

# Ten Facts You Need to Know About Blended Learning

## 01 Blended learning is more than just learning in the classroom and online

Blended learning is the *thoughtful integration* of classroom and online learning that aims at taking the best advantage of the strengths of the two learning modes. Classroom activities must support online activities and vice versa for the full potential of blended learning to be realized.

- The often-cited definition of blended learning by the former [Sloan Consortium](#) refers to the proportion of time online in blended courses.
- Blended Learning Toolkit: [What is Blended Learning?](#)
- University of Waterloo: [Best Practices for Designing Blended Courses](#).
- A full discussion of the range of definitions of blended learning: [Definition, Current Trends, and Future Directions](#) (Graham, 2006).
- An earlier discussion about the complexities of the notion of blended learning: [Can 'Blended Learning' Be Redeemed?](#) (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005).

## 02 Students perform well in blended courses

Although some individual studies may contradict this conclusion, research on the whole shows that students tend to perform moderately better in blended courses than their peers in either fully online or face-to-face courses. Their grades tend to be higher and they have lower dropout rates.

- University of Central Florida's experience showing that blended learning courses have [higher success and lower withdrawal](#) rates than face-to-face or fully online courses (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004).
- Blended Learning Toolkit: [Student Success Strategies](#).
- A widely cited meta-analytic study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education comparing in-class, online, and blended learning outcomes: [The Effectiveness of Online and Blended Learning: A Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Literature](#) (Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013).
- A comparative study of blended and face-to-face learning led a Canadian international authority on meta-analysis: [A Meta-Analysis of Blended Learning and Technology use in Higher Education: From the General to the Applied](#). (Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Tamim, & Abrami, 2014).
- One of the first comprehensive studies showing that students in online courses with face-to-face components perform better than those in fully online courses: [What Makes the Difference? A Practical Analysis of Research on the Effectiveness of Distance Education](#) (Zhao, Y., Lei, J., Yan, B., Lai, C., & Tan, H. S., 2005). [Restricted Access]

## 03 Students prefer learning in blended courses

Research shows that students prefer courses that combine online and face-to-face instruction more than those that are either only face-to-face or only online. They also seem very satisfied with their blended experience, feel they learn more, and want to take other blended courses.

- The EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research [survey of undergraduate students](#) shows over three-quarters of students prefer a mix of online and face-to-face course components.
- [Blended Learning: The Student Viewpoint](#). (Shantakumari & Sajith, 2015).
- A [PPT presentation](#) on impact of blended learning, including student preferences, at the University of Central Florida.
- [Student Perceptions and Achievement in a University Blended Learning Strategic Initiative](#) (Owston, Murtha, & York, 2013).
- [Achievement and Satisfaction in Blended Learning versus Traditional General Health Course Designs](#) (Melton, Bland, & Chopak-Foss, 2009).

## 05 Blended learning provides students with flexibility in their schedules

A high proportion of full-time students in our institutions work part-time, and many have family or other social commitments. Blended learning gives students more flexibility in their schedules for these obligations because a significant portion of course time is devoted to online activities, allowing them to study when and where it is most convenient.

- UBC Flexible Learning: [Blended Learning](#).
- [Commuter Students Using Technology](#). (Smale & Regalado, 2014).
- [Flexible Pedagogies: Technology-Enhanced Learning](#). (Gordon, 2014).
- [Evaluation of Blended and Online Learning Courses in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, and the Faculty of Health](#). (Owston, York, & Finkel, 2013).
- University Affairs: [What is Blended Learning?](#) (Smith, 2014).

## 04 Interaction is key to successful blended learning

For blended learning to be successful, students should interact with the content, others in the course, and the instructor. Although the research is not clear on the relative importance of these interactions, there is consensus that all are highly desirable and should be included in the design of a course.

- [Blended Course Design: A Synthesis of Best Practices](#) (McGee & Reis, 2012).
- [Online Interaction in Higher Education: Is There Evidence of Diminishing Returns?](#) (Castaño-Muñoz, Sancho-Vinuesa, & Duarte, 2013).
- [Designing Online Interaction to Address Disciplinary Competencies: A Cross-Country Comparison of Faculty Perspectives](#). (Barberà, Layne, & Gunawardena, 2014).
- [Assessing the Relationship of Student-Instructor and Student-Student Interaction to Student Learning and Satisfaction in Web-Based Online Learning Environment](#). (Sher, 2009).
- University of Notre Dame: [Student Interaction in Blended Courses](#). (Clark, 2017).

## 06 Blended learning may be more successfully implemented in STEM courses

Emerging research suggests that students in blended courses in STEM subject areas perform better than those in non-STEM areas. This is because different teaching approaches are required in the two fields based on disciplinary knowledge and understanding.

- [The Effect of Blended Learning on Student Performance at Course-Level in Higher Education](#). (Vo, Zhu, & Diep, 2017a). [Restricted Access]
- [Blended Learning Components Important to Student Learning: A Study on the Perceptions of Instructors](#). (Vo, Zhu, & Diep, 2017b, p. 123).
- [The Nagging Question when Designing Blended Courses: Does the Proportion of Time Devoted to Online Activities Matter?](#) (Owston & York, 2018).
- [Empowering Learners Through Blended Learning](#) cites research on STEM issues (Owston, 2018).
- [Design for Learning – A Case Study of Blended Learning in a Science Unit](#). (Gleadow, Macfarlan, & Honeydew, 2015).

## **07** The proportion of time spent online in a blended course affects outcomes

The division of time between the online and face-to-face components of a course depends largely on the instructional goals. However, research suggests a course should have between one-third and two-thirds of its time online in order to realize the full benefits of blending.

- Concordia University: [How Often Does a Blended Course Meet?](#)
- University of Milwaukee: [What are Hybrid or Blended Courses?](#)
- University of Ottawa: [What is a Blended Course?](#)
- [The Nagging Question when Designing Blended Courses: Does the Proportion of Time Devoted to Online Activities Matter?](#) (Owston & York, 2018).
- [The Choice of Reduced Seat Time in a Blended Course.](#) (Asarta & Schmidt, 2015). [Restricted Access]

## **09** Faculty tend to like teaching in blended courses

Research suggests that faculty find teaching blended courses reinvigorating and rewarding, and they enjoy the flexibility blended learning affords. At the same time, faculty need to be supported in blended course development, and department heads and other relevant administrators must recognize and value their efforts.

- University of Milwaukee: [Hybrid Courses - Faculty Insights.](#)
- [Evaluation of Blended and Online Learning Courses in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, and the Faculty of Health.](#) (Owston, York, & Finkel, 2013).
- Blog: [Are You Ready for Blended Learning?](#) (Bates, 2016).
- teachonline.ca: Pockets of Innovation: [Faculty Development.](#)
- WCET: [Faculty Development for Blended Learning: A Survey of Practices.](#)

## **08** First-year students do not appear to benefit from blended learning as much as those in upper years

First-year students often lack the study skills needed to perform as successfully in blended courses. Instructors can help these students by making clear what course expectations are for the online components, and ensuring that the online activities are graded accordingly.

- Blended learning Toolkit: [Design and Delivery Principles.](#)
- University of Milwaukee: [Ten Questions to Consider when Redesigning a Course for Hybrid Teaching and Learning.](#)
- [Student Perceptions and Achievement in a University Blended Learning Strategic Initiative](#) (Owston, Murtha, & York, 2013).
- [Student Engagement and Satisfaction Between Different Undergraduate Blended Learning Courses.](#) (Madriz & Nocente, 2016). [Restricted Access]
- [Empowering Learners Through Blended Learning.](#) (Owston, 2018).

## **10** Institutions may better utilize space and avoid increased costs with blended learning

Blended courses normally require less classroom space as a portion of instructional time is spent online, allowing institutions to make more efficient use of existing classrooms.

- [Improving Quality and Reducing Cost: Designs for Effective Learning](#) (Twigg, 2010). [Restricted Access]
- [Blended Learning: An Institutional Approach for Enhancing Students' Learning Experiences.](#) (Poon, 2013).
- teachonline.ca: Pockets of Innovation: [Institutional Change.](#)
- [An Administrator's Guide to the Whys and Hows of Blended Learning.](#) (Niemiec & Otte, 2009).
- [Supporting Institutional Hybrid Implementations.](#) (Cavanagh, Thompson, & Futch, 2016).