

Blended and Distance Learning Policy

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1. Background

The 2020 pandemic, unprecedented and unplanned for, has brought about challenges for Further Education teaching, learning and assessment which previously and predominantly took place in large classrooms, under the instruction of tutors, within a highly structured day. The sudden need to adapt to remote learning allowed limited time for tutors to implement detailed procedures; however, the start of a new academic year necessitates a more consistent, formalised, and structured approach to blended learning.

This policy will outline the types and methods of blended learning; provide guidance on the approach to blended and distance learning that should be taken by tutors and learners; and aim to ensure consistency of approach across all curriculum departments in the college. Consequently, BSDC will continue to provide engaging, exciting, and challenging learning opportunities, both in college and out of college, which result in ambitious, capable learners, committed to lifelong learning. Additionally, the well-being of learners and tutors is a significant consideration; it is recognised that learning can give a sense of purpose and achievement which is good for mental well-being. The policy aims to ensure a seamless and efficient blend of in-college and at-home learning, thus allowing learners to make progress while staff workload remains manageable.

Definition of Blended Learning:

Blended learning is a formal approach to education that creates an integrated learning environment where face-to-face and online teaching and learning become complementary, with the purpose of giving learners a more diverse and engaging learning experience.

At BSDC this means that time spent learning in the classroom will introduce key concepts, new content and skills; address misconceptions; answer questions; and, set clear expectations and guidelines for the work to be completed at home. However, it should be noted that the learning that takes place at home will take a variety of forms and will not be restricted to online provision.

Definition of Distance Learning:

Distance learning applies to learners recruited and enrolled online and who study independently using virtual learning environments - for example via online courses, posted resources, and telephone support.

Definition of Distance Assessment

Distance Assessment is a method of assessment where the assessment is designed to be carried out remotely. Distance Assessment enables learners to be assessed even if they are in situations/settings where traditional methods of assessment may be difficult or impossible to operate. Awarding Organisation guides provide support on this activity. There are scenarios where distance assessment will not be possible and not appropriate where:

- Practical skills and/or interaction with individuals/equipment need to be demonstrated and assessed in person
- There are group work situations/units where collaboration with others is required
- There is a requirement for learners to be overseen in person by centre staff at a specific physical location, under controlled conditions, including observations of performance in SVQ/NVQ type competency-based qualifications and externally set and marked examinations and controlled tasks.

2. Introduction

Following the success of our remote learning during the lockdown period, Burton and South Derbyshire College (BSDC) intends to capitalise on the learning potential and the ability to increase the opportunity for a blended learning delivery model using the Canvas VLE.

The model of learning will support teaching, learning and assessment in class, whilst providing the opportunity for pre and post teaching, learning and assessment. The model also supports learners who cannot access traditional classroom delivered education (e.g., those who are on long term absence, suspended, shielding) and provide opportunities for learners who need further support to catch up so that no-one need fall behind. It will also mean that learners and staff can continue using Canvas to deliver learning in the event of any future local or full lockdown.

Tutors and learners will need a set of digital competences to seize the potential of digital technology to enhance and innovate learning. BSDC will ensure staff involved in the blended learning programme are provided with developmental support and coaching.

This Policy should be read alongside the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Additional Learning Support (ALS) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Learner Disciplinary Policy
- Learner Behaviour Management Strategy
- Learner Disclosure and Fitness to Study Policy
- Combined Feedback, Marking and Assessment Policy
- Information Technology Usage Policy
- Learning and Assessment Technology Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Positive Intervention Guidelines
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Data Breach Notification Procedure

3. Guidance

Types of Blended Learning:

A. Face-to-Face Time with Learners

This is the most traditional form of teaching, learning and assessment. It is a 'tutor-centred' method of education and takes place in college, in person. Learners benefit from increased levels of interaction with their peers, as well as with their tutor, and are allowed the opportunity to bond with fellow learners. In face-to-face learning, learners are held accountable for their progress at the specific time the lesson is taking place, for example, through the use of assessment for learning (AfL) techniques.

B. Flipped Learning

In the traditional approach to teaching, learning and assessment the tutor is the primary source of information. By contrast, the flipped learning model deliberately shifts instruction to a learner centred approach, where in class time is dedicated to exploring topics in greater depth; introducing complex concepts; answering questions; addressing misconceptions; setting clear expectations around work to be completed at home (online or paper based); and creating rich learning opportunities. As a result, learners are actively involved in knowledge construction as they participate in and evaluate their learning in a manner that is personally meaningful.

C. Online Learning

BSDC's platform for sharing online resources and setting work will be Canvas. Learners will also be able to submit completed tasks and assignments through this platform. It is recognised that a considerable amount of engaging and effective work has been set through other platforms such as YouTube.

The continued use of these platforms is consistent with this policy and to be encouraged. However, for consistency resources and links associated with the work on alternative platforms should be embedded into Canvas.

Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous learning is learning that does not necessarily happen at the same time for the tutor and the learners. There is no real-time interaction; the learning resources are created and made available for learners to use later on. The main features of asynchronous learning are:

- resources and activities delivered online, e.g., through Canvas.
- recorded lessons/video instruction/podcasts.
- flipped learning - learners engage with material before discussions in class.

Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning is teaching and learning that happens where the tutor is present at the same time as the learners, meaning that there is real-time interaction between them. The main features of synchronous learning are:

- live, streamed lessons
- live online pastoral/achievement check in sessions.

D. Hard Copy Physical Resources

- paper packs and work booklets.
- textbooks.
- resources needed for projects

Methods of Blended Learning:

To enhance learning using a blended learning approach requires the following methods to enhance learning:

- Prompting learners to think about what they have learnt previously, that will help them with their next steps
- Explicitly teaching strategies to learners and helping them decide when to use them
- Learners practicing strategies and skills repeatedly, to develop independence
- Learners reflecting on what they have learnt after they have completed a piece of work
- Revisiting previous learning after a gap.

3. Responsibilities

To effectively deliver curriculum via blended learning there is a requirement for cross-college collaboration and clearly identified responsibilities:

3.1 Tutors will:

- Plan a range of in class and remote learning activities, including direct instruction, real time lessons, recorded activities, formal assessments, discussion forums and online material accessible via Canvas
- Where possible move away from traditional classroom delivery to project-based and flipped learning
- Use technology with learners which can include 3rd generation education iPads to deliver content and provide formative feedback
- Promote the use of laptops, tablets, and desktop computers for completion of assignment work
- Plan for scheduled online learning assessment (SOLA) in college learning centres or from home.

3.2 Learners should:

- record tasks set at the end of each face-to-face lesson in college, noting the due date for completion;
- dedicate appropriate time to distance learning, in order to complete the tasks, set by the due date;
- check Canvas for information on tasks, assignments, and resources daily, throughout the college week;
- identify a comfortable and quiet space to study/learn;
- engage in all learning set with academic honesty;
- submit all tasks and assignments in accordance with provided timelines and/or due dates;
- alert someone, tutor/progress coach of any issues or mitigations that prevent them from having what they need to complete tasks at home
- appreciate that when working at home, teachers will be delivering lessons every day at college.

Tutors will not be able to respond to multiple requests for assistance. Questions can be asked at the next face-to-face session with the tutor. If unsure about what to do with a task, learners should: read questions and instructions carefully; research the answer to the question; or collaborate with a friend/another learner/classmate. If, while learning at home, a learner has a problem that cannot be solved, then the relevant Progress Coach should be contacted in the first instance.

3.2 LTA Coach and the Digital Skills Developer will:

- Prepare staff on remote education practice through bitesize/refresher training sessions focused on how to use Canvas, communication tools, digital and non-digital resources and how to access online content
- Promote the use of Planet eStream to capture lessons to allow learners to dip in and out of lessons at their own pace
- Provide support areas with assistance in creating digital resources to support learners and tutors
- Source Microsoft and Apple applications to support TLA

3.3 Progress Coaches will:

- Produce digital content in conjunction with LTA Coaches to support the online delivering of Be Sessions
- Support the health and wellbeing of our learners to include but not be limited to, how they can learn from challenging events and circumstances that have happened in 2020 for example` challenging negative stereotypes`
- Support learners who are working from home and have an issue with a task set on Canvas

3.4 The Library Information Support Team will:

- Provide learners with accessible guides on remote education produced in conjunction with TLA Coaches and learner facing staff
- Work with learner facing staff and LTA Coaches on where, when, and how learners are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning and how assessment and feedback will be delivered using SOLA – considering how to support disadvantaged learners
- Provide learners with study skills support as required.

3.5 Digital Support Services will provide support for staff and learners with:

- How to make use of cloud storage systems (for example, Office 365)
- Accessing the VDI platform
- Password changes
- In conjunction with the LTA Coaches manage the Microsoft and Apple App Stores
- Provide support for tutors to live stream from home if self-isolating

Tools available to support the digital future of the quality of education at BSDC

Tutors/Assessors/Commercial Trainers	Learners/Apprentices
Surface Pro	iPad
One Drive and Office 365	Laptops
Canvas, including Big Blue Button	Computer desktops
Microsoft Teams	One Drive and Office 365
Planet eStream	Microsoft Teams
Microsoft applications	Canvas, including Big Blue Button
Apple applications	Microsoft applications
Century testing	Apple applications
Email	Century testing
City & Guilds SmartScreen	Email
Learning Assistant	City & Guilds SmartScreen
Promonitor	Learning Assistant
Thin Client	ProPortal
Educast Studio	Thin Client
Blended Learning Consortium	Educast Studio

4. Learners who are unable to attend college

Learners who are not able to attend college for the following reasons: Any learner off college for more than 3 days (but well enough to work), excluded for more than 1 day, shielding, isolating or subject to lockdown must be:

- Set daily work in the form of video clips, Power Point, direct instruction, online conversations, and on-line work.
- There should be enough work for learners to last the normal college day and it should follow the work being taught to the rest of the class with a live link to sessions via Teams if required.

5. Period of College Closure

- BSDC is committed to providing continuity of education for its learners in the event of an extended college closure. We will endeavour to provide continued learning for our learners during any period of closure in the following ways:
 - The provision of daily relevant, developmental online work which enables learners to make continued progress. This work should provide enough for the learners as in a normal college day or week
 - Regular, live sessions from staff, with the ability for learners to ask questions of their tutors in real time as far as possible. Video clips, exercises etc.
 - Tutors will not be required to sit at their laptop all day but to provide a live and pre-recorded teaching sessions, online chats and log in at various points to support learners
 - The opportunity for learners to have their work assessed by their tutors and receive feedback on it.
 - All members of College staff expected to provide blended/online learning are provided with a Surface-pro to enable remote working.

6. General Guidelines and Expectations

- Within the requirements set out by this and other policies and social distancing requirements the teaching quality is more important than how lessons are delivered;
- Ensuring access to technology is key, particularly for disadvantaged learners;
- Peer interactions can provide motivation and improve learning outcomes;
- Supporting learners to work independently can improve learning outcomes.

Therefore, it is important that everything put in place meets the four guidelines referenced above and that we have clear expectations for blended learning:

- Establish a Canvas course for each course and ensure it is used in the most effective and efficient way, for example, using modules, pages and clearly identifying activities for different groups. The establishment of the Canvas course and its effective use is the responsibility of the class tutor;
- Ensure that the Canvas page clearly identifies the group (red or blue), week and tutor so that learners can easily identify and quickly access content;
- Recognise the need for one 'work stream' - the work completed during face-to-face learning will complement and consolidate the work completed by learners remotely, and vice versa;
- Consider and plan for the 'work stream' to be completed, anticipating likely questions and problems that learners may encounter;
- Ensure face-to-face learning incorporates:
 - the introduction of new concepts;
 - the explanation of difficult concepts;
 - problem solving;
 - explicit teaching of new skills;
 - tasks that complement and consolidate the learning that takes place at home;
 - interactive discussion;
 - practicals (as/when appropriate);
 - the use of class time to personalise learning.
- Ensure at-home learning incorporates:
 - tasks that complement and consolidate the learning that takes place in the classroom;
 - tasks that learners can complete to enhance learning that takes place in the classroom, for example, research of/reading about a new topic to be introduced;
 - tasks that allow learners to practice new skills learnt during face-to-face time in college;
 - note-taking, summarising and formation of questions, assignment work, course work and portfolio building in preparation for face-to-face time in college.
- 'Chunk' work that is to be completed. Masses of content should not simply be 'dropped' into Canvas with an unrealistic completion date. Tutors should consider learning objectives for periods of two weeks and ensure that all tasks to be completed (both in college and at home) allow learners to meet these objectives;
- Clearly communicate learning objectives, for each two-week period of work, to learners so that they know exactly what is expected of them and what they will be doing in college and at home;
- Make deadlines for work completion clear to learners. Make explicit the method of how learners can submit completed written work (e.g., during face-to-face lessons on paper/ books, by uploading to Canvas etc.).
- Provide clear instructions for how the work set can be completed. These instructions can be delivered during the face-to-face time with learners but should also be available for learners to access at home, either by uploading them to Canvas or by including them in the paper resources provided;
- Consider how videos/podcasts can be used effectively to supplement, complement, and assist with the completion of, work set. Marking, feedback and assessment In line with the College's Marking and Feedback Policy, not all submitted written work needs to be quality marked in detail by the teacher; however, it is important that work completion is tracked so that learners who are not engaging with the work set can be appropriately supported.

6.1 Marking feedback and assessment

Assignments should be set in face-to-face sessions with clear submission deadlines given with learners reminded that when they submit work online that they are to avoid any forms of malpractice (for example plagiarism) and the consequences should they commit it. If this is not possible due to a local or national lockdown or closing of the college, clear guidance should be provided on the Canvas course page with the same information provided as if the assignment had been set in a classroom environment.

Tutors should consider how learners can be formally assessed so that progress can be effectively monitored, and intervention can be put in place where necessary. The nature of marking and feedback given will depend on the type of work completed and the method of submission. The College's Combined Feedback, Marking and Assessment Policy should be followed as the overall framework on which to base our approach. Tutors should be able to provide evidence that the work is authentic and has been completed by the learner. If not given in the classroom feedback should be timely, and questions constructively answered.

All assessment and internal verification documentation should be stored securely in accordance with awarding body Guidelines and Centre Agreement.

Self-assessment may be an integral part of a blended learning approach; however, for this to be effective, learners must be able to self-assess their work and progress accurately and confidently. Therefore, clear guidance and expectations relating to this will need to be provided by tutors.

6.2 Engagement

For a blended learning approach to be effective, it is of critical importance that all learners engage with the process. Therefore, learners must have a secure understanding of what they have to do and by when. Differentiation, a comprehensive overview, and clear instruction will be of critical importance, to enable learners to balance work completed in college and at home.

We expect that all learners will engage with this approach to teaching and learning. It needs to be made clear to learners that work is not "optional", and we expect tasks to be completed. Clear deadlines should be set to give learners an explicit understanding of what is required, by when.

Tutors and delivery staff will be timetabled to support blended learning when learners are working remotely

If learners do not engage appropriately, our normal procedures, as outlined in the College's Learner Disciplinary Policy, will apply. However, we must recognise that learners may be having difficulty in adapting to the new way of working or are struggling with barriers to learning, e.g., lack of space to work at home; unreliable broadband or limited ICT provision; etc. Therefore, it is important to try and establish what these barriers are and how we might help to remove them.

Established lines of referral (Class Tutor , Progress Coach, Line Manger) should be used, as necessary. Communication with learners in college and with parents at home will be an important way of addressing these issues. If a learner still fails to engage, then the usual procedures within the Disciplinary Policy will be followed.

6.3 Training

To ensure that learners can make the most of blended and distance learning, they may require support from tutors on:

- the effective use of Canvas:
 - how to navigate the Canvas course;
 - how to submit work;
 - how to keep track of tasks/assignments.

- the effective use of self-assessment grids/templates.

- To ensure that teachers can proficiently deliver blended and distance learning experiences, they may require support from tutors on:
 - how to ensure Canvas as the main source of setting and receiving work;
 - how to efficiently mark work electronically
 - how to organise Canvas into categories/sections so learners can access content quickly and easily;
 - how to photograph their work and upload to Canvas;
 - how to create a quiz/assignment Canvas;
 - the effective use of PowerPoint (PP) including;
 - creating and embedding podcasts and video clips into PP;
 - use of hyperlinks to bring learners from PP to necessary documents. Teachers may use time not spent teaching to:
 - source/create podcasts/videos relevant to PoWs for use when learners are working at home;
 - create prescriptive self-assessment templates for use with learners, especially for tasks that will be completed at home that would not otherwise be teacher assessed.

6.4 Content and Timing

Research indicates that learners cannot be expected to replicate the college day when learning at home; therefore, it is unrealistic to expect learners to engage in five hours of independent work per day that they are at home. However, in order to ensure that learners gain maximum benefit from the blended learning experience, teachers should set tasks that allow for the lesson objectives to be met and the course content to be completed. The time spent learning in college must be as productive as possible.

As a guide, learners should allocate their time spent learning at home on the same days as when they would be in college.

7. Monitoring and review

Learner facing line managers, team leaders and LTA Coaches will monitor and evaluate the provision of blended and distance learning in their areas through established monitoring and quality assurance procedures.

8. Ensuring live sessions are safe

Appendix A provides a set of guidelines for tutors and assessors when delivering live sessions to learners.

Appendix B provides a set of guidelines for learners for when they are participating in live sessions.

BSDC SAFER LIVE LESSONS (Tutors & Support Staff)

CONDUCT

Live Streaming of content should only be delivered at BSDC on a suitable approved platform such as Canvas & Teams. All participants must treat any online lesson in the same way as a classroom lesson. All teachers, additional learning support and Progress Coaches involved in live lessons will observe their duty of care to young people, through their use of any online platforms. This includes observing the BSDC Safeguarding policy and all other related policies.

COMMUNICATION

The behaviours involved with communicating online, sometimes called “Netiquette” have never been more important than they are right now for most of us. Teachers are delivering face-to-face lessons using digital platforms and learning new skills all the time. Some of the subtleties of positive, rewarding communication can be quite different to face to face communication, whilst some aspects remain the same. Here is a list of things to consider making the most of your online teaching and communications:

- ✓ **keep your camera on** whenever possible. The face-to-face interaction will help your learners and staff connect with you and the topic. (You can always turn the camera off when you are screen sharing to help learners and staff to only focus on the information being shared) In Teams meetings you can blur the background
- ✓ **Keep it professional.** During online teaching, never write anything you would not say out loud or be happy for learners to share. Never say anything you would not want written down
- ✓ If you are supporting a session (ALS, Progress Coach, or fellow team member) make sure you are clear of your role. Make sure you **know how to use the software** and what is expected of you
- ✓ Encourage learners to communicate professionally. Acknowledge their abbreviations (‘IDK’, ‘LOL’) but encourage them to **speak and write in language that is appropriate for the classroom**
- ✓ **SPaG matters...** Check your written communication when teaching online, preparing any online resources, and leading a meeting
- ✓ **Does your sense of humour work** via text?. Take care out there!
- ✓ Do what you can to **minimise distraction** and background noise. Use a **headphone and mic** to make sure you can communicate clearly
- ✓ **Close other programs** and apps that might cause sounds or messages to pop up whilst you are screen sharing
- ✓ Close the lesson or meeting appropriately. Clarify what they can expect next and what is expected from them. **Encourage farewells** as much as greetings.

BSDC SAFER LIVE LESSONS (Learners)

CONDUCT

Live Streaming of content will be delivered at BSDC on a suitable approved platform such as Canvas & Teams, allowing for live interactions (both visual and comments) between teachers and learners. All participants must treat any online lesson in the same way as a classroom lesson. All teachers, additional learning support and Progress Coaches involved in live lessons will observe their duty of care to young people, through their use of any online platforms. This includes observing the BSDC Safeguarding policy and all other related policies.

COMMUNICATION

To get the best experience from online learning it is important to create the right environment around you. Try to set up a mock learning space so parents can supervise if necessary. Only use platforms provided by the college and not personalised accounts open to public viewing, comments or sharing. Speak and write in language appropriate for the classroom and do not use shorthand text speech. Remember to be respectful and polite and avoid negative comments and spamming chat.

Please be aware from time-to-time online classes maybe recorded (video and/or audio) and used for educational purposes only, this includes being made available to selected learner groups for a limited period. If your class is due to be recorded your tutor will notify you in advance. Any recorded information or content will be stored in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in line with the College's retention policy.

RULES FOR LEARNERS IN VIRTUAL CLASSES

- ✓ **Be on time for all virtual classes** (aim to be logged in and online at least 5 minutes before the class starts. This way you can work out any audio or connectivity issues before the class starts)
- ✓ **Avoid multitasking** by closing applications and tabs which are not directly related to the class and ensure alternative devices such as mobile telephones are on silent and away from your study area.
- ✓ **Mute your microphone** during class so you do not distract the group unless you are asked to speak, or you are participating in a permitted group discussion.
- ✓ **Cameras should be switched on unless told not to do so by your teacher**
- ✓ **Use the raise hand feature to ask a question and/or use `chat`.** Do not switch on your microphone to speak unless invited to, or a teacher has told you it is fine to do so.
- ✓ **Dress appropriately**, as you would if you were present in College.
- ✓ **Limit distractions** in the background and avoid use of intricate or inappropriate virtual backgrounds.

The College adopts a zero-tolerance policy, which could result in disciplinary action should an individual fail to behave reasonably during an online class, this includes but is not limited to:

- **Disruption of teaching, learning and exchange of ideas** in the classroom.
- **Using any form of abuse, intimidation, harassment, or threatening behaviour** directed towards a staff member or fellow learner(s).
- **Allowing / abetting unauthorised attendance** in a class by sharing access passwords information or, links.
- **Displaying / sharing of any kind of sexually implicit or explicit content** during classes this includes presenting oneself during the online video classes in a sexually implicit and explicit manner and includes all kinds of voyeuristic exhibitionism behaviour.
- **Recording and distributing** of any class video or audio content including screenshots on social media or messaging platforms is strictly forbidden.

Should any individual have any concerns about content or behaviour regarding online class(s) then this should be directly reported to Burton and South Derbyshire College.

TOP 5 TIPS FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS

- ✓ **1. Get involved.** Taking part in discussions makes your learning active (using your knowledge) rather than passive (only absorbing knowledge). As a result, you are more likely to remember the facts or ideas you have learned.
- ✓ **2. Be clear and concise.** Try to keep to a single point in your post as this will make the discussion easier to follow and only post if it is relevant to the discussion. If you want to talk about a different topic, consider setting up a separate thread.
- ✓ **3. Check your spelling.** Use a plugin like Grammarly or better still write out your comment in a google or word document first - that way you will have a record of them. They might come in useful as a starting point for future assignments.
- ✓ **4. Start a conversation.** Have a go at responding to a post that your classmate has left. Use open-ended questions that cannot be answered using “yes” or “no” to encourage discussion.
- ✓ **5. Be nice!** This is not a YouTube comment section. Listening and engaging with different opinions will allow you to explore new perspectives.