Blended Learning Strategy

1/ Introduction and aims

- To meet RVC's vision to provide student-centred, flexible, and inclusive learning experiences for our students, which balance the best of onsite and digital learning opportunities.
- To underpin the university pillars of outstanding education and student experience which result in highly skilled graduates with a love of lifelong learning.
- To extend the global reach of our programmes in order to deliver our medium and long-term objectives and to drive up our competitive advantage in an increasingly challenging environment.
- To respond to a fast-changing world, where our graduates need be confident in their digital skills in order to be successful in future employment.
- To sustain our financial position, our teaching and learning must be aligned to the metrics and measures we need to run our College effectively and efficiently.

This strategy lays the foundations to support our strategy for Teaching, Learning and Assessment and the next version of College Strategic Plan in order for the College to continue to provide innovative teaching and learning for its community of students wherever they are studying. This strategy recognises that blended learning interconnects with many areas of the College and that no strategy can be implemented without an understanding of how these areas will be affected. Its implementation is aligned to the Professional Services Division (PSD) operational plan, our Access and Participation plan (APP), to strategies for the development of our Infrastructure (Digital and Physical), and to our IT strategy. All strategies at the College are underpinned by a commitment to sustainable wellbeing as a guiding principle.

2/ What does Blended Learning mean at RVC?

The RVC is committed to creating opportunities for learning as part of a wider social activity in our community. Just as the physical campus spaces provide ways for students to study collaboratively or individually through the integration of social learning spaces into our varied campus layouts, so too does the digital environment provide complementary opportunities to develop confidence in a range of future-focused digital skills.

Blended learning at RVC aims to combine the best of onsite teaching with learning that takes place in a digital environment while always valuing the social aspects of learning. It includes a mix of teaching approaches, delivery modes and learner styles. The 'blend' can mean different places for learning (onsite and digital); different scheduling (synchronous and asynchronous), different pace (class and self-paced) and different types of instruction (expert led, social/group, peer and individual).

Blended learning is:

- **Student-centred active learning** to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to apply professional skills in their future careers.
- **A 'blend' of onsite and digital learning** opportunities and approaches designed to achieve the learning outcomes through active engagement in the co-construction of knowledge.
- **Learning as part of social activity** in groups, working collaboratively and with tutors whether onsite or online.
- **Flexibility of time and place** with opportunities for self-paced learning so students can study at home, in the library, at a placement or partner location to suit individual learning styles within the overall shared purpose and structure of the course.

3/ Principles of blended learning

Our six guiding principles for blended learning tell us how we will achieve the strategy.

1. **Active and engaging learning**

- Learning activities (both class-paced and self-paced) are designed in ways that promote active learning (Bonwell and Eison, 1991) to achieve the learning outcomes.
- Active learning pedagogies provide ways for learners to co-construct knowledge through different types of authentic interactions with content.
- The digital aspects of blended learning are more than simply passive access to content – students are actively involved in tasks such as quizzes, forums, Padlets, wikis, blogs, formative assessments, reflection, etc to consolidate concept. The instructor has a visible and active role and technology is used to enhance the experience.

2. **Flexible and personalised learning - onsite or digitally.**

- Personalised learning enables learners to make choices (to suit their learning styles, preferences and backgrounds) about the 'how' and 'when' they will engage with their learning within the overall shared purpose and structure of the course.
- Flexible learning offers learners choices in the pace, place and mode of delivery (Jones-Devitt, 2020). This means learners can progress with some aspects of their course content digitally (self-paced), while other types of teaching such as practical elements, will be class-paced.

3. **Inclusive and accessible approaches to learning to support diverse learning styles and preferences.**

- Ensuring learners are well-prepared to work in diverse and complex environments by eliminating barriers to accessing learning, whether onsite or digital, regardless of learner differences and backgrounds.
- Developing scaffolded and supportive learning designs for blended learning to ensure all students can participate, interact and collaborate effectively in groups while recognising their diverse needs.

4. **Evidence-based approach that uses data to improve student outcomes and to maintain teaching quality.**

- A data -driven approach uses learning analytics to track continuous quality improvement of teaching materials and to support interventions where needed to improve successful student outcomes.

5. **Building learning communities to support the social aspects of learning in all modes of interaction).**

- A balance between learner-learner; learner-tutor and learner-content interactions for learning opportunities that takes place both in onsite spaces (social learning spaces, lecture halls, library) and digitally.
- Constantly creating a social context for learning that recognises the importance of group collaboration and interaction (synchronous and asynchronous) as well as individual self-paced study in order to support reflection and the construction of knowledge.

6. Uses technology to enhance interaction and to build confidence in digital skills.

- Digital technology is an enabler – not an end in itself. It can be used in innovative ways to interact and communicate and provides new ways to build community and collaboration - wherever learners are located.
- In fast-changing workplaces digital skills are a critical aspect of long-term success. Gaining confidence in communicating effectively using digital tools is a key transferable skill as is the ability to differentiate the quality and usefulness of online content and materials.

4/ Measuring Success – How will we know we are achieving these principles?

We'll measure our success using both internal and external methods:

- **Student feedback** (e.g. You said… we did, Course Reps, DLCs, etc)
- Internal student surveys and blended learning surveys.
- External measures such as the NSS and TEF award.
- An understanding of **student engagement** using learning analytics.
- **Successful student outcomes** in terms of attainment and progression and Graduate Outcomes for our alumni.
- **Increased access to learning opportunities** by diverse groups of students using the APP plan.

5/ Glossary of terminology

Term or Acronym	Description
Accessibility	Accessible learning ensures that all students can equally access the learning materials and experiences whether they are onsite digital learning accessed through LEARN the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
Active Learning	Active learning (Bonwell and Eison 1991), provides opportunities for learners to construct knowledge through different types of authentic interaction with content (onsite or digital) that aligns to learning outcomes and involves more than simply passive access to content.
Asynchronous learning	Asynchronous learning is self-paced to suit a student's schedule. Students can satisfy requirements within a flexible time frame. Methods of asynchronous online learning include streaming video content, self-guided lesson activities, virtual forums, formative quizzes, posted lecture notes, and exchanges across discussion boards or social media platforms.

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Data Driven	Data is considered to have value in and of itself. Having the right insight into the information available to you can lead to worthwhile and new processes, goals and outcomes.
Digital Learning	Learning which is mediated through an online environment and which may take place either synchronously (live) or asynchronously. It is not determined by a physical location and may include audio and visual recordings, video, live streamed lectures and Q&As, presentations, podcasts, forums, online interactive learning objects, quizzes and notes.
Digital Skills	This refers to a range of transferable skills that enables both students and staff to use a variety of tools to communicate and, interact effectively in the digital environment (ex. videoconferencing, activity creation and interaction). It also includes the ability to differentiate the quality and usefulness of the content of third-party online materials.
Equality Act 2010	A legal framework to require the exercise of certain functions to be with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and other prohibited conduct and to increase equality of opportunity.
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in the UK.
Inclusivity	Inclusive learning opportunities support all students to achieve the highest successful outcomes. It recognises and promotes the importance of diverse learners' voices and enables participation through scaffolding and effective communication strategies and the removal of barriers.
Interactive Learning Objects	A wide variety of interactive activities that require student input and can be accessed through LEARN including: computer assisted learning (CAL), Interactive quizzes (Moodle or other) formative assessments, SCORM packages, video recordings and reflection/quiz, forums, Padlets, etc.
Learning Analytics	Learning analytics refers to the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about the progress of learners and the contexts in which learning takes place (Sclater and Mullan, 2017).
Lecture Capture	Lecture capture is a technology which enables the recording, storage and delivery of materials (Ibrahim et al, 2021) At RVC Lecture Capture refers to the digital recording of live lectures in teaching spaces, in real time, using Panopto. Recorded content is included as part of a learning plan and is subsequently

	published, archived and can be accessed remotely via the Virtual Learning Environment (LEARN).
Learning plans	The weekly sequence of learning activities which include class-paced teaching (onsite and digital) that appear on the timetable and self-paced digital opportunities that can be undertaken flexibly by students. The learning plan provides information for students to allow them to structure their study time effectively each week.
Onsite teaching	Learning that takes place in a physical onsite space on any of the college campus spaces, rotation or placement locations, or at any of our partners' physical spaces.
Personal Capture	At RVC Personal Capture refers to the digital recording of lecture concepts or content in 'chunks' made using Panopto. Teaching staff make their recordings at their desktop and then subsequently publish the recording to be accessed remotely by students via the Virtual Learning Environment (LEARN). The recommended sequencing for students to watch the recorded content is included as part of a learning plan.
Personal data	Any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ("data subject"). An identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that person.
Personalised learning	Learning opportunities and experiences that allow students to make choices about how, when and where they will interact with some aspects of their course. This could include choice of content such as electives or assessments (ie topics or portfolio submissions) and choice in the pace/place of undertaking learning experiences while working towards shared goals of their programme of study (Advance HE, 2018).
RVC Blended Learning Rubric	An externally benchmarked framework of teaching strategies and design considerations for staff to use to develop and incorporate blended learning activities into their module or strand. The quality standards define baseline and enhancement actions which provide a consistent approach to blended learning across a wide range of student learning opportunities in RVC programmes.
RVC Supported technologies	RVC provides a number of centrally supported technologies a part of the digital infrastructure for learning and teaching. They are accessible to staff and students using an RVC username and password. These technologies are centrally maintained, developed and supported by the professional service teams at RVC including LEARN, Exams, Library and IT. The centrally supported technologies allow for data streams to be developed which can be used as part of learning analytics and which provide institutional data to various stakeholders.
Scaffolding	Scaffolding is an instructional method (Vygotsky, 1978) which provides support to learners in the form of text, facial, visual or verbal cues and feedback which direct students to engage with

	specific experiences or key concepts and learning opportunities as part of creating their individual learning journey. This roadmap can assist students in making decisions on sequencing of learning activities (self and class-paced), exploration of additional materials and strategies for revision and consolidation.
Student outcomes	Student outcomes can be measured and quantified in many ways across the student lifecycle. This may include access to education prior to enrolment and employability post-graduation. During the on-course part of students' learning the term refers to the attainment of the learning outcomes of that level, typically validated through the assessment of acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, successful progression through the levels of the programme and the final level of degree classification. Success in these areas can be related to engagement.
Synchronous teaching	Synchronous teaching, or 'live' events, are where students and instructors come together in a digital or physical space to: a) foster learning and belonging through social interaction and community; and b) to provide opportunities for students to practise the key skills needed to achieve learning outcomes. Methods of synchronous onsite learning include lectures, small group teaching, directed learning, practicals and tutorials. Methods of synchronous digital learning include video conferencing, teleconferencing, live chatting, and live-streaming lectures. Both are considered to be class-paced learning.
Virtual Learning Environment (VLE):	Centrally provided and supported learning platform and supporting technologies – at RVC our VLE is commonly referred to as LEARN.

Contact

Developed through the Blended Learning project group. For more information on this strategy, or other concepts discussed in this document, please contact Director of Learning and Wellbeing.

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