RVC
BLENDED LEARNING
RUBRIC 2021

RATIONALE

The RVC Blended Learning Rubric is an externally benchmarked framework for developing and incorporating blended learning into modules or strands.

Six quality standards define *baseline* and *enhancement* actions to guide staff to design their teaching activities. These standards align with the RVC's Blended Learning Strategy.

Blended learning at RVC aims to combine the best of onsite teaching with learning that takes place in a digital environment. The mix of teaching approaches, delivery modes and learner styles values the social aspects of learning.

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).

SIX PRINCIPLES

Blended learning at RVC is based on the following six principles outlined in the Blended Learning Strategy:

1. Active and Engaging learning
2. Flexible and personalised learning - onsite or digitally
3. Inclusive and accessible approaches to learning that support diverse learning styles and preferences
4. Evidence-based approach that uses data to improve student outcomes and to maintain teaching quality
5. Building learning communities in different ways to support the social aspects of learning in all modes of interaction
6. Uses technology to enhance interaction and to build confidence in digital skills

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Blended Learning Rubric's framework is intended to be used as part of continuous improvement of teaching materials and learning design to allow staff to review and renew how they will deliver their teaching.

We recommend that the Rubric be used by teaching staff in conjunction with the Self-Audit checklist of teaching materials (June 2021) and the Review & Renew guidance (June 2021) to refresh materials and continue to build on good practice.

At the programme level, further guidance in the form of implementation and planning documents will help course teams to consider the alignment between learning outcomes, learning design and delivery modes (Autumn 2021).

OVERALL AIMS

- Overall aims of the RVC Blended Learning Rubric:
- To provide a consistent blended learning experience for students, made up of a mix of onsite and digital learning activities.
- To design and develop reusable learning activities and materials that can be used as part of flexible learning design for teaching delivery
- To provide flexible learning design guidance that considers potential technical issues that could impact student access and engagement with learning.
- To improve the staff and student experience of RVC LEARN.

Quality Standard 1. Course Orientation on LEARN

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
1.1 Clear instructions are provided on how to get started with the course and where to find various components.	Use a variety of formats such as text, audio and video.	Students will benefit from clear and detailed information about what to do, when and how.
1.2 Instructor creates a self-introduction including contact details and a picture.	Instructor uses a video for their self-introduction. Students are also asked to introduce themselves by uploading an audio or video introduction to an area of LEARN.	An introduction helps create a sense of community and allows the students to feel connected to the RVC.
1.3 Acceptable communication methods for contacting the instructor are included (e.g. phone; email; chat, other) including expected response times.		Help students to know the best way to communicate with you to manage expectations. Providing response times lets students know when they can expect to receive a response for any queries and helps instructors manage their time.
1.4 Weekly learning plans are provided two weeks in advance of the teaching to enable students to plan their study schedule.	Provide this information via a video or audio recording increases engagement and allows you to highlight key points.	Students will need to build and maintain their own study plan for the self-paced elements within the overall course. Instructions in advance to set out your expectations of the sequence for the week, will help them to do this effectively.

Quality Standard 1. Course Orientation on LEARN		
Baseline Actions	**Enhancement Actions**	**Why?**
1.5 A central notice board is provided on LEARN course pages for all course announcements.	Provide a variety of types of announcements on a regular basis indexed by date.	Regular communication and signposting to key resources and services increases engagement and provide a focal point for the course.
1.6 Navigation is clearly structured and coherent. Course appearance is consistent and accessible.	Signposting is used effectively to help students to understand what to do next and to understand their learning journey.	Unclear navigation and disorganised materials present a significant barrier for all students. Consistency of presentation of the course flow and materials will reduce frustration for everyone and encourage students to be more self-sufficient.
1.7 All files are given appropriate titles and saved in appropriate course specific areas on LEARN.		Files are saved with intuitive names in order to provide more robust analytics and to manage content effectively.
1.8 Design factors such as colour and text size are considered.		The design factors (colour and text size) reflect universal accessibility design considerations.
1.9 Details on accessing alternative format of course materials should be provided.		Students can easily find accessibility options to meet their learning needs.

Quality Standard 2. Learning Design

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
2.1 Learning sequences are designed according to the ABC learning design principles which align specific types of learning activities with the most effective delivery mode.		The ABC learning design principles assist teaching staff to think through the purpose of teaching activities and design sequences that structure participation, interaction and collaboration as part of an overall blend of modes and approaches.
2.2 Learning outcomes are displayed next to each learning sequence. Instructors signpost how activities are used to achieve the learning outcomes either onsite or digitally.	Students are directed to reflect on their achievement of the learning outcomes in an ongoing manner (polls, forum, Q&A, reflective space).	In F2F classes, instructors provide information on an ongoing basis reinforcing the relationship between the learning material, the overall objectives and the intended learning outcomes. This aspect of good practice should be consistent in both the onsite and digital environments to help students consolidate their learning and identify transferable skill development.
2.3 Total student learning hours should be considered when designing learning sequences.		Students will move through self-paced learning activities at different rates, so giving students an idea of how long they might spend helps them plan their time effectively and ensure they understand the intended sequence.

Quality Standard 2. Learning Design		
Baseline Actions	**Enhancement Actions**	**Why?**
2.4 Lecture recordings are 'chunked' into smaller segments to provide easy access for students and to highlight key content and recorded using personal capture software (Panopto).	Break up 45-minute lectures into 15-20 minutes segments. Include a head shot in the personal capture so students can see the instructors face as part of the recording.	Students can manage their learning and motivation more easily when learning is broken down into asynchronous chunks so they can watch and re-watch in their own time. Listening/watching a poor-quality recording has an immediate and negative effect on engagement with a task.
2.5 Synchronous digital teaching sessions (live sessions, chats, Q& A's) should be clearly aligned to the purpose of the activity.		Synchronous teaching is best suited to interactive activities. Consideration to the planning of small group activities is relevant whether (onsite or digital) to encourage active participation. When synchronous activities are planned in the digital environment there should be consideration of issues that might impact student access such as bandwidth.
2.6 Maintain consistency in terms of timing of all activities. Neither synchronous digital teaching or asynchronous recordings should exceed their allotted time.		Students are creating their own study schedules and therefore over-running live sessions can impact their schedules and cause frustration.

Quality Standard 2. Learning Design

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
2.7 Accurate closed captions are provided for all recorded materials.	Enhanced accessibility tips from the guidance are incorporated into materials. Provide transcriptions where needed.	Ensure students can connect easily to self-help resources and to the Advice Centre, so they have the support they need.
2.8 Materials are produced using RVC accessible templates.	Explore ways to enhance accessibility	We are required to be compliant with 23 September 2018 new regulations on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies.
2.9 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited on slides and for recordings used within recorded lectures.		Copyright rules need to be adhered to and visible citations should appear on all materials. See Lecture and Personal Capture Policy, 2021) All new images included by the Learning Design team will be copyright free and will be credited where appropriate.

Quality Standard 3. Learning Activities - Interaction and Collaboration		
Baseline Actions	**Enhancement Actions**	**Why?**
3.1 Learning activities include a range of active learning opportunities where students can participate in different ways.	Include plenty of opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous interaction and collaboration.	Including a range of learning activity types as outlined in the ABC learning design principles (acquisition, collaboration, discussion, investigation, practice and production) helps facilitate active learning and student engagement.
3.2 Activities are designed to help build a sense of community, rather than each learner perceiving themselves studying independently.		Think about how you can facilitate this through activity design and instructions and the use of different modalities for different aspects of a learning sequence.
3.3 Learning activities should provide opportunities for interaction between: instructors and students, student to student and student to instructors. These should be provided frequently.	Student to student interactions are included as part of the course.	Design ways to construct knowledge through different types of interaction.
3.4 Use technology creatively to enhance specific types of learning activities (discussion, collaboration, voting) in both synchronous and asynchronous teaching.		The RVC tool wheel aligns activity types RVC supported tools that can be used to enhance that type of activity in both onsite and digital learning opportunities.

Quality Standard 3. Learning Activities - Interaction and Collaboration

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
3.5 Students are told when and how instructors will interact with them for each activity.	Guidelines explaining required levels of participation are provided.	Sharing with students what they can expect from you will enable them to engage with the activities appropriately.
		Setting and modeling expectations in all communication, will enable students to engage confidently. It may not be obvious to students how to replicate their in-class interactions in the online environment. Take time to explain how they should interact with you, the course, and their peers.

Quality Standard 4. Learner Support		
Baseline Actions	**Enhancement Actions**	**Why?**
4.1 Clear expectations of student behaviour, decorum and netiquette are provided.	Use time at the beginning of Q&As to confirm expectations for your sessions.	By making sure students understand your expectations of how they should interact online (e.g. cameras on/off; use of whiteboard or digital hands) it helps students to feel relaxed and to get to know each other. This common understanding makes an inclusive environment that can also lessen anxiety about raising issues or queries.
4.2 Outline expected staff response times to online discussions and email.		Closing quizzes or tuning off comments will let students know that the resource is not being actively checked and avoid disappointment. Providing response times lets students know when they can expect to receive a response for any queries.
4.3 Links to institutional academic and other relevant student policies (e.g. academic misconduct, no detriment, SPD; Student Charter; misconduct, etc.) are easy to find.	Reinforce links to the support services where appropriate in the learning plans, emails or in forum posts. Be clear about contacts in an emergency (such as a technical issue) so students don't feel like they will fall behind if they have any issues.	Students should have quick access to all relevant support they need during the course of their studies. Ideally this should be found within a few clicks.

Quality Standard 4. Learner Support

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
4.4 Links to student support services (Advice Centre, library, LEARN, Study skills, Smarthinking, Student Support Fund) and access to campus services are easy to find. **4.5** Links to institutional policies, contacts, and procedures for supporting students with disabilities are included and easy to find. .	Reinforce links to the support services where appropriate in the learning plans, emails or in forum posts. Be clear about contacts in an emergency (such as a technical issue) so students don't feel like they will fall behind if they have any issues.	Students should have quick access to all relevant support they need during the course of their studies. Ideally this should be found within a few clicks.
4.6 Feedback – students are given opportunities to provide feedback on content and delivery.		Consider using a variety of methods to capture feedback on course content and delivery using forums, Padlet walls or voting technology.

Quality Standard 5. Assessment and Feedback

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
5.1 The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning outcomes or competencies.	Include clear information using audio, video or text on how the assessment aligns to the learning outcomes.	In F2F classes, instructors often provide additional information verbally about upcoming assignments. Students will benefit from clear and detailed information to keep them focused on the bigger picture when they prepare for both formative and summative assessments.
5.2 Assessments are clearly signposted and include instructions on how to access the assessment and the grades.	Assessment instructions are explained using text, audio, or video, providing relevant examples when useful/possible, and reminding students how the assignment is connected to learning objectives/outcomes.	
5.3 Specific assessment criteria are provided for the evaluation of students' work, and their connection to the course grading scheme is clearly explained.	Assessment criteria are explained (using text, audio or video) using exemplars.	Students may feel disoriented without regular classroom interaction. Providing timely feedback can help you to interact with students online. Providing lower-stakes, formative assessments can help you and your students to proactively address any confusion before higher-stakes assessments and can also give you timely insights into students' understanding of material.

Quality Standard 5. Assessment and Feedback

Baseline Actions	Enhancement Actions	Why?
5.4 The assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.	Consider including "knowledge check" types of activities via creating low-stakes, simple quizzes or simplified online discussions that reflect the activities you'd already planned for in-class work. Include clear information on how and when students will receive feedback. Consider providing feedback in various formats (text, audio or video).	
5.5 The course provides students with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.		

References

- Specific Review Standards from the QM Higher Education Rubric, Sixth Edition (2018) Maryland online
- QM Emergency Remote Instruction Checklist for Higher Education (2020)
- Blackboard Exemplary Course Programme Rubric (2020)
- Quality Assessment for E-learning: a Benchmarking Approach (third edition) EADTU (2016)