

Who is inhibiting a blended learning approach? 'Reflections on the experience'

Dr Elaine L Ritch

Background

- Asked to develop and update a module for level 4
- Core for International Marketing, International Fashion Branding, International Fashion Business and International Business with Marketing
- '**Change**' is the central theme of the module
- Marketing is reflective of societal change
- Underpinned by technological advancement
- Affects consumer behaviours
 - Access to information
 - Expectation of access
 - Ease of access
 - Attention span for information
- Transfers into facets of everyday life

Opportunities for blended learning!

- Opportunities for blended learning may come from:
 - Increasing student engagement
 - Reaching students in ways in which they are familiar
 - Increase of digital technology that's filtering into everyday behaviours
 - Alternative learning needs
 - Reading (academic and key authors), listening (podcasts), watching (TV series)
 - More ownership of sourcing information
 - Attendance
 - To determine how best to deliver materials for a 'changing' cohort?

Blended learning tools that were implemented (1)

- Online narrated lecture
 - To manage the bank holiday weekend
 - Test the engagement with online access
 - To determine if this was a medium that would be beneficial for further development
 - For example podcasts from relevant sources – such as industry partners, on our related research, or widely available related material
- Engaging with a TV programme and Ted Talks that critically evaluated digital business
 - Access through a different medium and different voices (opinions)
 - May encourage critical thinking
 - May encourage considering alternative sources of information
 - May be easier to process

Blended learning tools that were implemented (2)

- Develop a video to communicate learning for a seminar (this was a group activity to be posted online and included an interactive discussion board)
 - Learning from each other
 - Thinking about content and audience
 - Thinking about what information to include and how to present this
 - Would obtain feedback from the teaching team and peers
 - Testing knowledge of module content
 - Developing skills in technology
- Submitting an abstract of their essay topic for feedback
 - To test their approach and obtain written feedback/comments on the content, ideas, relevant literature and theory
 - To encourage thinking and beginning to read around the topic earlier in the semester
 - To encourage reflective thinking
 - To get feedback that they are on the right track

What actually happened!

- Online narrated lecture
 - This was not listened to by most of the students
- Engaging with a TV programme and Ted Talks that critically evaluated digital business
 - Within the feedback, this was referred to as a waste of class time
 - Some students found the video useful
- Develop a video to communicate learning for a seminar (this was a group activity to be posted online and included an interactive discussion board)
 - Not all students contributed with a video
 - (but also some students did not contribute with the powerpoint requested for one seminar – so this may be a time issue)
 - It was considered as too difficult to meet with other students out with class time
 - Not all students were equipped with video making skills
 - Some of the videos were excellent

What actually happened!

- Engaging with a TV programme and Ted Talks that critically evaluated digital business
 - Some did not watch the programmes
 - Some were surprised at how informative the programme was - despite concerns for each of the 2 programmes being 2 hours long
 - It was considered as more accessible than academic literature
 - It was considered as thought provoking and underpinning the main messages of the module
- Submitting an abstract of their essay topic for feedback
 - Not all students submitted an abstract
 - Some abstracts were vague and not well thought through, making pointed feedback impossible

Conclusions and comments

- **TIME:** seems to be an issue for students
 - There was a reluctance to work outside of scheduled class time
 - It may be that we have to stress the student commitment (as a full time programme) more strongly
 - Perhaps time management workshops should be considered
- **ENGAGEMENT:** an ongoing issue
 - Express the benefits of digital skills for employment
 - The student experience should include participating in a GCU community of teaching and learning
 - We need to communicate that teaching and learning is a broader experience than passing assessments – which is the current emphasis
 - Concerns fall beyond the digital engagement to attendance
 - It may be that we introduce a more stringent attendance policy
- What students are looking for
 - Research into teaching and learning preferences would be useful