Supporting Blended Learning on Your Campus: An Online Instructor Resources Repository

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What is Blended Learning at the University of Waterloo? Definitions of blended learning abound!
At our institution we define blended learning as the integration of thoughtfully structured online activities into the overall design of face-to-face courses. Students engage in online activities that help them achieve specified learning outcomes. These activities can contribute to student success in a variety of ways: they may help prepare students for class or tutorial discussions or lab experiences; they may promote understanding of challenging course concepts, or assess students’ knowledge or retention of course concepts and skills; or they may enhance the sense of community within the course.

The Instructor Resources Repository (IRR)
Our collection of reusable learning activities, page layout templates, and instructor tools and tips for teaching fully online or blended courses is available to all instructors who use our campus learning management system (UW-ACE).

How We Find Resources for the Repository
An important aspect of the repository is that the online activities are submitted by our own instructors for peer review. The repository coordinator creates an abstract that describes the activity and how it can be used in a range of courses. Each activity is reviewed by an instructional designer for educational value and reusability before it is included. This process, although time consuming, ensures that activities are authentic and transferable.

Introducing the IRR to Faculty
Instructors attend a UW-ACE workshop which addresses an instructional challenge
Instructors are introduced to the “Community of Inquiry” Model *

During the workshop instructors are enrolled in a “mock course”
Instructors try online activities that address the challenge as “students”

The IRR is introduced to instructors as a source of more reusable activities
Instructors can bring activities from the IRR or the “mock course” into their own course
Instructors discuss their course and their new ideas with other participants
Instructors are reminded where they can get help in the future

Finding the “Right” Activity
Activities are classified by the instructional challenge that they address. Instructors can easily find the activities in the IRR activity matrix that correspond to their challenges. Once an activity has been identified, it can be copied into a course and modified to accommodate specific course content.

 Selected References

* Community of Inquiry Model
A community of inquiry is a cohesive and interactive community of learners whose purpose is to critically analyze, construct and confirm worthwhile knowledge. Three elements essential to a community of inquiry are cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence. We encourage instructors to consider these elements when they are integrating online activities into a blended course (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008).

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