
MAPPING YOUR BLENDED COURSE

What Do We Know About Mapping Your Blended Course?

The process of course mapping is an integral component to creating a student-centered blended course design. Course mapping will help you to ensure that your blended course includes aligned goals, objectives, assessments, and learning activities in both your face-to-face and online environments so that students have a clear path of what they are learning and how to succeed in the course (see Table 6.1).

As Blumberg (2009) argues, “well-stated objectives can improve communication between instructors and students. They can make student learning more efficient and reduce student anxiety because they know what the instructor expects of them and what their learning priorities should be” (p. 96). For students who are new to the autonomous and independent learning environment of a blended course, clear objectives that are aligned with course assessments and activities can provide a roadmap to their success.

Along with student-centered design, the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) provides a helpful framework for the course mapping activities presented later in this chapter. Coined by John Biggs, *constructive alignment* is a design process through which an instructor chooses particular course activities and designs assessments so that they are directly connected to, and in support of, pre-identified student learning objectives. This alignment creates a classroom environment where “learners arrive at meaning by actively selecting, and cumulatively constructing, their own knowledge, through both individual and social activity” (Biggs, 1996, p. 348). Biggs points to the importance of choosing learning objectives that are sufficiently challenging for students, designing activities that are meant to elicit a performance that provides evidence of student learning at a specific cognitive level, and creating assessments that can then evaluate whether students were able to accomplish the course objectives (e.g., see Box 6.1). Blended course designs based on constructive alignment have been shown to result in “significantly increased student interaction, engagement with learning and assessment tasks, and achievement of higher order outcomes” (Reaburn, Muldoon, & Bookallil, 2009, p. 829).

In the design of a traditional course, a constructive alignment mapping process can resemble a slightly more advanced version of the course schedule one might include in a syllabus (see Table 6.2).

TABLE 6.1.
Course Mapping Terminology Definitions

<i>Intended Outcomes</i>	What must students know and understand? What must students be able to do?
<i>Assessments</i>	What evidence will students provide of their learning?
<i>Learning Activities</i>	What activities and assignments will support the intended outcomes and assessments?

BOX 6.1
Relationship Between Intended Outcome and Assessment Example

If one learning objective of a course is for students to be able to *apply* the scientific method to a lab experiment, then an instructor may ask students to write up a lab report that offers a step-by-step explanation of the student's process in completing an experiment. When assessing this objective, the instructor might ask whether a student correctly included all of the steps, and *at what level of competence* they executed the components of the scientific method.

TABLE 6.2.
Traditional Course Design Alignment Map

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic/Content</i>	<i>Goal(s)</i>	<i>Learning Objective(s)</i>	<i>Assessment(s)</i>	<i>Learning Activities</i>
1					
2					

Blended courses, however, include several additional components that need to be intentionally mapped to ensure student learning and success. In the step-by-step guide that follows, I offer descriptions of the different components that should be included in your blended course map, some examples of blended course maps, templates for weekly course mapping, and some guiding questions for course mapping that will help you self-assess your map as you create the structure for your course.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Mapping Your Blended Course

Components of Your Course Map

Week and Topic

Clearly mark each week, including the dates of face-to-face (F2F) meetings, and the topics or guiding questions for that week.

Objectives (F2F and Online)

For each week, outline the learning objectives that you want students to focus on in both the F2F and online activities for the course.

Direct Instruction (F2F and Online)

Note on your course map the times where students will receive direct instruction from you in the form of a F2F lecture, a video lecture, a video tutorial, or other medium where students will depend on you for information or instructions to move forward.

Guided Inquiry (F2F and Online)

Note on your course map the times where students will engage in guided inquiry, or primarily student-led learning activities, where students will autonomously explore course materials with only minimal instructions from the instructor. For example, online activities might include students watching a video clip of a documentary while answering guiding questions or interacting with one another on a discussion board. Examples of F2F guided inquiry might include research tasks, small group work, or other activities that students will complete mostly independently.

Social Presence (F2F and Online)

Note on your course map when students will be asked to intentionally engage in activities that ask them to communicate with you or their peers. This is called *social presence* and it is a component of blended course design that must be included very intentionally because it is often instinctual in F2F classrooms. (This component is discussed more explicitly in Chapter 8.)

Assessment/Evaluation (F2F and Online)

Include all formal and informal assessments and evaluations in your course map. You will want to note the tests, exams, quizzes, or other assignments that occur in the course and clearly mark whether they will happen in the F2F or online environment.

Metacognition/Reflection (F2F and Online)

Lastly, but certainly not least, make sure to note times when you are asking students to intentionally reflect on their own learning. In many courses, this can be an unplanned occurrence, but reflective activities are crucial for students who may be

BOX 6.2 Course Design Recommendation

For the template offered in Table 6.3, it can be helpful to transfer the template to a large sheet of poster paper and use Post-it notes to write in the different elements. This will allow components of the course to be easily moved and changed as you work toward a final version of the course map.

TABLE 6.3.
Template for Aligned Blended Course Mapping

<i>Week & Topic</i>	<i>Goal (F2F & Online)</i>	<i>Objectives (F2F & Online)</i>	<i>Direct Instruction Learning Activities (F2F & Online)</i>	<i>Guided Inquiry Learning Activities (F2F & Online)</i>	<i>Social Presence Learning Activities (F2F & Online)</i>	<i>Assessment/Evaluation (F2F & Online)</i>	<i>Metacognition/Reflection (F2F & Online)</i>

TABLE 6.4.
Template for Weekly Blended Course Mapping

Week _____		
<i>Learning Objectives</i>	<i>Online Modules</i>	<i>Online Checkpoints (Assessments)</i>
	<i>F2F Activities</i>	<i>F2F Checkpoints (Assessments)</i>
Notes on Content:		

experiencing a blended learning environment for the first time. By asking students to reflect on what is helping or hindering their learning in your course, you can also identify patterns and make adjustments to help students succeed.

Tables 6.3 and 6.4 offer templates for mapping out your blended course over the semester and week by week. See Box 6.2 for a best practice tip regarding these templates. These templates will allow you the flexibility of easily moving around course components and playing with different organizational structures until you find the right structure for all the elements. Tables 6.5 and 6.6 offer completed examples of Tables 6.3 and 6.4.

Questions to Consider While Course Mapping

As you begin to map out your course, keep the following questions in mind:

1. Should your learning objectives be scaffolded (i.e., do certain ones need to come before others)?

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TABLE 6.5.

Partially Completed Template for Aligned Blended Course Mapping

<i>Week & Topic</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Direct Instruction Learning Activities</i>	<i>Guided Inquiry Learning Activities</i>	<i>Social Presence Learning Activities</i>	<i>Assessment / Evaluation</i>	<i>Metacognition/ Reflection</i>
Week 1: Introductions (some things to be completed before coming to the first face-to-face class)	Students will have an understanding of the overall course content, structure, and what they are expected to learn	Students will be able to navigate the LMS site (online), begin to meet one another, and successfully complete a syllabus quiz (online)	Students will view a demonstration video (online) that guides them through the LMS site and shows the major components of the course	Students will complete an initial reading with guiding questions (online) and an F2F independent activity to meet peers	Students will complete an introductory discussion board assignment to introduce themselves to one another (online)	Syllabus quiz (online) and pre-survey (F2F) to provide more information about what they already know about course topics	The pre-survey will include reflective questions about how each student prefers to learn

TABLE 6.6.
Example of Completed Template for Weekly Blended Course Mapping

Week 1: Introductions		
<i>Learning Objectives</i>	<i>Online Modules</i>	<i>Online Checkpoints (Assessments)</i>
Students will be able to navigate the LMS site (online), begin to meet one another, and successfully complete a syllabus quiz (online).	Video tutorial of LMS site	Syllabus quiz
	<i>F2F Activities</i>	<i>F2F Checkpoints (Assessments)</i>
	Icebreaker introductions activity and large group discussion of reading	Pre-survey
Notes on Content: The first reading for the course includes some important terminology. How can I best assess students' understanding of that terminology? Maybe through a discussion board posting?		

2. Do certain learning objectives repeat in multiple weeks (e.g., as students work on a larger assignment or project)?
3. What kind of assignment, activity or assessment might work best to help students accomplish a particular learning objective?

After you have finished a draft of your course map, consider the following:

1. How do the assessments in the course connect back to course goals?

Transitioning Your Course Map to a Syllabus Schedule

Once you have a course map that you are comfortable with, you will want to use components of the map to communicate to students the structure and schedule for your course. There may be parts of the course map that you want to keep to yourself for your own teaching notes. Tables 6.7 and 6.8 offer two examples of blended course schedules that were included in a syllabus and shared with students. One important thing to note is how the instructors clarify which components of the course are F2F and which are meant to occur online. (Additional information about preparing your blended syllabus is included in Chapter 12.)

TABLE 6.7.
Example One of Blended Course Map

Legend for schedule:				
F2F = Face-to-face meeting agenda: Keep track of your section’s meeting time				
M = Instructional module: Complete the modules and any readings before your F2F meeting				
P = Project: The fieldwork for these assignments is scheduled during those weeks				
D = Discussion/response readings: 500-word responses are due by class time on the day that you are to discuss the article				
Week	Topic	Out-of-Class Work	F2F Meeting	What’s Due
0	Getting acclimated to working online	M0: Pre-class orientation to online resources		Print syllabus, make online profile
1	From natural philosophy to biology	M1: Evolution before Darwin M2: Earth history	Course welcome and overview	
2	Phylogenies	M3: Working with fossils M4: The tree of life D1: Derry 1999	Science as a process	Response 1
3	Variation	P1: The comparative method (@ MCZ) M5: Cellular basis of variation	Building evolutionary trees	

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TABLE 6.8.
Example Two of Blended Course Map

<i>Date</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
Week 1: 1/15, Tues	First in-class meeting: Prior to class, complete two tasks outlined on Blackboard's Announcement Page
Week 2: Prior to 1/22, Tues	Read Chapter 1: Statistics and Data 1.1 The Relevance of Statistics 1.2 What is Statistics? 1.3 Variables and Scales of Measurement Watch Module 1. Statistics and Data [linked] Complete LearnSmart Chapter 1
1/22, Tues	Read Chapter 2: Tabular and Graphical Methods 2.1 Summarizing Qualitative Data 2.2 Summarizing Quantitative Data Watch Module 2. Tabular and Graphical Methods [linked] Complete LearnSmart Chapter 2
1/24, Thurs	In-class meeting on Chapter 1: Sections 1.1–1.3 and Chapter 2: Sections 2.1–2.2 Submit Homework Assignment 1 and Homework Assignment 2 by 10 a.m.
Week 3: Prior to 1/29, Tues	Read Chapter 3: Numerical Descriptive Measures 3.1 Measures of Central Location 3.2 Percentiles and Boxplots 3.4 Measures of Dispersion 3.6 Chebyshev's Theorem and the Empirical Rule 3.7 Summarizing Grouped Data Watch Module 3. Numerical Descriptive Measures [linked] Complete LearnSmart Chapter 3
1/29, Tues	In-class meeting on Chapter 3: Sections 3.1–3.2, 3.4, 3.6–3.7.
1/31, Thurs	Submit Homework Assignment 3 by 10 a.m.

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Key Ideas From Chapter 6

- Course mapping is a process that should be learning centered.
- Constructivist alignment can help you ensure that your learning objectives are connected to your course activities, assignments, and assessments.
- A good course map can help students who are new to the blended learning environment navigate the course and succeed as learners.
- Not all of the elements of your course map will be included in your syllabus; you can decide what components are for your planning and organization and which will be shared with students.

Questions for Faculty

- What kind of course mapping have you completed for traditional courses that you have taught?
- What components of the blended course mapping described in this chapter are similar to or different from this previous experience?
- If you have taught blended courses in the past, are there additional components that you have included in your course map to help students navigate the course?

Questions for Administrators

- What support does your institution have in place to help faculty engage in a blended course mapping process (faculty development office, teaching and learning center, online resources, syllabus template, model examples, etc.)?
- Are there particular components of a blended course map that should be a mandatory requirement in blended course syllabi?

Documenting Your Course Design Progress

TABLE 6.9.
Documenting Your Course Design Progress

<i>Course Design Steps</i>	<i>In Your LMS Sandbox</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate all holidays, exams, and other important dates and count the weeks and course days available in the term that you will be teaching your blended course. • Begin to fill out the blended course map template in Table 6.3 with the elements of your course that you have already planned and keep the course map handy for when you need to add additional components after completing future workbook chapters. • Complete the reflective questions to consider while course mapping to help self-assess the course map as you create it. • Consider which elements of your course map you might want to include in your syllabus schedule (this will help you prepare for Chapter 12). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if your LMS has a calendar tool and decide whether you plan to use it within your course to help students remember due dates and deadlines. • Wait until your course map is complete and solidified before building your LMS site structure; it may be difficult to make changes throughout the site later on if you move assignments to another week or rearrange learning objectives.

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