

## Blended-Learning in Higher Education in Greece: the Case of Post-Graduate Program “New Forms of Education & Learning”

### ❑ It is a masters degree program whose main axes of study and research are:

- Typical/non-typical and atypical education and learning / lifelong learning
- Adult education - pedagogical principles and practices
- E-learning and technologically supported education and learning - theoretical principles, technologies and modes of implementation.

### ❑ It is mediated through various Technologies:

- *Asynchronous* e-learning through the platform Moodle, Scholal, CourseLab.
- *Synchronous* teaching and learning both through in situ meetings (in the island of Rhodes) and synchronous teleconferencing supported by the platform BBB (BigBlueButton) and SecondLife.
- These technologies enhances blended learning with basic elements from Constructivism and Conversation theories, in order to achieve high degrees of interactivity among students and students and professors and help them construct new knowledge based on previous experiences

### ❑ Main results/benefits:

- Through this mode of offering a post graduate program, we have secured the implementation of one very successful masters' program for 10 continuous years and this new, equally successful program which is now running in its second-year.
- We have also developed a full structure of lifelong learning through e-learning programs in the university - <http://e-epimorfosi.aegean.gr>.
- We have used our knowledge to advise other masters programs in our University, through (a) e-learning development guides and best practices which we have produced and (b) relevant consultations.

❑ **The Curriculum:**

- It consists of **10 courses** (*theory as well as practice-oriented*) spanning 2 academic semesters.
- Each course starts (*semester opening*) and ends (*semester closing*) with a Face-to-face session scheduled in appointed hours over 3 to 4 days, where the students:
  - ✓ Meet and interact with the professors of their semester and with each other and get introduced to courses' learning goals, learning units/activities and assessment methods.
  - ✓ Get instructions on how to use the various technologies as their primary and secondary learning platforms.
- WBL (Web-based Learning) parts of the course are scheduled usually on a weekly basis, by determining events (e.g. video conferencing, Second Life), readings (e.g. multimodal learning content) and activities (e.g. tests, projects, artifacts, Scholar journaling, forum discussions).

Table 1. Activities within a blended course

Activity Type	Technology	Time period
Face-to-face sessions	Classroom	3 h x 2 weeks
Video conferencing sessions	Big Blue Button (BBB)	3 h x 8 weeks
Asynchronous discussions	Moodle, Scholar	2-3 per week x 10 weeks
Synchronous sessions	Second Life	30-60 min X 4 week
Self-paced learning material	CourseLab, Moodle	10 weeks

❑ **Within a course implementation during an academic semester, there are five distinct phases:**

- Educational material design and development
- Teaching of the discipline.
- Communication among actors involved.
- Interaction among actors involved.
- Assessment (formative and summative).

Clearly, there is a qualitative difference between “teaching online” and merely “putting a course online” and so **the design of the courses aims to convey the difference between using ICT as a delivery mechanism and using it as a communication medium**, thus leading to an effective interaction between pedagogy and technology in a virtual environment.

#### ❑ Lessons Learned:

- We have gotten to this point after 12 years mainly because we use continuous self-assessment and evaluation by all those involved - students, professors, etc. - through the input of which we continuously improve our structures, infrastructures and methods.
- This we will continue doing...
- What we wish to change is our audience, hoping to develop an English speaking program based on our philosophy, practice and acquired know-how.

#### ❑ What next?

- As noted above, we plan to develop an English language masters program, probably in collaboration with other universities.
- Also we plan to develop and offer lifelong programs in English, as well.



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