Blended and Online Delivery Guidance

Introduction

At the core of University of Worcester's learning and teaching is a commitment to active, flexible learning incorporating of real-world learning opportunities for employment and personal growth.

Within this context, active flexible learning covers the full range of campus-based learning opportunities through to fully online learning experiences with active learning as a core component.

All learning opportunities are grounded in key principles that guide the overarching design of active flexible courses.

- Development of curricula are under pinned by relevant taxonomies such as Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains, based in all three domains or equivalent discipline taxonomies.[1] [2]
- Curricula are designed with concept of constructive alignment at their core.[3]
- Curricula are designed with active learning approaches that allow students to be actively or experientially involved in the learning process.[4]
- Flexibility may encompass different dimensions including mode of delivery, time or length of course, and inclusive approaches to learning activities, resources and assessments.

The guidance outlined in this document is primarily focused on the considerations that need to be given when designing active, blended curricula that are to be delivered as highly blended or fully online courses but can be used to support any course that follows the above principles. Appendix A of this Guidance outlines the definitions for determining whether a course is classed as a Distance Learning, Blended or campus-based course.

Spectrum of Active Flexible Learning

The diagram outlined in Figure 1 illustrates the spectrum or continuum of course learning and activity based on the predominant space for that learning. The spectrum encompasses campus-based courses, including those with a work-based element, at one end with fully online courses at the other. It is important to recognise that the boundaries between one predominate space and another are not clear cut. Even in a classroom-based course there can be a range of digital learning and teaching approaches employed in support of active learning.

[1] Bloom, B.S. and Krathwohl, D. R., et al.(1956) ***Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, by a committee of college and university examiners. Handbook I: Cognitive Domain.*** NY, NY: Longmans, Green

[2] For example, Miller GE. (1990) *The assessment of clinical skills/competence/performance. Academic Medicine* : Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges. Sep;65(9 Suppl):S63-7. DOI: 10.1097/00001888-199009000-00045.

[3] Biggs, John B.; Tang, Catherine Kim Chow (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill. ISBN 9780335242757.

[4] Bonwell, C.; Eison, J. (1991). *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom AEHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1*. Washington, D.C.: Jossey-Bass. ISBN 978-1-878380-08-1

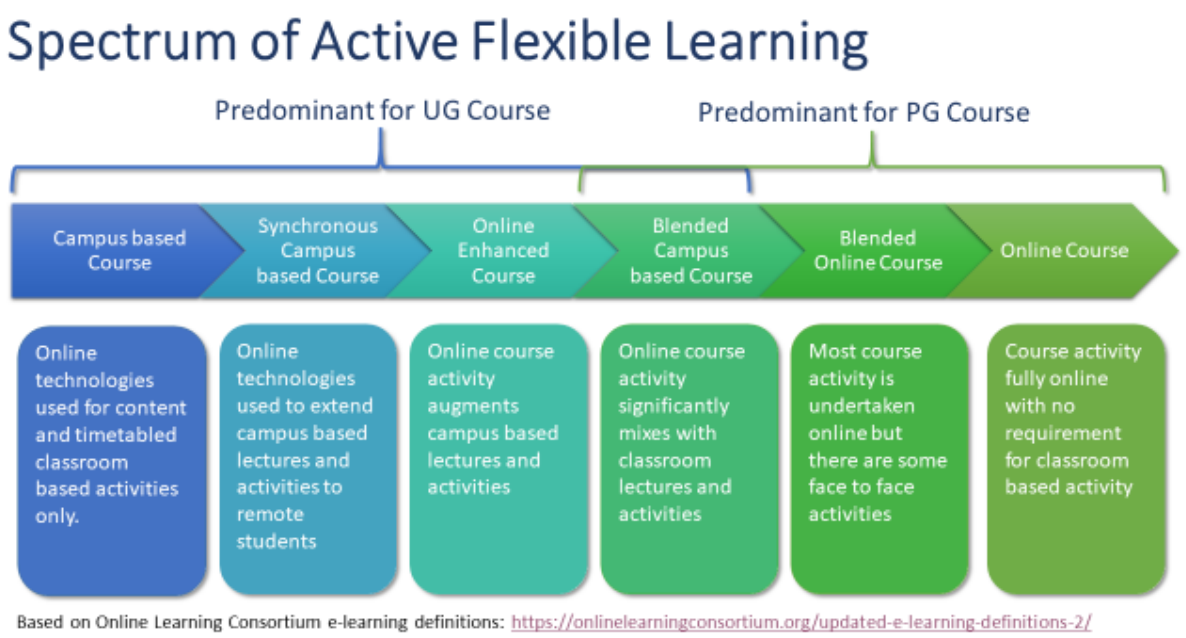


Figure 1 Spectrum of Active Flexible Learning. (See Appendix B for larger diagram)

In this context, campus-based courses are defined as those that are based around timetabled classroom dependent learning such as lectures, seminars, labs or work-based learning.

At the other end of the spectrum online courses are defined as those where course learning, activity and assessment is fully online with no requirement for classroom-based activity, though online activity can be scheduled to occur within set timeframes.

It should also be noted that online courses do not preclude the opportunity for face-to-face interactions via online communication and collaboration services nor do they preclude the ability for students and course tutors to interact synchronously.

Developing Blended Courses

Course development is a significant process with key stages before a course is ready to commence. These include the initial programme development approval which analyses the development of a new course or significant updating of an existing course. It is at this stage that the high level aims and learning outcomes of the course and its constituent modules are discussed to ensure that a new or existing course is still feasible, and its modules are aligned with the overall aims and learning outcomes of the course.

The overarching design and development of a course, online or otherwise, needs to be considered ahead of the detailed implementation phase of a course development can occur. This allows more opportunity to understand the demands in terms of time for development and upskilling of course team well in advance of delivery.

Figure 2 outlines the key stages that the overall course development undergoes ahead of a course commencing. Timelines for the various stages will be dependent a variety of factors but typically the overall process will take 18 months to two years.

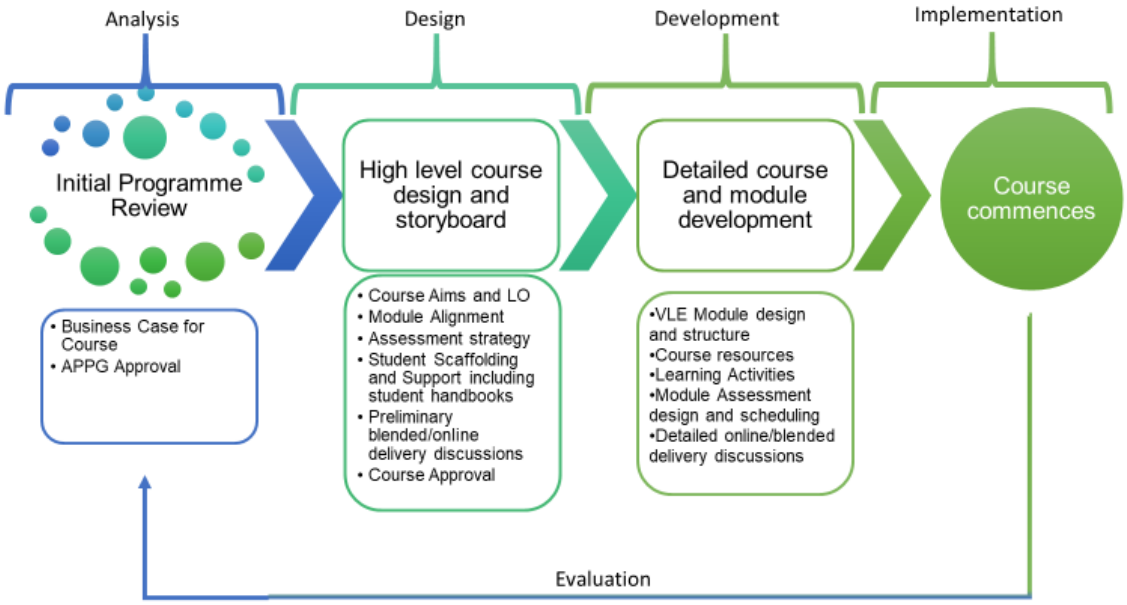


Figure 2 Programme/Course Development process flowchart mapped to ADDIE model (See Appendix B for large diagram)

The key stages of course development can be described in terms of a design model known as the ADDIE model.[5] The ADDIE Model (illustrated in Appendix B) can be useful in supporting curriculum development in relation to the learning requirements of a course and helps understand the key stages of course development.

The ADDIE model has different stages which help describe the nature of course developmental activity.

- Analysis Stage -Looks at learners' needs, external and internal reference points and requirements and promotes reflection on how learners will respond to the learning developed. When delivering a flexible course that is predominantly a blended online course or fully online course, this is an important stage to consider. This is also the stage to consider any pilots and any relevant subject/discipline learning and teaching research which may inform the design stage.
- Design Stage - is where the information gathered and considered feeds into overall design of the course. This needs to consider the intended learning outcomes of the course and the requirements of the students (current or prospective) gathered from the analysis stage. It also needs to consider the relevant quality assurance requirements, university policies that will also need to be incorporated into the overall design of the course. It also important to consider that broader student experience at this stage for example, how an online course will develop engagement and a sense of belonging for the students on the course.
- Development Stage- is where the design that has been developed is turned into tangible set of learning activities, resources and assessments that connect together both as modules and as a course.
- Implementation- the delivery stage of the course where the students are actively engaging with the curriculum in the way that it has been designed. It is through the implementation stage that further opportunities to gather feedback that will be useful for the evaluation stage can be collected.

[5] Kurt, S. "ADDIE Model: Instructional Design," in *Educational Technology*, August 29, 2017. Retrieved from https://educationaltechnology.net/the-addie-model-instructional-design/

- Evaluation- ongoing evaluation through student feedback and interactions while participating on a course is a key part of this stage. This is also where relevant course feedback, course and module evaluation and external examiners feedback can be reviewed and incorporated into future iterations and re-designs of the course.

In practice there is often an iterative process occurring between the development stage and implementation stage where ongoing evaluation will inform ongoing implementation in the form of minor amendments and adjustments to the overall course delivery.

When considering the design of an online, or blended course, in particular, the first stages of the process, Analysis, Design and Development, are key to ensuring that the ongoing development and implementation are successful. To assist with formal approval processes the guidance in the following section outlines key questions and considerations to be addressed when a team engages with the analysis, design and development stages of the process.

Blended and Online Courses Considerations

When developing courses that are located closer to the fully online end of the flexible course spectrum these questions need to be discussed with a range of relevant key areas of the institution to ensure that the student learning experience and student support are explored and designed appropriately.

Analysis Stage
This stage needs to consider some of the key intended aims and high-level learning outcomes of the course, the market for the course and the rational for intended delivery mode as a highly blended or online course. This will inform the case presented to APPG.

a. What is the business case for this course being a highly blended or fully online course? Are there any financial implications for international delivery, i.e. local tax rules?
b. What type of students are expected to be recruited onto this course?
c. What insights have student feedback and external examiner feedback from previous iterations of the course (if relevant) elicited?
d. What are the digital capability requirements of the students who will study on this course and how will these be communicated to applicants?
e. Are there specific technical requirements for studying on this course and how will these be communicated to applicants interested in studying on the course?
f. Are the requirements for study in terms of time and commitments clear to applicants?
g. Who will need to be involved in the design and development stages if this course is to be developed as a highly blended or fully online course?

Resources

- QAA Course Design and Development
- Jisc Digital Capabilities Framework
- AQU Guidance

People who can help

- School Quality Coordinators

- TEL Unit
- ITS: IT Business Partner
- Academic Liaison Librarians

Design Stage

At the end of the design stage a storyboard should be produced which provides an insight into the overall structure of the course arranged over time. Various learning design methodologies can help design the storyboard for example Carpe Diem[6] or CAIeRO,[7] the ABC model[8] or OULDI.[9]

A story board should provide the course approval panel with an overall sense of how the course fits together and the student journey through the course and its modules. It should illustrate the balance of content, learner activities and assessments (formative and summative). The aim is to assure the balance and pedagogical approach adopted are suitable and appropriate for the discipline/subject and level of the course. Some examples of storyboards are shown in Appendix C.

Whichever learning design model is adopted the storyboard should provide insight into the shape of the course and ensure that the following critical questions can be answered at course approval.

a. Are the module learning outcomes, learning activities and assessments aligned with the course learning outcomes?
b. Does the course have a logical and inclusive structure and take into account the variety of highly or fully blended course dynamics that may take place?
c. Does the overall course design take into account the digital capabilities of student starting the course and design activities to support students to develop those capabilities?
d. How will the course encourage a sense of belonging for the students participating in the course? What approaches will be used to foster engagement with the activities as well as the content?
e. Does the design ensure that the required effort of the course is distributed appropriately and that students are not overloaded especially in relation to the distribution of assessments across the modules on the course?
f. Does the design require students to have access to particular specialist digital tools, services or technologies and has support for these been discussed with relevant professional services especially in relation to GDPR? How will students be supported to use these tools?
g. Will the students be undertaking a range of online formative or summative assessments and are the facilities in place to deliver those assessment and for students to receive their feedback?
h. If students are studying on a fully online course how will they be made aware of and access relevant student support such academic study skills, IT support, finance or wellbeing services?
i. How will student academic and pastoral support be managed and how will student queries be managed within the course team?
j. How will student union representation be facilitated?
k. What additional information needs to be included in the student handbooks to cover studying on a highly blended or fully online courses?

[6] https://www.gillysalmon.com/carpe-diem.html
[7] https://www.northampton.ac.uk/ilt/academic-development/caiero/
[8] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2018/jun/designing-programmes-and-modules-abc-curriculum-design
[9] http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/OULDI/

l. Are there any staff development needs that have to be addressed to ensure staff have the skills and capabilities to deliver highly blended or online courses?

Resources

- AQU Course Guidance
- Gilly Salmon 5 Stage Model
- Inclusion Toolkit
- Learner Journey Toolkit
- Electronic Management of Assessment
- PAT Guidance

Development stage

The development stage is about taking the storyboard articulated in the design stage and translating that into a fully developed course. Often the learning design model used for the course design can be utilised again for the module design.

For all courses developed at the University this will include the use of Blackboard, at a minimum, for hosting relevant core content, student information and facilitating electronic marking of assessments and feedback to students.[10]

Courses and modules will require content to be written, resources including relevant multimedia resources to be located or produced. Learning activities to designed and scheduled. Formative and summative assessments to be written and scheduled.

The time taken to develop the course and modules in detail will be dependent on a variety of factors and the design phase should provide insights into the time required to be allocated to develop and prepare the course/modules. It should also make clear any specific technical or staff development requirements that will need to be addressed by the course team or relevant professional service specialist to ensure that the final course will be delivered with the relevant quality assurances in place.

a. Have all the requirements of the VLE baseline standards been addressed?
b. Are the Blackboard courses, the module content and resources as inclusive and as digitally accessible as possible and where alternative formats are needed have these been developed?
c. Has all content and resources been checked for copyright?
d. For highly blended or fully online courses have course teams received the necessary staff development for tutoring online?

Resources

- VLE Baseline standards: VLE Baseline standards
- Accessibility
- Copyright

Implementation Stage

This is the stage where the course actually commences, and students engage with the learning opportunities designed and developed through the previous stages. Individual modules on a course may not have commenced due to the sequencing of module over the course but students should have clear expectations of what those modules will entail and

[10] https://staffweb.worc.ac.uk/mediainteractive/Web/Pages/BaselineStandards/index.html

when they will be able to engage with them. Student will engage with courses to varying degrees and the questions outlined below are worth considering

a. How will the course team review student engagement with the course? What indicators will the course team look at to determine the level of student engagement?
b. For highly blended or fully online courses how will those communications with students who are not engaging be facilitated?

Resources

- Progress Information- see Course Leaders Network on Blackboard

Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage is where a variety of different feedback mechanisms about the course can be brought together. Evaluation is something that can occur throughout the implementation of the course but there are key formal evaluation opportunities such as CES and module evaluations, external examiner reports etc. as well as informal evaluation opportunities to gather feedback from both students and peers.

a. For highly blended/fully online courses what mechanisms will be available for students to provide informal feedback?
b. For highly blended/fully online courses what mechanisms will be available for staff, including external examiners, to provide feedback?

Resources

- AQU webpages – see sections Module Evaluation and Peer Supported Review of Teaching

Appendix A - Definitions for determining whether a course is classed as Distance/Online Learning, Blended Learning or Campus based

A distance or online programme of study or course is one on which a student undertaking the course is not required to be in attendance by the institution providing the course, where "required to be in attendance" is not satisfied by a requirement imposed by the institution to attend any institution:

(a) for the purposes of registration or enrolment or any examination;

(b) on a weekend or during any vacation; or

(c) on an occasional basis during the week

This definition reflects that published by Student Finance England.

A blended programme of study or course is one on which a student undertaking the course is required to study through a combination of online learning activities and some attendance to undertake campus based teaching or learning activities, typically through one or more periods of block study which may be over a weekend or summer school. The relative balance of online learning and campus-based learning may vary significantly, but there will always be some attendance requirement.

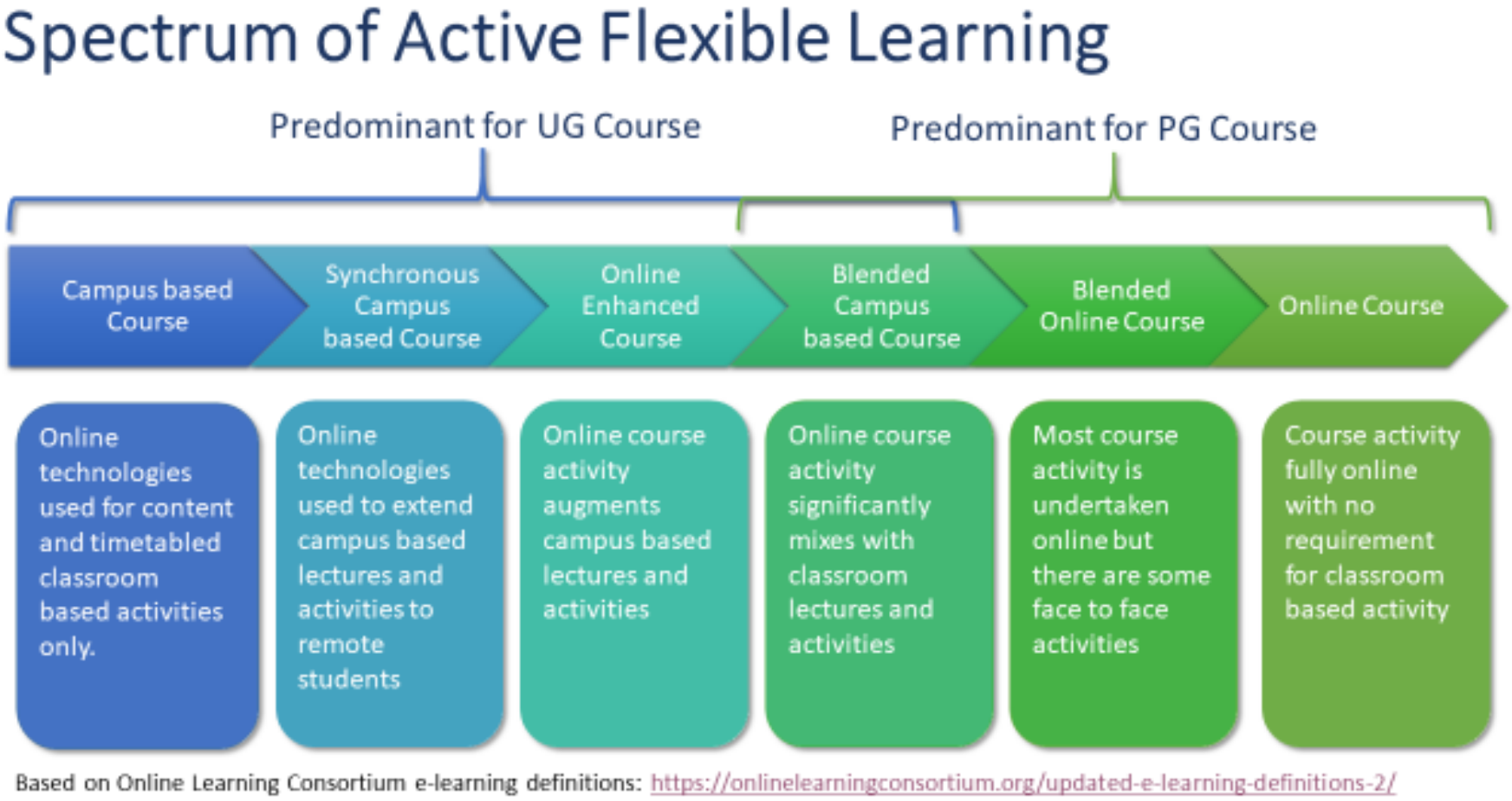
A campus-based programme of study or course is one in which a student undertaking the course is 'required to be in attendance' for the duration of the course, undertaking timetabled campus-based or work-based teaching and learning activities. Digital learning and teaching activities, including activities completed online, are likely to be designed alongside campus-based learning activities. Typically, the course will require attendance for a given number of timetabled hours per week for the duration of the course.

Distance Learning, Blended Learning and Campus-based courses can all be classed as FT or PT, depending on the number of hours of study. A FT course is where:

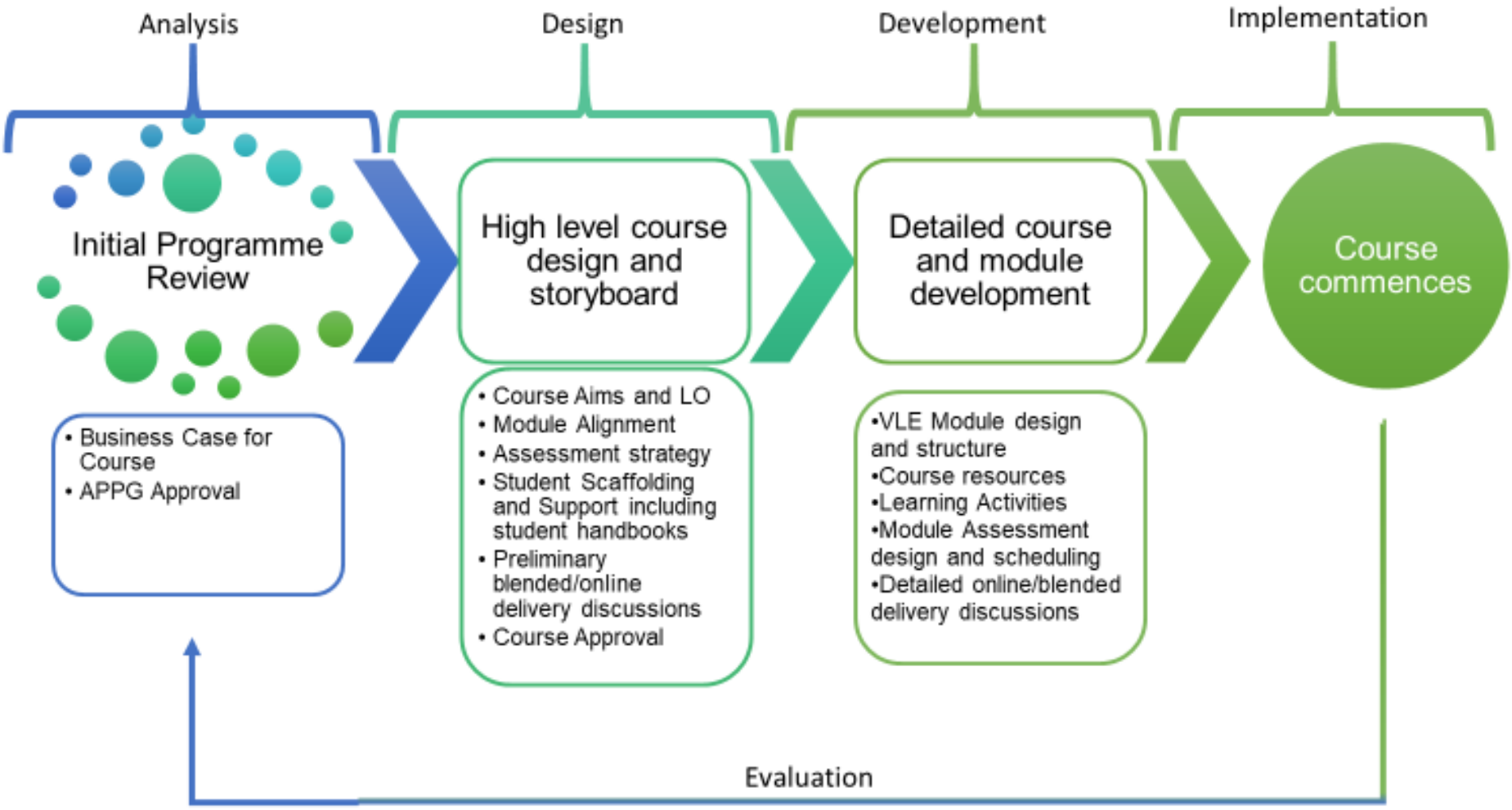
a) Students are normally required to undertake the course for a period of a minimum of 24 teaching weeks in each academic year (although there can be shorter FT courses)
b) Students are normally required to be engaged in learning activities (contact plus directed/independent learning) for around 38 hours per week
c) A whole year FT fee should be chargeable by the institution for the current year of the programme of study (exceptions to this will be made for students who are repeating part of a year).
d) FT means that students are required to undertake their course on most days of the week and for most weeks of the year.

When determining the contact tome for a blended or online course, only teaching and learning activities that are scheduled (ie synchronous) and involve interaction with the lecturer should be counted. For further information see Guidance on the use of video content in lecture design and how this should be reflected in terms of contact time for the module.

Appendix B – Large Scale versions of Figures



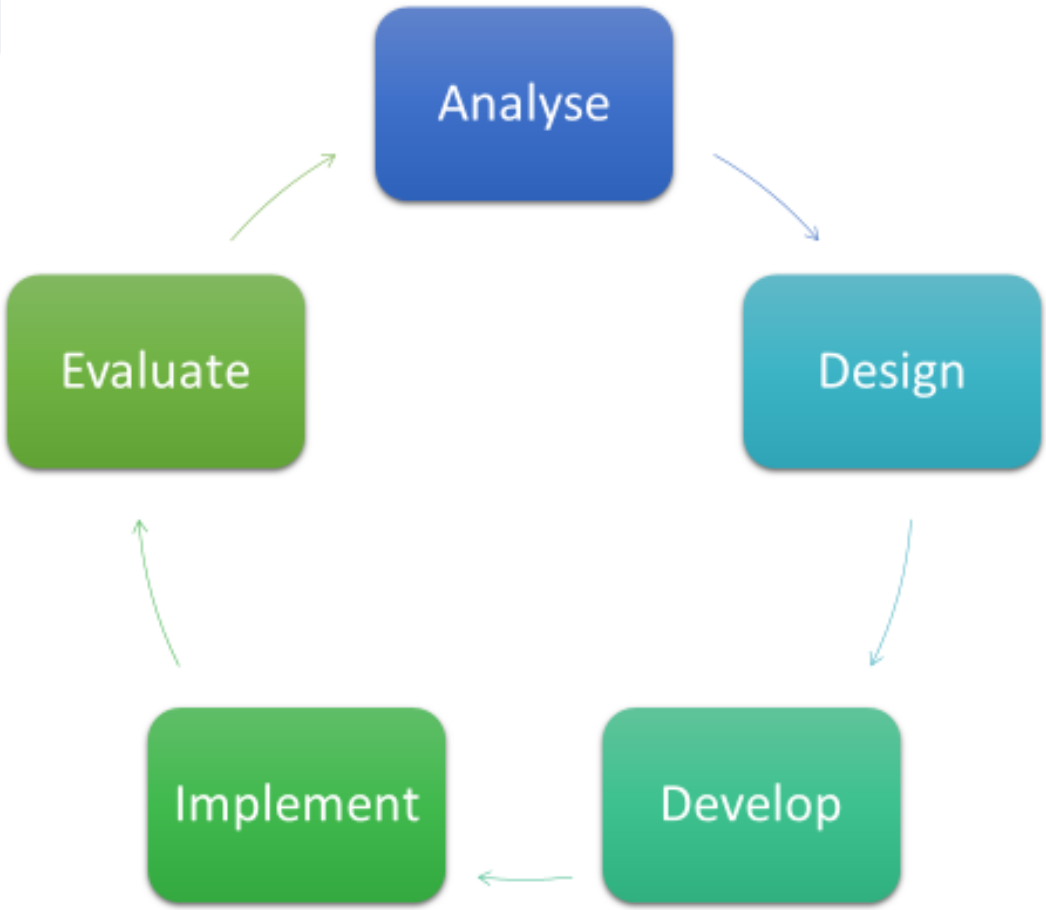
Course/Programme Development Process Flowchart mapped to ADDIE Model



The ADDIE Model

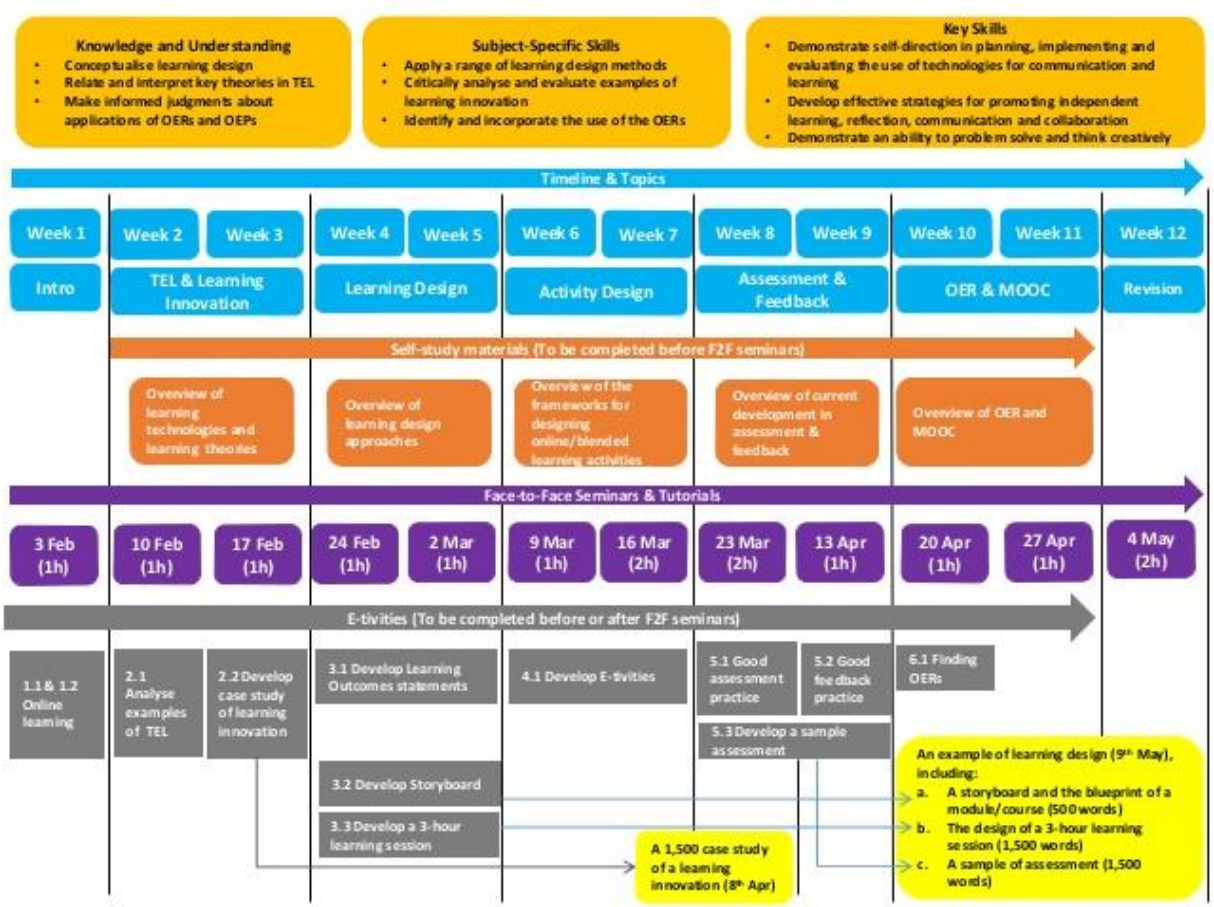
The ADDIE Model

The ADDIE Model can be useful in supporting curriculum development in relation to the learning requirements of a course.

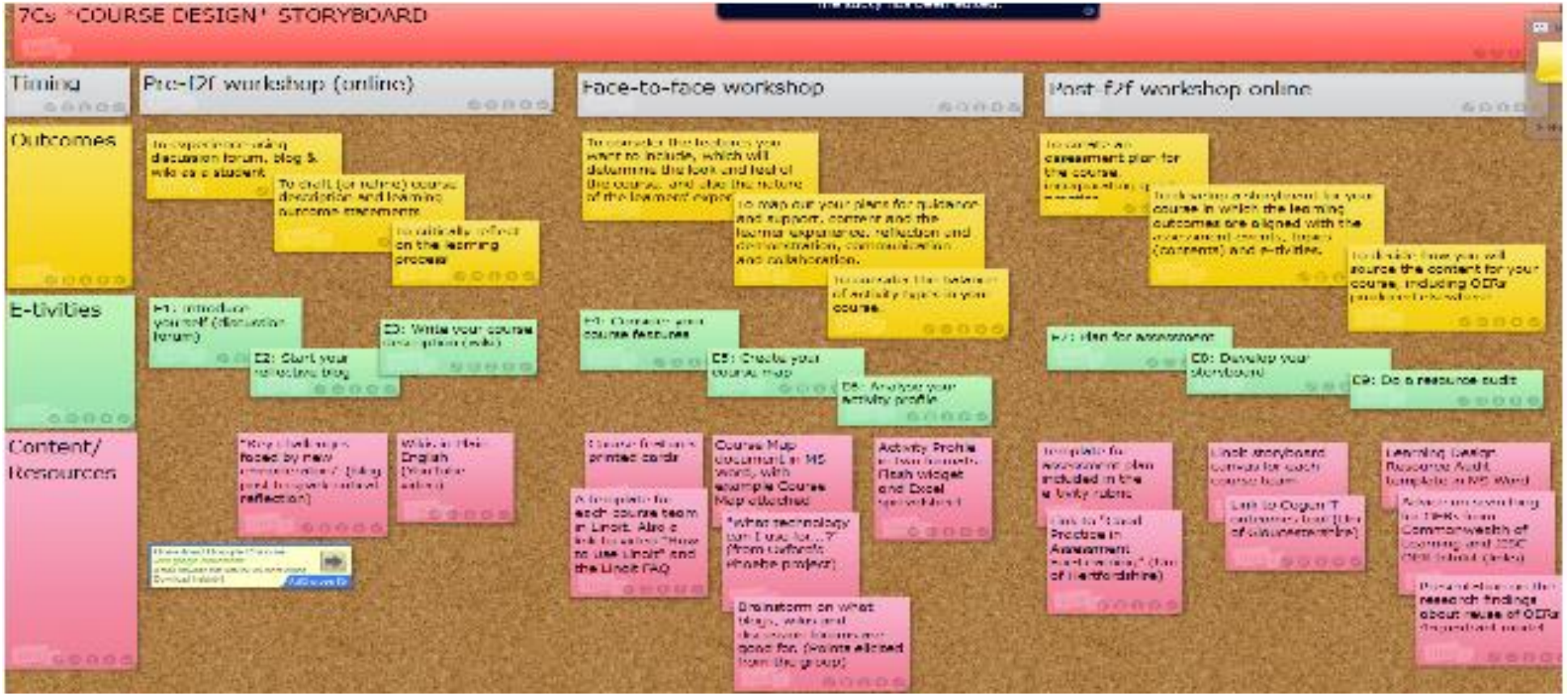


Appendix C Examples of Storyboards

Storyboard using Carpe Diem approach



Storyboard using 7C's design approach



Storyboard Using ABC model