

# Fourth International Blended Learning Conference

"Engaging Students in the Curriculum"

17th-18th June 2009

De Havilland Campus - Weston Auditorium

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

## Keynote Abstracts



**Professor Randy Garrison**

### **Exploring the Dynamics of a Blended Learning Experience**

The focus of this presentation is on exploring ways to engage learners in collaborative and reflective blended learning experiences using the latest findings of research using the community of inquiry framework. My goal is to give practical direction founded on sound research. To this end I begin with a brief description of concrete examples of blended learning. In order to understand the complex dynamics of a blended learning experience I will next provide the conceptual foundation necessary to study and understand blended teaching and learning. Finally, seven principles of blended learning will be presented and discussed from the perspective of strategies and possible techniques. Each of the topics have been shaped by questions generated by practitioners.

**Dr Gregor Kennedy**

### **The Seduction of the New: Balancing Web 2 Cool with Coalface Realities**

An array of new Web 2.0 technologies have risen to prominence in the last few years (*Flickr, Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, Del.ici.ous, Twitter*). These technologies are characterised by users' ability to create content and then, with relative ease, publish it to the world or share it with others in their social network. The widespread popularity and potential learning applications of these technologies has not gone unnoticed by educational technology commentators and university administrators alike. As a result there is increasing pressure on teaching staff – implicit and explicit – to incorporate Web 2.0 learning activities into their curriculum. And while there are certainly examples of how this has been done well, there are also significant 'coalface' challenges associated with effectively incorporating 'Web 2 Cool' into students' learning experience.

I will argue in this presentation that, in part, the perceived need to use Web 2.0 technologies in learning is based on fundamental assumptions about (i) the technological experiences and preferences of students who are entering higher education, and (ii) perceptions that Web 2.0 technologies offer straightforward opportunities to enhance students' learning experiences. I will present findings from a number of programs of research that test these assumptions. I will also discuss the lessons learnt from the implementation of a collaborative writing exercise, in which 750 first-year students were asked to use a wiki to create, publish and share material in their psychology studies. I will conclude by reflecting on how key attributes of Web 2.0 technologies can sometimes run counter to traditional practices of learning and teaching within universities.

**Mr Mark Russell**

### **Assessment: The heart of blended learning?**

Scratch the surface of any text relating to learning and you will immediately see the dominance of assessment. Assessment shapes what students do, how they engage with their studies and what they regard as the 'actual curriculum'. Despite our understanding of the importance of assessment many students do not enjoy a good assessment experience.

My presentation will argue for assessment to be an embedded activity in curriculum design. Drawing on research findings I will show examples of educationally effective and resource efficient assessment. I will draw on my research and show how technology can gainfully be used to enhance and assessment and support learning. During the presentation delegates will be invited to reflect on their own assessment practice and identify how they can enhance the experience for them and their students.