New Approaches to Engaging Nursing Students:
Blended learning as a core teaching approach

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This paper proposes blended learning as a way of rethinking the educational space for nursing. Presently, many traditional programmes supplement their classroom teaching with online offerings and label this 'blended learning'. However, online teaching is a new paradigm in learning (Harasim, 2000). The classroom is flipped, the students take centre stage and learning methods, rather than teaching methods, take prominence. This necessitates designing learning experiences that enable students to engage meaningfully with the required content, thereby creating communities of practice through interactive learning, in conjunction with a strong student support system.

Communities of Practice (COP):

- Professional identity (Baxter et al., 2014)
- 'Whole–person learning' (Matusove et al., 2005)
- Peer interaction

Interactive Teaching Methods:

- Teachers change teaching style to a more interactive role (Harasim, 2000)
- Considerable time commitment (Sweeney et al., 2016)

Student Support:

- Faculty engagement (Holzweiss, 2014)
- In-built direct student-teacher communications
- Interactive web discussions
- Student Support Officer

Rethinking nurse education within the paradigm of blended learning presents an opportunity to adhere to a national drive to ensure a pedagogical approach that is student centred and subject led (QQI, 2017). The complexity of this endeavour concentrates on the pedagogical design and the differences between face-to-face learning and online learning in preparing innovative teaching and learning strategies. Preparation of the programme involves a partnership between subject experts, educational technologists and learning designers. The synthesis of these concepts through the input of each partner contributes to the excellence and success of content development.

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