

P9 S6

Co-Training for Blended Learning Programmes



1. PURPOSE AND POLICY CONSIDERATION

Forus Training adopt a process of co-training in the recent migration from classroom teaching and learning to online learning. The purpose of using a co-training approach is to;

- Provide trainers with an opportunity to share the workload,
- Embrace different delivery styles to enhance the learning experience,
- Provide more 'personalised' supports for learners,
- Provide instructional back-up for challenging situations,
- Increase the provision of supervision and proctoring support for practical assessment sessions.

Forus Training believe that co-training is a highly rewarding activity when managed and conducted successfully. Learners are observing the power of collaboration and teamwork, thus creating a productive and engaging learning experience.

2. DEFINITIONS

Forus Training define this as the facilitation or conduct of training that involves two trainers working together in a cooperative and collaborative manner to deliver the learning outcomes of the training effectively. Each facilitator is proficient in the subject matter and appropriately trained and skilled to take on various training roles.

3. SCOPE

The Forus Training Co-Trainer Policy relates only to teaching and learning in an online, VLE (blended) learning environment. Where a programme is only being delivered through an online platform (such as Covid-19 restrictions). 2 trainers will work collaboratively to plan, prepare, deliver and assess a programme of study. In a blended learning context, such as a

P9 S6

Co-Training for Blended Learning Programmes



combination classroom-based delivery with VLE teaching, a co-trainer model may require 1 trainer to facilitate the classroom experience and 1 trainer to coordinate and deliver the VLE experience.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Forus Training are committed to enhancing learning opportunities and ensuring effective practice is incorporated throughout. Forus Training acknowledge the move to technology-facilitated learning, which has been significantly influenced by the presence of Covid-19 and social distancing restrictions placed upon service provision. As a result, Forus Training are continuously striving to evolve into a role in which we can interpret this high-tech opportunity and set it into a learning context for learners. Forus Training are a fast-paced training provider, recognising that technology-facilitated learning serves a purpose in helping learners in a multitude of ways;

1. It helps facilitate teaching and learning communication and feedback,
2. It allows learners to more easily collaborate and communicate with their peers,
3. It provides opportunities for practice of additional peripheral, learned skills,

Online and blended learning instruction is fundamentally different from in-class teaching. While technology-enabled online learning offers learners anywhere, anytime access and the ability to self-pace, the lack of face-to-face contact with trainers can feel overwhelmingly isolating for many learners.

Forus Training, through the co-training process, are committed to actively seeking out methods to create and strengthen dialogue, foster interactions and build strong virtual learning communities which offer increased reliability, validity and academic integrity. Forus Training believes that the co-training model, with strong leadership and management, can achieve exactly that.

5. PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

P9 S6

Co-Training for Blended Learning Programmes



1. **Check in with each other in advance.** As soon as trainers know they will be working with each other, they must get together to plan. They are required to agree on the timing, who will do which sessions and what roles and responsibilities each will have.
2. **Tell the co-trainer what is expected and needed.** The first time the co-trainers meet, they need to inform each other what is expected from one another as a co-trainer and how they will work best. Everyone has a different understanding of co-training and this needs to be shared before the collaboration commences.
3. **Check in with each other during the training.** When possible and necessary during each session, co-trainers need to check in with each other briefly but frequently. Sharing information can help the flow of the learning experience and minimize frustration for both the co-trainers and the learners.
4. **Check in with each other before and after each teaching session.** Before a session commences each co-trainer is required to check in with each other about what they are planning to do and if anything has changed since the last communication. After the training a further 'check in' is needed to share reflections on how the session went, what needs to change in the following session, and what could be done better next time. Because 'the unexpected' can always happen, checking in before and after a session is critical. This is also a great time to affirm each other.
5. **Support your co-trainer.** Each co-trainer must be fully attentive to what the other co-trainer needs, what the group may need and how each other can assist. It is vital to keep one another focused on the task at hand and keep up the energy of the learner group.
6. **Don't interfere.** Co-trainers must not interfere or contradict one another unless it is critical to the learning.
7. **Set personal and team goals.** Before teaching commences, each co-trainer must identify 1-3 things that are fundamental to delivery in the session. These need to be shared with one another. Setting team goals is also a great idea.
8. **Stay on time.** Always stay within the delegated time frame. The sessions are often scheduled for a short amount of time, where every minute is valuable and accounted for. If more than the allotted time is used, it will impact on learner engagement and subsequently, on the other co-trainer's activity and the learning that needs to happen from their facilitation.

P9 S6

Co-Training for Blended Learning Programmes



9. **Work as a team.** At all times, it is important that the learners see the two co-trainers as “a team.” Co-trainers must support each other, affirm each other in front of the group, and weave their individual work together. It is important that the learners think “Wow, we have learnt so much from both of our co-trainers!”

The key teaching and learning principles that will underpin this policy are:

1. Encourage active participation

- o Maintain a relaxed, engaging, and informative tone,
- o Encourage learners to ask questions, share experiences and collaborate,
- o Show no judgement and make sure no one ever feels ridiculed,
- o Use humor where appropriate.

2. Don't lecture..., question.

- o The primary goal of online facilitation is to turn lectures into interactive discussions,
- o Engage learners through pertinent questions that encourage individuals to thoughtfully explore the subject matter,
- o Use active questioning, which also helps trainers better know their learners, their preferences and their motivation, which in turn helps in the personalization of eLearning materials.

3. Encourage group collaboration

- o Learners can become facilitators. Ask them to share experiences with others to demonstrate their skills and knowledge,
- o Try dividing the class into smaller groups to tackle problems presented through real-world scenarios.

4. Make the information you're providing “bite-sized”

- o Gradually introduce information to learners through smaller, more digestible eLearning courses,

P9 S6

Co-Training for Blended Learning Programmes



- o Use polls, quizzes and gated content to make sure learners have fully absorbed information before moving on.
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5. **Tie the eLearning course into real-life scenarios or situations**
 - o Tie subject matter into real-life examples or experiences,
 - o Provide learners with opportunities to assess how the information applies directly to their own lives or experiences.
 6. **Set clear goals, ground rules, and expectations**
 - o Set rules and goals at the beginning, so learners are clear on the desired outcome,
 - o Set expectations with learners to keep everyone on track and aligned with the learning experience.
 7. **Keep the conversation on the subject at hand**
 - o It is the online co-trainer's job to bring the discussion, questions and answers back to the subject at hand, so learners don't lose their way and the learning value is retained.
 8. **Talk less and listen more**
 - o Good co-trainers talk less and listen more. They are not there to offer their own wisdom and experience, but to help learners become fully engaged,
 - o Use questioning to guide discussions that will allow a learner's understanding to unfold,
 - o Encourage debate (within the context of the subject matter).
 9. **Act as a guide, rather than as an instructor**
 - o Work to make sure learners are actively learning the subject matter as well as using critical thinking to apply it within their own lives.
 10. **Ask for feedback and make changes accordingly**
 - o Be open to constructive feedback from learners and use feedback to improve methods of teaching and learning as well as the course materials.

P9 S6

Co-Training for Blended Learning Programmes



6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The management pertaining specifically to the co-training process is held operationally by the Programme Assessment and Delivery Committee.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Trainer Handbook and Induction

8. ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED IF THE POLICY IS NOT IMPLEMENTED

Where a complaint of misconduct or alleged breach of conduct by a learner, co-trainer or another person presents, the concerned person will be brought before the Head of Certification. The Head of Certification will take steps as soon as is practicable to arrange a meeting (i.e., a preliminary hearing) with the person concerned and will provide in advance details of the alleged offence in the form of a P2 S2 Potential Improvement Notice (PIN).

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

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