

# **A Mixed-Mode Teaching Design and Practice for the "Documents & Credit for International Business" Course in Private College**

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## **Abstract**

**In traditional educational settings, students in private institutions often exhibit limited learning abilities and autonomy. Additionally, some educators lack experience with blended learning methodologies. In this regard, this paper focuses on the reform of mixed-mode teaching in the "Documents & Credit for International Business" Course, designing a "three-integration-one-aids" online-offline blended learning model, comprehensive assessment through "pre-class+during-class +post-class + final exam" under different phases, and a teaching evaluation method that records both online and offline learning behaviors via "Learning Gateway+ Practice Platform". Educational reforms have enhanced educational effectiveness, yet they have also presented their own set of challenges. In view of these problems, this paper puts forward some suggestions to further improve the teaching quality and provide reference for similar curriculum reform in private universities.**

## **Keywords**

**Private colleges, international trade documents practice, blended teaching.**

## **1. Introduction**

In accordance with the spirit of President Xi Jinping's important statements on education and the National Education Congress, and in line with the requirements of the New Era Higher Education Conference for the Revitalization of Undergraduate Education, the Ministry of Education issued the Implementation Plan for the Construction of Excellent Undergraduate Courses in 2019. This implementation guideline explicitly outlines the "Double Thousand Plan" for implementing first-rate undergraduate courses, which involves building approximately 10,000 national-first-rate courses and around 10,000 provincial-first-rate courses. This plan aims to enhance the advanced nature, innovativeness, and challenge level of courses by constructing high-quality educational resources, promoting educational reform, and improving the quality of talent cultivation. Private universities exhibit their own characteristics and challenges in advancing the construction of first-rate courses. This paper aims to explore problems encountered in the construction and blended teaching reform of the "International Trade Documentation" Course and to propose targeted suggestions. It provides practical experience for the development and reform of the business-related courses in the field of international economics and trade in private colleges.

## **2. The Pain Points in Traditional Teaching of the Course on "Documents & Credit for International Business"**

### **2.1. Analysis of students' learning situation**

Undergraduate students majoring in international trade at private institutions of higher education exhibit a lower level of interpersonal relationships compared to those studying at public universities. A common characteristic among these students is their relatively low ability

in learning, efficiency, and the lack of proper study methods. Additionally, their grasp of fundamental concepts and skills within their major is not as solid. Private institutions' students have weak initiative and self-discipline when it comes to learning this subject. Their attention is often not centered, and instances of students playing their smartphones during class occur frequently.

## **2.2. The Analysis of Teacher Pedagogical Issues**

In terms of faculty, the international trade documents course involves practical content closely linked to real-world trading work, demonstrating strong practicality. However, a portion of the instructors lack practical experience in business settings, leading to a lack of understanding of the latest requirements for international documents processing. In terms of practical guidance manuals, some practice guides or laboratory manuals fail to provide detailed explanations regarding the latest policy requirements and practices related to customs and quarantine integration. In the setting of teaching objectives, teachers have not adequately challenged students with practical difficulties, causing students to overly focus on achieving high scores in practice exercises within the software, thus leading to inflated exam scores that do not fully reflect the students' genuine mastery of knowledge and skills.

## **3. Designing and Practicing the Mixed-Mode Teaching Model for the Course "Documents & Credit for International Business"**

### **3.1. The blended learning methodology for the course**

(1) A blended learning approach that combines online and offline methodologies

Through SuperStar Network Platform courses online, students are required to complete pre-course learning on fundamental knowledge and methods for document creation via video and presentation materials, as well as take an online quiz before each class and engage in online-organized thought-provoking questions. In offline classes, students summarize and reflect on their previous practice exercises involving the submission of accounting documents. Teachers evaluate the results of online learning, discussing the difficulties and common pitfalls in filling out the documents, and assigning practical tasks for each lesson. [1]

(2) A blended instructional methodology integrating theory online with practice in an offline setting

Despite its professional practical nature, the International Trade Document Practice course still requires students to first acquire the underlying knowledge before embarking on practical exercises. As such, relatively foundational theoretical concepts are arranged for online self-study, with offline practice operations conducted to hone skills in creating international trade documents.

(3) A teaching methodology combining student group discussions with practice summaries and self-reflections

When students encounter problems during practical exercises in class, learning group members collaborate to discuss and devise solutions together. Through a summary and reflection report on the previous practical training exercise, the analysis of errors can facilitate students' internalization of knowledge, revision, and consolidation.

(4) Individualized tutoring by teachers

During students' practical exercises, teachers provide individualized guidance through actual operations.

### **3.2. The process of implementing the mixed-mode curriculum teaching process**

(1) The organized process of pre-class online learning

Acquiring basic knowledge through online learning, primarily involves transmitting the fundamentals. In the week preceding the commencement of classes, teachers update and refine online foundational theoretical knowledge teaching resources, such as instructional presentations, videos, pre-class quizzes or pre-class thought-provoking questions. Subsequently, by means of learning platform, issue online learning notices to students, and distribute a list of online learning tasks. Students engage in video tutorials and course materials on the basics of invoicing and their methods of filling out, pondering the thought-provoking questions posed on Learning Portals, complete the basic knowledge quizzes, and peruse various sample formats provided by the teachers for invoices.

#### (2) The process of organizing offline classrooms

Offline classrooms and practices primarily aim to facilitate knowledge internalization, proficiency training, and the cultivation of quality objectives. In the first class, the instructor began by inviting two student groups to share their issues and reflections from the previous lesson's practice on document creation. Following this, he introduced the content for the current session, disclosed the students' progress in online learning prior to the class, and discussed common mistakes found in Learning Portals' pre-test. Next, students answered the thought questions on basic knowledge and methods for document production that Teacher Learning Channel released. Students then translated the terms and conditions provided by the teacher regarding the requirements for document preparation and submission, followed by a lecture by the teacher on common pitfalls in this process of document creation. In the second class, the teacher assigned students with practical tasks in a business document processing software, requiring them to complete their practice exercises within the designated time frame.

[2]

#### (3) The process of organizing after-class tasks

Post-class, the primary focus is on organizing online knowledge extension discussions for students to consolidate their skills in invoicing practices. This enables the consolidation of knowledge and practical abilities, as well as the cultivation of quality objectives. Instructing their students to compile a summary and reflection on their recent practical assignment, as well as organizing an online discussion around real-life workplace scenarios, the teachers eagerly awaited the results. [3]

### 3.3. The Course Assessment Scheme

In the blended learning model where online and offline teaching methods are seamlessly integrated, the course evaluation scheme employs a 60:40 ratio in favor of process-based assessments, with an added emphasis on the importance of formative evaluations. Moreover, the share of online learning outcomes has increased to 30%.

In light of the assessment criteria outlined for this course, specific evaluation and feedback methods were adopted.

#### (1) Online learning evaluation and feedback mechanisms

The effectiveness of online introductory knowledge teaching videos is measured by the completion rate of video and lesson module tasks points, as well as assessments via online tests. Upon completion of the assessment, teachers provide feedback in class by explaining high-error-rate concepts.

#### (2) The assessment and feedback for offline classroom learning

The offline classroom student groups' self-reflection reports were evaluated and feedback was given through a peer assessment system on Learning Gateway, with teachers providing on-the-spot commentary. Student responses to key and challenging questions in class are verbally evaluated by the teacher and recorded for academic performance points via Learning Portals. Student performance in practical exercises for document drafting is evaluated through an

international business documents software, focusing on the scores assigned to their second and third draft documents. Feedback will be provided by the instructor during the subsequent lesson. Students who complete their practice tasks within the designated time frame in class and promptly utilize Learning Gateway for their classroom performance will be credited with points on the spot. [4]

**Table 1.** Assessment Scheme for the Course "Documents & Credit for International Business"

The composition of achievements	The appraisal method for modules	The assessment components	The subject of assessment	The percentage of scores	The percentage of overall course performance
Process-based grades	online	Video and courseware learning	Learning Management System	15%	60%
		Pre-class quiz	Learning Management System	10%	
		Knowledge extension learning and discussion	Learning Management System	5%	
	offline	turn out for work	Learning Management System	10%	
		Practice summary and reflection report, answer questions, etc.	teacher	20%	
		System experimental operation	Business document teaching system	40%	
Terminal Performance	laboratory report	Comprehensive document preparation	Business document teaching system, teachers	100%	40%

### (3) The assessment and feedback on after-class assignments

Student completion of the practice assignments assigned by the teacher online was evaluated by the teacher. The practice exercise evaluation, which incorporates reflection and summarization, is conducted jointly by both teachers and students in the classroom, with Learning Management System recording the proceedings.

## 4. The Successes and Challenges in Implementing a Blended Teaching Reform for the Course

### 4.1. The transmogrification of the course through a blended online-offline teaching approach

By reforming the mixed online-offline teaching mode, the learning enthusiasm of students has been fully stimulated, with their learning attitudes gradually shifting from passive learning to active learning. By integrating group discussions with reflective reporting, this approach fosters in students the habit of promptly reflecting on their errors and correcting them. It also enhances students' teamwork abilities, their capacity to summarize and write, as well as their verbal communication skills. By integrating online theoretical teaching with offline practical training, not only did it deepen students' grasp of basic theories and enhance their practical abilities, but also it ignited students' enthusiasm for participating in professional academic competitions. As a result, they achieved notable success in multiple discipline competitions such as the Commercial Elite Challenge (Single Document Track) and the POCIB Foreign Trade Competence Competition.

"The 'before-class+during-class+after-class+final' phased evaluation system, which comprehensively covers every aspect of learning, along with the teaching evaluation reform that records students' online and offline study situations in SuperStar Learning Gateway, makes the assessment of course teaching more objective and authentic in evaluating students' learning outcomes. "[5] Teachers now have a more objective basis for assessing students' performance in both online and offline classes, as well as after-class assignments, making it easier for educators to tailor instruction to individual students and enhance teaching efficiency.

### 4.2. The issues pertaining to the reform of mixed-mode teaching in the course

#### (1) Problems with Educational Resources

Inadequate or outdated online resources. Though the course has established a certain amount of online teaching resources, there still exist inadequacies in terms of resource diversity and content completeness. For instance, the absence of the latest case studies on foreign trade documents, as well as practical operation videos, makes it challenging for students to gain access to cutting-edge practical knowledge. In tandem, the pace at which online resources may be updated in response to changing international trade environments and rules may lag behind, thus affecting the timeliness of teaching content.

#### (2) Problems pertaining to the organization and implementation of teaching

Students' varying adaptability to the blended learning model results in uneven participation levels online and offline. In blended learning, student engagement and participation vary. Most students were able to complete their online studies within the prescribed time by the teachers, but some may have struggled with self-directed learning and the pace of online learning, lacking the ability for self-management, leading to suboptimal learning outcomes. A disparity exists among students who rely on offline teaching while underutilizing online resources and failing to complete their online learning in accordance with the teacher's prescribed time frame. This imbalance can lead to varying levels of understanding and proficiency in practical skills among students.

Lack of interactive teaching. While blended learning offers numerous opportunities for teacher-student interaction, such interaction remains insufficient in actual teaching. Online discussion forums have seen a lackluster activity level among students, with limited participation; in offline classes, discussions and quizzes often centered on study-enthusiastic individuals or group reflection reports or case analyses due to time constraints or poor organization, sometimes resulting in hollow exercises.

The teaching capabilities of faculty members in the same course group exhibit unevenness between online and offline modes. A select number of educators exhibited inadequate proficiency in the mastery of blended learning modes, lacking the pertinent instructional experience and skills. For instance, unfamiliarity with operating online learning platforms, inadequate ability to effectively design and organize both on- and off-line interactive activities, as well as limited capability in the development and utilization of online teaching resources.

Problems with the management of teaching and learning processes. The student's credits obtained through online learning remain unverifiable. Due to the potential incompatibility between the academic affairs office of private institutions and credits earned from online courses, if weekly assignments were set for online learning, it might prove too lengthy for students, thus reducing their motivation to engage in online learning and even breeding resentment towards teachers who assigned excessive study tasks. A few instances have surfaced where some students have given malicious negative reviews regarding their teachers' teaching performance. Due to the correlation between teaching evaluations and teacher performance evaluations, it can to some extent dampen educators' enthusiasm and determination for educational reforms.

## **5. Conclusion and Suggestions**

Addressing the issues in the reform of mixed-mode teaching for the course, the following methods can be employed.

### **5.1. Stabilize the faculty team, continuously optimize teaching resources**

Firstly, in the context of a stable faculty teaching schedule, continuous updates can be made to online teaching resources to ensure consistency with the latest international trade regulations, practices, national policies, and operational procedures. Through various means such as corporate research, one can acquire and augment a wealth of practical case studies, operational videos, animated demonstrations, and multimedia resources, all of which would greatly facilitate students' better comprehension and mastery of documentation knowledge. Concurrent integration of external expansion resources, such as expert lectures from the international trade sector, videos of actual operations in enterprises, and news reports on international trade, can broaden students' learning horizons and enhance their ability to perceive real business scenarios.

### **5.2. Intensify teacher training in both online and offline teaching methodologies, enhancing their ability to deliver blended learning experiences**

Firstly, teachers can be organized to participate in training on blended learning technologies, enabling them to gain proficiency in operating online teaching platforms, developing and utilizing educational resources, organizing and managing online interactions, among other skills. Inviting seasoned instructors or experts to conduct teaching methodologies workshops, sharing successful experiences and case studies of blended learning both online and offline, to aid educators in mastering how to design a logical curriculum flow, how to guide students in autonomous learning and interactive learning, among other skills. Subsequently, enhanced communication and mutual learning between instructors can be achieved through organized the online and offline blended teaching open class on the course, group preparation for lessons, and discussions. This shall facilitate the resolution of issues pertaining to blended teaching methodologies and techniques.

### 5.3. Optimizing instructional design and refining teaching organization and implementation

Adopting a learning model tailored to the students' abilities of private institutions, clearly define the objectives for each online learning session, and scientifically design pre-learning tasks before class to prevent excessive online learning hours. In tandem, judiciously allocate classroom teaching time to ensure adequate time for elucidating key concepts, organizing interactive discussions, and providing practical operation guidance.

### 5.4. Improve teaching evaluations promptly for timely feedback

Firstly, aligning the comprehensive invoicing content of the final examination with the subject matter of international trade documents competitions would enhance the challenge of the final examination content. Thus, the student's comprehensive invoicing score can truly reflect their proficiency in handling international trade documents operations. Secondly, leverage the data analysis functions of online teaching platforms to promptly collect student learning data, such as online learning time, completion rate of assignments, and test scores. In addition, it is not only assessing student evaluations, but also through questionnaires, interviews, and other means, understanding students' feedback on various aspects of teaching content, teaching methods, and educational resources. Based on the collected feedback, timely adjustments can be made to teaching strategies, the curriculum optimized, and teaching methods improved.

## Acknowledgments

This paper is supported by the fund from An Excellent Industrial-Educational Integration Curriculum Project of Guangzhou College of Commerce "Documents & Credit for International Business Course" (XJYXKC202517).

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