

Review of Blended Learning and Online Tutoring. A good practice guide.

Author Janet MacDonald

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Innovation: 4 stars

Content – 4 stars

Clarity – 4 stars

Recommendation – 4 stars

Value for money - 3 stars

This book is aimed primarily at an academic audience and is based on comprehensive research from a range of academic establishments. That said, it provides interesting, practical information that would be of use to anyone considering introducing online activities into their current learning systems.

The 3 main sections are:

Part 1 - current practice in the academic environment

Part 2 - practical tools and methods

Part 3 - approaches to learning development from the points of view of tutors and students

It is very clearly laid out with a thorough introduction, excellent summaries of each chapter and plenty of tables, headings and boxes to break up the text. Each chapter also has further references and there is a very comprehensive summary, in the appendix, of all the case studies – including email details of participants, so it would be great for following up particular areas.

The author, Janet MacDonald, is Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator for the Open University in Scotland with particular responsibility for blended e-learning and she did her doctorate on online course design and assessment. She also has experience of being an online student and tutor.

She is honest about the challenges and obstacles that can occur because of e-learning and there are numerous ideas about how to work through them. Some of them are listed in well defined text boxes as 'bright ideas'.

For a book containing such a lot of detail it was surprisingly easy to read, though the first few chapters did contain quite a lot of jargon. The research is presented in a variety of styles - I particularly liked the quotes and comments from tutors and students who had participated as it made it very accessible.

This would be a really useful read if you are involved in designing, or setting up, e-learning at any scale. There are constructive questions, handy techniques,

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frameworks, anecdotes and comments that could save a lot of time in reinventing the wheel; much of which would be applicable in business learning situations as it is very pragmatic and takes into account the human experience of e-learning.

Reviewer

Stella Collins runs Stellar Learning which actively employs brain friendly learning techniques to ensure people are engaged and responsible for their own development. This leads to effective knowledge transfer in the workplace and maximum return on investment. Contact her on +44 (0) 118 983 6339, at info@stellarlearning.co.uk or visit www.stellarlearning.co.uk