

Engaging Masters of Social Work students: Applying blended learning approaches coherently and consistently

Jo Mensinga

James Cook University, Cairns, Australia
Jo.mensinga@jcu.edu.au

Deb Miles

James Cook University, Townsville, Australia
Debra.miles@jcu.edu.au

Ines Zuchowski

James Cook University, Townsville, Australia
Ines.zuchowski@jcu.edu.au

Drawing on literature that claims blended learning approaches can increase interactions between students, decrease the sense of difference between them and contribute to deeper learning; this paper describes a project that sought to redesign the delivery of a Masters Social Work (Professional Qualifying) degree. Adopting a 5D model of Appreciative Inquiry the project team implemented the following stages of the model: (1) 'defined' the focus and scope of the project; (2) 'discovered' descriptions of existing learning and teaching approaches being used; (3) 'dreamt' of a shared vision for a cohesive pedagogical approach; (4) '(re)designed' models of delivery to establish a consistent and well-designed blended framework; (5) 'delivered' subject templates, guides and modular prototypes. This paper reports on the use of an appreciative inquiry process to develop a holistic student experience that explored the unique issues of social work in the tropics and prepared students for practice as beginning practitioners. The implications of the project will be discussed highlighting the way in which blended learning strategies were negotiated and lessons learnt from adopting an Appreciative Inquiry approach.