

# Out with the Old, In with the New

**Excerpt:** One big feature in our new Education Innovation 2020 initiative is the move towards blended learning. What exactly is blended learning and why is this move beneficial for us? Why not stick with what we've always been doing? Read on to find out more!

## The traditional model vs the new 'blended' model

We are all familiar with the traditional model of teaching: teachers lecture and students listen and take notes. Notes have to be printed or brought to class and if we forget, we have to borrow our friends' notes, which results in compromised learning for all. If we are sick, we will probably not know what we missed out on. It is also hard attending lecture-style classes at night, after a long day of working with clients.

Now add to this the fact that the social service sector is expanding fast. How then will we be able to scale up if our professionals are busy working with clients most of the time? Our physical premises and manpower at SSI have a limit to how many professionals we can teach at any one time. In 2015 alone, there were 15,367 training places. But the sector is bigger than that and will be increasingly so in the years to come. Many professionals also have specialised expertise and knowledge in their field and not being able to share that with the rest of the sector due to physical constraints is a problem that technology can definitely help us solve. With the introduction of blended learning and moving learning online, we can scale up fast and also tap on one member's expertise and share it with others instantly.

Another reason why we are going blended and online is because the overall attrition rate for the sector is about 20%. This means that for every 5 professionals currently in the sector, 1 is likely to leave and needs to be replaced. The trend in the sector and Singapore (which has an ageing population) has been that more and more of our newly-joined professionals are entering midcareer. Encouraging midcareer entrants to join the sector is also a solution to meeting our manpower needs to tackle the coming decade. With the move to blended and online learning, more of these new professionals can be quickly brought up to speed through e-courses and e-certifications.

## So what does the move towards blended learning mean for me as a learner at SSI in the near future?

With the move toward blended learning, there will be an online component to our courses and learning. Learners will have time to access online materials at least 2 weeks before classes, read at their own pace to grasp the content, and come to classes prepared and ready to contribute to meaningful discussions that are interactive and engaging. Quizzes and evaluations will also be done online, and certificates will now be e-certificates, in a move towards digitisation and sustainability! Because a big part of the learning would have already taken place before class, more time in class can be devoted to value-adding sharing of personal experiences in the sector, which may be more relevant than textbook knowledge. We understand that the social service sector is markedly different from other sectors, in that the application of theory is extremely important and practical advice we can get from others who have had the experience in that particular area of care is priceless. Thus, we hope that learners will come onboard our blended learning initiative soon!