

# Final Project Report

Overall Status: **Complete**

Project Name: Staff Training Program for Flipped Classrooms at The School of Humanities

May 30, 2022 / Author: Beth Rogers

## Status Code Legend

- On Track and Achieved
- Attempted but Ultimately Dropped from Project
- Achieved with Difficulty
- Goals Which Became Incompatible with the Project in its Original Form

The project is <b>Finished</b> the week of May 2 – May 6, 2022, due to the following:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Selection of curriculum methods and teaching best practices for teaching to staff</li><li>● Curation of novel resources and materials to help teachers designing courses</li><li>● Presentations, videos, and other materials designed to support the development of more comprehensive teacher training</li><li>● Delivery of resources to staff members throughout the AY 2021-2022</li></ul>
Issues:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Consistent attendance by stable participant group</li><li>● Refreshments to incentivize attendance</li><li>● Lack of participant-generated materials (e.g., teacher lesson plans)</li></ul>
Milestones accomplished for the project over the course of Academic Year (AY) 2021-2022:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Held four seminars on original topics, plus 1 (Flipped Classroom Method) which was re-run at participant request</li><li>● Curation of several online resources for staff in the School of Humanities</li></ul>
Areas/questions for discussion:	How could we encourage more attendance? Is the language barrier an issue here? (Seminars were conducted in English) What is the best way, going forward, to offer comprehensive training to <b>all teaching staff, regardless of permanent or non-permanent status?</b>

## Contact Information

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## Project Abstract

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This project, accepted for funding in May 2021, created a pilot program for teaching and support staff in the School Humanities to use the Flipped Classroom Method on a wider basis. In addition, resources to help implement this popular pedagogy were made available to other interested parties. We hoped to inspire more clear and meaningful course structure, more student engagement, and easier lesson planning, for the participants of this program, beginning with the School of Humanities. The 4-seminar series was open to all teaching staff of the four faculties housed within the School of Humanities (Faculty of Theology and Religion, Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, Faculty of Languages and Cultures and the Faculty of History and Philosophy), including sessional and non-permanent teachers. These four seminars explored modern, popular pedagogical trends for the tertiary level, including the Flipped Classroom Method, which centralizes student-led activities to education, general student engagement, and multi-platform lesson planning. Feedback from these seminars resulted in a greater understanding of both teacher and student needs at the School of Humanities. The project primarily supports Goal #2 of the Quality Enhancement Strategy for Teaching and Learning 2018-2021 (replaced by the Strategy of the University of Iceland, [HÍ26](#)).

## Introduction

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This project was designed to introduce a popular method of instruction, known as the Flipped Classroom Model (FCM) or blended learning, to the School of Humanities at Háskóli Íslands in the hopes of implementing it on a more wide-scale basis. To accomplish this, the seminar series was designed with a stable group of active participants who would attend all through the series in mind. In this way, materials such as lesson plans, homework, etc., would be developed dynamically in line with the Successive Approximation Model (also known as the SAM method), based on the participation and feedback of this group.

The flipped or blended classroom method was chosen as the focus of the project because it is a pedagogically sound choice to better help meet the stated goals of the School of Humanities at HÍ. Specifically, the original project plan was submitted in support of **Goal 2** within the Quality Enhancement Strategy for Teaching and Learning 2018-2021 (2. Quality of teaching and learning – Support for pedagogical development) and will demonstrate the need for these measures to accomplish the following **Project Objectives** in particular:

- ✓ **2.2** Learning management systems will be strengthened to ensure the systematic use of IT in teaching and learning and IT support will be expanded.

- ✓ 2.5 We will explore the possibility of making better use of IT in teaching, particularly for large courses or where students particularly need extra support, e.g., with blended studies (recordings and online assignments). Measures to assist teachers and faculties in these areas will be proposed.
- ✓ 2.6 Professional support for sessional teachers will be increased and the frameworks for sessional teaching strengthened.
- ✓ 2.7 Particular emphasis is placed on welcoming new teachers and supporting them as they get to grips with the role.

## Methods

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All staff members in the School of Humanities were notified via Hugskot and Uglya Event notifications, along with reminder e-mails and announcements by both Beth Rogers and Matthew James Whelpton, to inspire attendance. Unfortunately, attendance for the seminars was low in general, with as few as two and as many as ten. When this project was created, I envisioned working with a small group of dedicated staff members that I could support throughout the year in *each* of the four workshops as they developed new ideas for their own courses using the SAM Method described below. Low turnout due to prior obligations made it difficult to count on the same participants each time. Therefore, the original project plan was changed to suit a busy staff by adopting a break-out structure in which three distinct and separate topics called “Teacher Tools” were offered to staff. These topics all relate to popular ideas or common discussion topics in tertiary education. They, along with the Flipped Classroom Method, were used to generate a discussion of teaching methods and the student body needs at the university. These were:



## Results

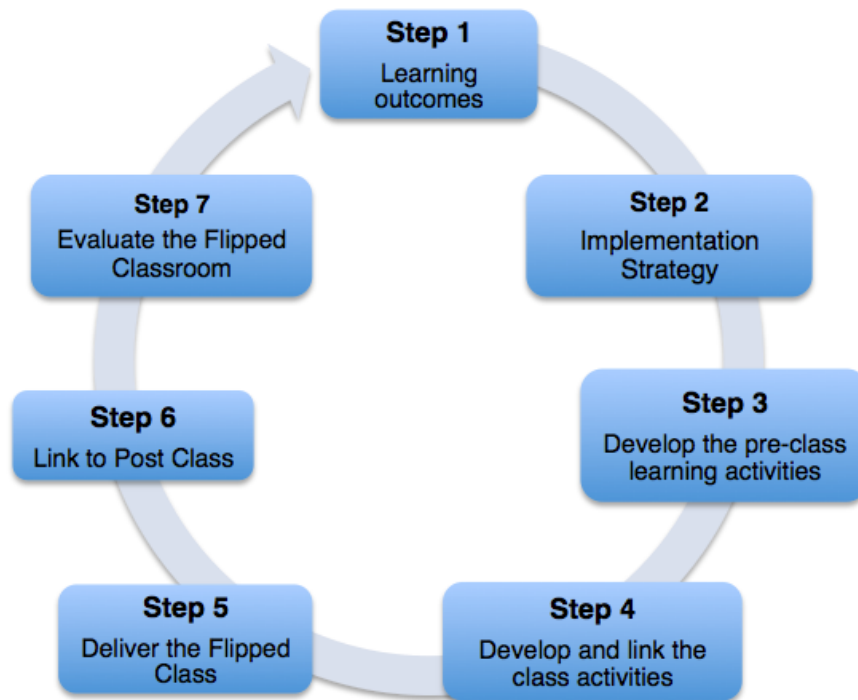
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The four work packages and their corresponding project objectives were conducted in full, though the method and implementation of the project changed considerably from the project’s origin to its execution. Information and materials were presented to teaching staff in person (those who attended the seminars) and via e-mail and other online formats when contacted outside of the seminars. IT methods and materials were emphasized to make better use of IT in teaching at the university.

Considering issues with varying attendance from teaching and support staff, these were the seminars that were developed and presented as stand-alone topics based on common struggles of teachers, popular discussions in the field of education and feedback from staff at the School of Humanities:

*Seminar 1: The Flipped Classroom Method (September 2021, re-run by request December 2021)*

In this seminar, staff will be introduced to the FCM and the university's new commitment to improving the quality of instruction at HÍ through the adoption of more student-led course work.



*7 Steps to Flip Your Class, University of Adelaide, Source: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/flipped-classroom/about/>*

In this seminar, staff:

- Brainstormed activities which they think fall under the definition of the FCM
- Outlined reasons why they hesitate or struggle to implement new teaching methods

*Seminar 2: Increasing Engagement (November 2021)*

For seminar two, the topic focused upon student engagement. Attendees were told that we would work together to find solutions you can use in the classroom immediately, for issues like: Designing an effective course with online and in-person activities, creating activities that are relevant and useful for students, and small things instructors can do right now to increase interaction and participation.

In this seminar, staff:

- Charted their current strengths and weaknesses as an instructor
- Correlated strategies to increase student engagement that will address those strengths and weaknesses

- Experimented with small or single-class student-led activities in their current course(s) to challenge their assumptions about teaching and/or their own abilities

### *Seminar 3: Multi-Platform Storytelling in Lesson Planning (April 2021)*

The topic of this seminar was developed to explore the idea of storytelling and narrative as a core principle to help staff organize lectures and activities in a cohesive manner across class work and technology, while also maintaining clear goals and expectations for students. The more specific aim was to save instructors and students time and stress when completing work, as it would all flow together to form one, multi-faceted whole theme or message from its disparate parts (e.g., Discussion on Canvas, class lecture, social media posts, activities completed using various software and websites such as Kahoot!)

In this seminar, staff:

- Discussed our students, and the similarities and differences between generations such as the Boomers, Millennials and Generation Z (Gen-Z or Zoomers)
- Explored software and other resources available to teachers and how to use it at university level
- Debated the pros and cons they have discovered in trying student-led activities in the past or present semester

### *Seminar 4: Putting It All Together (May 2022)*

In this session, we reviewed the concepts and ideas from previous workshops (The Flipped Classroom Method, Engagement, and Multi-Platform Storytelling). This material was used to discuss big and small changes to try in upcoming courses. By the end of the session, teachers had ideas on how to achieve more effective results with course planning and teaching, based on what other instructors at HÍ are already doing.

Its position at the end of the Academic Year in May gave staff members space to:

- Reflect on the experience of the past semester
- Analyze problems and obtain help from peers, as well as celebrate successes
- Assess their successes and struggles in their attempts to implement the FCM, Student Engagement, and Multi-Platform Storytelling in Lesson Planning
- Criticize and evaluate the new teacher training itself to provide feedback for future iterations and ideas (see below **Work Package 4**)

## Discussion

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### *Did you accomplish the purpose of the project?*

In general, the purpose of the project, to provide support and mentoring to the teaching staff in the School of Humanities, was accomplished. As I said in the original project description, the experience of teaching and learning at the University of Iceland has been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like so many educational institutions around the world, HÍ is now looking at its structures and procedures with a critical eye. Rather than return to the teaching strategies and practices that have worked well in the past without analysis or critical thought, a flood of exhortations in the media have appeared, pleading with those in power of every sector, from private to public, from financial to educational, not to return to “business as usual” in the aftermath of the

pandemic. Now that teaching at HÍ can reliably expect to teach on-site as they did in the semesters before the pandemic (barring new variants of COVID or severe weather events which occasionally shut down campus in the winter), it is a suitable time for this research and other projects like it.

**Did anything interesting come to light that was not related to the original project?**

Due to the issue of low attendance, it was sometimes difficult to see patterns and trends among the teaching staff of the School of Humanities, as I had hoped to do. However, there was interest in learning across all groups and subject areas that attended. There was interest in developing more communication for teachers and about teaching. There was interest in creating mentorship for instructors both new and experienced, to share ideas and problem solve.

**What conclusions can be drawn from the results?**

Considering the above, flexible access to training and information is more likely to be successful. This allows staff to "dip into" events and access resources as they need them. The university continues to develop incentives, but, as always, teaching staff at any university always have ongoing research and administrative pressures in addition to other work/time commitments for both permanent and sessional staff which make it difficult to attend regularly scheduled training seminars like these. In addition, of course some staff members might be better served by a fully Icelandic language presentation. While my Icelandic is not currently fluent enough to pull this off, I am hopeful I will be able to do so in future. This may also incentivize greater participation.

In addition, discussions and reactions gleaned from this program revealed that teaching staff are interested in any kind of support, resources, or information they can get to aid their work, but it is important to complete the needs-assessment project discussed above to know how best to help our current staff. There are resources meant to help encourage *some* teaching staff to innovate, but they are few and closed to non-permanent staff and especially non-permanent and non-Icelandic staff whose Icelandic language proficiency is still developing.