

PART 6

You are going to read extracts from articles about online learning written by four experts on education. For questions 37 – 40, choose from the extracts **A – D**. The extracts may be chosen more than once.

Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

Learning online: more effective than learning in the classroom?

A

In the experience of my team at the Maximana Education Institute, students who do their classes online perform better on average than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction. Students who study through a mixture of online learning and traditional methods of learning ('blended learning') do even better. The reasons for this are fairly obvious. Right from the start of their course, students doing fully or partially online courses are motivated in their studies by having the opportunity to choose from the broader variety of subjects available to them, including programs which may not be available locally. Furthermore, being able to attend classes whenever and wherever there is access to the internet, they can learn at a pace that suits them, and have a schedule tailored to their specific circumstances. It seems an obvious next step, then, for educators to introduce more blended learning courses.

B

It is important to recognise that online learning has definite advantages and disadvantages. Although students' grades appear to be unaffected by the mode of instruction, certain courses are more challenging to students who carry out their studies in the virtual environment than in the classroom. However, in online classes, participation in learning activities may be less daunting, especially for shy students, and the quality and quantity of student-student and teacher-student interaction may be higher. Increasingly, it is a crucial issue for designers of online curriculums to decide how to match the advantages of different modes of instruction to specific courses, by offering not only fully classroom-based or online courses, but also courses that take the best elements of both types to address the needs of students and teachers and to make the most efficient use of resources.

C

Students who study online tend to lack a sense of community, trust and positive interaction with other course members and teachers – all elements that were in the past believed to increase the effectiveness of classroom learning, especially amongst the least confident learners. However, online students generally also feel that they learn at a similar rate to their peers in the classroom, and in fact at my college their grades are just as good as those who are taught in person. But just imagine how much more effective our online courses could be if they fostered a culture of class cohesion, spirit, trust and interaction, both among students and between students and faculty. Perhaps the most effective way to achieve this improvement is for online educators to give more one-on-one contact and to encourage students to collaborate.

D

Online learning provides a far more student-centred teaching approach than the traditional classroom method, and all school directors should aim to adopt it as their main means to deliver education. Although I accept that the performance of online students is no more impressive than that of other students, online learning has clear advantages. Since every student has an individual learning speed, students educated online can ensure that each learning point is completely understood before moving on to the next. Furthermore, students can access lectures, discussions and other course materials at any time of the day. Doing this at a time they have chosen means they are psychologically ready to learn, and can then process and absorb the material more effectively. In addition, those students who struggle to follow spoken material in a classroom setting find it easier to learn online. The same is true for those who are nervous about interacting in the classroom. Such students will gain from feeling able to share their insights and learn from others in a setting which they are likely to find less intimidating.

Which expert

has the same opinion as expert A about the rate at which students learn online?

37

expresses a different belief from the others about how the results of online students compare to those of classroom students?

38

has a different opinion from expert B about how to enhance existing online courses?

39

shares the same view as expert D on the implications of online learning for students who lack confidence?

40

PART 7

You are going to read a magazine article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the article. Choose from the paragraphs **A – G** the one which fits each gap (41 – 46). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

The future of the world's wetlands

Wetlands – lakes, swamps, marshes, rice fields, floodplains, river deltas, peat bogs and flooded forests – exist all round the world, but they are shrinking fast.

The Llanos de Moxos wetlands in Bolivia form an area covering some 6.9 million hectares – the area of the Netherlands and Belgium combined – and contain thousands of entrancing animal and plant species, like the giant otter, Bolivian pink river dolphin, giant armadillo, jaguar, tapir and black caiman.

41 But this positive development sits awkwardly with the wider, worrying picture of the state of the world's wetlands. The rate of loss and deterioration is accelerating in every region of the planet, under pressure from rising populations and demand for agricultural land and water. And that's before climate change is factored in.

42 Wetlands are on the front line of global development, and as a consequence, half of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1990 – converted or destroyed for commercial development, drainage schemes and the extraction of minerals and peat. Many of those that remain have been damaged by siltation (the build-up of sediments in water), agricultural pesticide and fertiliser run-off, industrial pollutants, and the construction of dams and dikes. Yet wetlands can be extremely beneficial.

43 Even so, wetlands tend to be undervalued, and the fact that numerous products are derived from freshwater habitats is often forgotten, among them food such as fish, rice and cranberries; medicinal plants; poles for building materials; and grasses and reeds for making mats and baskets and for thatching houses.

44 Wetlands are also rich sources of in-demand commodities such as palm oil, pulpwood and, above all, peat, but in the case of peat, the effects on the wetlands can be disastrous. When peatlands – wetlands with a waterlogged organic soil layer – are drained for cultivation, they become net carbon emitters instead of active carbon stores, and make a significant contribution to global carbon emissions. Peat consists of 90 percent water, ten percent soil, so one of the most alarming consequences of peat drainage is land subsidence. As the peat drops below water level, very large areas become flooded.

Conservationists generally recognise that the best protection for wetlands does not come from dogmatically trying to keep them in pristine isolation; rather, it results from local people valuing and profiting from them. A number of conservation organisations work with local communities to ensure they can derive an income from wetlands, are involved in planning and decision making, and have clear rights to use the areas.

45 Another promising approach draws on the hundreds of forest species that can be harvested sustainably to keep wetlands alive. For instance, in Kalimantan – the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo – the hardwood meranti tree is now being cultivated for its nuts, which produce an oil used in chocolate and cosmetics processing.

46 Huge challenges remain in convincing enough people of the need for change, but many environmentalists are optimistic, taking encouragement from the growing number of farmers increasing their profits by using less water and fewer pesticides. Large parts of the world are waking up to the fact that we can't keep exploiting wetlands.