

## Ottobock Blended Learning certification program for internal product trainers

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### Background

With C-Leg market launch almost 25 years ago Ottobock started to qualify internal Product Trainers to multiply knowledge and certify customers on sophisticated mechatronic products. Over the years the Ottobock Global Academy established a comprehensive education curriculum for fifteen different products to raise and ensure fitting quality worldwide. With Covid-19 the face2face (F2F) based training curriculum for prosthetics lower limb was rearranged to a Blended Learning Program with a significant number of digital parts.

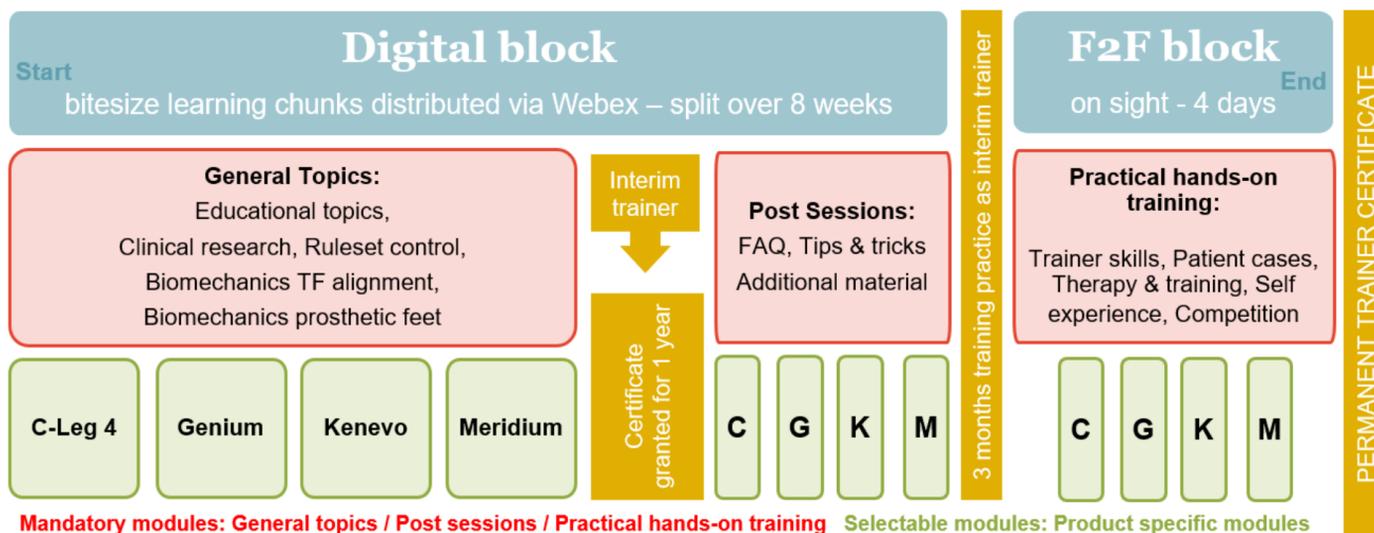


Figure 1: Blended Learning Program for Ottobock Trainers in prosthetics lower limb.

### Aim

The aim was to transition a well established F2F curriculum for trainer qualification for C-Leg 4, Genium, Kenevo & Meridium into a Blended Learning Program after a **medium-impact blend**<sup>1</sup> to ensure trainer availability and high-quality fittings even during Covid-19 pandemics. Experiences are shared so that stakeholders in O&P education can benefit from our gained know-how.

### Methods

A total of eight days of F2F curriculum was transitioned into a medium-impact blend with four well balanced modules (**Module 1-3: digital** – distributed over 8 weeks / **Module 4: F2F** – 4 days). The digital modules have been split in general and product-specific online sessions executed via “Webex Events” (Cisco). Small groups, supervised homework and an online presentation of a patient case study from every trainer candidate ensured that our high standard for trainer education could be maintained also in the digital world. After successful completion of the digital modules a time limited interim trainer status was granted. The final F2F module in Vienna in addition to the conducted training practice in between represented the last step in receiving a permanent trainer status.

### Results

The expectations in the Blended Learning Program have been clearly fulfilled (see Figure 2). Though our limited experience with such extensive online trainings at the start of Covid-19 pandemics and stumbling blocks like different time zones and technical challenges 14 out of 17 trainer candidates from all around the globe have successfully completed the program until today.

Learning groups of maximum 8 enrolled attendees per course and close supervision during the entire program contributed to the successful program transition.

To retrieve quantitative feedback from the enrolled candidates an online questionnaire (**1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree**) was conducted (n=15). The blended learning model was rated superior in comparison to the classic solely F2F approach (**3,8 vs. 2,9**). Additional open feedback sessions also illustrated the limitations of pure digital training. The two most named weak points have been missing “hands-on” and “social exchange” for sustainable learning success. This confirms with the authors impression that a 100% digital approach is not applicable but a split of 60% digital and 40% F2F seems reasonable regarding our requirements in trainer qualification.



Figure 2: Feedback poll from enrolled trainer attendees of the Blended Learning Program (n=15)

### Discussion & Conclusion

Next to the benefits of digital learning like repetition possibilities due to recordings, bitesize learning, flexibility and reduction of business trips there are also drawbacks like potential technical issues, different time zones and the lack of physical presence. Due to the overall positive feedback, Ottobock will permanently use a blended learning approach for future trainer certification even when Covid-19 pandemic is finally mastered. Especially for far away countries this format will not only save resources but also lead to a more sustainable education and high qualified trainers. In addition, Ottobock will closely review if blended learning programs can also be beneficially used for other areas in O&P education.

### References

1. Alammary, A. et.al.; Blended Learning in higher education: Three different design approaches; *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 2014; 30(4), S.440-454