

# Blended Learning Exemplars: Requirements and Challenges (matching design and technology)



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# What is a Blended Learning Exemplar?

An **example** of the **optimisation** of **online** and **face-to-face pedagogical approaches** to maximise **student learning experiences** and to increase **engagement, motivation** and **retention** *(based on Garrison & Vaughan, 2008)*

# Why Blended Learning?

Tomorrow's Professor eNewsletter: Blended Learning as transformational institutional learning. Based on a book by Kim VanDerLinden "Connecting learning across the institution."

**Students in a BL course performed significantly better (results and student motivation) than students in completely online courses or students in face-to-face courses**

(Glazer 2011, US department of Education 2009, Zhao *et al.* 2005)

# Why is Blended Learning significantly better than that in a traditional classroom?

Research points to the idea that it is ..... that results in better learning

1. How effectively the technology is used
2. Course design, Pedagogy (particularly active learning strategies) and Implementation
3. Effective student communities of learning with each other and with their teachers
4. A mixture of learning experiences catering to different student learning styles

“Victoria University’s students are both younger and older, and more educationally, culturally, linguistically and economically diverse than is the case for other universities in Australia.”



The VU Agenda and Blueprint for Curriculum reform.

<http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/wfg/pdfs/VUAgenda-CurriculumBlueprint-Nov2012.pdf>

# Pedagogy

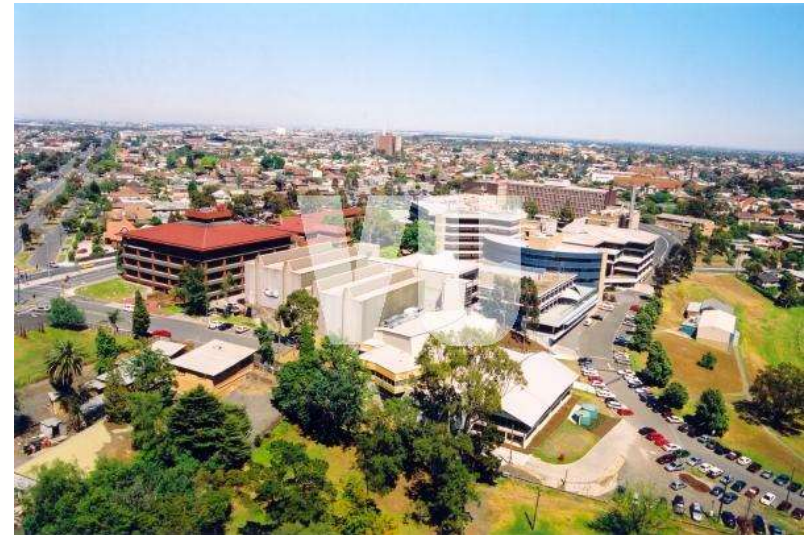
Transitions pedagogy and first year experience:

- frequent, early, formative assessment with individualised feedback
- significant weekly time in small classes
- learning support
- supporting students in engaging with new identities and social practices
- enabling active and collaborative learning

# Design

- Investigation of relevant background information
  - current successes & opportunities
- Guiding pedagogical approaches for each unit identified
- Detailed recommendations for the development of each exemplar were identified and recorded in order of priority.

VU implemented D2L university-wide in Semester 2, 2014



# Implementation

- Targeted professional development of staff
- Creating or providing supporting documentation for staff and students
- Building online site within VU Collaborate and/or improving learning space use with unit staff
- Testing the approach in a face-to-face or online session of an equivalent unit in conjunction with unit coordinators

# Exemplar Highlights

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## Exemplar Highlight - Flexible, Active Learning using a Virtual Classroom

If you are searching for a flexible blended learning option with the ability to promote student-centered active learning then consider using a Virtual Classroom in VU Collaborate.

### What is a Virtual Classroom?

A **virtual classroom** is an online environment that allows students and instructors to communicate **synchronously**. Sessions can be designed to be similar in structure to a seminar, known as a **webinar**, or simply as a meeting place between participants. To take part in a virtual classroom, participants need a device such as a computer, iPad or smart phone that can connect to the internet. Ideally, participants should also have a headset with a microphone and a webcam on their device if they would like to talk in the session or be visible in a video respectively.

At VU, the virtual classroom software is called **Blackboard Collaborate**.

The main features of Blackboard Collaborate include:

- **Presentation window** - the presenter can display or share files or documents such as Powerpoint Presentations, pdf files etc.
- **Text chat** - participants can type text into the chat window area.
- **Interactive whiteboard** - participants can draw or type in the presentation area using a number of tools.
- **Audio and Video** - this area displays any video if enabled. An Audio setup wizard allows participants to test the quality of sound that can be heard from the speakers of their device and if they are using a





# Exemplar Highlight

- Begin with the pedagogical purpose
- What is the approach and/ or tool used?
- Why use it, what are the benefits found in the literature?
- How can it be used
- Participant perspectives
- Tips
- Challenges and how they can be overcome especially technical
- Further Reading and References

# Challenges

- There is no perfect blended learning exemplar
- Limited purposeful, evidence-based resources required to strengthen exemplars
- Limited strategic direction, policy development etc.
- Teaching staff operating in silos

# and Future Directions

- A variety of exemplars can be created for a variety of approaches, diverse students & contexts
- develop further resources including the design, pedagogy & implementation of blended learning approaches
- Develop university wide BL policy and documentation
- Promote communities of practice