



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA**  
AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL UNIVERSITY

# **REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF ONLINE AND BLENDED LEARNING**

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## Summary of Recommendations

### Overall Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 1: overall**

That blended learning (which encompasses online) approaches be used by all staff to encourage student engagement to enhance learning outcomes and create an interactive and dynamic teaching and learning environment for all students

**RECOMMENDATION 2: overall**

That the Blended Learning Strategy 2010-2012 described here be adopted and actioned immediately, in light of the Winter Intensive Term

**RECOMMENDATION 3: overall**

That the University ensures it has the capacity to support the development of such new methods and approaches in ICT as are essential to continually develop robust and flexible tools for flexible and blended learning

**RECOMMENDATION 4: overall**

That UC collaborate with an appropriate strategic grouping of universities to benchmark progress in developing online and blended learning against the e-Learning Maturity Model. (see: <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/research/emm/VersionTwo.shtml> )

**RECOMMENDATION 5: overall**

That representations of blended learning activities on the UC website, and in other marketing/PR information, tells a strong story about the University's accomplishments at a project level

**RECOMMENDATION 6: overall**

That UC develop its own notion of the "total scholarly environment" in the form of a virtual and physical UC Teaching Commons to promote the discussion and scholarly exchange of innovative strategies and to provide feedback on best practice in the use of blended learning approaches

**RECOMMENDATION 7: overall**

That the University provide funding to seed developments and target assistance to strong applications to the ALTC Grants and Fellowships programs for projects specifically related to furthering UC's capacities in blended learning

**RECOMMENDATION 8: overall**

That UC consider forming a strategic partnership with a university equipped for, and experienced in, distance education and fully-online courses, through which to develop our capacity in that area.

**RECOMMENDATION 9: overall**

That workload models within Faculties ensure that online and blended teaching is treated equitably.

## **Summary of Recommendations (continued):**

### **Recommendations addressed to the Teaching & Learning Centre**

#### **RECOMMENDATION TLC1:**

**That the TLC urgently develop an Educational Capability Plan for the Blended Learning Strategy 2010 - 2012, with Stage 1. to focus on the Winter Intensive Term**

**and**

#### **RECOMMENDATION TLC2:**

**That the TLC be sufficiently resourced to implement this plan which would put concentrated effort into assisting staff to develop flexible and blended approaches for courses offered in the Winter Intensive Term**

#### **RECOMMENDATION TLC3:**

**That TLC contextually assess the merits of new teaching approaches adopted in Winter semester or elsewhere, and compile a searchable toolbox of blended approaches to facilitate adoption by other staff**

#### **RECOMMENDATION TLC4:**

**That TLC examine such programs as those offered by the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies and the Siemens medical diagnostics project, with a view to documenting those aspects of their programs and teaching approach that might be applicable more broadly across the University**

### **Recommendations addressed to the Learning Environments Advisory Group**

#### **RECOMMENDATION LEAG1:**

**That LEAG, as a matter of urgency, be charged with investigating ways in which the relationship between AV services and the Teaching and Learning Centre can be made closer and more direct**

#### **RECOMMENDATION LEAG2:**

**That LEAG investigate in more detail the reasons for any negativity from either the Students' Association, and the student body more generally, towards online and blended learning, and seek to identify and recommend solutions**

#### **RECOMMENDATION LEAG3:**

**That the Project Manager of the Campus EAI Project consult with LEAG to ensure that its full potential to support learning and teaching is realised, and to ensure its alignment with other teaching and learning initiatives**

#### **RECOMMENDATION LEAG4:**

**That LEAG gather together an online marketing group to design a student project or a staff-supervised practical student project to design a marketing campaign using social networking tools**

#### **RECOMMENDATION LEAG5:**

**That LEAG undertake, with assistance within the University, to cost in detail the anticipated resource implications identified in this Review**

## 1. Background to the Review of Online and Blended Learning

Several factors have combined to drive this Review. Firstly, the University of Canberra needs to significantly develop its online and blended learning capacity, both to constructively increase load and to cater for students' increasing need for flexibly-delivered education. However, to do so it requires, in turn, a policy framework for blended learning, knowledge of staff expectations with respect to developing and delivering blended learning, and a greater understanding of resource requirements to underpin development in this area.

Secondly, the 2008 Review of Higher Education (the Bradley Review) has recently identified, as a key aspect of a quality experience in higher education, "An accessible and sophisticated online learning environment" (p.79). In its RECOMMENDATION 22, the Bradley Review also argues for greater rigour in university accreditation procedures for universities, and in particular that universities should:

- "undertake sufficient research in at least three broad fields initially and over time in all broad fields in which coursework degrees are offered; and
- undertake sufficient research in all narrow fields in which research higher degrees are offered." (Chapter 5.1)

These latter points may seem less immediately relevant, but it will be argued later in this Review that a successful institutional approach to online and blended will benefit from integrating, at the institution level and in detail, research and teaching; and as well, in linking them through pedagogy as well as through the efforts and activities of individual staff.

Thirdly, the Australian Government's recently-announced plans to build a 100Mb/sec fibre-to-the-home broadband network would make it possible to deliver a far wider and more demanding breadth and depth of content, and for that content to be delivered with greater equity to a greater (estimated at 90%) proportion of the population. Institutional clients such as schools and workplaces would benefit in the same way as households. While this plan, assuming it goes ahead in its proposed form, will not be completed for eight years, indications are that a significant proportion of households — a significant market for education services — might be connected within four years or so.

This opens up a new market for educational services, in terms of both the kinds of consumer and the range of possible delivery modes. Clearly however, it also exposes smaller institutions such as UC to a possibly increased level of competition and risk, as larger institutions with plentiful and established resources and capabilities take the opportunity to project those capabilities further afield.

### Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference as initially established for the Review Group included some points outlining the University's main aims for blended learning, and a specific list of aims for the Review. The aims for blended learning were to:

- enhance the nature and scope of the learning experiences within an overall strategic framework;
- provide increased flexibility for staff and students;
- increase access to resources that support learning;
- support collaboration and communication between staff and students, and among students;
- meet students' expectations about appropriate uses of technologies to support learning and engagement;
- assist students in learning how to use technologies effectively; and
- support distributed learning, utilising different technologies for different content, learners and learning experiences.

The specific aims for the Review of Online and Blended Learning were to:

- audit current practice, using previous policy and reports on online and flexible learning, capturing existing learning and expertise;
- advise on appropriate models needed to advance blended learning across the campus;
- advise on the strategic framework and policy for using blended learning across the campus;
- benchmark across the higher education sector as to appropriate models for developing blended learning and appropriate resourcing, particularly with respect to the specific needs of online learning;

- advise on the development of appropriate staff expectations regarding blended learning, particularly with respect to academic responsibilities and workload;
- advise on resourcing blended learning in its various modalities across the campus; and
- advise on best practice for marketing of online courses.

## 2. Approach

A Review Group, coincident with the membership of the Learning Environments Advisory Group (LEAG) was chaired by Dr Greg Battye. The Review sought input from Deans, Associate Deans Education, TLC staff and selected members of the UC community with particular expertise in the areas of online and blended learning. Some of the latter were co-opted informally as Members of the Review group (refer APPENDIX 1: List of Consultations). A wiki was established to share information within the group, and other devices such as the ADE Group on Moodle were used for similar purposes. An online survey for both staff and students was set up to assess and compare attitudes and preferences in relation to online and blended learning. This initial survey will partly serve to test and validate questions for use in a larger-scale (and publishable) study to be undertaken under LEAG's supervision, which will have a more specific relationship to UC initiatives currently being rolled out, such as the BURF-funded Video streaming and Web-based Lecture Recording Project, the trial of Mahara, and the continuing development of UC's Moodle-based LMS.

Some benchmarking was carried out, with an emphasis on qualitative analysis of web-based information provided by a number of Australian universities, including the G06 comparison group (Flinders, James Cook, Macquarie, Murdoch, University of Tasmania and Wollongong) and the regional competitors identified in the JWT Situation Analysis prior to the Review of Courses and Disciplines (ANU, ADFA, Charles Sturt [and Wollongong]). As discussed in more detail below, some other benchmarking initiatives that will take longer to complete fully have also been put in motion.

### Defining blended learning

Moves to strengthen and enhance the university's approach to online and blended learning are linked to the university's need to grow load and to improve the quality of teaching. If one adopts a broad view of what blended learning is, such as:

*Learning that is facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning. For example: self-paced, collaborative or inquiry-based study, accomplished through the use of virtual and physical resources (from Wikipedia)*

Then some would argue (as some have done in speaking to this Review), that we are already doing it, and by implication that we should simply do more of it, as required by the various contexts of learning within which we already operate and the continuing developments within those fields. According to this view, indulgence in more elaborate discussion of definitions may seem peripheral.

Clearly however, the role of online learning occupies a particular and key role in this investigation, whether we are referring to fully-online courses or to what Garrison and Vaughan (2008, p.5) refer to as:

*...a new educational paradigm that integrates the strengths of face-to-face and online learning — a design approach whereby both face-to-face and online learning are each made better by the presence of the other...*

On the same page, Garrison and Vaughan go on to say:

*Blended learning is not an addition that simply builds another expensive educational layer. It represents a restructuring of class contact hours with the goal to **enhance engagement** and to extend access to internet-based learning opportunities. Most importantly, blended learning is a **fundamental redesign that transforms the structure of, and approach to, teaching and learning**. The key assumptions of a blended learning design are*

- *Thoughtfully integrating face-to-face and online learning*
- **Fundamentally rethinking the course design to optimize student engagement**
- *Restructuring and replacing traditional class contact hours.*  
(emphasis added).

A Macquarie University study, **eBenchmarking for Quality Enhancement** prepared by Dr Maree Gosper (2007) provides strong support for the notion that e-Learning (Macquarie's inclusive term, at

least prior to this 2007 review, embracing 'blended,' 'integrated,' 'flexible' and 'online' learning) must be viewed as an integral part of learning and teaching, not as a separate category of activity. This study sees such a strong risk from "the perception (whether real or imagined) that e-Learning is separate from mainstream learning" (Gosper 2007, p.14) that its very first recommendation is to:

*Reframe 'eLearning' as the use of technologies in learning and teaching in order to avoid any misconception that 'eLearning' and 'learning' are discrete entities.*

This Review group felt similarly, about both this principle and its priority. The Group did not take up debate on any possible standardisation of terminology, feeling that any attempt to impose standard terms in the absence of a widely shared understanding of methods and activities would not be helpful.

### **3. Current practice at the University of Canberra:**

#### **3.1 Programs**

As mentioned in the Definition section above, there is a sense in which UC is already teaching many blended courses. As a university with a practical and professional emphasis, our courses have always incorporated a strong element of hands-on and workplace-oriented learning, and this has necessitated use of a variety of teaching and assessment approaches that go beyond traditional lecture/tutorial/essay methods.

However, in the sense of Garrison and Vaughan's definition above — combinations of face-to-face and technology-supported learning in a design approach where by each is "made better by the presence of the other" — UC activities are fragmented, even though valuable and interesting projects are taking place and have been taking place for some time. The University lacks an institution-wide framework that clearly exemplifies and promotes online and blended methods to staff as part of the default array of learning and teaching approaches they should always consider. Such a framework should also assist the systematic gathering of information on existing advanced projects, and make it widely available in an easy-to-assimilate form so that other staff who aspire to do something similar can be best informed about how to proceed.

There are notable instances of online and blended approaches — more fully online than blended. Some of these, such as the fully-online coursework Masters programs in the Faculty of Arts and Design, have been going for some time, though in some cases (such as the Master of Creative Writing), they attract small numbers despite what might be seen as a potentially very large population of interested potential students, particularly internationally. Marketing remains an issue, but as discussed below, this needs to be linked to the institutional framework for teaching and learning in order to be most effective.

Recent major initiatives such as the online Justice Studies program have thrown the lack of this institutional framework into sharp relief. Across the university, a rapid development of fully-online parallel versions of units, or in some cases new fully-online units, for use as electives in the program, has shown up issues in workload, learning design, student administration support, technical support, and timetabling. None of this should be taken as criticism of the Faculty of Law's initiative in undertaking the course, and the Faculty is to be congratulated for pushing beyond these barriers and successfully launching the program. It does, however, illustrate the difference in required effort between pioneering such a program in an environment that has not been set up to support it and which is predicated on different teaching models, and pioneering such a program in an environment which assumes and supports the routine use of online and blended learning approaches.

This report does not attempt to describe the totality of blended and/or online programs offered at UC, but rather to derive the take-home messages that might facilitate soundly-based developments in the near future. A few program examples demonstrate aspects of the gap in potential between the highly-blended or most inventively designed online courses in some areas of UC, and our broader weakness in transferring and generalising these capabilities across the University:

1. The Centre for Customs and Excise Studies uses a model of blended learning at the program level, offering both graduate and undergraduate coursework units, vocational courses, and a range of graduate and professional and research-based post-graduate degrees. All units existing as face-to-face units are also offered in fully-online mode. The quality of teaching is actively supported by research and consultancy. In microcosm, the Centre does what the University

needs to do: it has a framework covering teaching, research, consultancy, and links with key industry partners, and its marketing is integrated into that framework. From relatively recent beginnings, the Centre has become a key player on the world stage in customs and excise education and training. It should be possible to draw useful generalizations from its success, of a kind applicable at a UC-wide level.

2. The Master of Forensic Studies (online) is part of a collaborative education partnership with the University of Florida and the University of Edinburgh, with each institution contributing units to a whole which is obviously greater than any single partner could offer. This strategic collaboration is clearly only available through the use of online technology, and is a model that others could follow; similar opportunities potentially exist in every discipline.
3. Partnerships with private industry provide useful examples of how external funding might be used in some areas to build capability. The Siemens medical diagnostics project in Applied Science, which yields a fully-online unit in medical diagnostics technology, is a cooperative venture that assists both partners. This model is unlikely to be as successful in the humanities, but still may have principles worth building on for other disciplines.
4. At the activity level (i.e. within-unit level), examples are too numerous to list even a sample, and they are spread across every Faculty. Thanks to the introduction of Moodle (see more below), an increasing range of staff are experimenting with its greater range and flexibility of modes of learning and interaction offered, by comparison with WebCT. Nevertheless, the predominant use of Moodle, as for WebCT, is still for posting parallel replications of fixed documents already deployed in face-to-face sessions, such as unit guides, lecture notes etc., rather than to add value to units by building synergistic combinations between modes.
5. One pre-Moodle experiment of interest in the context of the current lecture-streaming project (see more immediately below) has been the use, since 2006, of off-the-shelf video conferencing software (iChat) to run a real-time Japanese-English conversation classes in which UC students of Japanese talked with Japanese students from Aichi Shukutoku University in Nagoya, many of whom had limited English. While language itself was the focus of this activity, the same technology could be used to facilitate discussions between any two geographically separate groups for a range of educational purposes. This opens the way for numerous activities to be conducted as student-led inquiry, and may reduce the need for expensive dedicated video conferencing. However, the expertise developed in this exercise has been difficult to preserve in the face of changing arrangements for ICT support. For the success of the development of strong online and blended programs, it is vital that as these changed ICT support arrangements rollout, the university preserves an internal capacity for creative and original developmental work in the ICT domain, with support for academic and technical staff who need to develop new approaches. Good maintenance is not enough.

### **3.2 Technology**

The very high take-up rate in use of the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) is a 'foot in the door' to greatly improved technology-based learning and teaching at UC (by Day 1 of Semester 1 2009, >95% of undergraduate student enrolments and 76% of higher level student enrolments had access to a Moodle site for their units: figures provided by TLC). As noted above, there is a lag effect in bringing forward users of Moodle to do more than was offered by WebCT, but with the [very large] job of launching the new LMS now over, the TLC and the Learning Environments Advisory Group can start to put energy and time into moving Moodle users up to the next level. Internal training and discussion through the MoodleMatters site is working well and displaying a high level of energy and user interest, noticeably beyond that previously displayed in relation to WebCT.

Individual staff are experimenting with the use of technology (and with new pedagogical approaches) in a variety of ways in their own units. Moodle is by no means the only technology being used; mobile phones, wikis, blogs, media-sharing sites such as Youtube, and a variety of social software tools are all being employed either as experimental or as mainstream learning applications. The ALTC project Digital Learning Communities: Investigating the Application of Social Software to support Networked Learning, led by Dr Robert Fitzgerald (Education, UC) and James Steele (former Head of the UC Division of Communication and Education's Technical Services Unit) describes in detail multiple social software-driven learning projects, most of them at UC. A mentioned above however, internal

support for developmental work of this kind is vital.

While some of this is being shared constructively with and through the TLC, which does the maximum amount possible with its own limited staff resources, and (where appropriate) through the ALTC, there is certainly an appetite for more — but also a real limitation in the time available for individual staff to learn, and put into practice, new methods. There are certainly some staff who have been doing things in a certain way for a long time, and for whom any suggested significant change in teaching approach would be received as an imposition; these are not a majority however, and for most staff there is some enthusiasm for trying new approaches. The difficulty is simply that of generating the extra energy to make yet another change in a time and an environment already afflicted by major change.

### **3.3 The Near Future**

While the Moodle LMS is the central vehicle containing or linking most of the technology-based learning and teaching that most staff are likely to do in the next year or two years, three other developments put UC in a relatively strong position to grow online and blended learning in the same or shorter timeframe. In no particular order these are:

- The BURF-funded lecture-streaming project, which facilitates the possibility of giving a lecture once, but recording it at sufficient quality level to enable it to be used either several times, or simultaneously in more than one context (e.g. face-to-face and streamed online). If the particular software/hardware system decided upon also allows for other inputs in pre-recorded form, then there is the possibility of integrating (for instance, but not limited to) the lecture streaming system with a desktop video system. This would make for an enormously expanded potential richness in media content delivery, and thus potentially in the range and depth of subject content able to be taught in blended and online modes. The BURF project group charged with selecting and designing the lecture-streaming system is already aware of the need to take this kind of flexibility into account.
- The trial of Mahara: Mahara is an open-source e-portfolio system. It combines easily with Moodle and is thus a very effective expansion of Moodle, and a further incentive to staff and students to use the LMS to greater effect. The use of an e-portfolio links with our signature theme of work integrated learning and offers an integrated social networking system which can be used to create virtual learning communities, whether for online or face-to-face courses. While similar social networking functionality can be provided by other means (through Facebook for instance), the use of an internal system clearly linked to the LMS would avoid the problem identified further below, where students may object to intrusion into their non-university social space by university work.
- Winter semester: Winter semester may be of key importance in building blended learning capability relatively rapidly. Since any teaching offered in that semester must be offered in a shorter time, a range of options exist for how courses should be arranged, and the time available (7 weeks) is such as not to force thinking about course design in any particular single direction (e.g. highly intensive, fully-online, etc). A blended mode of delivery that allows time for quality face-to-face elements and good use of technology-based elements, within a pedagogical framework that builds communities of learning, may be easy to encourage during this period, especially with strategic assistance from the TLC.

Some members of the Review Group expressed a desire that the University should recognise winter semester as a 'sandbox' within which advanced teachers who wish to experiment with new approaches might be explicitly encouraged to do so. Again, TLC involvement with this would help to assess outcomes and disseminate valuable new approaches, and ICT support is vital.

## **4. Models of Blended Learning**

Any search for an all-purpose pragmatic model of blended learning is futile. We should rather aim (as should be the case with all our teaching) to provide staff with a cognitive framework with which to comprehend the possibilities for learning design in good blended and online teaching, and empower them to be able to choose and use the best tools for each task, at the unit and course levels.

To the extent that any top-level framework can provide a conceptual approach that fits all or most learning circumstances, Garrison and Vaughan's<sup>1</sup> (2008) Community of Inquiry framework seems to fit the bill. It positions the educational experience as one that happens at the intersection of a teaching presence (an actual or virtual teacher or teaching role), a cognitive presence (an actual or virtual learner, cognitively engaged with the learning process), and a social presence (actual or virtual presence in the learning space by both teacher or learner). Overlaps between the three circles which fall outside the central educational experience serve to support the process by selecting content, setting climate and supporting discourse.

This model constructs and encourages the central notion of the Community of Inquiry (COI), a constructivist paradigm eminently suited to thinking about how “new learning and teaching,” in the words of Kennedy et al above, needs to be approached. It is particularly apposite in blended learning situations because it makes no initial assumptions about either content or method of learning. For the same reason however, it does not offer concrete solutions for those wishing to make a practical start.

Prof. Mike Keppell's recent presentation at ANU, “Blended Learning: The Future of Higher Education” presented two ways of categorizing blended learning; by level, wherein blended learning may occur at either course, subject (unit) or activity level; and by paradigm, wherein a ‘blend’ may be either:

- Enabling — adding equity, access or flexibility;
- Enhancing — incrementally changing the pedagogy in both face-to-face and technology-supported environments, or
- Transforming — making major redesigns of teaching and learning, e.g. by successful online presentation of a unit formerly thought to be necessarily only face-to-face.

These are helpful frameworks for starting to think about what changes might be beneficial, and how to make them. At the practical level of operational detail however, guidelines such as the UNSW ones (mentioned above) are useful: <http://www.guidelinesonlearning.unsw.edu.au/guidelinesHome.cfm>. The following section describes the context in which a blended learning strategy might be adopted at UC.

## 5. Context of the Blended Learning Strategy at UC

### 5.1. Introduction

The University of Canberra is committed to high quality student learning. This requires an understanding of the learning needs of our students, approaches to teaching which recognise the diversity of our students and courses, and a commitment to ensuring that all students have access to well designed, learner-focussed resources and experiences.

The University of Canberra's Strategic Plan 2008-2012 affirms the University's intention to “*use information and communication technologies to their full potential*” (Our Vision) and to “*deliver courses in a way that best suits the busy life of modern students*” (Our Context). Under Strategy 2 — increasing our student load to 9000 EFTSL by 2013 — three of the Thirty-Nine Steps make the substance of these intentions more specific:

Step 15: Provide a great student experience, appropriate to the age, stage, background and circumstances of a diverse student population.

Step 17: Review our semester system and modalities of course delivery with a view to being attractive to new kinds of well-qualified students.

Step 18: Make the best use of educational technologies and work-based learning opportunities.

Aspects of each step are already in train, but the opportunities afforded by solid and systematic approaches to online and blended learning underpin all of them. For this reason, several recommendations arising from Professor Carole Kayrooz's Review of Courses and Disciplines

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<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, ND, Garrison DR (2008). Blended Learning in Higher Education: Frameworks, Principles and Guidelines

(endorsed by Academic Board, March 2009) targeted online and blended learning environment (APPENDIX 2). Recent proposals for fully online courses have also highlighted the need for further such development.

Consequently, the University of Canberra is reassessing the delivery of its courses to use the most appropriate and effective blended learning options to achieve the best student learning outcomes. Blended learning can provide flexibility in the delivery of education and can provide economies through reuse/repurposing of materials. Most critically it can provide a means to enhance quality learning. In terms of student enrolments, it offers access to students in different geographical catchment areas and its take-up is critical if UC strategic goals are to be achieved.

### **Definition of blended learning**

It is proposed that UC adopt the term 'blended learning' as the principal means of addressing the use of technologies to enhance its learning and teaching activities. In the UC context, the following definition will be used to inform policy and practice in relation to blended learning.

*Blended learning is defined as:*

*A strategic and considered approach to teaching and learning that effectively integrates different models of teaching and styles of learning whereby both face-to-face and online learning are each made better by the presence of the other. (Carter 2009)*

This definition encompasses many of the pedagogical approaches and practices already in place at UC and provides a mandate for supporting academic staff as they seek to achieve best practice in the integration of technologies in the curriculum.

One aim of a blended learning approach is to encourage and enable student *engagement* with the course. A way that encourages students to be *active* learners is to focus student activity on learning tasks that require students to follow a series of actions that will lead to effective learning, such as:

- Conducting investigations or surveys
- Carrying out fieldwork or observations
- Working with case studies
- Undertaking investigations or reports
- Reflective tasks on learning at different stages of the course
- Designing projects
- Contributing to an ongoing online discussion
- Group investigations and reports
- Group presentations and debates
- Literature searches and reviews
- Designing and conducting an experiment
- Gathering a portfolio of activities or evidence for skills
- Undertaking a research project
- A whole course based around resolving a problem scenario or a series of these

### **5.2. Principles underpinning a Blended Learning Approach at UC**

UC values the on-campus experience for students and will continue to provide and further develop a lively and intellectually vibrant campus. Learning technologies can contribute to the creation of a dynamic teaching and learning environment, supporting interaction among distributed communities and increase student access to resources, experiences and expertise. In this context, learning technologies will be used to enhance student opportunities and provide flexibility and learner choice, therefore blended approaches that combine face-to-face and technology supported learning will be emphasised.

Our use of technologies will support student and staff interaction. The University will identify preferred learning technologies such as video streaming, podcasting and social networking tools which will be supported through staff development and training and appropriately resourced technical support. All learning technologies will be selected on the basis of their capacity to support effective teaching and student learning, and their adoption and use will be guided by our commitment to student learning.

**10 key principles** underpin the University of Canberra's use of learning technologies. They will:

1. assist students in learning how to use technologies effectively;
2. create learning experiences that would otherwise be difficult to provide;
3. enhance the nature and scope of learning experiences;

4. enrich the campus experience for students;
5. facilitate leading practice and innovative approaches to learning and teaching;
6. increase access to resources that support learning;
7. meet student expectations about appropriate uses of technologies to support learning and engagement;
8. provide flexibility of provision to support a diverse student population;
9. provide increased flexibility for staff and students; and
10. support collaboration and communication between staff and students, and among students;

The appropriate use of learning technologies will support distributed learning, utilising different technologies for different content, learners and learning experiences.

### **5.3. The Teaching-Learning-Technology framework at UC**

#### ***Flexible or Blended?***

The University of Canberra, along with many other universities in Australia and elsewhere, has used the term ‘flexible learning’ to address matters relating to the organisation of learning and teaching activities. Flexible learning is a broad concept that encompasses: forms of access, participation, content, teaching and learning methods; responsiveness to student needs; assessment methods and choice of resources, all of which can be augmented by the effective use of educational technologies in particular contexts.

The principles and practices associated with flexible learning concepts at UC were originally articulated in the Policy Statement, *Learning for the Future: The University of Canberra Flexible Learning Policy* (revised 2007). The policy promoted a range of learning modes and encouraged diversity in the time and place of educational delivery. A student-centred approach to flexible learning was advocated, with emphasis upon enhancing the quality of learning. The policy covered the management, staffing issues, funding and resources. Recent thinking and practice supports the fact that the use of technology in association with learning and teaching requires more specific attention, hence the emergence and our use of the term ‘blended learning’.

Our Blended Learning Strategy sits within a tri-modal TLT framework to be implemented over 3 years to effect significant curriculum renewal.

#### **Tri-Modal Teaching-Learning-Technology framework**

##### **Mode 1 - Enabling: ‘adding equity, access or flexibility’ – 100% of courses by 2010**

**Baseline** course administration, unit information (for single unit sites), anonymous feedback and learner support, sometimes referred to as ‘supplementary mode’ or ‘minimum presence’. It is proposed that Mode 1 provision be mandatory for all courses and programs at the University of Canberra.

*Although we are only just acquiring the tools to analyse the situation at UC, it is believed that about 97% of units have an online site through the Learning Management System (Moodle). How many of these meet the baseline described above would require an audit of Moodle sites but will be greatly improved when the Equella Unit Outline project is complete and the processes in place to ensure that this data is fully compliant with policy. The approvals process in Equella facilitates the academic scrutiny of the pedagogical quality, particularly the assessment design, in unit outlines.*

##### **Mode 2 - Enhancing: ‘incrementally changing the pedagogy in both face-to-face and technology-supported environments’ – 85% of courses by 2012**

Blended learning, leading to significant enhancements of curricula and pedagogy, including enhanced research-teaching linkages, optimised work integrated learning experiences, and an internationalised approach to learning, teaching and curriculum design.

*The facilitation of Mode 2 blended learning approaches is the **main goal** of this strategic statement. Blended learning approaches will vary according to the particular learning and teaching context and according to the pedagogical principles informing curriculum development. The defining characteristic of blended learning approaches is that technology will be used to enrich the quality of the student learning experience through interactive learning activities beyond those attainable through face-to-*

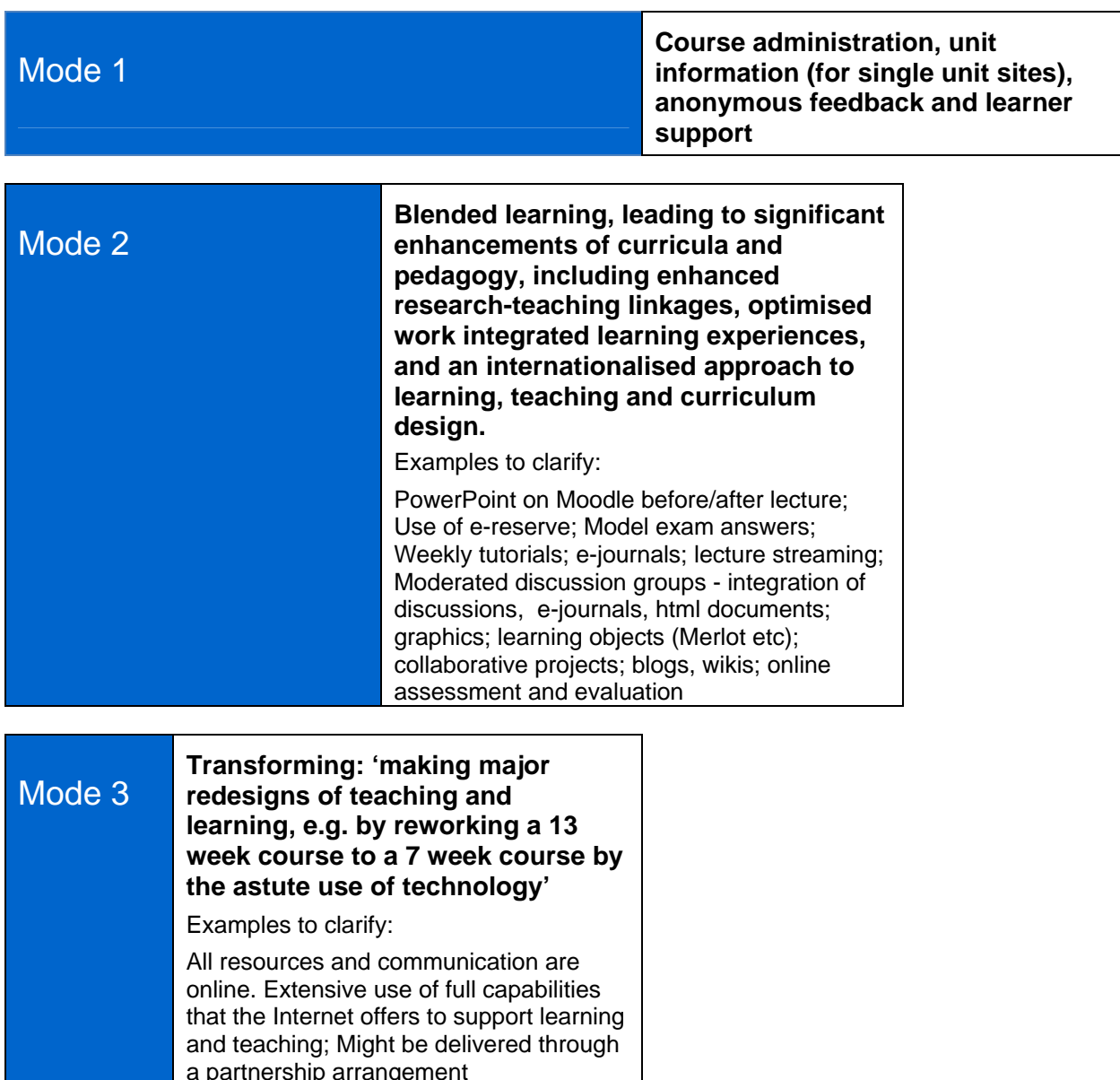
face classroom interactions. Conversely, the best use of online learning should enable classroom activities to be active and engaging learning experiences.

### **Mode 3 - Transforming: ‘making major redesigns of teaching and learning’ – 15% of courses by 2012**

This may be represented by fully online courses or a mix of intensive face-to-face and online, and incorporate all the best features of Modes 1 and 2. These will be developed in response to **strategic** needs of the University and might represent about 15% of the courses on offer.

*Mode 3 fully online course modules already exist at UC, for example in the form of external offerings at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The strategic and quality implications of extending the present level of Mode 3 activity need to be addressed as a separate, but complementary exercise and might best be achieved through partnering with a provider experienced and resourced for fully online delivery. Reworking a 13 week course to a 7 week course by the astute use of technology requires a major redesign and thus requires the allocation of significant resources to achieve this component by 2010. (Refer to APPENDIX 3).*

#### **Diagram representing the Tri-Modal Teaching-Learning-Technology framework**



## Benefits of strategic learning-teaching-technology framework

Adoption of blended learning approaches has the following benefits:

- Best fits the current learning and teaching environment and aspirations at UC
- Builds on and consolidates existing best practice at UC
- Enriches the student experience and learning outcomes
- Enhances formal and informal learning opportunities
- Supports the important goal of accommodating student diversity
- Reflects international theorising and leading practice in this area
- Avoids the *'all-or-nothing'* assumptions inherent in previous online learning approaches
- Optimises the opportunity to secure widespread ownership and acceptance among academic colleagues
- Provides flexibility in terms of implementation at the course and program level
- Supports current institutional strategic directions in learning and teaching, including opportunities for promoting interdisciplinarity, internationalising the curriculum, enhancement of research-led teaching and of work-integrated learning
- Complements the existing views of flexible learning while at the same time emphasising the unique pedagogical qualities characterising the blending of face-to-face and technology-enhanced learning and teaching
- Increases competitiveness in building new student markets enabled by flexible and innovative program delivery
- Optimises opportunities to attract and retain top quality students
- Contributes to cost effective learning and teaching solutions
- Makes optimal use of physical and virtual resources.

## 6. Blended Learning Strategy at UC

### 6.1. Strategic intent

The strategic intent is to support the institutional learning and teaching priorities, as outlined in the *Academic Plan*, to ensure that UC achieves distinctiveness and excellence in its program offerings and in the quality of the student experience and learning outcomes. This strategy contributes to these goals by proposing that blended learning approaches be embedded *judiciously* in all learning and teaching programs over the next **three-year period** to further enhance the quality of student learning at UC.

In practice, this means aligning blended learning approaches with the strategic objectives and action areas identified as priorities in *Academic Plan*, namely:

- Providing an excellent student learning experience that supports student success
- Assuring the quality of teaching programs to a high level
- Providing students with teaching and learning programs that reflect the distinctive UC 'signature' experience
- Providing comprehensive support for students as they prepare for lifelong learning and employment
- Ensuring that staff are supported to achieve high professional standards in the provision of teaching and learning
- Providing an excellent campus environment to support the student learning experience
- Developing key policy and supporting statements to inform and support the *Learning and Academic Success NETWORK* Plan (under development).

### 6.2. Characteristics of blended learning environments

An effective blended learning environment at UC will be informed by good teaching (refer APPENDIX 4: *Teaching Capability*) and have characteristics that include:

- High priority attached to student learning and pedagogical needs when considering and applying blended learning approaches
- Strategic and systematic use of technology in association with a quality face-to-face environment to support student learning
- Enhancement and ultimate transformation of existing learning and teaching processes
- Flexibility in terms of implementation at the program and course levels

- Accommodation of diversity in student learning experiences
- Encouragement and nurturing of innovation among students and staff
- Enhanced interaction between students, staff, peers and the community
- Increased capacity for student-managed learning
- Learning that takes place at students' discretion in terms of time and place
- Enriched opportunities for work-integrated learning activities
- Enhanced research–teaching linkages
- Creation of collaborative, distributed learning environments
- A professional team approach to course design, delivery and evaluation
- Targeted professional development, including resources to support blended learning curriculum design and requisite technical skills acquisition.

### **6.3. Goals for the Blended Learning Strategy**

- i. To systematically embed blended learning approaches in the teaching and learning activities of all programs by 2012
- ii. To develop a campus environment capable of supporting blended learning
- iii. To nurture and extend staff capabilities in the applications of blended learning
- iv. To extend the University's quality assurance framework to support blended learning approaches (Reference Strategic Planning and Quality Improvement for Learning and Teaching at the University of Canberra, November 2004)

#### **Goal i. To systematically embed blended learning approaches in the teaching and learning activities of all programs by 2012**

- Academic staff and relevant support staff to have an informed understanding of the conceptual and pedagogical implications of the application of blended learning in curricula
- Academic staff to be competent in documenting and explaining the rationale and applications of blended learning in course and program design, including expectations for, and impact on, the student learning experience and outcomes
- Curriculum documents make explicit statements on the means by which the strategic priorities of teaching-research linkages, work-integrated learning and internationalisation of the student experience are enhanced by blended learning approaches
- Program plans to have clearly articulated statements on strategies for embedding blended learning approaches

#### **Goal ii. To develop a campus environment capable of supporting blended learning**

- Provide both physical and virtual environments for collaborative and individual blended learning activities
- Further develop and maintain a flexible and responsive learning management system
- Ensure that access to a rich array of learning and information resources is seamlessly integrated within the learning and teaching environment
- Ensure that all students have access to skills training in information management and the use of ICTs within their disciplinary and program contexts
- Provide cost effective technical infrastructure to support blended learning approaches, including unit outlines in a CMS and video streaming
- Develop the capability for the local production and reuse of learning resources
- Further develop and maintain high quality blended learning tools and services
- Integrate social networking tools into the blended learning environment

### **Goal iii. To nurture opportunities and extend staff capabilities in the use of blended learning**

- Develop a virtual and physical Teaching Commons to promote the discussion and scholarly exchange of innovative strategies and to provide feedback on best practice in the use of blended learning approaches. This includes development and dissemination of professional development resources on pedagogical and technical implications of blended learning approaches
- Further develop an institution-wide system for rewarding innovation and good practice in the use of blended learning
- Develop and embed opportunities at all levels in the university for research into student-focused blended learning
- Ensure educational design support from TLC with ADEs for academic staff in being able to incorporate blended learning approaches into curriculum design, development, delivery and evaluation.
- Foster collaboration with other universities and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) in order to extend the knowledge and understanding of good practice in blended learning approaches

### **Goal iv. To extend the University's quality assurance framework to support blended learning approaches**

- Develop a series of indicators and measures for institutional success in terms of embedding blended learning in the student learning experience across programs at undergraduate and postgraduate level
- Develop and incorporate quality improvement mechanisms and measures related to blended learning as an integral part of the University's learning and teaching quality assurance framework
- Ensure the student evaluation of unit and course instruments include questions on the impact of blended learning activities

## **6.4. Indicators of success**

There are several ways in which UC will know that it has succeeded in fulfilling its strategic goals for blended learning, including:

- Blended learning becomes an integral part of all curricula by 2012
- Academic staff confidently integrate educational technologies into curricula in a manner consistent with course and program learning outcomes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels
- Students graduate with confidence in their capabilities to use ICTs for enhancing lifelong learning
- Students are attracted to UC because of its reputation for providing an up-to-date and enhanced learning experience
- Links with local, national and international communities are optimised and dependent on the effective use of blended learning approaches
- Innovative approaches to developing teaching-research linkages emerge through the application of blended learning
- Blended learning approaches are recognised as being integral to the UC vision of engagement through public scholarship.

## **Organisational and management implications**

In order to fulfil the goals and objectives of the *Blended Learning Strategy*, the following factors require attention:

- Ensure the cohesion and effectiveness and governance of all organisational units supporting the academic community in developing blended learning approaches
- Ensure that budget reviews and provision are aligned to enable sustainable blended learning approaches
- Ensure alignment between the University's institutional *Blended Learning Strategy* and the strategic plans of faculties
- Ensure the effective integration of teaching and learning activities with administrative services

## **Review**

The *Blended Learning Strategy* will be reviewed at the end of 2012.

To implement this, the following recommendations are suggested:

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: overall**

**That blended learning (which encompasses online) approaches be used by all staff to encourage student engagement to enhance learning outcomes and create an interactive and dynamic teaching and learning environment for all students**

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: overall**

**That the “Blended Learning Strategy 2010-2012” described here be adopted and actioned immediately, in light of the Winter Intensive Term.**

**All other recommendations flow on from these two recommendations.**

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: overall**

**That UC ensures it has the capacity to support the development of such new methods and approaches in ICT as are essential to continually develop robust and flexible tools for flexible and blended learning**

### **RECOMMENDATION TLC1:**

**That the TLC develop an Educational Capability Plan for the Blended Learning Strategy 2010 - 2012, with Stage 1. to focus on the Winter Intensive Term**

**and**

### **RECOMMENDATION TLC2:**

**That the TLC be sufficiently resourced to implement this plan which would put concentrated effort into assisting staff to develop flexible and blended approaches for courses offered in the Winter Intensive Term**

### **RECOMMENDATION TLC3:**

**That TLC contextually assess the merits of new teaching approaches adopted in Winter semester or elsewhere, and compile a searchable toolbox of blended approaches to facilitate adoption by other staff**

### **RECOMMENDATION TLC4:**

**That TLC examine such programs as those offered by the Centre for Customs and Excise Studies and the Siemens medical diagnostics project, with a view to documenting those aspects of their programs and teaching approach that might be applicable more broadly across the University**

UC values the on-campus experience for students and will continue to provide and further develop a lively and intellectually vibrant campus. Learning technologies, however, can contribute to the creation of a dynamic teaching and learning environment, supporting interaction among distributed communities and increasing student access to resources, experiences and expertise. In this context, appropriate learning technologies will be used to enhance student engagement through increased flexibility and learner choice.

## **7. Benchmarking**

The Review examined the public web-based information provided by the G06 comparison group of universities (Flinders, James Cook, Macquarie, Murdoch, University of Tasmania and Wollongong) and the regional competitors identified in the JWT Situation Analysis prior to the Review of Courses and Disciplines (ANU, ADFA, Charles Sturt [and Wollongong]). Initially this was undertaken primarily to assess the comparative state of development of UC's activities and approaches, and to collect information about approaches, activities and steps that we might usefully imitate, given that aspects of 'best' practice might well be found in a number of places.

In fact this exercise yielded more useful information than was expected about strategic framework and policy, and about approaches for conceptually embedding online and blended learning within a higher-order teaching and learning framework. Some of this is discussed within this section, and some under subsequent headings.

Other benchmarking activities need to be undertaken as the University moves more and more into the blended/online learning space. A limited-scope benchmarking exercise undertaken by the IRUA group (Innovative Research Universities of Australia) using the ACODE Benchmarks (Refer APPENDIX 5) indicated that all participants were able to identify areas for self-improvement and, more importantly, partners with whom to work for those improvement purposes. This is a good time in this University's fortunes to form partnerships with which to better identify the areas in which change and development is needed, and to gain assistance in that change and development process.

An immediate observation that springs from inspecting the websites of other universities is that UC does not make the best of its own accomplishments. While we are probably roughly in the mid-range of the distributions of both quality and quantity of online and blended learning activities, at least for our size, we do not present as coherent a picture of our activities as most of the comparison universities do. This alone would go some way toward improving our marketing of the courses that use such methods.

In summary, a few universities demonstrate elements of best practice not just in informing their staff and students about blended and online learning, but in understanding and structuring the universities' own substantive activities in the area. Griffith University (GU), the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and Charles Sturt University (CSU) deliberately not only positioned online and blended learning as part of teaching and learning as a whole, but also situated this pairing in a close relationship to research. In the case of CSU, the notion of a "total scholarly environment" markets well, to staff and students alike, what the university is about — and one we should consider our own version at UC.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: overall**

**That UC collaborate with an appropriate strategic grouping of universities to benchmark progress in developing online and blended learning against the e-Learning Maturity Model. (see: <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/research/emm/VersionTwo.shtml>)**

**RECOMMENDATION 5: overall**

**That representations of blended learning activities on the UC website, and in other marketing/PR information, tells a strong story about the University's accomplishments at a project level**

The message that springs loud and clear from the benchmarking information, whether as a result of its presence or absence on the sites of any given university, is that online and blended learning must be positioned as an aspect of teaching and learning, and this serves to reinforce the first recommendation of this review.

Perhaps more subtly, the linkage between teaching and research, and a notion such as CSU's "Total Scholarly Environment," an idea broadly supported by GU and UNSW, are highly important ones for UC to take on board. As mentioned in the initial background to this report, the connection between teaching and research, as expressly identified in the Bradley Review, spells out very clearly where Universities need to go if they are going to preserve their status. It will become increasingly important for all aspects of teaching to be linked back to research activity. We will be stronger if all teaching and all research are conceived of as part of the same universe of scholarly activity.

Research into learning and teaching needs to be consciously built in to the array of methods used to motivate strategic change. The university has had good success, for its size, in attracting Carrick/ALTC grants, and there is now a positive repository of expertise, reputation, and links with other universities that is there to be built on. If development of online and blended capabilities is to be a priority for UC over the next few years — and the Review Group feels that it should be — then some targeted internal assistance with ALTC grant applications might be a worthwhile strategy. Such

assistance would be best directed towards ALTC's Competitive Grants Program, since they count as research.

Only a restricted range of universities offer a full distance-education (DE) capability. Some universities which might have been expected to go down the DE pathway and which would seem to be equipped to do so, such as Wollongong, have deliberately chosen not to. Even without a close analysis of the costings, this would appear to indicate that for UC, embarking on such a path on its own might be risky. In order to facilitate delivery of fully-online programs and flexible options generally however, it may be useful to form a strategic alliance with one or more partner institutions which already have well-developed capabilities in this area.

At an operational level, an inspection of how other universities marshal their physical resources indicates that some changes that would be worth considering at UC. Audio-visual (AV) services currently sit under ICT Services here. Although their major purpose is to support physical teaching and learning spaces, the current arrangement means there is an indirectness in the relationship to their stakeholders which means inevitably that decisions about AV are not necessarily driven by teaching and learning considerations. A number of institutions have reconceptualised their AV services as support related to learning environments (or learning spaces) which includes both the physical and virtual elements of teaching spaces. This would align well with the Learning Technologies and Environments program approach in the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) which supports and provides strategic advice for the development of our broad technology-enabled learning and teaching, including the Learning Management System (Moodle) and related educational technologies such as the Mahara ePortfolio pilot and the BURF-funded Video streaming Project. There are economies and knowledge flows in the current arrangement that should be preserved but this should be invested by LEAG for urgent consideration and as a matter for further recommendation.

**RECOMMENDATION 6: overall**

**That UC develop its own notion of the “total scholarly environment” in the form of a virtual and physical UC Teaching Commons to promote the discussion and scholarly exchange of innovative strategies and to provide feedback on best practice in the use of blended learning approaches**

**RECOMMENDATION 7: overall**

**That the University provide funding to seed developments and target assistance to strong applications to the ALTC Grants and Fellowships programs for projects specifically related to furthering UC's capacities in blended learning**

**RECOMMENDATION 8: overall**

**That UC consider forming a strategic partnership with a university equipped for, and experienced in, distance education and fully-online courses, through which to develop our capacity in that area**

**RECOMMENDATION LEAG1:**

**That LEAG, as a matter of urgency, be charged with investigating ways in which the relationship between AV services and the Teaching and Learning Centre can be made closer and more direct**

## **8. Staff and student expectations**

### **8.1 Staff**

While Deans and ADEs were inevitably divergent in the pictures painted of current and future expectations, taken collectively they give a rich picture of staff views on where we are and where we need to go. The following is a summary of expressed positions on the questions posed to Deans and ADEs; some summaries combine responses to more than one question, reflecting the expression of related views in successive questions. Responses from other staff consulted during the process are also worked into this summary:

- Understanding of blended learning:

This was variable, but most saw blended learning as a mix of strategies combining face-to-face interactions and technology-based interactions, matched for best fit to content, cohort disposition etc. The general feeling was however that there was ample scope for much more of this to be done; several Deans felt that staff perceived units as intrinsically belonging to a certain teaching mode — generally either all face-to-face or all online. Some areas noted that accreditation was an issue, though not necessarily an insurmountable one.

- Pedagogic rationale for blended/online learning:

The rationale generally perceived was the opportunity to actually enrich learning and teaching, by better using on-campus time, allowing students to learn at their own pace, facilitating peer-to-peer learning, increasing opportunities for critical reflection and thoughtful contributions by students, and better assessing participation.

- Preparedness to use online/blended approaches:

There was some sympathy for the view that staff time is fully consumed and that another change (moving to more blended learning approaches) would be difficult at the moment. Some staff were already skilled and interested, some not. The current EB was viewed as inequitable in its treatment of online/blended approaches, as opposed to face-to-face teaching. There was some perceived reserve or hesitancy on the part of senior management in recommending greater adoption of these approaches, though infrastructure issues and a perceived lack of information about demand from students for online/blended learning, contributed to this.

Attitudinally, there was considerable positive staff interest in implementing developments in online/blended learning, but almost universally this was tempered by change fatigue and by a feeling that infrastructure was not currently up to the task.

- Resourcing changes necessary at central level to facilitate change:

The common factor here was the workload model; staff needed to be empowered to choose a workload model that allowed for efficiently flexible approaches while accurately reflecting effort. There was also a commonly expressed desire for (preferably) central assistance with technical support and advice.

- Necessity of shifting towards online/blended models:

This was widely seen as essential and necessary, with the following arguments quoted: UC's demographic (and particularly the demographic we aspire to increasingly attract) is a working one; we need to be maximally competitive when the 'cap' comes off CSP places; PG students in particular need to be catered for more flexibly. The need to ensure a vigorous on-campus life, however, was also mentioned.

- Perceived major advantage in blended learning: efficiency, market expansion or quality improvement:

Deans in particular viewed efficiency, market competitiveness and quality improvement as of equally high importance, though several sounded cautionary notes about quality, to the effect that quality was certainly not *automatically* raised by a move to blended modes.

## 8.2 Students

There is evidence that even current students, who have generally not been exposed to a wide range of blended learning approaches, nevertheless favour a strong element of blended/flexible learning in their degrees. Staff views of student demand, which may be largely anecdotal, indicate that while there is no desire to reduce face-to-face content in small-group classes such as tutorials and practical sessions, lectures are viewed as optional and largely replaceable by alternative technology-based options such as web-delivery. This view is however directly supported by research at UC (MacPherson 2008) on a cohort of third year undergraduates, and indirectly supported by the kinds of initiative put in place at other universities.

The encouraging message in the MacPherson paper is that while students avoided lectures, they did in fact consult the replacement sources. It would be unwise to attempt to derive, from information of this kind, a model that could be presumed to apply to students in general, even within a narrowly-

defined cohort. The key here is, indeed, flexibility: providing students with different pathways to the same goal, and using blended learning options always with a view to enriching possibilities rather than closing down options.

A submission from the President of the UC Students Association raised some legitimate concerns about matters such as the staff training and education necessary to "get it right," and made the point that "the university has to have a clear understanding on what in fact blended learning and online learning is and how they want to use it." However, the submission was generally positive in tone; in response to a question on the pedagogic rationale, for instance, it said "Blended learning can reach students in a more interactive way that may allow for greater understanding of the subject matter ... fully-online learning ... may attract an new audience who is unable to attend classes for various reasons. In particular people in full time work such as the public service may find this as an effective way to combine work with study. It allows for a more flexible timetable and puts more onus on the student to learn for themselves.

Research, including research within UC (Miley and Read, 2009; Fitzgerald and Steele, 2008) indicates a need for some caution in the use of social software. There is often a presumption made that all 'net-gen' students are 'techno-savvy,' and that those who frequently use technology in their private lives will therefore unquestioningly embrace it in learning and teaching. These studies, and more recently the ALTC project led by Gregor Kennedy et al from University of Melbourne, Charles Sturt University and Wollongong University, have all shown to various degrees and in various ways that "while emerging technologies afford a range of learning activities that can improve student learning processes and outcomes," "managing and aligning pedagogical, technical and administrative issues is a necessary condition of success when using emerging technologies for learning.." (Kennedy et al, "Educating the Net Generation" workshop. The last slide from this presentation is the one we should all see and note:

"Innovation with learning technologies typically requires the development of:

- New technology-based skills
- And new learning and teaching
- Which entails significant effort for both students and staff
- Do not underestimate this for either group"
- 

### **8.3 Evidence from the survey**

The survey was directed to and completed by both students and staff, partly to enable a comparison between the two groups in relation to the same issues. Postgraduate research students were specifically included on the grounds that they may have a role as tutors, and they are also likely to have recent experience of contemporary online/blended learning modes in their capacity as former UG students. At the time of writing, more staff members than students have contributed to the survey.

The survey — a trial version for a more detailed iteration still to come — had a higher dropout rate than was desirable, and the desire to correct such issues was the reason for the trial. However, clear preferences are present even with a small sample. In summary, respondents (across types) showed the following preferences:

- A diversity of teaching approaches is important;
- A mix of face-to-face and technology-based teaching, as contextually appropriate, is preferable within a unit;
- Current teaching and/or learning for respondents is already a mix of face-to-face and online;
- Live lectures and face-to-face tutorials are good tools, but other delivery forms can be as rich, and may allow multiple use of the same material;
- Strategic, rather than uniform, use of Web 2.0 tools is preferable;
- Blended learning allows for better alignment of outcomes with assessment methods;
- Blended or mixed-mode teaching fosters more types and modes of social contact than either face-to-face or online alone.

Indeterminate preferences were shown for different forms of teaching presence and cognitive presence; these appear to be a function of the questions, and require change for the future survey.

**RECOMMENDATION 9: overall**

**That workload models within Faculties ensure that online and blended teaching is treated equitably**

**RECOMMENDATION LEAG2:**

**That LEAG investigate in more detail the reasons for any negativity from either the Students' Association, and the student body more generally, towards online and blended learning, and seek to identify and recommend solutions**

## **9. Resourcing**

Two major developments already mentioned — the successful roll-out of Moodle, and the BURF-funded lecture streaming project — are already taking place or commenced, and will provide significant reinforcement to UC's online and blended learning capabilities. However, weaknesses exist elsewhere that militate against the ability to capitalize fully on these developments: our computing infrastructure is run down, and needs significant input quite apart from any moves towards online/blended learning. The potential for capabilities in online/blended learning, and the particular strategies to be employed, need to be explicitly taken into account as we refresh this infrastructure. Other related issues, such as possible schemes for the loan/supply/lease of student laptops, the use of private equipment in class, and the continuing (or not) role of student computer labs etc., will need to be part of an integrated decision-making process. This process affects not only technology itself, but the use and physical configuration of teaching spaces.

The need to refresh computing infrastructure at the same time as managing an increase in use of blended learning may provide for some efficiencies. As an example, the university does not have a full-time video conferencing facility open to use by all staff, though it has three such partially-operational facilities. Meanwhile desktop video is becoming a far more realistic and user-operable capability of normal desktop computers. New rollouts of desktop staff machines will need to take a constructive view of how to handle such facilities, for which demand can only increase.

Training of staff to take advantage of learning technology will be a significant, and rolling, cost. Training will be required to motivate change, as well as to actually develop skills; the necessary training to change pedagogy and teaching approaches will if anything be more demanding than software training, at least some of which should be able to be managed through self-directed learning.

Policy or guidelines need to be developed with respect to the use of off-campus Web 2.0 technologies for teaching. These are needed to direct appropriate support infrastructure.

A University of Canberra student portal to replace OSIS and OPUS is needed, and this system will need to support social networking. This may be realised by the Campus EAI project which is just commencing but much improved engagement is required. The possibility for continued use of this system by graduates has been raised, and this needs to be investigated; while costs would be associated with such an initiative, it would also strengthen alumni ties considerably, and this may be a compensating factor.

**RECOMMENDATION LEAG3:**

**That the Project Manager of the Campus EAI Project consult with LEAG to ensure that its full potential to support learning and teaching is realised, and to ensure its alignment with other teaching and learning initiatives**

At various times. Staff have raised the possibility of UC becoming an extensively or fully-online campus, and perhaps moving into full distance education. This would be a significant departure from UC's current role, and would require an investment greater than we would be able to currently make. The resources already discussed above require careful costing by people equipped and qualified to make such judgements, but clearly they run to millions. Any major move into distance education thus needs to be done through and with a partner university already equipped and competent in that role.

## 10. Marketing

This is an area in which the Review Group still needs to make further advances. It was pointed out early in the life of the Review, by Jules Wills, that without a clear idea of what it was we wanted to market, expenditure on marketing would be futile. The marketing of individual programs is easier when those individual programs are subsumed under a brand that consistently enunciates the values to which future students will be drawn. The University's brand certainly is strengthening, but fully-online courses, in particular, will need to be marketed in areas to which the locally-increased brand strength will not have penetrated.

As Richard Buddle remarked in response to this Review, "Marketing tertiary education follows the same rules as all other services marketing. Seminal authors of marketing will point towards things like: promote what is exclusive, provide better products and service, provide better value and better price, provide convenient access, provide personalised service to customers' needs." Nevertheless, tertiary education is a difficult market because there is a lack of clarity about exactly what is, or should be, being marketed. As a paper provided by Richard Buddle (Ancil 2008) says, "what is 'for sale' in higher education are the intangibles such as learning and lived experiences. It is impossible to show a prospective student what a college education is, so colleges and universities often show the evidence of what a college education experience will look like." The experience that UC needs to be able to market is the experience of learning enjoyably while learning effectively: the process, not the ultimate product. Learning *itself* needs to become our product; learning should not be a sacrifice one makes to get a job, but rather an experience to be highly valued in its own right.

Recent advertising campaigns within Faculties have shown impressive results with online advertising in locations such as Facebook, and it is possible there is some academic interest, across the University, in social networking and social media. These are potentially marketing channels that do have the potential strength of demonstrating something important about the experience of being a student; about the 'how' of learning rather than the 'what' of learning. It should be possible for the University to gather together the collected expertise of these people and either build a funded or sponsored research project, and/or recruit a HDR student in the area to design a campaign using cutting-edge approaches from this field. Unless a very clear commercial alternative to this can be found, with an irresistibly strong track record of success in this narrow field, the expense involved in this research proposal is likely to be less than paying external private firms, and at least as likely to succeed.

### **RECOMMENDATION LEAG4:**

**That LEAG gather together an online marketing group to design a student project or a staff-supervised practical student project to design a marketing campaign using social networking tools**

## Conclusion

If the university is to create an interactive and dynamic teaching and learning environment to work for the needs of all students and staff we should learn from past experience here and elsewhere.

We should also, however, pay attention to the ways in which tertiary education needs to change to compete successfully, not only against other educational institutions, but against the chances offered by the dynamic information world. Once universities were guardians and gatekeepers to information, but we can never again be anything of the kind. Our teaching must not be about imparting information, but about modelling and mentoring self-perpetuating skills in evaluating, sifting, comparing, judging and synthesising, all within a framework that fosters original and creative thought, cooperative working modes and broad social engagement.

The tools that make for the best blended teaching and learning are precisely the tools that facilitate the best and most discriminating use of the flood of information that is characteristic of our time, and which can only get bigger. We must use these tools so that the experience of formal learning is part and parcel of the experience of learning to live in the world at large.

A blended future environment that engages students to improve learning outcomes is not optional – it needs to be adopted universally and supported appropriately. It must be dynamic, not fixed in stone. It will be continually evaluated and adjusted. Decisions on blended learning approaches will be

evidence-based. With an investment in blended learning that provides experiential richness, students will want to come to the University of Canberra, and to stay and to recommend the distinctive experience to others ... and staff will be proud to say that they are a part of UC.

**RECOMMENDATION LEAG5:**

**That LEAG undertake, with assistance within the University, to cost in detail the anticipated resource implications identified in this Review.**

If we are to be successful in terms of our regional engagement strategies and our winter intensive term, then we have no option but to adopt a blended learning approach.

## APPENDIX 1: List of Consultations

The Review Panel as originally proposed by Pro Vice-Chancellor Education Professor Carole Kayrooz, in concert with the Vice Chancellor's Group, consisted of the following people:

Assoc. Prof. Greg Battye (Chair)  
Assoc. Prof. Helen Carter  
Professor Dharmendra Sharma  
Professor Cathryn McConaghy  
Dr Alan Arnold  
Dr Grazia Scotellaro  
Mr Michael de Percy  
Mr Dale Kleeman  
Dr Maree Sainsbury  
Dr Jules Wills

In practice it was impracticable for Deans to attend meetings of the Review Group, and they preferred to consult in other ways. They also indicated a desire for others in their Faculties to contribute, on the basis of possibly more directly specialised knowledge. Given that the Learning Environments Advisory Group (LEAG) contained some of those suggested people, and because the role and interests of LEAG were largely coincident with the interests of the Review Panel, LEAG itself ended up being both the principal source of direct inputs to the Review, and its most constructive sounding board. To the list of names provided above, this added the following people:

Dr James Neill  
Mr Marc Emerson  
Dr Robert Fitzgerald  
Ms Anita Crotty  
Ms Katarina Christenson

Ms Alicia Thomson also contributed when Jules Wills was unable to attend. Many of those above contributed in more than one way —through formal meetings of the group, but also by reviewing, providing and/or commenting on documents, and on many occasions, through informal discussion.

As the lecture-streaming project funded through the Better Universities Renewal Fund (BURF) was also critical to aspects of this Review, some output from the BURF Working Group, chaired by Helen Carter, was also incorporated. Stef Batts-Cirilli, the only person on that Working Group not already included in either LEAG or the existing Review Group, thus also contributed to this report.

All Associate Deans Education were circulated with information and drafts, and all contributed in various ways and at various stages to completion of the Review. All Deans were formally invited to make submissions, and were provided with a formal questionnaire to structure their responses. The Review Group owes a particular debt in this regard to Professors Gibson, Maher and Skidmore, who all made time available for detailed structured interviews which contributed strongly to the overall shape of the report. Professor McConaghy provided a short interview but also facilitated detailed contributions from the Faculty of Education ADE, Dr Francesco Sofo, and from the ADR Dr Robert Fitzgerald, extra to his other contributions to the Review. Professor Sharma responded to email interview questions and also contributed with informal discussion. While the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) was represented in the form of Assoc. Prof. Carter, direct and extensive contributions were also made by other members of the TLC, Dr Peter Donnan, Mr Shane Nuessler and Mr Leonard Low. These three TLC staff, as well as Mr Matt Bacon, will be continuing to work with the Review Chair on models for

building blended-learning versions of current semester 1 and 2 units for offering in Winter 2010.

The University Education Committee received an early interim report on the progress of the Review, and examined a full draft at the meeting of 29 April. Some detailed comments received at that meeting have been incorporated in this version of the Report.

Two submissions were received from the UC Students Association, one from Mr Marc Emerson in his capacity as a UCSA representative on LEAG, and one from Mr Kurt Steel as UCSA President. The Convener of the UC Research Education Program, Dr Joelle Vandermensbrugge, assisted in disseminating information on a survey of staff and students and made useful comments on that survey, as well as informal comments on graduate students' preferences in relation to online learning.

Two Moodle Mentors in the Faculty of Arts and Design with considerable Media Production experience and expertise, Drs Sam Hinton and Jordan Williams, contributed worthwhile perspectives on ways of using the LMS (Moodle) to manage content across both conventional units and equivalent or related blended-learning units. Others elsewhere also responded generously; Dr Elke Stracke shared experiences of blended learning in TESOL classes, Mr Richard Buddle offered detailed views on marketing, and Assoc. Prof. David Tait shared his knowledge of principles affecting intensive delivery of units in research methods.

Externally, three former UC staff members, now with specific experience of online and blended approaches elsewhere, provided perspectives on methods and approaches: Ms Jenny Millea, formerly in Creative Writing at UC and now with Education.Au; Dr Ian Hart, formerly Head of Media at UC and subsequently Head of the Interactive Media Group at the University of Hong Kong and Principal Supervisor of Learnnet, the Learning Objects co-ordinating group for Hong Kong and China; and Assoc. Prof. Marj Kibby, former Lecturer in Media at UC and now a researcher at the University of Newcastle with a special interest in the use of new technologies to deliver authentic learning experiences.

The Chair, Dr Battye, also attended two relevant half-day seminars during the period of the Review: "Blended Learning: The Future of Higher Education," run by Professor Mike Keppell, Director of the Flexible Learning Institute and Professor of Higher Education at Charles Sturt University, and "Educating the Net Generation in Australian Universities," delivered by Assoc. Prof. Barney Dalgarno and Dr. Andrea Bishop, which shared findings from the ALTC-funded "Educating the Net Generation" project.

## **APPENDIX 2: Excerpt from Review of Courses and Disciplines – 20 April 2009**

### *Interactive and blended learning methods*

The University's Strategic Plan exhorts the University to deliver courses in a way that best suits the busy life of modern students. Step 17 of the Plan directs us to *Review our modalities of course delivery with a view to being attractive to new kinds of qualified students* and Step 18 to *Make the best use of educational technologies and work-based learning opportunities*. The Scott 2005 survey indicated that students need *an appropriate variety of interactive, practice-oriented and problem-based learning methods that link to assessment tasks*. The University itself has an image as small close and personal - the "corner store" rather than the 'franchised supermarket', as one course convener said in a focus group.

### *The use of lectures*

The use of lectures versus web-based learning was often mentioned in canvassing views on learning methodology across the University. Lecturers were genuinely surprised by poor attendance at teaching in lecture format and wondered if there should be a blanket directive to pursue web-based teaching. The question was often asked "Why do we still give lectures?" There was some support for the move to mandatory lecture streaming and a stronger tutorial style system where we did not utilise the lecture except to begin and end a course, or to invite in expert guests, such as visiting fellows or adjuncts with expertise in the field. Many thought that the content of lectures could be provided by web-based resources, blended learning or intensives.

### **Recommendation 3.7**

**That the University Education Committee institute a university wide project to establish an appropriate variety of blended, flexible, interactive practice orientated and problem based learning methods and resources.**

**That the University review, update and seek evidence-based practice in the delivery of lecture and tutorial material.**

**That the University widely adopt streaming technologies and podcasting availability, a tutorial style system, where appropriate, and greater use of adjuncts and visiting fellows in teaching and learning.**

### *Online programs*

While almost all courses at the University have an online component, in 2007 the University sustains 15 fully online programs, all at graduate level. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in almost all cases these courses cater for a cohort that would not otherwise attend the campus. Almost all students are enrolled part-time so although numbers in some programs look very healthy, the EFTSL base to support these programs is low. The obvious tension is that although online mode is clearly a significant teaching and learning mode now and into the future, only five of the programs currently running (Marketing Communication (x2), Creative Writing, Customs, Internet Communication /Knowledge Management) carry more than 8 EFTSL at postgraduate level.

### **Recommendation 3.8**

**That the University seek best practice in marketing of its online programs and launch 2009 with a strong focus on the flexibility provided by online learning.**

### *Intensive mode/multimode*

Although a number of courses include individual units delivered in an intensive mode/multimode, in 2007 the University is currently supporting 12 intensive courses, all at graduate level. Five courses have EFTSL totals greater than 8 in the areas of Business Administration (x2), Inclusive Education (x2) and Physics Education. There may be broader opportunities across the campus to explore this mode in future, especially for tailored entrepreneurial programs that attract a regular cohort (e.g.

Physics Education). Creating flexible options, including timetabling of evening and weekend classes, and offering intensive or multimode delivery in normal leave periods, is increasingly desirable as most UC students are working as well as studying.

### **Recommendation 3.9**

**That the University adopt intensive mode/multimode courses at postgraduate level and move towards intensive mode/multimode at undergraduate level.**

The University could develop a more distinctive marketing edge by investing further in educational design and academic development. Currently either does not feature strongly at the University of Canberra except in a few innovative courses in Communication and Business and Government. A Faculties Partnership Program has been usefully employed in other Australian universities, such as the University of Wollongong and Latrobe, to provide a partnership between educational designer and academic. Adoption and extension of such a program for the University of Canberra would mean that the faculty dean, associate dean education and academic would partner with staff within current TEDS and CELTS to design innovative courses and units in the context of the primary and subsidiary themes of the University<sup>2</sup>. The input of TEDS would be needed to assist with innovative educational and technological design and that of CELTS would be required to provide an appropriate variety of evidence based, interactive, practice oriented and problem based learning methods that link to assessment tasks. The model proposed would be that CELTS and TEDS staff forming a combined inter-professional team to work with academics to design and advance proposed and existing courses and units from an academic and technological perspective.

### **Recommendation 3.10**

**That Faculties develop a Faculty Partnerships Program in conjunction with TEDS and CELTS (now incorporated as the TLC).**

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<sup>2</sup> A proposal to integrate these two units is currently being considered by staff.  
Report on the Review of Online and Blended Learning

## **APPENDIX 3: Guidelines for preparation for Winter Intensive Term 2010**

(ref. Intensive Teaching Formats: Report of the Working Group, University of Melbourne)

### **Preparation and management**

- Provide early access to material
- Require advanced reading
- Use in-class assignments
- Schedule assignments after classes end
- Be careful about choice of material
- Provide fewer but deeper topics

### **Student attitudes and preferences**

- Plan schedule carefully
- Choose and schedule student assessment carefully
- Diversify teaching methods e.g., in-depth group discussions, individual and small group projects, case studies, experiential learning, role plays, simulations, interactive exercises, e
- Use students' experiences as part of the classroom discussion
- Make instruction more process-oriented and use a more facilitative instructional style
- Use student appointments, review sessions or email communication to complement in-class feedback
- Use breaks during class to deal with some issues (in week-long intensive teaching, evenings can be used)

### **Learning process**

- Use experienced teachers
- Ensure teachers receive adequate training
- Share best practice about most effective configurations and practices, as well as types of subjects that work

### **Instructor attitudes**

- Instructor makes choice of whether to offer a subject intensively or in traditional formal – should not be imposed on instructors or subjects
- Diversify teaching methods e.g., in-depth group discussions, individual and small group projects, case studies, experiential learning, role plays, simulations, interactive exercises, etc.
- Use students' experiences as part of the classroom discussion
- Make instruction more process-oriented and use a more facilitative instructional style
- Schedule activities to vary pace and provide short breaks during classes
- Redesign traditional subject specifically for intensive teaching
- Plan class schedule and assignments
- Use student appointments, review sessions or email communication to complement in-class feedback
- Use breaks during class to deal with some issues (in week-long intensive teaching, evenings can be used)
- Distribute instructor's intensive teaching in a way that results in a sustainable workload
- Allow instructors time off in lieu

### **Class type/student types**

- Explain how the intensive teaching format work to students unfamiliar with it
- Identify specific concerns and provide measures to address them
- Avoid use of intensive teaching in subjects where it's difficult to use different teaching

#### **APPENDIX 4: Teaching Capability**

The teaching capability of academic staff is closely associated with good teaching.

Our understanding of good teachers is that they:

- a) are committed, accessible and knowledgeable
- b) clarify student expectations about the course, assessment, university rules, staff access and grievances
- c) respect students' ability to learn by providing guidance and self study materials
- d) provide clear course/unit goals and outcomes and an appropriate variety of interactive, practice oriented and problem based learning methods that link to assessment methods
- e) provide alternative perspectives on content and relevant social and professional contexts in teaching
- f) stimulate intellectual challenges suitable for the level of the student
- g) provide learning based on explicit and up to date research on the capabilities that will be most needed in the early years or practice in the specific discipline or profession concerned
- h) address the close relationship between theory and practice in the context of the changing nature of professional knowledge
- i) design consistent and integrated assessment based on real world problems and what counts for early career success with prompt and constructive feedback
- j) acknowledge the social and collaborative nature of learning in their methods and assessment.

## APPENDIX 5: ACODE Benchmarks

### ACODE e-Learning Maturity Model

The E-Learning Maturity Model (eMM) provides a means by which institutions can assess and compare their capability to sustainably develop, deploy and support e-learning. The eMM is based on the ideas of the Capability Maturity Model and SPICE (Software Process Improvement and Capability dEtermination) methodologies.

The underlying idea that guides the development of the eMM is that the ability of an institution to be effective in any particular area of work is dependent on their capability to engage in high quality processes that are reproducible and able to be extended and sustained as demand grows.

<http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/research/emm/index.shtml>

### ACODE benchmarks for e-learning in universities

ACODE has developed benchmarks for the use of technology in learning and teaching (e-learning is used for the sake of convenience while recognizing that some institutions refer to their practice with terms such as flexible learning).

The purpose of the benchmarks is to support continuous quality improvement in e-learning. The approach reflects an enterprise perspective, integrating the key issue of pedagogy with institutional dimensions such as planning, staff development and infrastructure provision. The benchmarks have been developed for use at the enterprise level or by the organisational areas responsible for the provision of leadership and services in this area. They have been piloted in universities and independently reviewed.

Each benchmark area is discrete and can be used alone or in combination with others. Benchmarks can be used for self assessment purposes (in one or several areas), or as part of a collaborative benchmarking exercise.

The [benchmarks](#) cover the following eight separate topic areas have been internationally reviewed.

- Institution policy and governance for technology supported learning and teaching
- Planning for, and quality improvement of the integration of technologies for learning and teaching
- Information technology infrastructure to support learning and teaching
- Pedagogical application of information and communication technology
- Professional/staff development for the effective use of technologies for learning and teaching
- Staff support for the use of technologies for learning and teaching
- Student training for the effective use of technologies for learning
- Student support for the use of technologies for learning

We encourage you to use these benchmarks and provide us with feedback. A set of [guidelines](#) and a [case study](#) have been developed to assist you. In any report please refer to these benchmarks as the 'ACODE benchmarks for e-learning in universities'.

<http://www.acode.edu.au/aboutus/acodebenchmkwsp/default.htm>