A New LMS (Canvas): Opportunities for Learning & Teaching at the University of Auckland

Office of the DVC Academic, June 2015
Purpose

- To present the pedagogical and evidence-based rationale for introducing a new Learning Management System (LMS) at the University of Auckland.

- To identify the opportunities provided by a new LMS (Canvas) for University of Auckland teachers and students.

- To scope what might be reasonable approach to web-based norms as part of the University’s course delivery, as we migrate to a new system.

Introduction

Since the Phase 1 “Setting the Agenda” report (August 2014), in which we presented the high-level objectives for our learning environment with a view to guiding a University e-learning investment plan, we have made significant advances in e-learning planning and implementation:

1. Selected a new LMS, Canvas, following a formal consultation and evaluation process in 2014 and 2015.

2. Determined key tools to be integrated into the LMS as a starting point for future development, including Talis (course materials management software), Google Drive (to provide basic applications and storage), Piazza (platform for threaded discussions), and Turnitin (plagiarism, marking and peer assessment). Many of these tools will not be new to staff but the difference is that they will be fully integrated into the LMS environment, more user-friendly and accessible for staff and students via any device.

3. Delivered our first two Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in 2014 in partnership with FutureLearn, gaining invaluable experience with a new form of distance education that will equally help to shape and build capacity for our future e-learning practices and the virtual learning environment for our internal students.¹

Our new technology suite which we will move to in Semester 1, 2016, provides powerful tools to support teaching, learning, assessment and course management. Specifically, Canvas will enable teachers to find additional ways of supporting students in achieving the learning objectives and providing them with the best possible learning and teaching experiences, as well as supporting teachers in their role (including the management and administration of courses). As with the adoption of any software solution, there will be trade-offs which will need to be considered and accommodated. Canvas was selected for the functionality it offers, its ability to integrate with other learning tools, and its consistency across a wide range of criteria.

The report explores some of the key growth opportunities that Canvas offers University of Auckland teachers and students.

¹ The two UoA MOOCs were: an introductory course on statistical data analysis; and a short course exploring how academic integrity can be demonstrated by students in their study and research at university.
Context for Change

The new LMS equips us with the tools to respond to the significant challenges and opportunities in our external environment.

**Emergence of New Learning Delivery Models**

In response to the rising costs of a tertiary education and driven by the rapid evolution of academic technologies, new learner-centred education delivery models have emerged which provide more flexible and affordable learning opportunities. MOOCs, online learning and other technology-enabled learning modes, far removed from traditional approaches to higher education, are attracting learners en masse. Since 2013, these new modes, largely dominated by private providers, have gained momentum in the higher education sector as traditional universities embrace new technologies and learning modes to make themselves more accessible to students.

Research notes a marked shift in the way that traditional universities are thinking about online learning; the majority of universities now recognize online education as critical to their institutions within the next five years (Allen & Seaman, 2014; Lucas, 2014; Thornton, 2014; Christensen and Eyring, 2011). While there are still few systematic studies of synchronous and asynchronous learning at the university level, the common assumption that online/blended teaching and learning is of inherently poor quality is increasingly being challenged.2

**Students’ Changing Technology Needs & Expectations**

The *ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2014* (Dahlstrom & EDUCAUSE Centre for Applied Research, 2014) presents findings from a survey of over 75,000 respondents at 213 institutions from across 15 countries. The study has been repeated on a similar scale since 2004. This large and deep data set indicates that:

- Blended learning environments are now the norm for students and the majority say they learn best with a blend of online and face-to-face work.
- Students expect their instructors to use technology to engage them in the learning process and believe technology benefits them, especially with regard to achieving their academic outcomes and preparing for future academic and workplace activities.
- The majority of students own two to three Internet-capable devices, which they are ready to use for academic purposes, and look to institutions and teachers for opportunities and encouragement to do so (Figure 1). (Note: The University of Auckland Mobile Learning Strategy Group reported that over 35,000 devices connected to the University network in June 2014 suggesting that our students are actively using wireless devices on campus in record numbers (Plimmer et al, 2014)).

The University has invested in a platform that harnesses the latest developments in academic technology and allows us to respond to the way students now want and expect to learn. The University has improved its wireless infrastructure in recent years and is committed to expanding the breadth and depth of wifi across campus to support teachers and students to embrace pedagogical opportunities offered by Canvas and its mobile optimised interface.

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2 For example: a) recent research in cognitive science and science education carried as part of the Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative (a multi-year project at the University of British Columbia) found that the development and utilization of e-learning technology boosts the effectiveness and efficiency of science education. The project cites numerous examples of how technology has been used to facilitate better learning, and enables more rewarding and efficient use of staff time through better dissemination and duplication of materials. The use of IT has also enhanced communication to allow better understanding of student progress and difficulties and provide more effective guidance (Wieman, 2012 and 2006). A study of survey responses from more than 2,800 colleges and universities; b) in the United States, aimed at answering fundamental questions about the nature and extent of online education in Higher Education, reports that the percentage of academic leaders rating the learning outcomes in online education as the same or superior to those in face-to-face instruction has grown from 57 in 2003 to 77 percent in 2012 (Allen and Seaman, 2014).
Enhanced Learning Experiences for Students

According to the latest ECAR studies, blended learning environments best support how students learn. Students perceive that technology is critical to academic success; that it plays an important part in their future accomplishments; that it makes them feel connected to their institutions, their teachers, and other students; and that it elevates the level of teaching (Dahlstrom, 2013). The following section discusses ways in which Canvas can enhance the learning experiences of students.

Interactivity and Collaboration

Active engagement with course material is vital for learning. When provided with opportunities for interaction with their peers and teachers, students are not only more motivated to learn, but also more attentive, participative and more likely to exchange ideas with others and engage in significant learning experiences (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013; Bath & Bourke, 2010; Fink, 2013).

The rise of social media has set new norms and expectations for interaction and shared learning. As examples, our own Peerwise and more recently Piazza have become tools which are used extensively (formally and informally within courses).

Supporting this area, Canvas will provide a number of virtual classroom tools: online learning environments which allow for synchronous instruction (teacher and students are logged into the virtual learning environment at the same time), where students and teachers can collaborate in a protected platform:

- **Chat (Figure 2)** allows students to interact with other students and their teacher in real time. There is potential for teachers to use this tool to conduct virtual office hours as an alternative to face-to-face consultations for students studying off campus or on work placements, and for teaching staff away from campus.

- **Conversations (Figure 3)** - a messaging tool used instead of email to communicate with a course, a group, or an individual.

- **Discussions (Figure 4)** - an integrated system for class discussions, allowing both instructors and students to start and contribute to as many discussion topics as desired. Discussions can also be created within student groups. In 2014 a survey of University of Auckland staff indicated that a better discussion forum was one of the most common functionalities sought outside of the LMS. Canvas discussions includes sought after features such as anonymous posting, moderator and access control, threading, and a user-friendly interface. This tool will be available within the LMS, in addition to Piazza.
Figure 2: Chat

Figure 3: Conversations

Figure 4: Discussions
Figure 5: Groups

![Image of group management interface]

Figure 6: Polls App

![Image of Polls App interface]

A panda has the physiology of a...

- Carnivore
- Herbivore

Add Answer

Save  Start Poll
Groups (Figure 5) - a tool which allows students can work together on group projects and assignments. Teachers might create groups to set up student group configurations at the course level for assignments and in-class work, both graded and ungraded.

Polls App (Figure 6) – provides a way for instructors to request student opinion in the classroom and collect responses with ease. Unlike ‘clickers’ which are already in use in some courses, users only need to download the Polls for Canvas app on their smartphone devices. This helps to address barriers to interactivity often associated with traditional delivery formats – limited class time, rigid seating arrangements and students’ reservations about speaking out in class (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013).

Web Conferencing (Figure 7) enables web-based video conferencing and livestreaming, where students and teachers can collaborate in real time.

These collaboration tools can be used to support undergraduate and postgraduate students to:

- start thinking about an upcoming assignments or class discussions;
- follow-up on a conversation or questions that began in a face-to-face classroom;
- test their comprehension of important points made in class;
- debate contradictory ideas;
- brainstorm different approaches to a class problem;
- ‘feel heard’ in a large class;
- facilitate student/supervisor communication in research and work experience programmes;
- communicate easily with multiple cohorts or a sub-set of a cohort (e.g. project teams in a large course);
- build a sense of community for off-campus students though live interaction using audio and video;
- allow students to interact with people beyond the University (e.g. industry experts and overseas-based professionals).

Student-Driven Learning
Many of these tools will be available to students within Canvas regardless of whether teachers use them in a course. Students can independently start their own discussion thread and start group conversations. They will also have greater access to teachers via tools such as Chat. A student-centred virtual learning environment will pose some new challenges for teachers:

- managing students’ expectations regarding teachers’ availability in an environment which makes 24/7 communication possible;
- ensuring that students behave ethically in online environments, as per the University’s IT Acceptable Use Policy.

Issue for consideration: It is proposed that teachers ensure that expectations regarding their availability and response times (e.g. 48 hours), and guidelines on the ethical use of the virtual environment (‘netiquette’) are clearly communicated in an obvious place in the Course Syllabus section of Canvas (see Appendix 2).

Calendar-Driven Learning
An entirely new feature that will be available to students in the LMS is the Calendar Tool (Figure 8) which provides each student with access to a personalised study calendar for assignments, important events and course announcements. The Calendar in Canvas is a global feature, meaning that students can see all of their assignments from all of their courses in one place. If desired, the calendar-driven design of Canvas course sites allows staff to communicate with students via automated reminders and notifications, helping students to understand the competing demands of their commitments and assessments. In large first-year classes, where many students are shouldering adult responsibilities for the first time, the calendar tool supports students to embrace time management skills.
Figure 7: Web Conferences

Figure 8: Course Calendar – Month view
**Peer Learning and Formative Assessment**

Providing learner-centred, educative feedback and assessment as support for learning is not new. Students and teachers want more formative assessment but it is often time-consuming and difficult for teachers managing heavy course loads. Canvas will provide additional online assessment tools which students can access and experience formative assessment within the LMS environment at a time during the course that best suits the activity:

- **Peer-Review Assignments (Figure 9)** enables students to comment on submitted assignments and learning about their work by assessing others. Peer review assignments can be automatically or manually allocated to students.

- **Quizzes (Figure 10)** can be used to give assessments or to create student surveys. Teachers can administer different kinds of quizzes: A practice quiz, graded quiz, graded survey, ungraded survey.

These tools can support student learning by encouraging the review of content and integration of knowledge learnt, and help to identify gaps in understanding.

*Figure 9: Peer Review Assignments*
Figure 10: Quizzes

Quiz results are shown here. If enabled, correct and incorrect answers will be noted with flags to the left of the questions.

- **Take the Quiz Again**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Attempt History</th>
<th>Attempt</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Attempt 1</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>1 out of 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Last Attempt Details:**

- **Time:** 60 minutes
- **Current Score:** 1 out of 5
- **Kept Score:** 1 out of 5

Unlimited Attempts

*(Will keep the highest of all your scores)*
Teacher Tools for Course Delivery

A range of additional tools will be available in Canvas to support teachers in their role (including the management and administration of courses).

Communicating Course Logistics & Expectations to Students

Canvas provides two simple communication tools designed for teachers to push notices and important course information to groups of students, thereby playing a vital role in their course communication strategy:

- **Announcements (Figure 11)** allows staff to communicate course logistics to students:
  - Remind students what they need to accomplish to stay on track;
  - Point students to learning resources that will help them achieve course outcomes;
  - Leave a message for the entire class with video or audio comments;
  - Celebrate student success and important events that may be of interest to their students.

- **Course Syllabus (Figure 12):** is used to communicate to students exactly what will be required of them throughout the course in chronological order. We envisage that Course Syllabus could be arranged in four parts:
  - **Part A: Syllabus Description** where teachers post their contact details, office hours and a brief (i.e. 300 words) course description for students. Staff can copy content from Word documents directly into the Rich Content Editor or create original content inside of the Rich Content Editor. If desired, the Syllabus Description can be made public, so can potentially be a mechanism for providing information to prospective international and domestic students. If used in this way, it may be desirable to include a link to the relevant course page in the Academic Calendar which provides information on the course’s points value, prerequisites and restrictions. (It remains to be seen whether this information can be automatically uploaded to this field of the Syllabus page).
  - **Part B: Syllabus Handbook** where teachers provide official course information by uploading a PDF document. This might include an overview of course learning outcomes, assessment regime, delivery mode, frequency of meetings, and relevant University/Faculty/class guidelines and policies, etc. There is potential for each Faculty to have a standard template for Part B populated with standard policy links, statements and guidelines, so that a teacher needs only to fill in course specific information.
  - **Part C: Calendar & Weighted Assignment Groups** section which displays aggregated information about course events and grading. The assignment group information can be edited in the Assignments Tab while the Calendar information can be edited in both the Assignments and Calendar Tabs. Any changes made will be automatically reflected in the Syllabus.
  - **Part D: Syllabus Table** which automatically displays course assignments or events and their due dates in the bottom half of the Syllabus page. Changes to these dated events can be made in both the Assignments and Calendar features and will be automatically updated in the Syllabus.

**Issue for consideration:** Essentially the Course Syllabus functions as the online version of the PDF course outline and may be set as the homepage for a course. This web-based template presents us with an opportunity to review our course outline practices and introduce more consistency in the way we deliver course information to students (see Appendix 2 for further discussion).
Figure 11: Announcements

Figure 12: Course Syllabus
Managing Feedback and Assessment Processes

Managing the assessment process is an integral part of most courses and often a substantial component of a teacher’s workload. Receiving timely and quality feedback on assessment also significantly enhances the quality of a student’s learning experience. The results of our 2014 snapshot survey of University of Auckland staff indicated that tools for online assignment submission, for grading assignments and providing feedback to students electronically are among the priorities for e-learning and teaching. Canvas provides tools that can support teachers to:

- receive and return assignments;
- sending feedback in a variety of media formats to students;
- record grades.

The assessment tools available within Canvas are:

- **Assignments (Figure 13)** can be used to: assess how well students are achieving course outcomes; set up online submissions that can be quickly marked in the SpeedGrader (see Figure 15); grade online as well as student work submitted “on paper”; easily set up peer review; and create ungraded activities that align with course outcomes. This tool also allows for assignments to be allocated to other markers. This helps convenors to easily monitor the marking progress of their tutors or Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). Currently this is not easy for staff using GradeMark within Turnitin as all markers are required to share a single password. This makes it difficult for convenors to mentor individual markers and to compare grading quality across a team of tutors.

- **Rubrics (Figure 14)** enable grades and comments to be inputted against individual assessment criteria. This helps teachers to communicate assessment expectations to students and align pre-defined learning outcomes to course assessments.

- **SpeedGrader (Figure 15)** enables staff to view and grade student assignment submissions on a single screen using a simple point scale or complex rubric. The tool allows teachers to return feedback to students in a variety of forms: as an individual text file, as annotations in a student’s assignment, or as an audio commentary.

- **Turnitin**: Canvas will be fully integrated with Turnitin. For staff who prefer to mark within Turnitin, this will remove the need for them to export grades from one system (Turnitin/GradeMark) and reformat data in order to import them back into the LMS. It will also remove the ‘double-handing’ required, saving time for staff, and reducing errors. Students will also be able to see straight away what their total course grades are, rather than waiting for their course convenor to import grades.

- **Gradebook (Figure 16)**: is a tool for tracking student progress and recording grades, which we can expect to have different features and processes from CECIL. Columns are automatically added to the Gradebook when staff create Assignments, graded Discussions, and graded Quizzes and Surveys in a Canvas course site (in addition to any tests or exams administered outside of Canvas). Staff can sort the Gradebook by due dates, student names, total scores, or group scores (if applicable). The Gradebook can be used to:
  - Enter student grades for course assignments;
  - Download or upload grades as a CSV file;
  - Create weighting, curving, and grade ranges;
  - Automatically calculate total and final grades;
  - Provide grade comments for students;
  - Download assignment submissions from students to grade or view them offline;
  - Notify students when an assignment has been graded;
  - Mute (hide) marks and grades from students until they are unmuted (published);
  - Message students who haven’t submitted an assignment yet, or who scored more than or less than a specific score on an assignment;
  - Record private grading notes.

1 L&T Technology Review Report, October 2014, pp. 14-15
Figure 13: Assignments

Figure 14: Rubrics
Figure 15: SpeedGrader

Figure 16: Gradebook
Figure 17: Course Analytics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Discussion Topics</th>
<th>Files Uploaded</th>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>109</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity by Date**

Each bar represents the number of page views on that day. An orange bar indicates that some user took an action within a course on that day.

**Activity by Category**

Each bar represents the number of page views related to that category.

**Grade Distribution**

Distribution of current grades in courses across all students enrolled in department courses.
**Teacher Analytics for Improved Learning Support**

**Course Analytics** *(Figure 17)* will provide new opportunities for technology-oriented educators to personalise learning and to understand more about learner behaviour and how students are engaging with course materials. Learning analytics is also a growing field of research that allows teachers to gain deeper insights into student learning, and to design better courses and activities based on this understanding. Potentially this technology plays an important role in identifying students at risk and could impact our ability to retain those students.

*Note:* Please refer to the Canvas User Guides for further information about Canvas tools: [https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3601](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3601)

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**Equity & Access to Learning**

Our new digital environment with its mobile interface and virtual classroom tools will support several student sub-populations with distinct study needs to access and succeed in our programmes:

**Increased Flexibility for Adult Learners**

Canvas will support greater use of electronic course resources (online readings, e-textbooks, lecture recordings), providing students with structured access to essential course resources via digitised reading lists and tools such as mobile apps. This helps to provide pedagogical coherence and greater convenience for students, particularly our adult learners who are balancing study with employment and family commitments.4

LeBlanc (2014), writing about the changing demographics and needs of higher education students in the United States, notes that online learning has now become dominant for adult learners because it offers a ‘far more convenient approach to education at a lower cost.’5

**Improved Access for Students with Disabilities**

The number of students registered with University of Auckland Student Disability Services has increased by 48 percent in the past six years.6 Leaders of University Disability Services agree that academic technology holds the promise to provide a universally accessible experience that often is not available in the traditional classroom environment. Barresi (2014) provides a number of examples:

- A student with a physical disability who has difficulty getting around campus will benefit from increased opportunity for working remotely;
- A student with a chronic health conditions where class attendance can be an issue will benefit from increased opportunity to working at home;
- A student who has difficulty processing information will benefit from the ability to watch and re-watch lectures, videos and other online course content.

The Canvas platform was built using modern accessibility (HTML and CSS) technologies, and supports a key accessibility and university design resources including screen readers and browsers. See [https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061)

**Learning Support for ESL Students**

The cognitive load is initially very high for students who have to interpret in a second language what is said before being able to comprehend and develop understanding. These students, the largest proportion of whom are international students from Asia,7 benefit significantly from the ability to

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4 In 2014 mature learners (defined for the purpose of this analysis as students 25 years or older) represented about 30 percent of the University of Auckland student population (ref DSS Headcount & EFTS 2014 report).

5 Online adult learners now represent the greatest percentage of college students.

6 From 405 students in 2005 to 750 students in 2013 - UoA Equity Statistics 2013 Report. This number does not include students who do not self-identify.

7 In 2014 approximately 80% of international students were from Asia. The numbers of international students from Asia has increased from 2742 students in 2011 to 3862 in 2014 – an increase of 40% (DSS Headcount and EFTS 2011-2015 report 23/02/2015)
listen to lecture recordings at their own pace and absorb other online course content. As the University seeks to increase its international tuition fee income, it is essential that we provide strong learning support for our international students.

**Outreach to Students from Low Decile Schools**
The University is developing online courses for external audiences with a view to reducing achievement gaps and improving access to University of Auckland programmes. For example, in 2015 the Faculty of Education will be working in partnership with other Faculties to develop a suite of online courses, initially in STEM areas, for delivery to schools. The development of schools’ online courses provides a flexible means of widespread outreach addressing specialist subject preparation, and aims to support science teaching capacity, particularly for low decile schools. Canvas will provide a delivery platform for these courses, independent of FutureLearn or any other third-party provider.

**Equity Considerations in Implementing BYOD for Coursework**
Canvas’ mobile interface and the University’s improved wireless infrastructure will make it easier for teachers to experiment with mobile learning strategies in their courses. To implement BYOD for coursework, a teacher needs to be confident in assuming that students are or can easily be equipped with a highly functioning mobile device. A review of BYOD experiments at benchmark universities highlights the importance of:

- Analysing the equipment owned by students and whether students would be willing to bring it into the classroom;
- Ensuring that all students can access the same core applications and functions;
- Ensuring that the class will be delivered in a space with sufficient wifi to cope with the activity;
- Ensuring that students have a sufficient data plan for their mobile device to access the internet if required to use 3G or 4G to access the internet for study purposes. This could apply, for example, to students in fieldwork or on placements in industry and community settings.

Other than planning ahead, strategies for addressing potential equity issues which might be supported at either a Faculty or University level include:

- Engaging or leveraging vendor partners in providing learners with access to discounts on the purchase of standard compliant mobile devices, data plans, and maintenance support;
- Provision of allocations or subsidies for learners for whom finances are an issue;
- Provision of iTunes gift card to fund the purchase of core applications.

**Increase Academic Resilience of Courses**

Increasing the use of online and blended tools available in Canvas will support staff to increase the resilience of their courses. For example:

- Increasing web provision increases the preparedness of teachers and students to move to an online instructional mode if required to manage an unexpected closure of the campus (or sectors of it). It would help to ensure that all teachers are well positioned to communicate with their students and deliver critical course content via the LMS (assuming we still have power!).
- Teachers can collaborate and build on each other’s designs and provide and curate a repository of open educational resources (MOOCs material, practice questions/quizzes for example). This has the potential to reduce their own development time and provide back-up resources for staff managing unplanned teacher shortages.

**Issue for consideration:** Implementation of a web presence standard for UoA courses would be a significant step forward in academic continuity planning at the University (see Appendix 2).
Issues for Discussion by TLQC

In advance of the implementation of Canvas in 2016, and in light of the benefits for students and teachers outlined in this paper, it is worth considering the value of introducing a web presence standard for University of Auckland courses as a means of assuring students a consistent approach to communication and technology delivery across the University. An initial scoping document exploring this issue is at Appendix 2.
References


### Appendix 1: Definitions of Instructional ‘Modes’

#### Mode 1: Web Facilitated Course
- Proportion of content delivered online: 1-29%
- Courses that use web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course. An LMS is used to facilitate course management and resources for learner support.
- Examples: Technology used to provide lecture notes or recordings and to perform basic administrative functions (announcements or course emails).

#### Mode 2: Blended/Hybrid Course
- Proportion of content delivered online: 30 – 79%
- Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings. This does not necessarily mean adopting a wide range of technologies for a particular course. It can mean simply using a few tools, but in effective ways in order to achieve quality in teaching, learning and/or course management.
- Examples: Technology used to manage marking, enter & release grades using online grade centre; deliver a lecture to on and off campus students simultaneously using an online virtual classroom tool; create an online collaborative workspace for group work; deliver online practice quizzes to support lecture & textbook material using automatic marking functionality.

#### Mode 3: Online Course
- Proportion of content delivered online: 80+ %
- A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings.
- Examples: Technology used to deliver webcast lectures; online virtual classroom; discussion forums for teacher/student communication; online tests.

#### Mode 4: MOOC
- Proportion of content delivered online: 100%
- A course where most or all the content all delivered online via the internet. No face-to-face meetings.
- Examples: Technology used to deliver webcast lectures; online virtual classroom; discussion forums for teacher/student communication; online tests.

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As presented in *Blending In: The Extent and Promise of Blended Learning in the United States* (2007), where the definition relies upon a ratio of web to traditional instruction.
Appendix 2: Introduction of a Web Presence Standard for Courses: Scoping Document

As part of the migration to a new system, there is value in determining a reasonable approach to web-based norms as part of our course delivery.

Cecil usage stats indicate that the majority of undergraduate courses are already actively using the LMS for sending announcements and distributing course resources (Table 1). However, our own students have commented on the lack of consistency in this area. This mirrors the findings of the ECAR Studies - a large international survey repeated on a large scale since 2004 - which indicates that students want greater access to course content online (See Figure 18 below) and for teachers to increase their use of the LMS (as well as lecture capture tools).

Table 1: CECIL General Usage Report 2014, University of Auckland

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>UG Courses</th>
<th>Use Announcements</th>
<th>Use Discussions</th>
<th>Use File Distribution</th>
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<td>Arts</td>
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<td>582</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td>FMHS</td>
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<td>Science</td>
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<td>305</td>
<td>91%</td>
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Figure 18: Percentage of students from 2014 ECAR survey saying they wish their instructors would use a technology more...or less (Dahlstrom et al. 2014, p.12)

*Among device owners 0% 25 50 75 100% Percentage of respondents

Wish their instructors would use it more
Wish their instructors would use it less

9 A strong theme in the 2012 & 2013 University Teaching & Learning Surveys free-text comments
Rationale for introducing a web presence standard for University of Auckland courses

Potential reasons why the University might want to introduce a web presence standard for courses:

- To support students’ access to online resources for all courses through a common platform;
- To provide a consistent look-and-feel across all courses, even when the LMS acts as a portal to other systems for learning materials;\(^{10}\)
- To provide consistency in the core information provided to students across subjects;
- To provide a core subset of tools considered significant contributors to University and Faculty goals for student engagement and success;
- To meet student expectations regarding online material provision;
- To support the development of resilient courses and the ability of teachers and students to move to online learning and teaching if required in the event of campus closure.
- Because from 2016 staff will have access to an integrated, accessible and user-friendly virtual environment that will remove many barriers to using online tools to achieve quality in teaching, learning and/or course management.

How do other universities define a web presence standard for courses?

Several Australasian universities are implementing formal ‘Minimum Online Presence’ MOP policies (for example, the University of Queensland, RMIT University, LaTrobe University and Victoria University of Wellington). MOP policies mandate that every taught course will have an online presence in the University Learning Management System which will make critical information available to students. This information typically includes: essential course information; assessment requirements; learning resources and technologies; relevant school policies; a place for news items (announcements) to be posted; and a discussion board where students can communicate with staff.

What do we want every University of Auckland student to have access to online?

While the integration of academic technologies in courses will naturally vary according situational factors such as discipline, learning objectives, learners’ characteristics and the academic’s approach to teaching and confidence in using technology, there are some online resources that every student could reasonably expect to have access to:

1. Course overview (description of course and learning outcomes, delivery mode & lecture plan);
2. Information on assessment (assessment weighting, methods, criteria, due dates, relationship to learning outcomes);
3. Relevant University/Faculty/class guidelines and policies (academic honesty, student feedback, etc);
4. Learning resources (Talis reading lists, lecture slides and lecture recordings, where applicable);
5. Course calendar;
6. Course alerts and announcements;
7. Timely access to marks and grades.

What additional online elements might be desirable?

Further down the track, once staff have become more familiar with the Canvas environment, there may be additional online tools that could become regular features of UoA course delivery:

1. Use of Chat for virtual office hours as an alternative to face-to-face consultations for students studying off campus or on work placements, and for teaching staff away from campus;
2. Use of Polls App for formative feedback purposes;
3. Integration of a discussion board in a course’s design.

How could we implement a web presence standard for courses?

The Canvas Syllabus page will contribute substantially to a standardized approach by providing a dynamic ‘container’ for six of the seven online elements listed above (refer to Figure 12). To optimise the usefulness of the Canvas Syllabus for students, staff would need to perform a number of tasks:

- Load the following course information into Canvas in time for the teaching semester:
  - syllabus description, instructor contact details, consultation hours and expected response times

\(^{10}\) In 2014, 94% of undergraduate courses had a presence in CECIL. While the majority of courses use the LMS there is considerable inconsistency in the way that course sites are presented and the generic learning resources made available to students.
- syllabus handbook (link to a PDF document)
- schedule of course dates and milestones
- schedule of reminders/alerts
- assignments and a course grading scheme.

- Create and maintain their own course reading lists as per new Talis processes with the support of subject librarians.

- Load grades for internally assess tasks into Canvas within a reasonable timeframe. (An issue for consideration is whether the University’s Assessment of Student Learning Policy (attached to this report) needs amending to mandate the timely loading of grades into the LMS so that students can plan ahead and benefit from Learning Analytics tools in Canvas (for example the ‘What-If Grade’ tool that allows students to calculate their total grade by entering hypothetical grades for all ungraded assignments).

None of these tasks are beyond the scope of the standard preparation for course delivery. The introduction of a separate ‘policy’ or mandate therefore may be unnecessary. A viable alternative might be to build the notion of basic web provision for courses as a service standard at Faculty level.

**Proposed Support Plan for Staff**
The proposed plan for supporting teachers to migrate their courses to Canvas and for increasing their confidence in the new system is outlined below.

- The USPO project team will work with CLeaR and Faculties to develop appropriate training materials to support the adoption and use of the system, including websites and videos for staff as required.

- Some Faculties have learning technology teams which are already planning for their specific context and requirements. Over the next month, meetings with the Director of Learning and Teaching will provide an overview of the product and the opportunity for Deans to discuss Faculty key requirements.

- Faculties will be provided with resource to employ Learning Design support. These staff will guide staff to set-up courses and to implement Canvas features and tools. The Faculty allocation will be based on the number of courses being delivered in Semester 1 and contracts will be for a fixed term (likely to be from mid-August for 1 year).

- These staff will be guided by a Senior Learning Designer, who will provide leadership in the creation of training materials and the establishment of systems. Weekly meetings for all Learning Designers will allow for knowledge sharing across Faculties and ultimately provide consistency in the student experience.

- Student helpers or LTAs (Learning Tech Advisors) will also be available to assist with the migration of course materials and to assist with technology issues.

- Throughout Phase 1 of the Canvas rollout (January 2016 - June 2017), staff and students will have 24/7 phone support directly with the company. This service is based in Utah and will provide a first tier of assistance for Canvas-specific issues and questions.

- The diagram below suggests a likely evolution of users adopting new technology. Clearly the priority throughout 2016 is ensuring all Canvas users develop some mastery, if not impact. Recognition of these phases for individuals will be a key aspect of the training and development needs.
Teacher confidence in use of technology
based upon the work of Mandinach and Cline

**SURVIVAL**
I'm scared of breaking it.
I'm not sure what to do.
I think I should use this in lessons but I'm not sure how.

**MASTERY**
I've received training.
I've practiced with apps.
I've trialled it in lessons with success.
I'm feeling more confident.

**IMPACT**
Students & I are using tech effectively.
Tech is embedded in my lessons and planning, where appropriate.

**INNOVATION**
Technology use is pervasive.
I am digitally literate as I am with pedagogy & subject knowledge.
I innovate & share.

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**LEVEL**

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**EXPANSION**

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**CONFIDENCE / COMPETENCE**
Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the processes of assessment are carried out in a manner that is fair, valid, robust, manageable and relevant. Assessment should assist students in their learning and motivate students throughout their studies.

Policy

Assessment at the University of Auckland will be carried out in a manner that is fair, valid, robust, manageable and contribute to the process of student learning.

- Assessments will be demonstrably aligned with learning outcomes in each course.
- Assessments will give students the opportunity to work towards achievement of the applicable University of Auckland Graduate Profile. Assessments may also be aligned with other profiles, e.g., for programmes, majors or specialisations.
- Assessments will be relevant and measures will be taken to ensure that what is being assessed is clear to students.
- Assessment criteria will be transparent and made available to students in a timely manner.
- Criterion Referenced Assessment (i.e., standards-based) is the preferred type of assessment method.
- Staff will be encouraged to use a range of assessment methods to reflect different learning styles and strategies.
- Assessment methods will ensure that students with disabilities are provided with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes.
- Assessment design for group projects is the responsibility of the Course Director for the course, and should be undertaken with appropriate Faculty oversight to ensure the design is demonstrably fair and clear to students, complies fully with all aspects of this policy and is consistent with the overall assessment regime.
- Assessment arrangements that have been approved and published cannot be changed without consultation with students and approval by the Academic Head and Dean of Faculty. In the case of changes, these must be agreed and publicised to students within the period of deleting the course from a student’s enrolment without penalty.
• Students will receive their work back with constructive and timely feedback as soon as possible and no later than three teaching weeks after the day the work was handed in or due, whichever is the later.
• Internally assessed tasks which count in a final grade for a course which has an examination must be marked and available to students before the date of examinations. Normally, these tasks should be scheduled for completion or submission by the end of the second-to-last teaching week at the latest.
• Each teaching unit must establish procedures to ensure: levels of consistency of assessment; levels of equity; and the standard and quality of feedback.

Definitions

Assessment is the ongoing process of: establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning; ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes; systematically gathering, analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our outcomes or expectations; using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.

Types of assessment

Formative assessment: The purpose of formative assessment should be to provide regular feedback to students in order to stimulate learning and to provide students with information which will enable them to judge the effectiveness of their learning strategies and to make progress. Formative assessment should also alert teachers to any aspects of the course or approaches to teaching where students are having difficulties.

Summative assessment: The main purpose of summative assessment is to make a judgment regarding each student’s level of achievement for any given assignment. The results of this type of assessment are generally expressed as marks, percentages, grades, or qualifications. Summative assessment may be defined as a measure of a student’s performance or level of achievement at the end of a unit of study.

Continuous assessment: The terms ‘continuous assessment’ and ‘coursework’ signify the use of regular tests and assignments throughout a unit of study, or in the case of practice disciplines, ongoing assessment of competence/performance, where results for each piece of work contribute to the final mark or grade for each student.

Criterion referenced assessment:
Criterion Referenced Assessment or CRA is a standards based model of assessment of student learning with the following characteristics:
• The results are expressed in terms of how well a given student’s performance matches set criteria
• The outcome for each individual student is independent of any other student’s results
• Standards are set before teaching takes place
• Judgments are made about individual performance
**Audience**

All staff and students

**Relevant Regulations**

Examination Regulations

**Related Documents**

- The University of Auckland Guidelines for Effective Teaching
- Resolution of Student Academic Complaints and Disputes Statute
- Graduate Profiles
- Student Charter
- Student Academic Conduct Statute
- PhD Statute and Guidelines
- Examination Regulations, Academic Statutes and Regulations, The University of Auckland Calendar
- Instructions to Examiners and Assessors
- The University of Auckland: Examination Instructions (for Students)
- The Inclusive Teaching and Learning of Students with Impairments. The University of Auckland’s Principles and Guidelines for Faculties, Services Divisions, Staff and Students