

# SPECTRUM

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UTDC



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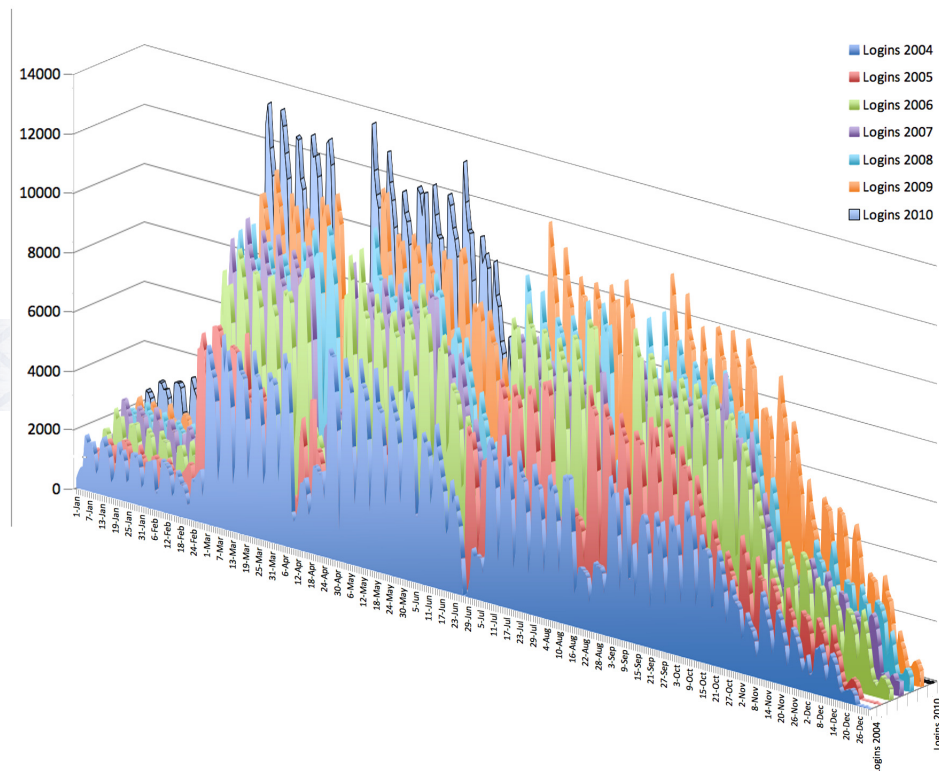
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## Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching at VUW

The use of technology for learning and teaching at Victoria is dominated currently by the Blackboard system. As part of the VUW Learning and Teaching Strategy there will be a review in 2011 of the infrastructure (including Blackboard) used to support learning and teaching. As the figure below shows, use of the Blackboard system continues to grow year after year, and it is important that the University continually ensures that the system is meeting the needs of students and staff.



In October 2009, as part of the regular monitoring of technology use, the University Teaching Development Centre (UTDC) conducted a survey of Victoria staff and students' attitudes to the use of online technology in teaching and learning. 192 staff members and 1820 students took part in the survey. The survey was administered in two parts: one set of questions was related to Blackboard (Victoria's centrally-supported online teaching and learning platform); another set of questions explored more general views and current practices in using online technologies in teaching and learning. This article presents a few results from the analysis. The full report is available from <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/research/technology/2010OnlineTechnologySurveyReport.pdf>.

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## Technology (cont.)

### Use of computers and IT

The majority of the students reported being able to *access computers away from the university* (95%), and *using a high-speed Internet connection* (95.5%). At the same time, the use of the University student computing facilities continues to be fairly high.

Most of the staff reported that, in 2009, they used online tools and resources either in all their courses (70%) or in more than half of the courses (18%), with only 2.5% saying that they did not use them at all. The students were overall *satisfied* with this aspect of their study, reporting that, in the majority of their courses, the use of online tools and resources was *about right* (77%); however, 18% thought that it was *not enough*.

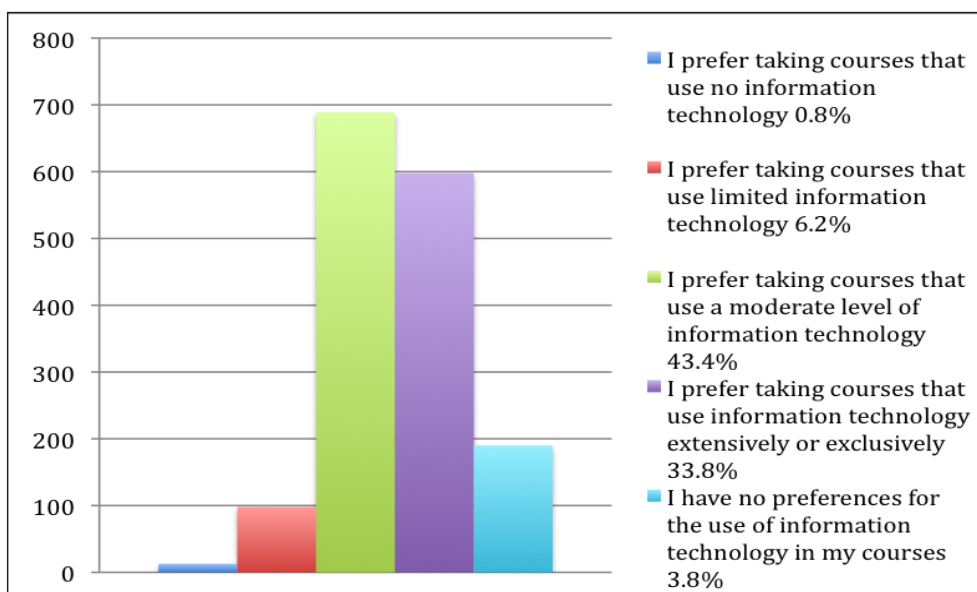
Students reported a preference for courses that either use a *moderate* level of IT (43.4%), or use IT *extensively* (33.8%). In addition, 3.8% of the students wanted to study exclusively via IT.

### Blackboard

The survey shows that Blackboard was used in the majority of courses of the staff (83.3%) and students (85.5%) who took part in the survey. Both staff and students (over 90%) indicate that Blackboard is primarily used as a platform for *online delivery of course content* (e.g. web pages, documents, images, multimedia, electronic journals, databases) and *posting announcements*. Over 40% of the staff and students report the use of *Discussion Boards*. The *Grade Centre* and *electronic submissions* are more prominent in the responses of students (77.4% and 50.1%, respectively) than those of the staff (28.1% and 23.8%, respectively). The use of online journals (blogs), groups facilities, quizzes, surveys and wikis is less common, and is reported between 10 and 20%. Podcasts and synchronous communication tools (chat and virtual classroom) are used the least (less than 5%).

The majority of the students (58.2%) and staff (67.7%) used *email* in Blackboard for course communications (however, many report that using Victoria email addresses is a hindrance to communication). The next most common activity was for students to *receive feedback on course work and assessments* (46.5%) and to *complete tasks or project online* (40.5%). Students also used Blackboard to *ask questions and contribute to online discussions* (37.1%) and to *seek advice from their lecturers* (32.7%).

### Which of the following best describes your preference?



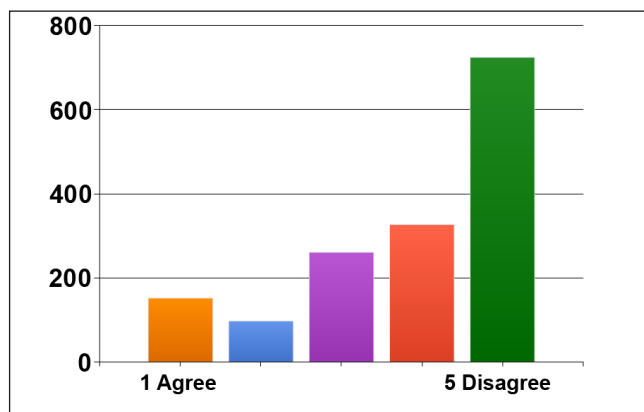
Under 20% of the students reported using Blackboard to *give feedback to lecturers*, to *prepare group presentations* or to *work with other students on course assignments*. Few students (less than 10%) participated in *peer or self-assessment*, *wrote regular blog entries* or *engaged with blog posts by other students* in Blackboard.

Even though staff and students were in agreement that Blackboard *made life easier for students if they missed a class*, the patterns of responses differed considerably between the two groups when asked whether *Having lecture notes online means that students attend fewer lectures*.

Students were generally *against* this statement (67.3% disagreed; 16.7% were neutral; and only 16% agreed), while staff views were leaning more towards *agreeing* with the statement (50% agreed; 26% neutral; and 24% disagreed).

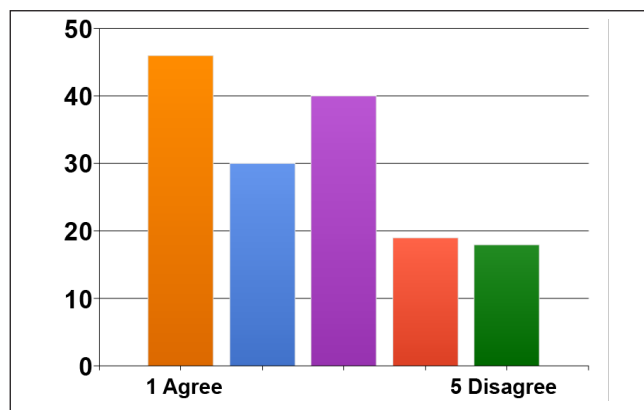
### Students

Having lecture notes online means I don't need to attend all lectures



### Staff

If I put lecture notes online, students attend fewer lectures



## UTDC News

### Kathryn Sutherland

Sadly, Kathryn Sutherland will be leaving the UTDC in October to take up a role as the Associate Dean (Students) in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. This is a great opportunity for Kathryn to experience a different role in the University and it will no doubt inform her work as an Academic Developer in the future. Kathryn will be on secondment for three years but will be maintaining an active involvement with the UTDC, particularly with regard to her work on early career academics and the Developing Scholarly Habits programme. Kathryn has made a substantial contribution to the UTDC since starting here in 1999 and we will miss having her around even as we continue to benefit from the programmes she has established.

### UTDC/SLSS Review

The DVC(A) has requested that David Crabbe (AVC-Academic) convene a panel in early September to review the support provided by Victoria for learning and teaching. The panel will consist of:

David Crabbe (Convener)  
Geoff Crisp (University of Adelaide)

Geoff Pearman (Partners in Change, formerly University of Canterbury)

Lorraine Stefani (University of Auckland)

The terms of reference for the review are:

Having regard to the learning and teaching goals formulated in Victoria's Strategic Plan and Learning and Teaching Strategy, the review panel is asked to advise on the following issues:

1. The scope, quality and coherence of the learning support and teaching development provided by the responsible units, including identifying any significant gaps in current functions and activities;
2. The extent to which current formal connections between and within staff groups in these areas should be further developed in order to facilitate the design and delivery of coherent, high-quality support for the learning and teaching at the University, with a particular focus on the whole student experience;
3. The effectiveness of current linkages between these services and academic schools and programmes and other relevant central service units;

4. The effectiveness and quality of activities and linkages supporting the achievement of the University's Treaty commitments and equity objectives; and

5. Any other relevant matters which in the panel's opinion are significant and should be drawn to the University's attention.

### Research excellence & awards

Kathryn and Linda were awarded the 2010 HERDSA Creative Presentation award for their recent conference presentation on "Students' perceptions of the effects of coursework on their development of graduate attributes" voted 1st equal with one other presentation, as the most creative presentation of more than 170 presentations at the 2010 conference.

Kathryn has a history of winning these awards as her attendance this year was paid by her winning the 2009 Creative Presentation award for her paper "Relationships and agency in doctoral and early career academic experience." Her paper "Nurturing undergraduate tutors' role in the university teaching community" was also voted the article of the year, 2009, for the international journal *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*.

## Sharing and Reusing Learning Materials: New Philosophy Tutors' Repository

I had been a tutor for three years in the Philosophy Department at Victoria University of Wellington before I realized that I really had no idea what the other tutors were doing in their tutorials. We were all supposedly helping students with the same material but I realized that it would be nice to be able to see exactly how the same tutorials were being conducted, not only for my benefit, but to ensure some sort of consistency across the class.

Not only that, but several of our most experienced tutors were graduating from their research degrees and leaving. I realized that they were taking all their tutoring experience in our first year courses with them.

After a stint as a research assistant at UTDC it struck me that one thing that might be done was to create a repository of tutorial materials, which would be accessible by all the philosophy department tutors. The intention was to create a workspace where new tutors could go to get ideas and examples of activities and presentations that had been used by previous experienced tutors. They could find inspiration for active learning ideas. Also, such a repository would enable peer review of learning materials being used for classes. Any factual

errors, for example, could be picked up on by other tutors. Finally, I figured that having other current and previous tutors' materials available might help to speed up preparation time. It's one thing to read the readings, but then a lot of time can be spent creating handouts, or activity sheets, or presentations. It surely was possible to assist this process by some strategic perusal of previous class material.

After an initial discussion with the other tutors I decided to go ahead and create the repository. I requested that everyone who wanted to contribute send me tutorial materials as PDFs, word documents or PowerPoint presentations. This generated about 120 files spread across four first year courses. Initially it was hoped that the MyVictoria Groups function would allow for the database. However, due to file-size restrictions we had to use Blackboard instead. I sent a request for a Blackboard Organization called 'Philosophy Tutors' to be created. This was promptly done and all the materials uploaded into individual course folders. I then added all the current tutors as group leaders so that they can upload, download and edit materials. It should be a simple matter now of enrolling each new tutor as a group leader.

With any luck the new Philosophy Tutors Organization on Blackboard will inspire philosophy tutors to look beyond their current repertoire of tutorial activities. It should ensure some consistency across tutorials, and hopefully raise the quality of teaching in our first year courses.



*Matt Gers is completing a PhD in the Philosophy Department at Victoria University of Wellington. He is interested in how the technology we build shapes our minds. He thinks about evolution and cognition while tramping New Zealand's backcountry.*

# Victoria Learning and Teaching Fund Project Updates

Victoria funded 17 learning and teaching projects for 2010. Details of the fund and all of the projects can be found at <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/resources/landtfund/>. Many of the projects have just started but a few can already report significant progress.

## David Mason: What factors determine the effectiveness of tutors in tutorials?

Data for the first part has been collected and is in the process of being analysed. Focus groups have been conducted with three groups of first year students, and one with the tutors. Preliminary results have suggested that INFO101 is the most popular first year course offered in the BCA. The focus groups identified several issues regarding tutorials that should be changed but the overall feedback is that the INFO tutorials are much more enjoyable than other first year courses. The focus group ideas and issues will be used to make some changes to tutorials before the commencement of the second trimester, particularly with regard to scheduling, and the research will continue with the next cohort in trimester two.

## Eric Chong: Supporting academically at risk students: A proactive approach

The pilot for this project was done at the start of Trimester one. Discussions were organised for 25 "at risk students" (i.e. students who had failed one or more subject before signing up for the MGMT 101 course). They were asked for reasons that have hindered their academic progress. The transcripts of these discussions were analysed and three causal factors emerged. These are: Prior Education Factor (1. the University requires more independent study, 2. increased academic workload as compared with school and 3. immediate effort required from start of term), Individual Factors (1. not wanting to seek help early, 2. not knowing where to get help, 3. family, socialising and relationship issues, and 4. poor decision on subject combination) and Disabling Factors

(1. Poor English language proficiency, 2. part-time work commitments and 3. problems with accommodation). A detailed questionnaire has been designed and a coaching model selected for use in the main project commencing at the start of Trimester two. The project is progressing as planned.

## Kevin Gould: Promoting higher-order thinking with effective clicker questions

Jessie Prebble, a BSc Hons graduate in the School of Biological Sciences, has been employed as a Research Assistant to study the effective design of clicker questions. With support from UTDC, Jessie has begun to summarise the literature on the selective use of appropriate multiple choice questions to promote higher-order cognitive development. From this, we hope to construct a set of guidelines to assist in the creation of optimum question design. Our results are to be presented at the First Year Biology Educators' Colloquium in Dunedin, November 2010.

## Stuart Brock: Measuring critical thinking abilities

This project is testing whether and to what degree taking PHIL 123: CRITICAL THINKING affects a subject's performance on the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (a psychometric test commonly used in New Zealand to test a subject's critical thinking abilities). The aim was to test three groups (two from Philosophy and a control from Religious Studies). An initial scan of the data is encouraging. The mean test scores for the second test were higher than the mean test scores for the first test in both Philosophy classes. Over the next few months I will be analysing the data in detail.

## Ocean Mercer: Te Kawa a Maui Cultural Atlas

The Te Kawa a Maui Cultural Atlas project is progressing with technical aspects and training having been addressed. It is envisaged that MAOR students will access GoogleEarth through Blackboard, upload their assessments onto the GoogleGroups map to be set up (for the courses), and the Class Map will then be converted into a format that is usable and accessible in the ArcGIS system hosting the Atlas. Around 150 students enrolled in the courses MAOR123, Maori Society and Culture and MAOR122, The Peopling of Polynesia have so far participated in the Cultural mapping project. Student feedback on the mapping assessment activities has been collected and is being analysed.

## Mary Roberts: Student research skill development

The project started in June with a literature review, including a review of the work already done at VUW over the last 12 years focussing on the relationship between research and teaching and learning. The next phase is establishing a framework of research skill development in the undergraduate degree to inform the contribution that research and researchers can make to undergraduate learning. A research skills development framework has been designed and trialled at the University of Adelaide and we invite staff to examine this framework and give us feedback on it (<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/rsd/>). The project is also mapping the way in which research and researchers currently contribute to undergraduate learning at Victoria. We would be interested to hear from any teaching staff who would be interested in participating in a mapping as described here: <http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/journal/vol9/beej-9-1.aspx>. The final phase involves the trial of a research skills development framework within specific courses at VUW and dissemination of trial results. Teaching staff interested in participating in such a trial are most welcome to contact us. Sydney University's project is a similar model to that being considered <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/projects/RLT/about.htm>. If you are interested in contributing to this enquiry in any way at all – but particularly by working with your undergraduate course in the area of developing undergraduate research skills please contact Mary or Jan at Student Learning Support Services.

## Vicky Mabin: Encouraging Excellence in Teaching: Showcasing teaching successes in FCA

An experienced researcher, Dr Heike Schaezel, has been engaged as a Research Fellow to undertake this project. An email letter to all FCA staff has been sent out inviting their participation, and separate letters to Heads of Schools and UTDC, asking them to help encourage staff to be involved. Staff have been asked to respond to Dr Schaezel to arrange an interview. Interview questions have been designed. A research design has been constructed. Interviews will commence as soon as staff volunteer. We plan to conduct up to 40 interviews, but will stop earlier if we reach saturation in terms of topics and coverage.



Australasian  
survey of  
student  
engagement

AUSSE 2010 is coming soon.  
Invitations to participate will  
start in August.

<http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/ausse/>