The University of Huddersfield Strategy/Policy for Roll Out and Usage of the VLE

1. Introduction and Scope

1.1. Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at centre stage, is a critical element of provision for our students.

1.2. The driving factors for the development of the VLE are enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, meeting students' expectations in the use of technology and improving student satisfaction. The benefits of using pedagogy led TEL are well-known and the implications of getting it right are far reaching; the VLE needs to move away from being a passive content repository and be transformed into an active learning environment. If we are going to help our students become all they can be, we need to make this change.

1.3. These drivers feed into the teaching and learning KPIs in our post-2018 strategy map such that the VLE facilitates enhanced retention, top ten in the NSS, maintenance of our gold status, excellence in employment prospects along with enhanced attainment and addressing the attainment gap.

1.4. The University has taken the bold step of changing the VLE from UniLearn (based on Blackboard) to Brightspace, with the changeover occurring for the 2018/19 academic year. Brightspace has the potential to bring many benefits to both staff and students. These include:
   - a clean, modern, intuitive, easy to use interface
   - an interface that adapts to all mobile devices, plus mobile apps
   - easy drag and drop upload of content
   - cloud hosted, resulting in less downtime and more resilience
   - learning analytics to help identify retention and attainment issues
   - a whole host of exciting new features to help staff easily create innovative and engaging learning resources.

1.5. One important aspect of maximizing the potential of the new VLE is that the innovative usage of the VLE depends on the learning resources uploaded by staff and hence the digital literacy of the staff base. Any strategy for roll out has to involve a significant element of training for staff, both in the initial set up phase but also into the future.

1.6. This document outlines the strategy aimed at realising the benefits of the new VLE both in the roll out phase and into the future. It is split into three sections: minimum standards for modules, setting up the new VLE and best practice for ongoing development.

1.7. This document will be updated on an annual basis.

1.8. Further information and guidance for staff on the new VLE, details of the training available and the timelines for its introduction can be found within the Brightspace learning materials for staff (will move to iPark in Sept 2018).

2. Expected Standards for Modules and Learning Resources on the VLE

2.1. This section sets out the mandatory minimum standards for module content on the VLE in order to ensure equitable treatment of all of our students.

2.1.1. Accessibility of information is important. The new VLE allows for a much wider mobile interface and this is particularly relevant for retention and engagement.

2.2. These minimum standards are outlined in Appendix 1 and it is expected that all UGT and PGT modules across the university will conform to these standards.

2.2.1. These standards provide for a set of information that students can expect for each module of their course.
2.2.2. These are minimum standards; it is expected that staff will load significantly more content and add innovative material (see section 4) and make use of interactive tools
2.2.3. The intention is not to have 'clones' of modules but to ensure that the basic information that students require is easily and consistently accessible via the VLE and consequently on any device the student may have access to.

2.3. It is expected that these minimum standards will be used and adhered to at the set up stage of the new VLE.

2.4. It is the responsibility of the module leader to provide material for the module that complies with this minimum standard.

2.5. It is the responsibility of the course leader to check that all modules in their courses meet the minimum standard.

2.5.1. In the event that a module does not comply then the course leader should liaise with the module leader in the first instance to rectify the situation.
2.5.2. If a module continues to fail to meet minimum standards then the matter will be referred to the HoD/Dean/Dir/AD of T&L as appropriate depending on the structures within each School.

2.6. After the initial set up period, it is the responsibility of LTAs within Schools to provide training to staff to enable them to set up modules to this standard.

2.7. If lectures are used as a delivery vehicle, lecture material (slides or notes) should normally be available on the VLE at least one week before the scheduled class.

2.8. The reading list for each module should have clear sections and details of essential and background reading with links to the library.

2.9. Modules should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that content is up to date and all outdated content removed.

3. Methodology for Setting up Modules on the new VLE

3.1. Best practice is that academic staff load their own material into shell modules set up by the VLE team in CLS.
3.1.1. This practice is the preferred option as it as it allows for faster innovation in the VLE interface.
3.1.2. This practice is the preferred option as it avoids a 'garbage out/garbage in' scenario.
3.1.3. This practice is the preferred option as it provides a faster route to improving the skills of academic staff in the use of the new VLE.

3.2. The VLE team will provide staff with both a shell module and a database of their material from the old VLE.

3.3. In some exceptional circumstances material can be directly migrated from the old VLE into the shell modules.

    3.3.1. This practice is not recommended as it requires extensive cleanup of modules by academic staff and is more time consuming

    3.3.2. This practice is not recommended as it does not allow for initial innovation in the VLE interface

3.4. Refer back to point 2.5 for roles and responsibilities for setting up and checking of modules

3.5. Timelines for the process of setting up of modules are shown in Appendix 2.

    3.5.1. School working parties will develop specific programmes within this outline in the best interests of the School.

    3.5.2. The expectation is that all modules will be built to the minimum standard by the end of July 2018.

    3.5.3. The expectation is that all modules will be checked for compliance with the minimum standards by end of August 2018.

    3.5.4. The expectation is that all modules will be meet the minimum standards by the beginning of the third week in September 2018.

3.6. Academic staff are expected to engage with the following sessions as part of the set up process.

- Awareness session
- Online training
- Planning workshop for course teams
- Module building workshops
- Enhanced features workshops (for identified course teams)

3.7. The University reognises that this is a body of work for Academic staff over a tight timescale. Line managers should allow for this in workload models (if possible) or in practical terms through in year variations in workload distribution and allocation.

    3.7.1. Review and enhancement of material on the VLE is an activity that is expected to occur on annual basis (as a minimum)

4. Development and Best Practice for the VLE on an Ongoing Basis

4.1. Once modules are set up in the new VLE there is an expectation that staff will continue to develop the material and introduce elements of best practice on an ongoing basis as appropriate to their student body.

4.2. Staff should ensure that all material on the VLE is checked on a regular basis and old content is refreshed and that all links working and not broken.

4.3. Examples of best practice that the new VLE can facilitate will be provided within the Brightspace learning resources for staff.

4.4. It is expected that staff will introduce at least one extra element of best practice into their modules on an annual basis.

    4.4.1. It is the responsibility of course teams and module leaders to determine the most useful features that will enhance their students' experience and aid learning

    4.4.2. Training on the best practice features will be available online and from LTAs

4.5. It is the responsibility of the module leader to ensure that the addition of best practice is undertaken for their module.

    4.5.1.   Module leaders will be expected to report on the material added in their end of year module report for annual evaluation.

4.6. It is the responsibility of the course leader to check the addition of best practice into all modules in their courses.

    4.6.1.   Course leaders will be expected to report on the material added in their end of year course report for annual evaluation.

    4.6.2.   In the event that a module does not comply then the course leader should liaise with the module leader in the first instance to rectify the situation.

    4.6.3.   If a module continues to fail to add elements of best practice then the matter will be referred to the HoD/Dean/Dir/AD of T&L as appropriate depending on the structures within each School.

5. Appendix 1 – Mandatory Minimum Standards

5.1. Structure of the Module

5.1.1. Home page will contain

- Banner
- Welcome Message widget
- Staff Profiles widget
- Announcements widget
- Calendar widget

5.1.2. Navigation Bar will contain

- Content   (Repository for learning content & module info)
  - Overview   *(Welcome Message)*
  - Bookmarks   *(Personal Content Bookmarks)*
  - Module Schedule   (*List of time stamped content and assessments)*

  - Table of contents   *(Overview of all module content)*
  - Information   *(Module Information not elsewhere)*
  - Assessment   *(Assessment info and submission points)*
  - Lecture Capture   *(Automated link to lecture capture videos)*
  - Learning resources   *(All Learning related content)*
- Communication   *(Links to Brightspace communication tools)*
  - Announcements
  - Chat *
  - Classlist
  - Discussions
  - Groups
  - Instant messaging
- Key Items   (Automatically populated links to key items)
  - Assessment Title **   *(link to ASIS Assessment Titles)*
  - Module Handbook   *(link to Module Handbook on WISDOM)*
  - Module Specification   *(link to Module Spec. on WISDOM)*
  - Reading List   *(link to Module Reading List)*
  - UniLearn Module Content Download ** *(link to extract of content from UniLearn)*
  - VLE Default Standards **   *(link to VLE Strategy)*

- Tools   *(Link to BrightSpace tools)*
  - Class Progress
  - ePortfolio
  - FAQ *
  - Glossary *
- Grades   (Link to Gradebook)
- Module Administration **   (Link to Module Administration Tools)

Notes:

* Does not display until the Module Leader turns that tool on within Module Administration.

** Does not display to students.

5.2. Practice within the Module

5.2.1. Module Home Page

5.2.1. Banner. This can be customised by the Module Leader as appropriate.

5.2.2. Welcome Message. This must be populated by adding a suitable message to the Overview section.

5.2.2. Staff Profiles Widget. This identifies the Module Leader in bold, while tutors display in normal text.

5.2.2.1. Module Leaders should ensure that they have the correct role in the module to facilitate this. This can be checked in the Classlist tool.

5.2.2.2. Staff profiles should be populated with contact information and a photo.

5.2.3. Announcements Widget. This displays announcements created in the Announcement tool. Announcements should be created to inform students of all key important information.

5.2.4. Calendar Widget. This should contain all timetabled information and key assessment deadlines visible. Assessments submission point and other items with a deadline will populate the calendar automatically. Other key dates should be added manually by the Module Leader or tutors.

5.2.2. Navigation Bar

5.2.2.1. The Learning Resources area should have all core resources that students need organised into a logical and intuitive structure. This area cannot be empty but can be renamed. Sub-units can be created in this area to present an intuitive and logical structure for content to students. All content and sub-units should have meaningful names to enable students to search the module. Where possible, Lecture notes and slides should be uploaded before lectures.

5.2.2.2. The Information Area should contain any information about the module not displayed elsewhere. The contents of this area should be consistent across all modules in a course where possible. This area does not have to contain anything and if empty, will not display to students.

5.2.2.3 Assignments area should have clear assignment briefs and information about submission dates.

5.2.2.4. There should be a welcome announcement added to the overview area of the module, which will be automatically displayed on the module home page.

5.2.2.4. Reading Lists should be populated and kept up to date.

6. Appendix 2 – Timescales for Module Development and Training

Activity	Timescale	Responsible person/group	Resource Implication
Informal Awareness Campaign	Dec 2017– Jan 2018	VLE Working Party	Staff time/marketing material
Create School Working Group	Dec 2017– Jan 2018	School Dir T&L or ADT&L plus LTAs	Staff time
Formal Initial Awareness Sessions	Dec 2017 - Jan 2018	VLE Working Party	Staff time/space for sessions
Write University Strategy for VLE	Dec 2017- Jan 2018	VLE Strategy Group	Staff time
Approval of Above	Jan 2018	ProVCT&L/QSAG/UTLC	Staff time
Tidy up Modules in UniLearn	Jan-Apr 2018	All module leaders	Staff time
Online Training Available	Jan 2018	VLE Working Party/Staff Development	Staff time/hosting space
Planning Session Workshops	Jan -May 2018	VLE Working Party/ School Working Group	Staff time/space for sessions
Unilearn Content Available	Feb 2018	IT team/ VLE Working Party	Staff time/IT storage space
Empty Shell Modules Available	Feb 2018	IT team/ VLE Working Party	Staff time
Module Building Workshops	Feb-Jul 2018	VLE Working Party/ School Working Group	Staff time/space for sessions
Module Building	Feb-Sept 2018	All module leaders/ one to one support from LTAs and expanded IT help	Staff time/space for sessions
All Modules Built for courses with October 2018 start	July 2018	Module leaders/ VLE Working Party/ School Working Group	Staff time/space for sessions
Module Enhancement and Extra Features Workshops	Apr–Dec 2018	Course Teams as selected by Catalyst team/ VLE Strategy Group	Staff time/space for sessions/ finances for away days
Module Checking	July-Sept 2018	Course leaders, LTAs then Dir/ADT&L	Staff time
Module Enhancement	Ongoing	All academic staff	Staff time