



International Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching Association (IBILTA) Research Conference 2024

Program

24 - 26 July 2024

VU City Tower
370 Little Lonsdale St, Melbourne VIC 3000

vu.edu.au/IBILTA-2024


IBILTA
THE INTERNATIONAL BLOCK
AND INTENSIVE LEARNING AND
TEACHING ASSOCIATION

Hosted by:


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UNIVERSITY**
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Acknowledgement of country

Victoria University (VU) acknowledges the Elders, families and forebearers of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wathaurung (Wadawurrung) who are the custodians of University land and have been for many centuries.

We acknowledge that the land on which we stand is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal, and that the Kulin people's living culture had, and has, a unique role in the life of this region. VU supports the aim of Reconciliation Australia to build better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the benefit of all Australians.



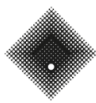
Artist: Paola Balla, Moondani Balluk, 2017



International Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching Association (IBILTA) Research Conference 2024

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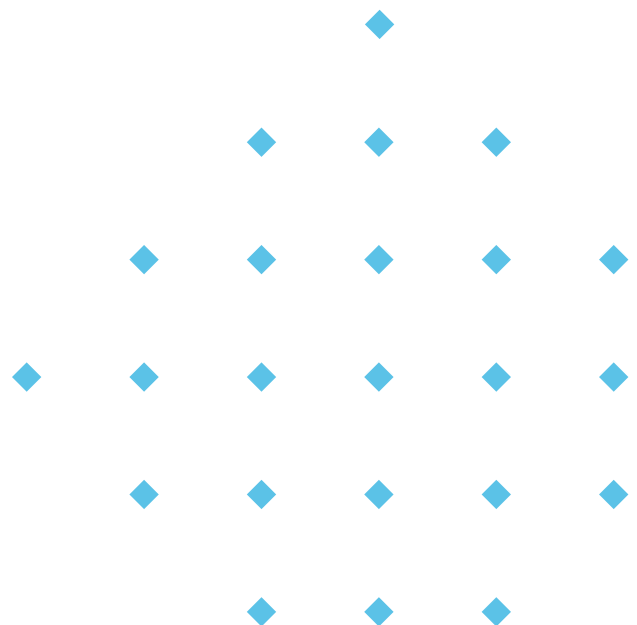


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Conference Program



Day 1 - Wednesday 24 July 2024

12.15pm - 1pm	Conference Registration (City Tower Foyer, Ground Floor)
1pm - 1.30pm	Welcome (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) Dr. Ellen Buck, IBILTA President Professor John Germov, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer, Victoria University
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Panel: How are universities built better? (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) Panel Chair: Professor Adam Shoemaker, Vice-Chancellor and President, Victoria University Panellists: Professor Andrew Smallridge Victoria University, Professor Thomas Roche Southern Cross University, Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk, Professor Laura Straus, University Montana Western, Professor Alasdair Blair De Montfort University, Professor Steve Hayward, Colorado College.
2.30pm - 3pm	Afternoon Tea and Networking (City Tower, Level 9)

	Stream 1 (City Tower, Level 9)	Stream 2 (City Tower, Level 9)
3pm - 4.30pm	<p>Session 1A - Governance & Curriculum Design Chair: Associate Professor John Weldon</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Transition Governance”: Overseeing Academic and Regulatory Requirements of Going Block – Professor Tom Clark, Victoria University 2. Rethinking Public Law in the Block – Dr Matt Harvey & Dr. Tristian Galloway Victoria University 3. An overview of the Ecology of Block Implementation – Professor Anthony Watt, Victoria University, Dr Naomi Dempsey, LaTrobe University, Professor Andrew Smallridge, Victoria University 	<p>Session 1B - Professional Learning & Academics’ experiences in Block Teaching Chair: Dr Bert Oraison</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ‘It Changed My Thinking Around, Okay, What Is Really Key?’: Academic Voices of Delivering Intensive Teaching in Higher Education – Dr. Melissah Thomas, Dr. Amanda Muscat, Professor Anthony Watt, Victoria University 2. “Blockwise Brilliance: Harnessing Evidence-Based Professional Learning for Teaching Excellence” - Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski, Dr Marc C-Scott, Victoria University 3. University academics’ experiences of participating in collaborative peer observation learning circles – Associate Professor Puspha, Sinnayah, Victoria University
4.30pm - 5.15pm	<p>Session 2A - Workshop: IBILTA Journal Workshop: Becoming a Reviewer – writing an abstract Chair: Associate Professor Tom Yeager Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah, Victoria University & Dr. Christian Gilde, University of Montana Western</p>	<p>Session 2B - Workshop: Building Sustainable Belonging: inclusive approaches to Block design and delivery to foster wellbeing and belonging in and across student and staff communities Chair: Ms Samantha Amjadali Jo Divers, Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk</p>
5.15pm - 6.15pm	<p>Conference Welcome Cocktail Event (City Tower Foyer, Ground Floor) Sponsored by the VU Block Model Academy</p>	

Day 2 - Thursday 25 July 2024

8.30am - 8.45am	Day 2 arrival (Queen Street Lecture Theatre)
8.45am - 9.05am	Welcome (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) Professor Andrew Smallridge, Victoria University Kathleen Raponi, IBILTA Director of Projects
9.05am - 9.50am	Keynote Presentation (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) Left to our own devices: First Years on Block Professor Bethany Blankenship, University of Montana Western
9.50am - 10.05am	Morning Tea and Networking (Queen Street Courtyard)
10.05am - 11.20am	Panel Presentations: Student Experiences in Block (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) Chair: Dr. Ellen Buck <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Balancing Act: student perceptions on managing study and extra-curricular activities in block delivery – Mr Gerard Everett & Ms Kathleen Raponi, Victoria University Student satisfaction in a 6-week immersive block model: Exploring the impact of transitions – Professor Thomas Roche, Professor Erica Wilson, Dr. Elizabeth Goode, Southern Cross University

Stream 1 (City Tower, Level 9)		Stream 2 (City Tower, Level 9)	
11.30am - 1pm	Session 3A - Learning beyond the classroom: Field Trips & Experiential Learning Experiences Chair: Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Problem-based learning of an intensive design studio block unit in collaboration with a local community centre – Dr. Hing-Wah Chau, Victoria University Enabling Field Trips in the Block – Ms Kathleen Raponi & Professor Stephen Bigger, Victoria University Designing and delivering Embedded Immersive Learning Sessions (ELIS) within the VU Block delivery model – Craig Kappes, Victoria University 	Session 3B - Block Opportunities & Challenges Chair: Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lights, Camera, Action, Block: Optimising Media Pedagogy for the Block – Dr. Marc C-Scott, Jenna Corcoran, Victoria University Can You Fast Forward Creativity? – Professor Bethany Blankenship, University of Montana Western and Associate Professor Ligia Pelosi, Victoria University Achieving student success in Nursing and Midwifery through Clinical Learning Tools – Karina Ireland, Victoria University 	
1pm - 2pm	Lunch & Session 5: Poster Exhibition & Poster Talks (City Tower, Level 10) Chair: Ms Kathleen Raponi		
2pm - 3.30pm	Session 4A - Panel Presentations: Field Trips Chair: Dr Bert Oraison <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Block in the Field: Intensive Out-of-Classroom Experiences – Dr. Laura Straus, Dr. Christian Gilde, University of Montana Western; Michelle Prawer, Victoria University; Dr. Thomas Yeager, Victoria University A Block Model and Tech School Collaborative Framework for Enhancing Pre-Service Teacher Self-Efficacy in STEM - Dr Neil Fernandes, Dr Andrew Welsman, Mr. Samuel Nikolsky, Dr. Melissah Thomas Victoria University 	Session 4B - Reflective practice, Student Centred & Group Work Chair: Associate Professor John Weldon Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> From reflective practice to critical reflective practice on the block - Associate Professor Cara Jane Millar, Hayley Dell-Oro, Dr. Laura Chahda Dr. Samar Alamawi, Victoria University The building blocks for successful group-work experiences in intensive learning environments – Dr. Samuel Howe, Victoria University Block Model Teaching- a Style of Teaching that Encourages Student-Centred Learning for Students Majored in Building Surveying – Dr. Le Li, Dr. Nima Izadyar, Dr. Shuo Chen, Dr. Darryl O'Brien, Victoria University 	
3.30pm - 3.45pm	Afternoon Tea (City Tower, Level 10)		

3.45pm - 4.45pm	Session 5A - Panel: Supports to increase participation and success in block model in today's economic climate in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching Chair: Associate Professor Tom Yeager Sarah Jobson, Sophia Stirling, Nicole Bourke, Lisa Showers, Victoria University	Session 5B - Workshop: Engaging first year biomedical students with scientific literature via the innovative Perusall online reading platform. Chair: Samantha Amjadali Dr. Gayathri Rajaraman, Dr. Neil Fernandes, Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah, Victoria University
4.45pm - 5.30pm	Break	
5.30pm	Conference Dinner & Awards Night (Novotel & ibis Melbourne Central Hotel, Level 1 Bar & Restaurant) Doors open 5.30pm, seated by 6.00pm for formal proceedings	

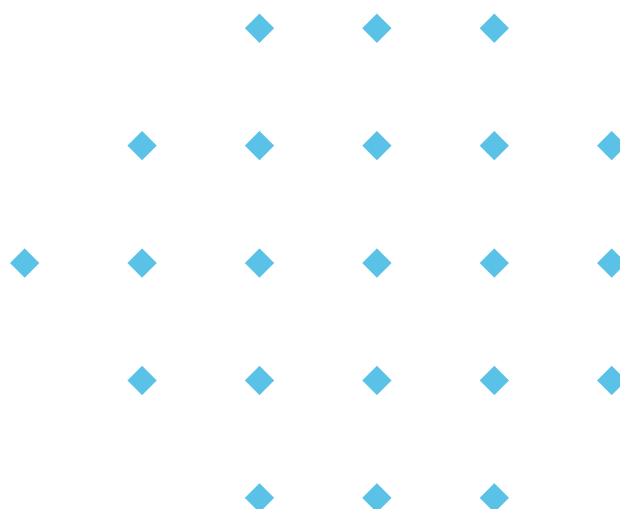
Day 3 - Friday 26 July 2024

8.45am - 9am	Day 3 arrival (City Tower, Level 9)
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	Stream 1 (City Tower, Level 9)	Stream 2 (City Tower, Level 9)
9am - 10.30am	Session 6A - Effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the block and what does this mean for integrity? Chair: Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Block Model teaching: Opportunities and Challenges from accounting academics' perspective - Dr. Chitra S De Silva Lokuwaduge, Victoria University Integration of AI into classrooms for the first year students in Higher education in block model - Dr Maja Husaric, Victoria University Workshop: A Custom GPT for VU Block Model Curriculum Design – Dr. Joshua Johnson, Victoria University 	Session 6B - Designing for the block Chair: Mr. Gerard Everett Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of critical thinking, satisfaction with teaching and learning and preparation for clinical placement among Undergraduate Nursing and Nursing/Midwifery students - Dr Abdi D. Osman, Victoria University Implementing a new block model teaching approach in nursing and midwifery education - an evaluation - Associate Professor Gina Kruger, Victoria University Workshop: Wiki Technology in Block Teaching and Blended Learning: Fostering Development of 4C 21st Century Skills - Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity Dr. Neil Fernandes, Dr. Andrew Welsman, Dr. Thomas Yeager, Dr. Gaya Rajaraman Victoria University
10.30am - 10.45am	Morning Tea (City Tower, Level 9)	
10.45am - 12.15pm	Session 7A - Block Opportunities and Challenges Chair: Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Redefining Success: Exploring Ungrading for the Block – Dr. Marc C Scott, Victoria University Client consulting projects on the block: Understanding sources of tension – Lora Louise Broady, Colorado College Embedding WIL in the block model to facilitate transfer of learning: Reflections from educators - Hayley Dell'Oro and Dr Laura Chahda, Victoria University 	Session 7B - Student Experiences Chair: Samantha Amjadali Presentations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students' psycho-social perspectives on Victoria University's (VU) First Year College (FYC); a mixed method analysis - Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski, Dr Bert Oraison, Associate Professor John Weldon, Professor Andrew Smallridge, Victoria University International Postgraduate Student Experiences of Block Mode Delivery - Chunxiao Liu, Victoria University It Was Good Talking with You: Student Perspectives from an International Collaboration - Michelle Prawer, Victoria University
12.15pm - 12.45pm	Lunch (Queen Street Courtyard)	
12.45pm - 1.15pm	Session 8: Panel Presentations: International Exchange within the Block Schedules (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) Chair: Dr Bert Oraison, Victoria University Dr. Megan Chilson, University of Montana Western, Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski, Associate Professor John Weldon Victoria University	
1.15pm - 2pm	Closing Keynote Presentation (Queen Street Lecture Theatre) The Building Blocks of Active Learning: Pedagogical Innovation at a Micro Level Dr Amanda Muscat, Victoria University	
2pm	Closing Remarks President IBILTA Conference (Queen Street Lecture Theatre)	

Poster Exhibition Summary

Poster No.	Poster Title & Presenter
1	<p>Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Feedback Literacy Behaviour Scale within an osteopathy teaching program</p> <p>Presenters: Rebecca Wospil and Craig Kappes, Victoria University Authors: Dr. Nicholas Tripodi, Rebecca Wospil, Jack Feehan, Brea Wright, Dale Harris, Ming Song and Craig Kappes, Victoria University, Brett Vaughan, The University of Melbourne <i>Poster Talk</i></p>
2	<p>Using the academic framework to maximise the opportunities of block teaching</p> <p>Author and presenter: Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk <i>Poster Talk</i></p>
3	<p>Group work assessments in block mode of delivery: students' reflections and performance</p> <p>Author: Dr. Wasantha Liyanage, Victoria University <i>Poster Display</i></p>
4	<p>Designing Your LMS for Block</p> <p>Author: Dr. Mary Cornelius, University of Suffolk <i>Poster Display</i></p>
5	<p>Reimagining the Effects of Introducing Block Mode Teaching in Higher Education</p> <p>Author: Thi Tho Trinh Nguyen, Dr. Amir Ghapanchi and Dr Afroz Purarjomandlangrudi, Victoria University <i>Poster Display</i></p>
6	<p>Students and faculty perceptions of summative assessment methods in block and blend</p> <p>Author: Paulo Vieira Braga, Carmen Maria Ortiz Granero and Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk <i>Poster Display</i></p>
7	<p>Understanding Engagement in Intensive Learning Environments</p> <p>Author: Dr Reilly Anne Dempsey Willis and Paulo Vieira Braga, University of Suffolk <i>Poster Display</i></p>
8	<p>A collaborative international project between five universities to understand the opportunities, challenges and impact of a move to block delivery</p> <p>Author: Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk, Dr Gayani Samarawickrema, Victoria University, Professor Leanne de Main, De Montfort University, Dr Rebecca Turner, University of Plymouth, Dr Alice Graeupl, Manchester Metropolitan University, Professor Sarah Jones, University of Gloucestershire <i>Poster Display</i></p>
9	<p>Winner of the VU Research Festival Poster Competition: Supporting and Advancing Aboriginal Communities in Metropolitan Melbourne</p> <p>Author: Marei Witjes, Rachel Jones, & Grace Killmer. <i>Poster Display</i></p>



Keynote Presentation



Prof. Bethany Blankenship

University of Montana Western

Left to our own devices: First Years on Block

Full implementation of Experience One, the block scheduling program at the University of Montana Western, began in August 2005. August 2005 was also the start date of my job as an assistant professor of English at UMW. Despite campus-wide preparation for implementing block scheduling, no one knew exactly how such a radical change would affect the university's numerous first-generation students, many of whom were in need of math or writing remediation. My first year with first year students showed me the block's unique gift of deep connections that helped both my students and me succeed.

Closing Keynote Presentation



Dr. Amanda Muscat

Victoria University

The Building Blocks of Active Learning: Pedagogical Innovation at a Micro Level

This session will dive into the transformative potential of block teaching, emphasising the necessity of a pedagogical shift to optimise teaching and learning in block contexts. The presentation will examine the intricacies of effective block teaching and learning at a micro level, showcasing innovative approaches to active learning that can reshape teaching practices on the ground. Discover strategies for engaging students and fostering deep learning experiences within the dynamic context of block delivery.

Conference Presentations Synopsis

(Abstract will be published in Journal of Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching.)



Session 1A - Governance & Curriculum Design

“Transition Governance”: Overseeing Academic and Regulatory Requirements of Going Block

Professor Tom Clark, Victoria University
Presentation

The governance challenges and opportunities for a university when it converts to a block model approach are comparable to the transition pedagogy challenges that have motivated many universities to make this change. Much as the scholarship around block and intensive learning and teaching approaches suggests their beneficial influence on student engagement is critical to their success as transition pedagogies, this presentation argues that maximising academic engagement in governance is critical to the success of the transition in institutional practices.

Rethinking Public Law in the Block

Dr Matt Harvey & Dr. Tristian Galloway, Victoria University
Presentation

After five years have teaching in the Block Model two compulsory law subjects: Constitutional Law (Harvey) and Administrative Law (Galloway). We have begun co-operating more closely and are redeveloping our units with a greater emphasis on Strategic Learning, also proposing to capitalise on their synergies. We intend to test the advantages of teaching law through Strategic Learning in the block and of staircasing these two subjects.

An overview of the Ecology of Block Implementation

Professor Anthony Watt, Victoria University; Dr Naomi Dempsey, LaTrobe University; Professor Andrew Smallridge, Victoria University
Presentation

The implementation of Block model requires more than a change to the content and design of learning and teaching. It necessitates modifications to student administration, academic calendars, scheduling of assessments and results, and regulatory reporting on student outcomes. When considered within a HE ecological model four domains of criticality exist: Management (M) accountability to lead, and support transition to the Block Model; Administration (A) configured and operationalised to respond quickly to intensive mode delivery; a new Design (D) to foster collaboration and integration between learning designers and academics; and the revitalisation of pedagogical Delivery (D). This presentation will provide an overview of university reflections on actualising a MADD framework to successfully implement the Block model

Session 1B - Professional Learning & Academic's experiences in Block Teaching

‘It Changed My Thinking Around, Okay, What Is Really Key?’: Academic Voices of Delivering Intensive Teaching in Higher Education

Dr. Melissah Thomas, Dr. Amanda Muscat, Professor Anthony Watt, Victoria University
Presentation

This presentation delves into the realm of intensive teaching in higher education, specifically exploring academic perspectives within the context of VU's Block Model®. Through interviews with nine participants, our qualitative analysis uncovers three intertwined themes: the functionality and experience of intensive teaching, the impact of relational aspects on learning, and the close connection between learning and assessment in this intensive format. The findings not only shed light on the benefits and challenges but also advocate for further investigation into the transformative potential of block practices, emphasising their influence on pedagogical approaches and the facilitation of high-quality learning and teaching in intense and block modes.

“Blockwise Brilliance: Harnessing Evidence-Based Professional Learning for Teaching Excellence”

Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski, Dr Marc C-Scott, Victoria University
Presentation

This presentation discusses the importance of evidence-based professional learning in improving teaching practices in higher education, with a focus on block-mode institutions. Based on Victoria University's Professional Learning Program, it highlights the benefits of tailored professional learning initiatives for academic staff in block mode settings. The presentation identifies key principles and best practices, providing insights into how evidence-based professional learning can enhance teaching practices. It emphasises the need for academic staff to adapt to emerging methodologies, technology, and pedagogical trends through rigorous research to meet the evolving demands of contemporary education in block mode.

University academics' experiences of participating in collaborative peer observation learning circles

Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah, Victoria University

Presentation

The literature emphasizes the effectiveness of peer observation of teaching in higher education (HE) for academic professional development and institutional quality assurance. Despite its recognized benefits, sustained and supported peer observation is limited in HE due to various constraints. This study aimed to promote academics' professional learning through collaborative peer observation learning circles (CPO/LCs). Conducted at an Australian metropolitan university, the research employed online surveys and interviews to explore academics' experiences in CPO/LCs. Findings underscored the importance of mentorship, leadership, community, and an open mindset in fostering engagement. Participants valued purposeful observation, feedback, self-reflection, curriculum design insights, and collaborative learning. Sustained CPO/LCs, facilitated by supportive university leadership, hold potential to enhance teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Session 2A - Becoming a Journal Reviewer

IBILTA Journal Workshop – Becoming a Reviewer – writing an abstract

Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah, Victoria University & Dr. Christian Gilde, University of Montana Western

Workshop

How to be a peer reviewer for JBILT? A guide to being an effective peer reviewer. This session is targeted to early career researchers who are considering becoming peer reviewers as part of their professional responsibilities. This guide takes you through necessary steps to be aware of your role and ethical obligations.

Session 2B - Wellbeing in the Block

Building Sustainable Belonging: inclusive approaches to Block design and delivery to foster wellbeing and belonging in and across student and staff communities

Jo Divers and Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk

Workshop

The pandemic has resulted in a longer-term sense of disconnection and isolation from learning communities, and the wider campus experience, with impact on academic confidence, friendships and wellbeing. While block and immersive learning models can enhance tutor-student relationships, increasing engagement and achievement, the lived experience of students and staff learning and teaching in The Block suggests that "block fatigue" may counter some of these benefits. This workshop will explore ways of intentionally designing with belonging, wellbeing and sustainable relationships, and programmes in mind.

Panel Presentations: Student Experiences in the Block

The Balancing Act: student perceptions on managing study and extra-curricular activities in block delivery

Mr Gerard Everett & Ms Kathleen Raponi, Victoria University

Panel Presentation

This presentation will explore student's experiences in balancing extra-curricular activities whilst studying in VU Block Model®. The panel will comprise of existing Victoria University students, who will be interviewed using a series of set questions. The responses will be analysed via a SWOT analysis. It is accepted within the literature that participation in extra-curricular activities is beneficial to students achieving improved academic results, this panel discussion will focus on students who study in a block delivery mode. Further the panel presentation will generate academic debate on how institutions can better support students in managing their study and extra-curricular activities.

Student satisfaction in a 6-week immersive block model: Exploring the impact of transitions

Professor Thomas Roche, Professor Erica Wilson, Dr. Elizabeth Goode, Southern Cross University

Panel Presentation

This presentation explores the notion of a "transition effect" on student satisfaction in an immersive block model at a regional Australian university. Unit and teaching feedback results were analysed for students who commenced their programs in the new model, and those who transitioned partway. Focus groups were also conducted with 69 students representing both groups. Findings indicate that satisfaction is substantially lower for "transitioned" students than "new" students. We also find evidence of strong improvements to satisfaction as the model becomes less "new" for both staff and students. This has implications for how to manage and evaluate major curriculum reform.

Session 3A - Learning beyond the classroom: Field Trips & Experiential Learning Experiences

Problem-based learning of an intensive design studio block unit in collaboration with a local community centre

Dr. Hing-Wah Chau, Victoria University

Presentation

The extension of the existing Serbian Cultural and Information Centre in Cairns was selected as a real project for both building design and architectural engineering students studying in a design studio block unit in 2023. Under active and participatory learning approaches, students were encouraged to propose creative solutions to cater for the needs of diverse ethnic groups and First Nations people in Cairns. After the end of the block unit, best students were selected to fly to Cairns to visit the community centre in person and engaged with a local architect. Through this engagement, students were equipped with industry-ready skills.

Enabling Field Trips in the Block

Ms Kathleen Raponi & Professor Stephen Bigger, Victoria University

Presentation

Field trips often create a memorable experience, bridging the gap of learning, between knowledge acquired in the classroom and real-world practices. An empirical study was conducted to identify academic perceptions of field trips. Participants were from different discipline areas and taught within the VU Block Model[®]. The study reveals the factors academics consider to be enablers, thus being opportunities to facilitate a field trip and those which academics consider to be hurdles and prevent a field trip from proceeding. Insights can be used to develop strategies to overcome the barriers and encourage others to embed field trips.

Designing and delivering Embedded Immersive Learning Sessions (ELIS) within the VU Block delivery model

Craig Kappes, Victoria University

Presentation

This article will provide a reflective case study to examine and demonstrate how Embedded Immersive Learning Sessions (EILS) can be effectively programmed within a Block or modular unit/subject deliveries to promote enduring understanding as described in Hansen (2011); Wiggins and McTighe (2005) while supporting “Active Learning” (Brame 2016) while engaging in “Authentic Real” as described in Boud (2022). This case study will also aim to describe how EILS’s can assist with delivering complex HE and VE “Outcomes Driven” pedagogies as mentioned in Crespo et al. (2010) that may target workplace and industry related skills and knowledge.

Session 3B - Block Opportunities & Challenges

Lights, Camera, Action, Block: Optimising Media Pedagogy for the Block

Dr. Marc C-Scott and Jenna Corcoran, Victoria University

Presentation

This presentation delves into the intricacies of teaching media-based units within a Block model, emphasising the cultivation of creativity and technical skills among students. It explores immersive learning, collaborative projects, industry partnerships, and curriculum design strategies tailored to the Block pacing. Through dissecting the efficacy of these methods, nuanced insights into student learning and skill development emerge. Addressing challenges faced by educators within Block timeframes, the presentation showcases successful case studies and compares hands-on learning in traditional versus Block models. By inspiring innovation and excellence in Block learning, it offers pathways for advancing media production education, fostering dynamic skill development amidst evolving pedagogical trends.

Can You Fast Forward Creativity?

Professor Bethany Blankenship, University of Montana Western and Associate Professor Ligia Pelosi, Victoria University

Presentation

Block teaching requires creativity. Few college instructors can imagine what a class might look like when time is compressed so tightly and wonder if creativity will have time to percolate. However, block instructors aren’t alone in the classroom. The block format is especially notable for its ability to organically foster learning communities. Erica McWilliam’s article “Teaching for Creativity: Towards Sustainable and Replicable Pedagogical Practice” suggests creativity is most likely encouraged by team work and other peer-to-peer interactions. In practical terms, this means college instructors could use the power of the block’s learning communities to co-create creativity.

Achieving student success in Nursing and Midwifery through Clinical Learning Tools

Karina Ireland, Victoria University

Presentation

Nursing and Midwifery students within Australia completing a Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Midwifery/Bachelor of Nursing (Dual Degree) require successful completion of clinical practice placements. These placements are an integral part of entry-to-practice programs, comprising 50% of entry-to-practice nursing and midwifery programs; and must be completed to register as a Nurse and/or Midwife. This research project aims to provide insight into the student experience of using clinical learning tools that can support them in successfully completing their clinical placement. This student-centred project outlines an innovative and supportive learning process developed by Victoria University (VU) Nursing and Midwifery academics.

Session 4A - Panel Presentations: Field Trips

The Block in the Field: Intensive Out-of-Classroom Experiences

Dr. Laura Straus and Dr. Christian Gilde, University of Montana Western; Michelle Prawer and Dr. Thomas Yeager, Victoria University

Panel presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to examine how field trips in the block constitute authentic learning opportunities for students and effective curricular choices for instructors. The various types of field trips featured in this research are situated within the context of work integrated learning (WIL). The method of this effort is the case-study approach and analyzes the field trips according to their contexts, strengths, challenges, opportunities, and risks. Preliminary results reveal that, when considering field trips within the block model, faculty preparation, disciplinary factors, administrative expectations, student commitment, sustainability, and site accessibility need to be taken into account.

A Block Model and Tech School Collaborative Framework for Enhancing Pre-Service Teacher Self-Efficacy in STEM

Dr Neil Fernandes, Dr Andrew Welsman, Mr. Samuel Nikolsky, Dr. Melissa Thomas, Victoria University

Panel presentation

This panel presentation describes the impact of incorporating a design thinking (DT) approach on pre-service teacher self-efficacy in the context of a unique collaborative Block delivery model involving Victoria University (VU) and Wyndham Tech School (WTS). Tech schools are a special initiative of the Victorian State Government aimed at addressing persistent skills shortages in STEM. This initiative involves pre-service teachers attending DT workshops at WTS where they experience the active learning environment of a tech school and then apply the design thinking skills they have developed in associated assessment tasks within the context of the Block's Model's focus on active learning.

Session 4B - Reflective practice, Student Centred & Group Work

From reflective practice to critical reflective practice on the block

Associate Professor Cara Jane Millar, Hayley Dell-Oro, Dr. Laura Chahda Dr. Samar Alamawi, Victoria University

Plenary presentation

Building critical reflective skills inclusive of personal and interpersonal communication skills, cultural safety, ethical practice, empowering practices and the integration of theory and practice is essential to be a health care worker than can be a good communicator, and a lifelong learner. It is essential to map where and how this teaching/learning occurs for health students and for critical reflective practice to be lifelong learning it needs to be scaffolded and is more effectively taught through metaphor. Therefore it would be advantageous if health degrees outside of social work, delivered in an intensive model tracked their reflective practice learning experiences.

The building blocks for successful group-work experiences in intensive learning environments

Dr. Samuel Howe, Victoria University

Plenary presentation

Higher education intensive learning models generally incorporate group-work activities to facilitate active student learning. Whilst group-work activities and/or assessments provide opportunities for students to improve process-based skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking, they also pose several challenges for both students and teaching staff. We show the importance of evaluating how the actions of group members and oneself, as well as remaining accountable and contributing equally to the final product, maximizes student learning potential.

Block Model Teaching- a Style of Teaching that Encourages Student-Centred Learning for Students Majored in Building Surveying

Dr. Le Li, Dr. Nima Izadyar, Dr. Shuo Chen, Dr. Darryl O'Brien

Presentation

This paper aims to investigate the efficiency of the Block Mode (BM) teaching method in both in-person (IP) and online real-time (ORT) formats to encourage student-centred learning in the Bachelor of Building Surveying course (NBBS). It summarised the student-centred learning strategies used for two subject units designed for NBBS students in the last seven years, including Traditional Semester-length (SL) delivery mode from 2016- 2018 and IP-BM and ORT-BM approach from 2018 to 2024. The efficiency of the BM teaching method in encouraging student-centred learning is estimated based on the received Student Evaluation of the Unit (SEU).

Session 5A - Panel Presentation

Supports to increase participation and success in block model in today's economic climate in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching

Sarah Jobson, Sophia Stirling, Nicole Bourke, Lisa Showers, Victoria University

Panel Presentation

Exploring the challenges of accessing higher education for diverse student populations amidst today's economic landscape, we have developed a unique delivery of block model enabling students to continue their work as early childhood educators whilst studying to become Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs). Leveraging live evening classes, strategic partnerships with the Victorian Government and employers, and valuing relationship building, our Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching will graduate 700 new ECTs this year, many of whom never thought they would attend university. We are forging a path towards inclusive education, where challenges are met with innovation for the betterment of all.

Session 5B - Innovation in the Block – Workshop

Engaging first year biomedical students with scientific literature via the innovative Perusall online reading platform.

Dr. Gayathri Rajaraman, Dr. Neil Fernandes, Associate Professor Puspha Sinnayah, Victoria University

Workshop

First year students at Victoria University undertake introductory Biology units for biomedical suite of courses in the revolutionary VU Block Model®. Core learning outcomes aligned to their assessments in these units include critical reading of scientific literature. Traditionally, distributing hard copies of scientific articles in class or uploading PDFs on the LMS have not allowed teachers to monitor student engagement with the literature until after students submitted an assignment. This drawback was addressed by using the technological innovation, Perusall online platform, to actively and collaboratively engage students in their reading and take ownership of their learning.

Session 6A - Effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the block and what does this mean for integrity?

Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Block Model teaching: Opportunities and Challenges from accounting academics' perspective

Dr. Chitra S De Silva Lokuwaduge, Victoria University

Presentation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as one of the most powerful agents of change in accounting education, presenting the sector with unprecedented academic, ethical, and legal challenges. AI is the umbrella term used to explain machine learning and natural language processing, which extensively relies on computing power algorithms. By using computing power to process and learn from data, The purpose of this study is to explore the opportunities and challenges of AI in block teaching and how and what measures should be in place to safeguard academic integrity, giving special reference to the Accounting curriculum

Integration of AI into classrooms for the first year students in Higher education in block model

Dr Maja Husaric, Victoria University

Presentation

This study investigates the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing higher education, focusing on its impact within block model classrooms where students engage intensively in a single subject over four weeks. It evaluates AI's effect on student learning and faculty teaching practices using surveys, focus groups, and academic performance data. AI tools like tutoring systems and personalised learning platforms are examined for their potential to provide customized feedback and learning pathways. Additionally, the research assesses how AI influences faculty workload, teaching strategies, and perceptions of technology in education. The findings aim to inform effective AI integration strategies, shaping future higher education policies and curriculums for improved engagement and efficiency.

A Custom GPT for VU Block Model Curriculum Design

Dr. Joshua Johnson, Victoria University

Workshop

This workshop introduces a custom GPT model trained for VU Block Model® curriculum development. Participants will explore how the tool accelerates the design process, offering innovative teaching and learning strategy ideas while underscoring the importance of expert oversight and precise prompting. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with the AI to design or review their own units/courses to understand its strengths and limitations and its potential to accelerate and provide recommendations in curriculum design. This interactive workshop will highlight the balance between leveraging AI's capabilities and the essential role of professional expertise in overseeing its use effectively.

Session 6B - Designing for the block

Evaluation of critical thinking, satisfaction with teaching and learning and preparation for clinical placement among Undergraduate Nursing and Nursing/Midwifery students

Dr Abdi D. Osman, Victoria University

Presentation

VU Block Model® has been well established at the Victoria University since its commencement in 2018 with reported positive impact on student outcomes. Nursing and Midwifery students are required to undertake between 640 to 1100hrs of clinical placement, depending on their degree and entry pathway and critical thinking skills is essential to them. Our study aimed to evaluate the impact of the Block Model on students' critical thinking capacity. Interim results indicate no association between critical thinking development and the Block Model. However, student's reported very high satisfaction with the Block Model learning method and their ability to retain content and skills under the Model.

Implementing a new block model teaching approach in nursing and midwifery education - an evaluation

Associate Professor Gina Kruger, Victoria University

Presentation

A block model learning and teaching approach is unique to the disciplines of nursing and midwifery. The VU Block Model® was rolled out for the first time nationally, at a university in the Western Region of Melbourne, in Victoria, Australia in 2018. The unique nature of engaging block model learning in nursing and midwifery students has resulted in an active learning approach with enhanced learner engagement and deeper learning in preparation for practice. This evaluative presentation outlines the significant and important inroads made into improved learning in the student cohort compared to national data, emphasising the opportunities the block model has afforded to enhancing student outcomes.

Wiki Technology in Block Teaching and Blended Learning: Fostering Development of 4C 21st Century Skills - Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity

Dr. Neil Fernandes, Dr. Andrew Welsman, Dr. Thomas Yeager, Dr. Gaya Rajaraman, Victoria University

Workshop

In this workshop, we demonstrate how a traditional first year university biology unit was redeveloped for block delivery through the use of student-created wiki spaces, which served as a means for exploring key themes in biology and for the development of key 21st century skills. The Block Model is particularly well suited for the implementation of blended learning strategies involving synchronous and asynchronous collaboration among students. As part of this interactive workshop, participants will be provided with multiple opportunities to reflect on the application of our framework to create a wiki space in their own area of expertise.

Session 7A - Block Opportunities and Challenges

Redefining Success: Exploring Ungrading for the Block

Dr. Marc C Scott, Victoria University

Presentation

In recent years, traditional grading in higher education has faced criticism for its limitations in promoting genuine learning and student engagement. In response, educators explore alternative methods like ungrading, emphasising feedback and mastery over numerical grades. This presentation examines ungrading in higher education, focusing on its potential in Block delivery. Unlike traditional grading, ungrading prioritises student-centered learning. Through mixed-methods research, it investigates ungrading's impact across instructional formats, revealing benefits and challenges. The analysis identifies trends and unique aspects, informing implementation in various contexts. The presentation delves into student and faculty perspectives, highlighting challenges and perceptions. It emphasises ungrading's transformative potential in Block delivery and advocates for further research on its long-term effects.

Client consulting projects on the block: Understanding sources of tension

Lora Louise Broady, Colorado College

Presentation

Research has long shown that client consulting projects embedded in semester-based courses can increase student learning outcomes; the intensive learning nature of the block plan offers added benefits as well as unique challenges. Using a mixed-methods approach centered on reflective case writing and supplemented by data from students and clients, we investigated the benefits, challenges, and unique tensions in client consulting projects on a 3.5-week block model. Overall, the major stakeholders – faculty, students, and clients – agreed that the benefits outweighed the challenges. This presentation will share the findings and key success factors in client consulting projects on the block.

Embedding WIL in the block model to facilitate transfer of learning: Reflections from educators

Hayley Dell'Oro and Dr Laura Chahda, Victoria University

Presentation

This presentation introduces a university's newly adopted approach of embedding Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences within the block model. This approach aims to integrate theoretical and clinical learning, supporting speech pathology students to consolidate and transfer their knowledge and skills into professional practice. Early reflections on opportunities and challenges of this model elucidated by university and practice educators will be discussed. Whilst this model is in its infancy and further research is warranted to examine the impact on student learning, initial reflections indicate that this approach is an exciting and unique method to prepare students for readiness to practice.

Session 7B - Student Experiences

Students' psycho-social perspectives on Victoria University's (VU) First Year College (FYC); a mixed method analysis

Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski, Dr Bert Oraison, Associate Professor John Weldon, Professor Andrew Smallridge, Victoria University

Presentation

This presentation will detail the results of a whole of college research project which investigated the success of the First Year College in relation to psycho social indicators such as; sense of belonging, wellbeing and stress, connectedness to the University and College, academic and social capital. Ethics approval was sought and received to conduct the research. There were 708 participants who completed the battery of questionnaires, and 10 qualitative in-depth interviews conducted and analysed.

International Postgraduate Student Experiences of Block Mode Delivery

Chunxiao LIU, Victoria University

Presentation

This qualitative study delves into the effects of the trademarked VU Block Model® on international post-graduate students' educational experiences. Investigating student engagement, satisfaction, and academic achievement, the research employs a phenomenological approach. Eight international students, experiencing both traditional and block mode units of study, provide insights. Thematic analysis uncovers five emerging themes: Assessment, Academic Engagement, Information Assimilation Time, Intensive Learning and Teaching, and Mode Preference. Assessment structure significantly impacts stress levels and academic outcomes. The VU Block Model® offers intensity and efficiency, fostering timely feedback and improved results. Small class sizes enhance engagement despite the accelerated pace. While preferences vary, block mode's focused delivery is generally favored. Implications for curriculum design and student engagement enhancement are significant.

It Was Good Talking with You: Student Perspectives from an International Collaboration

Mrs Michelle Praver, Victoria University
Presentation

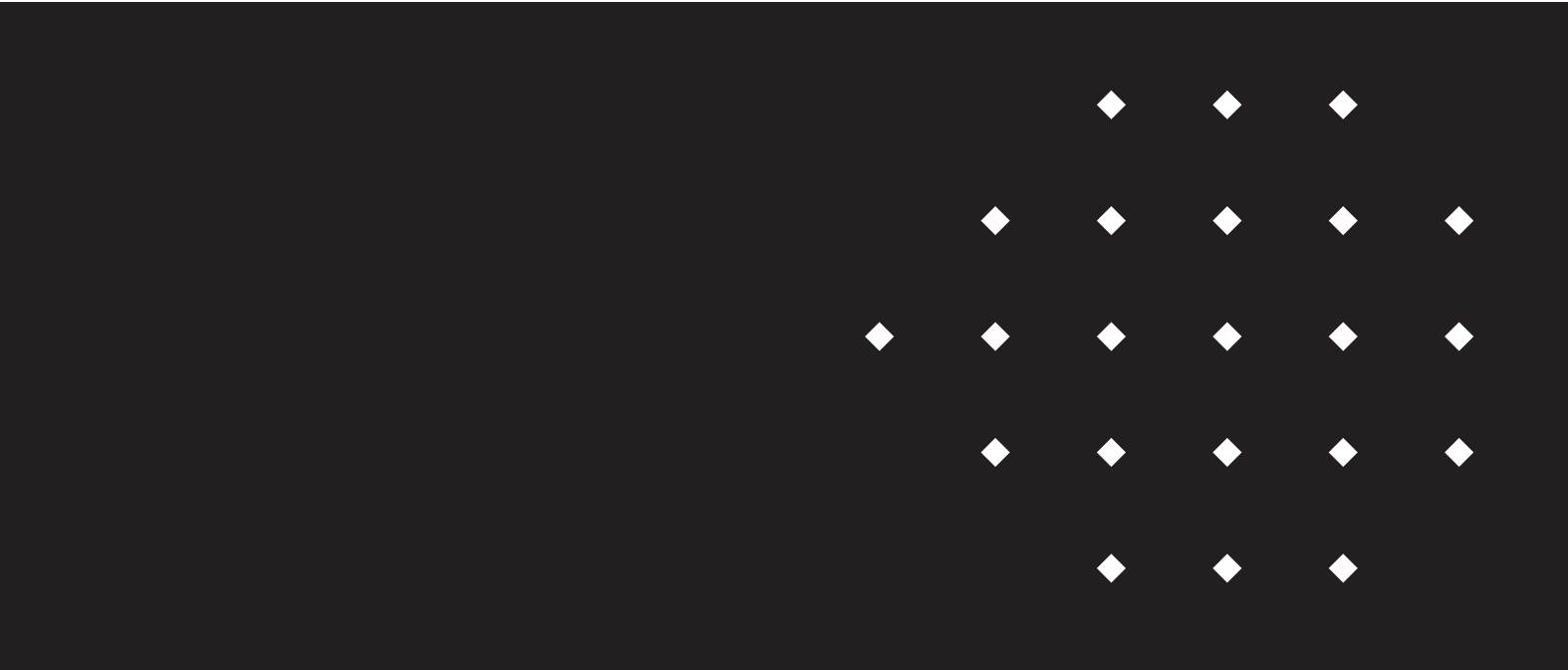
How might the experience of talking with students from another part of the world affect learning, and what are the benefits of such an exchange? As part of an ongoing collaboration between faculty at Victoria University and the University of Montana Western, we will present data taken from responses to a shared class experience involving students who were studying the same subject but were resident in different countries. We will report student responses to this experience, share student suggestions for future international experiences, and explore how the block model both enhances and challenges implementation of international collaboration and partnerships.

Session 8 - Panel

International Exchange within the Block Schedules

Dr. Megan Chilson and Associate Professor Janelle Handlos, University of Montana Western; Associate Professor Loretta Konjarski and Associate Professor John Weldon, Victoria University
Panel Presentation

To increase relationships with block model universities in North America, staff of the First Year College (FYC) and the University of Montana Western are exploring how to support international efforts and harness the block-scheduling model for student and academic staff exchanges and co-teaching opportunities. This panel discussion will bring together constituents from both institutions, including faculty, staff, and administrators, to discuss both the untapped potential and realization of international exchanges.



Poster Exhibition

Poster 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Feedback Literacy Behaviour Scale within an osteopathy teaching program

Authors: Dr. Nicholas Tripodi, Rebecca Wospil, Jack Feehan, Brea Wright, Dale Harris, Ming Song and Craig Kappes, Victoria University, Brett Vaughan, The University of Melbourne

Presenters: Rebecca Wospil and Craig Kappes, Victoria University

Poster Talk

Feedback literacy—the ability to recognise, understand, generate and action feedback—is not only a key attribute in preparing work-ready graduates, but also a crucial component in block and intensive teaching practices. This study undertakes a confirmatory factor analysis of the Feedback Literacy Behaviour Scale to assess if the proposed factor structure is appropriate for an osteopathy student cohort.

Poster 2

Using the academic framework to maximise the opportunities of block teaching

Author and presenter: Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk

Poster Talk

When developing a new pedagogy, existing practices, governance and regulations may bend but not fully flex to support comprehensive redesign of curricular and the learning experience intended for our students. Such situations can prevent the realisation of the full potential of a move such as that undertaken at the University of Suffolk in 2020, and may need a full academic cycle to be fully understood. Now, with lessons learned through ongoing evaluation of impact and practice, the University is going back to basics, and building a new compassionate and enriching block and blend experience from the ground (academic framework) up.

Poster 3

Group work assessments in block mode of delivery: students' reflections and performance

Author and presenter: Dr. Wasantha Liyanage, Victoria University

Poster Display

This study explores the students' reflection and performance in group project assessments under the block mode of delivery in higher education. It introduces an improved peer assessment tool for quantitatively evaluating individual contributions within groups. Analysis of 151 responses from civil engineering units across multiple units at different year levels reveals high satisfaction with peer attendance and increased intellectual engagement as students advance in their academic years. These findings correlate with improved student attendance and academic performance after introducing the block mode of learning and teaching at Victoria University.

Poster 4

Designing Your LMS for Block

Author: Dr. Mary Cornelius, University of Suffolk

Poster Display

Designing blended modules that are simple to navigate and clearly signposted support students through block learning. At the University of Suffolk, the Learning Design team developed module templates based on Universal Design for Learning principles to enhance the student experience.

Poster 5

Reimagining the Effects of Introducing Block Mode Teaching in Higher Education

Author: Thi Tho Trinh Nguyen, Dr. Amir Ghananchi and Dr Afroz Purarjomandlangrudi, Victoria University

Poster Display

This study examines the effects of adopting the Block Model of Teaching (BMT), an innovative instructional approach, across five universities. Through case study analysis, it identifies 14 positive impacts (e.g., enhanced focus, deeper learning) and 7 negative impacts (e.g., workload concerns, transition challenges) categorized into a comprehensive taxonomy. The findings highlight BMT's potential benefits and challenges, offering insights to inform strategic decision-making for universities considering its implementation. By evaluating this alternative teaching model, the research contributes to efforts optimizing learning experiences and innovating in the higher education landscape.

Poster 6

Students and faculty perceptions of summative assessment methods in block and blend

Authors: Paulo Vieira Braga, Carmen Maria Ortiz Granero and Dr. Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk
Poster Display

This poster illustrates a study on the perceptions of students and faculty towards summative assessment methods in a block and blend delivery at a higher education institution. Using a convergent mixed methods approach, it compares their views and conducts a thematic analysis to enrich understanding. The findings suggest a preference for multiple smaller assessments occurring throughout a block over traditional single assessments at the end, citing better accuracy in evaluating a range of skills, effective workload management, and timely feedback. The results advocate for reassessing current assessment strategies to enhance learning evaluation in block and blend.

Poster 7

Understanding Engagement in Intensive Learning Environments

Authors: Dr Reilly Anne Dempsey Willis and Paulo Vieira Braga, University of Suffolk
Poster Display

As the University of Suffolk has pioneered into innovative approaches to learning and teaching through block and blend, it is an opportune moment to reflect on evolving concepts of 'student engagement'. This study helps us to better understand what engagement looks like in a block and blend environment, and how students perceive their own levels of engagement. Our research found that students reported, on average, higher levels of self-defined engagement in block learning than in non-block semesterised or yearlong learning. Our research also helped to 'map' elements of student-defined engagement against block learning design.

Poster 8

A collaborative international project between five universities to understand the opportunities, challenges and impact of a move to block delivery

Authors: Dr Ellen Buck, University of Suffolk, Dr Gayani Samarawickrema, Victoria University, Professor Leanne de Main, De Montfort University, Dr Rebecca Turner, University of Plymouth, Dr Alice Graeupl, Manchester Metropolitan University, Professor Sarah Jones, University of Gloucestershire
Poster Display

An international collaborative project, funded by the Quality Assurance Agency brought together six institutions in the UK and Australia who had each adopted block modes of learning and teaching as a crisis response and as a longer term strategy for the enhancement of practice and performance. The project aimed to gather insight into rationales for implementation and experiences of learning in this way. Outputs included the Learning In Block conference, and a suite of resources in response to growing block curiosity. This presentation will introduce colleagues to the tools using the poster and AR technologies.

Poster 9

Winner of the VU Research Festival Poster Competition: Supporting and Advancing Aboriginal Communities in Metropolitan Melbourne

Author: Marei Witjes, Rachel Jones, & Grace Killmer.
Poster Display



International Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching Association (IBILTA) Research Conference 2024

Program

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