**Key**

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# EVALUATING THE IMPACT ON STUDENTS IN A WHOLE OF SCHOOL TRANSITION TO A BLENDED DELIVERY MODE

**AUSTRALIA**
**ECU**
**EDITH COWAN**
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## Moving to blended delivery mode for nursing students

Studies suggest flipped and blended learning in nurse education can promote higher order critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities and the enhancement of communications and team working skills, all important capabilities for a successful transition to the complex and dynamic healthcare environment (Betihavas, Bridgman, Kornhaber, & Cross, 2016).

- Critical thinking skills
- Problem solving abilities
- Communication skills
- Team working skills

### The Context

In 2016, the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Edith Cowan University introduced a new blended learning model of curriculum delivery. In part, this was done to:
- increase student engagement
- address low student attendance at lectures
- allow flexibility for their busy student cohort.

### Solutions
- flipped and blended content
- increase the unit offerings
- online lectures converted to Interactive Learning Activities
- two hour face-to-face seminars

### Challenges
- Student kickback
- Staff time
- Support

### Time frame
- 3 year roll-out period
- 4 units per semester to move to blended learning (including some units that were already teaching in the blended mode)
- Less than 6 months development time

## Student challenges

In line with current literature about the move to blended learning, the school encountered some kick-back from the student cohort, who were concerned about the changes.
Simpson and Richards (2015) identified three challenges:
- Discomfort with the move away from the traditional class
- The increase in preparation time needed by students
- Resistance to working at home

Did the students understand the flipped/blended model of delivery?
Were their concerns based on the decrease in face-to-face lectures?
Were they reacting to what they'd read about the removal of the face-to-face lectures?

Uni moves to web lectures for nursing

## Staff challenges

The amount of time required to produce the learning resources and activities was underestimated. Some academic staff members had lecture content already available and were able to use this to create their Interactive Learning Activities. Others needed to plan, find resources and record their content.
The role of the nurse educator shifted from teaching face to face to being fully online, some staff were experienced with teaching online, some support was required for this change.
**Staff Support**
Learning design and technology support were provided by the Centre for Learning and Teaching, the school employed their own technology support officer for the project, to provide support for the staff in the creation and deployment of the interactive learning activities to their learning sites.
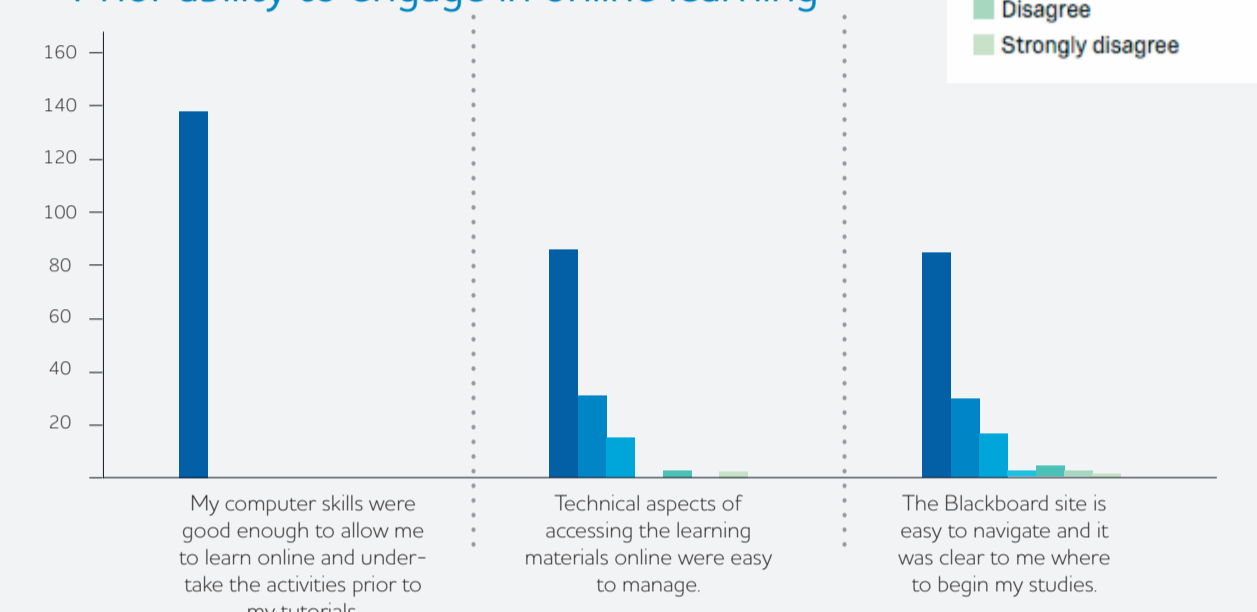
## Did students understand the benefits of blended learning?

### Evaluation method

An electronic survey was developed to determine the impact of the change on the nursing students using the new delivery mode. The survey link was made available to both on campus and online students, across 9 units. Out of approximately 600 students, there were 384 responses. Students were provided with questions using a Likert scale to rate their agreement with statements provided and were given the opportunity to provide open feedback.
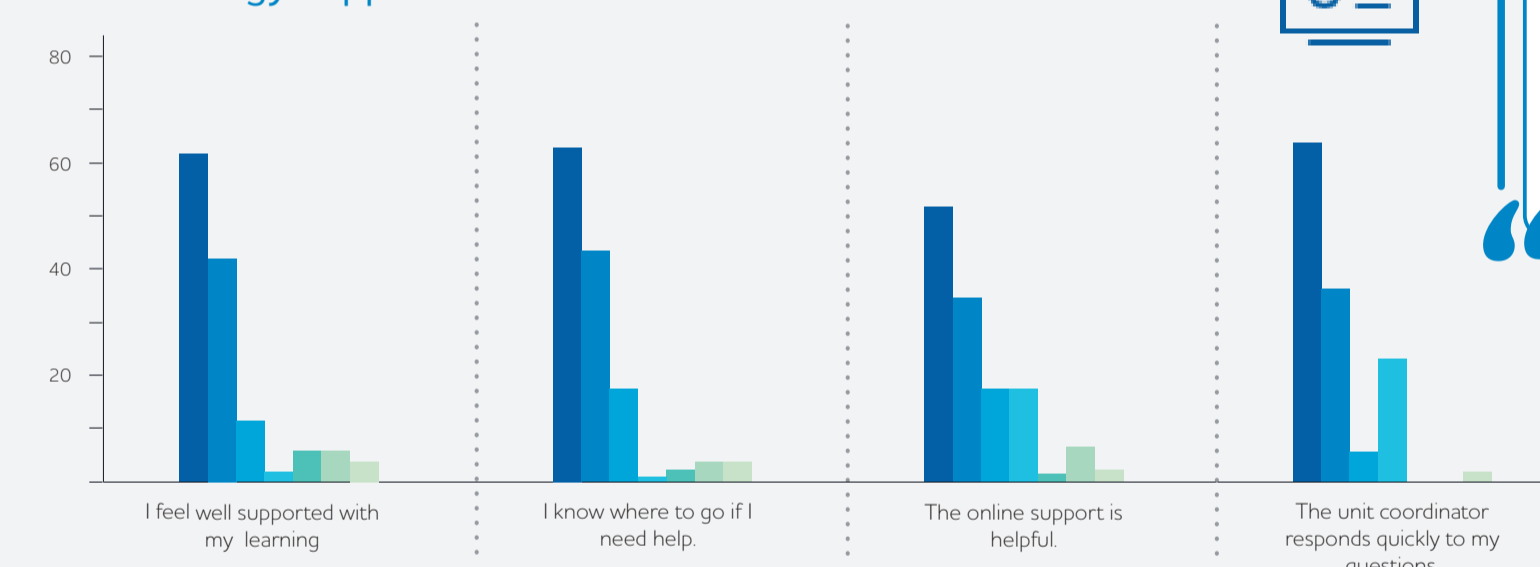
### 3 key themes of the survey

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree


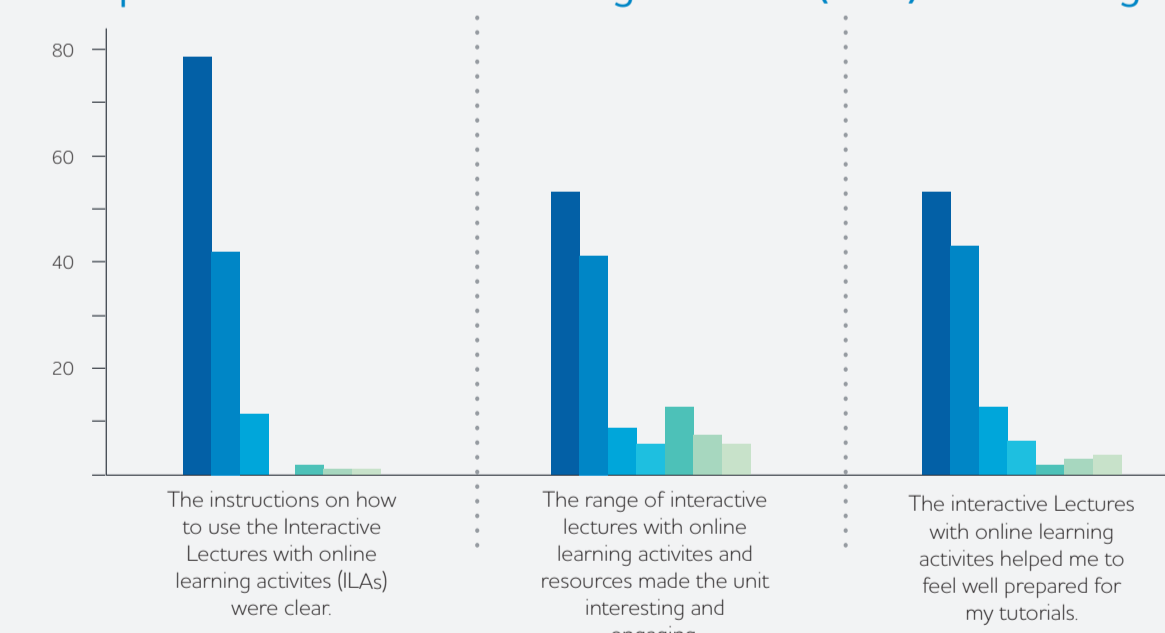Prior ability to engage in online learning

> As a mature age student I am adapting to this new style of learning.
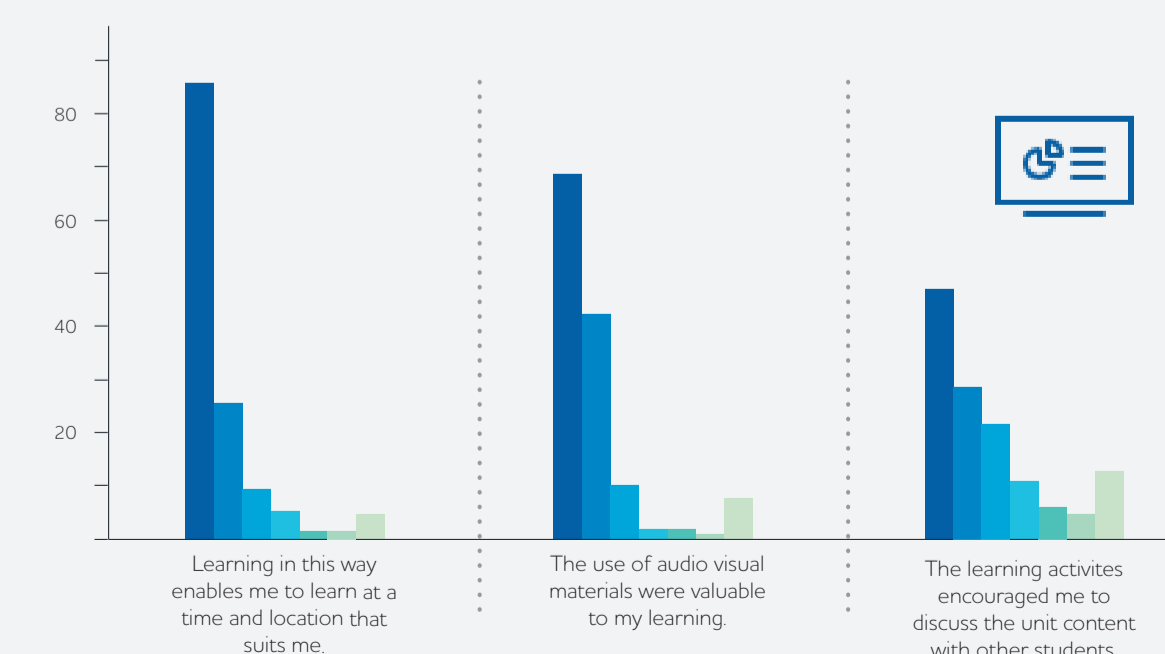

Technology support

> Haven't needed support, but it seems very good.


Impact of Interactive Learning Activites (ILAs) on learning

> I love them! So much better than lectures. I also love that they are in short sections rather than 1 two hour block. Makes it a lot easier to concentrate.



> I have found the ILAs, the Lecture notes, the Tutorial notes and the online videos and links to be very useful and the different formats complement each other and enable me to experience a well rounded learning experience.

## What did we learn?

### Key themes from open responses

**Prior ability to engage in online learning**
Most students agreed that their computer skills were sufficient prior to the commencement of their course. Some commented on their navigation through the content, that "everything was clearly set out and logical within Blackboard". Some students indicated that there had been an improvement on earlier versions of the unit. Students who were unfamiliar with Blackboard struggled at the start of semester and those that were studying more than one unit, noted that the differences across units was challenging.
Other points noted by students included:
- being overwhelmed by number of resources
- feeling unsure of what was expected week by week
- having more than one level of folders in a module was hard to navigate and track what had been completed and what hadn't

**Technology support**
Students in rural areas did experience some problems with accessing the online learning materials. Some experienced initial technical difficulties including some links that didn't work or content that did not download. These difficulties were addressed by the unit coordinators, learning technologist or IT support services. General feedback was that students were happy with the level of support provided.

**Impact of Interactive Learning Activites (ILAs) on learning**
Most students agreed that the interactive learning activities helped them feel well prepared for tutorials, some students suggested that online learning was not their preferred way of learning. Some students found online learning isolating. Issues of audio quality were highlighted with students finding this frustrating and a hinderance to their learning.

## Key recommendations

**Improved access and preparation of students**
- Early identification of technical problems, to be addressed prior to next semester delivery
- Development of an orientation to Blackboard, the unit and the ILAs
- Standardisation of unit navigation and naming conventions for items
- Consistant quantity of online resources and activities
- Standardised recording times
- Clear information to students on what's required and recommended each week

**Improved quality of interactive learning activities**
- Quality review process introduced
- Re-recording and replacement of audio on recordings, provision of headsets with microphones to ensure high quality audio.
- The inclusion of a welcome video at the beginning of the unit and at the start of ILAs to connect with students and set expectations for the weekly activities.
- Provide students with more opportunities to connect e.g peer to peer support, group work.

## Further research

**Student experience** ← · · · → **Student achievement**

- Linking experience with achievement
- Is there any pattern in these results regarding demographics of students?
- Staff experience and their changing role
- The use of learning analytics to identify patterns in how the students are using the interactive learning activities

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