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Are synchronous technologies  
the answer to poor online  
engagement?

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# Session plan

- ❖ Overview of research
- ❖ Group work
- ❖ Blackboard Collaborate is no more...

# Research title

- ❖ An analysis of the online postgraduate distance learning programmes at Oxford Brookes University from a pedagogic perspective

# Research gaps

- ❖ SESE
  - Research population
- ❖ Digital literacies questionnaire (2010)
  - Undergraduate on-campus
  - Timely
- ❖ Data gathering methods
- ❖ Timescale
- ❖ Instructional level analysis

# Research purpose

- ❖ To establish what pedagogical processes underpin the learning opportunities utilised in online distance learning programmes at OBU
- ❖ To establish best practice guidelines for:
  - Delivering content
  - Facilitating communication
  - Providing assessment and feedback

# Research population

- ❖ 2778 modules available for study at OBU
- ❖ 1600 undergraduate modules
- ❖ 1178 postgraduate modules
- ❖ 31 online undergraduate modules (1.94%)
- ❖ 82 online distance postgraduate modules (6.96%)

PIP September 2012

# Research population

- ❖ Business
- ❖ Health and Life Sciences
- ❖ Technology, Design & Environment



# Research population

- ❖ 619
- ❖ Questionnaire one – 72 responses (11.63%)
- ❖ Questionnaire two – 43 responses (6.95%)
- ❖ Interviews – six

# Data collection methods

- ❖ Two online questionnaires (SurveyMonkey)
- ❖ Online interviews (Wimba Classroom)
- ❖ Document study
  - OBU Moodle content
  - University League Table 2013 (universities listed from 40 to 50)
- ❖ Triangulation

# Group work

- ❖ Divide into groups
- ❖ Try not to sit with colleagues in your department or faculty
- ❖ Discuss each question – no right or wrong answers
- ❖ Consider the online elements of your programmes or modules
- ❖ Include Moodle and non Moodle tools

# Question 1

- ❖ Do you think that the delivery format (e.g. seminar discussions or the use of online lectures) is appropriate for the modules you teach?

# Key findings

- ❖ Subjective question
- ❖ Timing of delivery of complex topics
- ❖ Certain topics only suitable for certain formats
  - Complex topics need time to digest - asynchronous
  - Reflection – asynchronous
  - Information processing – asynchronous
- ❖ Supporting content
  - Vary the format (psychological arousal)

# Question 2

- ❖ Does your programme use both synchronous and asynchronous online learning opportunities to encourage student interaction?

# Key findings

- ❖ Student interaction concerns:
  - Activity planning
  - Content
  - Social support
- ❖ Blurring of lines between synchronous and asynchronous
  - Use emails synchronously
  - Use discussion forums synchronously

# Key findings

## ❖ Interaction with staff

- Mostly asynchronous (activity planning or content)
- Social support synchronous – telephone
- Residentials/workshops

## ❖ Interaction with students

- Activity planning – synchronous
- Content – asynchronous
- Social support – asynchronous



# Question 3

- ❖ What do you think constitutes a good online learning experience?

# Key findings

- ❖ The ability to gain access to the tutor's knowledge
- ❖ The tutor's ability to orchestrate and facilitate the work that you do particularly when you are working with other students
- ❖ Content that you can work on yourself
- ❖ Being able to self-test or submit work formatively

# Key findings

- ❖ Appropriate and timely feedback
- ❖ Relevant learning outcomes
- ❖ Varied resources to support learning outcomes
- ❖ Timing of the learning activities
- ❖ Balance between individual and group work

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No

# Generalisability - population

- ❖ Cross faculty
- ❖ Global participants
  - North/South America including the Caribbean
  - Europe
  - Africa
  - Middle East
  - Asia Pacific
- ❖ Native and non-native

# Generalisability - OBU

- ❖ Text based content
- ❖ ASYNCHRONOUS/<sub>synchronous</sub> learning opportunities
- ❖ Individual assignments (Turnitin and Moodle)
- ❖ Discussion forums for group work

# Generalisability – HE Community

- ❖ Moodle/Blackboard as a VLE
- ❖ Turnitin for assessment and feedback
- ❖ Wimba Classroom for webinars
- ❖ Provision of support for online distance learning programmes
- ❖ Consistency in the communication and content delivery methods employed
- ❖ Use of group work to facilitate learning

# Blackboard Collaborate is no more...

- ❖ 15th February 2014
- ❖ Blackboard Collaborate/Wimba Classroom
- ❖ Voicetools – Voice Authoring, Voice Board, Voice Email, Voice Podcaster, Voice Presentation
- ❖ Blackboard IM/Wimba Pronto
- ❖ Wimba Create



# Replacements?

- ❖ Adobe Connect in Moodle
- ❖ Audacity
- ❖ Moodle chat, Google + & Hangouts, Skype
- ❖ Moodle book or HTML editor
  - Contact Media Workshop or DMELD