

Facilitating engaged learning in the Block

In order to facilitate an effective engaged learning experience in the Block, use a combination of the VU Collaborate unit space and your classroom space to support student learning. Connection with students is improved when you use a conversational tone.

Consider what your students will be doing at each stage and draw on the strengths of both the face-to-face classroom and the VU Collaborate space to create a dynamic learning environment that provides activities and instructions to students in a logical sequence within the session modules. There are a number of ways to do this.

1 Use before and after class activities

Offer purposeful before-class tasks to scaffold and prepare students for what they will be doing in class.

Create in-class activities to engage and help students to focus and reflect on key learning and to help students who may have missed the session catch up. Focus on the aspects that students find most challenging because you are available to help them.

Important: *This doesn't mean students can just do the unit online! The active nature of the learning should reinforce the importance of participation both in and out of the scheduled face-to-face sessions.*

Provide after-class activities that are targeted to help students reflect on the learning or practise skills gained in class and consolidate learning.

To decide the appropriate mix of before class and after class activities, consider that:

- before class activities are useful when students may already know something about the topic and you can extend on that in class. This helps achieve highly interactive classes.
- after class activities are useful when students need to independently consolidate their learning. This helps achieve structured purposeful learning through carefully constructed scaffolded explanations.

2 Provide effective contextualization

1. Clearly articulate the relationship of the before or after class task to the session. Indicate its purpose, how it is to be carried out and what the students will have as an outcome.
2. Indicate any relationship to assessment tasks.

3 Use available media and online resources to enrich activities

Use the library video stream services Kanopy, ClickView and LinkedIn.com. Embed videos with appropriate contextualisation and interactivity to make their purpose clear. Seek assistance from your College Librarian or Learning Designer to add relevant video titles and online resources to the databases available. Select short videos particularly for before and after class activities. Simple concepts can be effectively conveyed in 2-3 min.

For example:

Before class: short reading, simple research task, review a video or article, interactive scenario/H5P interactive objects as hooks into the content

In class: brainstorming sessions with Padlets, frame the terms of a class debate, polling activities, student & teacher presentations, community & industry field trips, group work, interviews, guest speakers, peer reviews & assessment, complete practice exercises

After class: complete a writing task, complete problems, self-assessment quiz, contribute to a wiki, make a podcast, complete a group project task, post a blog post, make a journal entry

4 Incorporate collaboration and reflection

In addition to in-class discussion, online collaboration can be facilitated through discussion forums, peer feedback and journaling reflections. Use a variety of structures in collaboration to maximise engagement, e.g. pair work, ad hoc small group, long term small group, whole class.

Consider these approaches:

- A unit or thematic **blog** as an easy way to quickly share ideas, media and resources
- A reflective **journal** for a personal account of the learning journey over the block
- A **wiki** to co-create a larger product that also records who contributes or annotates material
- A **podcast**, so students can publish audio chapters as alternative to written responses
- **Peer feedback** to review documents

5 Embed experiential learning within the community and industry

Embed field trips, visits to organisations and other experiential opportunities to contextualise and consolidate learning. Use VU Collaborate communication tools to remind students (e.g. News and Calendar) of the upcoming field trips.

Contextualise the intended learning by listing goals and linking to assessment tasks. Ensure students are appropriately prepared by completing all necessary pre-tasks and have any relevant equipment. When linked to group work, ensure the group is prepared by considering roles and responsibilities of team members.

6 Incorporate active classroom ideas

Provide preparatory resources or guides for session activities such as debates, project team brainstorming and role-plays. For example:

- a debate could be supported with appropriate guidelines and team resources such as a wiki to refine the arguments out of class
- a role-play or team brainstorm exercise could be prefaced with some background on using the De Bono thinking

Capturing the team brainstorming and mind mapping online offers the advantage of contributions being accessible for the duration of the block.

Want to know more?

VU Block Model Guidelines for Academics

To assist with the development of units for the Block Model, we have developed a suite of [guidelines for academic staff](#). These are available on the [Sharepoint site](#).

[Scaffolding for learning](#) guide,

<https://vustaff.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/00032/budd/ERTASdlw0htEk0E-Jy2bNTgB303PW7YkspRZx1NYugi_3g?e=XINxC1>