

# Guide for application of the VU Minimum Standards for Online Presence

The purpose of this guide is as a supplement to the Learning and Teaching - Minimum Standards for Online Presence Procedure. It provides brief justification for some of the minimum standards and pointers to relevant procedures and other information.

Instructors wishing to apply for an exemption to any of the standards must seek approval from their College Director of Learning and Teaching in writing explaining the rationale for exemption. Exemptions can only be granted by the College Director Learning and Teaching.

Comprehensive information on the use of VU Collaborate and associated systems is available through the Learning Environments Help site at <https://blendedlearning.vu.edu.au/>. Similar information for students is available at: [https://blendedlearning.vu.edu.au/student\\_help/](https://blendedlearning.vu.edu.au/student_help/). In addition, the Learning Environments Team runs a significant [training program](#) for VU Collaborate and associated systems with recordings of each session also available online.

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## Standard 1: Consistency

Use of Learning Management Systems other than VU Collaborate is not permitted, for the following reasons:

- a. To ensure that students are provided with a consistent experience across all units and Colleges
- b. To enable the efficient exchange of data (such as enrolments, assessment data) between VU systems
- c. To ensure that student-related data is properly maintained with regard to security, IP and data retention policies

The use of specific tools not provided within VU Collaborate is permitted. However, it is recommended that staff seek advice from the Learning Environments Team at [learningenvironments@vu.edu.au](mailto:learningenvironments@vu.edu.au) to ensure that the desired functionality cannot be achieved in an already supported tool. It will

also enable feedback to be obtained on the external tool for possible future incorporation within VU Collaborate.

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VU Collaborate automatically releases spaces to students 1 week prior to the formal start dates of each teaching period (as recorded in VU Connect). The Space Creator can override the start date in VU Collaborate Manager to make it earlier, but the date cannot be pushed back.

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All VU Collaborate Spaces should use the relevant College Template. This is so that students will have a consistent experience across all units, and so that all units will include a basic set of tools and information. The College Template must be applied or updated by the staff member responsible for setting up the space (Space Creator, Convenor or Instructor). The placeholder information must be updated by either the Convenor or the Instructors enrolled in the space. The [Template User Guide](#) contains comprehensive instructions for undertaking these activities.

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If separate spaces are created for the same unit taught in different locations, they should include the same information and learning materials. Teaching teams can work together in a single space (either a Master / Parent space or a [sandpit space](#)) to revise the core content and then [copy this across](#) to all relevant spaces.

If different staff are involved in teaching the unit at different locations, contact information should be relevant for each location.

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It is necessary for the information within a space to be maintained intact after the end of the semester in which it is taught. This is so that students can refer back to the information that is relevant to the semester in which they took the unit. It may also be necessary to refer back to teaching material or forum discussions in case of a dispute.

VU Collaborate will, by default, retain the information intact.

To copy information into a new space, you must be enrolled as either a Convenor or Instructor in BOTH the previous space AND the new space. The [Copy Components Guide](#) contain detailed instructions for how to copy all or selected components.

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## Standard 2: Materials

If you copy content from a previous semester's space, all learning materials and instructions should be reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant for the current semester. In particular, reference to dates (such as due dates for assignments or dates corresponding to weeks of the semester) should be

reviewed. Also, any hyperlinks to external material as well as any items embedded through 'Insert Stuff' or 'Insert Quicklink' should be checked to make sure they still work.

Ensuring materials are accessible supports and is important for all students. The '[Making your VU Collaborate Space Accessible](#)' guide is a good introductory starting point, with further information available on the [VU Collaborate Accessibility page](#). Staff members can also contact the VU Accessibility Officer for further information.

Ensuring all learning materials comply with copyright regulations is a legal requirement for the university. The [VU Collaborate Copyright page](#) provides basic information on how to comply with copyright. Staff members can also contact the VU Copyright Officer: [library.copyright@vu.edu.au](mailto:library.copyright@vu.edu.au)

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### Standard 3: Access to recordings

Students should be able to review lectures in order to reinforce their learning and review material, or catch up in cases where they may have missed a lecture.

All lectures that are held in Echo360 Active Learning Platform-[enabled venues](#) should be recorded automatically. Activities that are not defined as lectures in the timetabling system, such as seminars, can have a [recording requested](#) by filling out the Echo360 ALP Event Recording Request (Non-Unit Based) form.

Recordings can be paused during the lecture, for example if a copyright-restricted DVD is being shown, or if discussion is taking place where recording is not desired. If recording is paused, it is important to restart the recording at an appropriate time. Pausing and Resuming is controlled from the touch-screen control panel on the presenter's desk in the room. Alternatively, the recording can be [edited once it is completed](#).

The default delivery option for automatic recordings is for both streaming and download to be available. This is so that students can download the recordings to review on mobile devices in any location. If a change to this setting is required, it will be necessary to contact the IT Servicedesk.

Students must be informed that they can [access their lecture recordings](#) on Echo360 ALP on VU Collaborate.

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Utilising authentic examples of student work from previous semesters helps to communicate expectations to students and inspire them. Before re-using student work, however, the convenor is responsible for arranging consent via

email or signed hardcopy. This evidence of acceptance must be retained by the convenor and passed on if another staff member takes on the convenor role.

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While the eLearning environment at VU is comprehensive, instructors may occasionally wish to utilise other tools. It is recommended that staff check the list of software provided by ITS as part of the standard student open-access PC environment (available on the Staff Intranet), or if it is an [eLearning Tool](#), seek advice from the Learning Environments Team at [learningenvironments@vu.edu.au](mailto:learningenvironments@vu.edu.au) to ensure that the desired functionality cannot be achieved in an already supported software.

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Files uploaded to VU Collaborate can be a maximum of 500Mb. However, it is recommended that, wherever possible, file sizes be kept to under:

- 5mb for word documents. It is recommended that [word documents are converted to HTML pages](#) in VU Collaborate for student accessibility and ongoing maintenance reasons.
- 5mb for pdf. For student accessibility, it is recommended to use optical character recognition options in any PDF file uploaded, so that screen readers can read the document. If the resource has been created locally and the word file is available, it is better to [convert the original into a HTML page](#) in VU Collaborate.
- 50mb for audio only. Externally sourced audio should be linked to from VU Collaborate via Insert Stuff. Audio produced in house should be uploaded into Echo360 ALP via the [Media Import process](#).
- 100mb for video. Externally sourced audio should be linked to from VU Collaborate via Insert Stuff. Video produced in house should be uploaded into Echo360 ALP via the [Media Import process](#).

This is so that this content can be easily viewed and downloaded by all students, including those who are offshore or accessing via a slower internet connection.

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#### Standard 4: Assessment

Assessment should follow the expectations set out in the [Assessment for Learning – Standards for Assessment Procedure](#), read in conjunction with the [Assessment for Learning Policy](#).

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#### Standard 5: Communications

Timely responses to student emails are critical for student engagement.

The College Template includes an 'Ask a question about the unit' discussion forum set up specifically for students to ask general questions of the unit and receive responses. Instructors should encourage students to utilise this forum so that each question only needs to be answered once for the entire cohort. Particularly important information could also be distributed to students via the [News tool](#). [Additional forums can be created](#) for questions/discussion related to particular activities or content within the unit.

Students should be encouraged to use the [notifications feature](#) of VU Collaborate. Once set up, this will automatically inform students of any changes to Grades, Discussion Posts, Quizzes, Assessment Dropboxes, News items and ePortfolio activities.

Staff are advised to use students' VU email address rather than personal emails wherever possible. Instructions to students on how to set up email forwarding (from their VU email address to a private address) are included in the 'Support and Resources' section of the College Template.

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Measures of student participation and engagement in a unit can be obtained through VU Collaborate by clicking on View User Progress within the space. Assistance with interpreting the data is available in the [User Progress Guides](#). The unit convenor and instructors should monitor this information and contact students directly where there are clear indications of disengagement (e.g. not accessing content, not completing assessments).

It is also possible for the Convenor/Instructors to set up '[Intelligent Agents](#)' which will automatically email students who do not meet threshold criteria (e.g. an intelligent agent can be established to automatically email students who haven't logged into VU Collaborate 2 weeks after classes started with information/resources on how to login and where to get support). This reduces the workload of the Convenor/Instructors who can then focus on more difficult aspects of disengagement.

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## Standard 6: Behaviours

The College Template provides basic information on appropriate netiquette (online etiquette) for students in the Support and Resources Module. Further information is contained in the '[Guide to Online Etiquette](#)' on the [VU Collaborate Student Help site](#).