# Digitally enabled learning through Bb+

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Ensuring the learning journey of each student is digitally enabled and supported through the effective use of technology was the driver for the introduction of what we have called Blackboard Plus (Bb+). The University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) uses the learning management system Blackboard (Bb) and all courses have a Blackboard course site, whether the course is taught face-to-face or online, locally or globally. Academics are encouraged to consider their Blackboard course site as an extension of their physical classroom to digitally enable student learning.

Students require instructions to navigate the Bb course site just as they do in a face-to-face learning environment. This notion ensures curriculum is student-focused, explicit and relevant with intentional integration and sequencing of knowledge, skills and attitudes to enhance their learning experience (Nelson et al., 2014). However, all too often Bb course sites are organised in different ways and students have told us that the inconsistency of navigation and organisation of materials across courses and programs is confusing and frustrating. To improve the student experience the Centre for Support and Advancement of Learning and Teaching (C~SALT) at USC developed Bb+ and used a bottom-up approach to the initiative's implementation.

Bb+ is a University-wide initiative coordinated by the C~SALT curriculum support team and designed to assist academic staff in making the change from a face-to-face to a blended learning approach. Bb+ aims to bring consistency of course design and presentation across courses and programs whilst ensuring that the underlying pedagogy enhances learning, regardless of delivery mode. The goal is to improve the student experience when navigating Bb, which in turn will improve the opportunity to meet the course learning outcomes.

There are a number of parts to Bb+. The Core Elements identify important requirements informed by universal design principles (CAST, 2011) that assists students to connect with the course and the learning outcomes. Core Elements are presented in a checklist, supported by a user guide and an example course. Two other key components of Bb+ are the course templates (automatically uploaded for academics) and a visual design toolkit which enables academics to improve the "look and feel" of their Bb course sites.

Ultimately, it is academics that manage the Bb course sites and facilitate the students' blended learning experiences. Therefore a bottom-up approach to the implementation of Bb+ is utilised so academics are empowered to create the change and to design blended educational programs suited for local and global needs (Carbonell et al., 2013). A bottom-up approach to Bb+ harnessed the enthusiasm of the early adopters and created momentum for lasting change across the University. The course coordinators of a number of first year courses from each faculty participated in the pilot to impact as many students as possible. Through a series of hands-on workshops, course coordinators were assisted in developing their courses to meet the core elements. These courses will be used as examples for colleagues to view as the Bb+ innovation is rolled out across the whole University in 2016.

## References

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