

The Stalled Revolution: An Examination of Online Teaching in International Relations & Politics at Australian Universities

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Statement

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. This thesis does not exceed 100 000 words.

Signed

Matthew Hardy

Dated:

The research undertaken for this thesis was carried out with approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project number CF11/1023 – 2011000509).

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Thankyou

To Sally, my friend, who put me on the road.

To Beth, my supervisor, who guided me down it.

To Céline, my wife, who cheered me along at each step.

To Eloïse and Nelson, my children, who had to walk alongside.

Abstract

This thesis deals with the broad question of how Australian universities and their teachers are meeting the changing market conditions of the 21st century. This examination occurs in the context of changing legislative and regulatory circumstances and strategic efforts to meet the broader goals of 'graduate attributes' and increased accessibility of tertiary learning.

The underlying query of this thesis is how technology can assist in transcending traditional models of higher education teaching delivery. Related to this is a focus on collaborative learning, with the question of its desirability and what it might offer in terms of improved outcomes relevant to teaching and learning in higher education. These questions are primarily discussed in the context of how online environments can aid collaboration and result in both discipline specific and generic outcomes.

Through a case study of Australian International Relations (IR) and Politics teachers at the undergraduate level, this thesis finds that there has been limited innovation in the online delivery of these subjects and that there is little consistency in any e-learning approaches that have been adopted. In particular, collaborative online learning is infrequently pursued. This is surprising because in a climate of increasingly market-driven higher education, collaborative online tools may offer a solution to many of the pressures teaching academics face.

These findings point to a significant gap between the strategic goals expressed by universities and what is actually being delivered to undergraduates. This includes meeting ambitions in 'graduate attributes', satisfying regulatory oversight, contending with financial pressures and the societal drive to make learning more accessible to a wider audience.

The thesis also examines some of the barriers teaching staff feel prevent them from utilising online collaborative methods, including perceptions of time poverty, support, skills, institutional factors and peer experience. The findings indicate that teachers of IR/Politics feel little incentive to implement online collaborations, chiefly because of time constraints, but also a prevailing sense that such innovations are not worth their investment in terms of career advancement and institutional support. Unfamiliarity with the technology involved serves to exacerbate these perceptions to the point where investing any effort in the pursuit of online approaches is seen as wasteful. A theoretical Technology-Assisted Teaching Adoption

Model is proposed as a means of demonstrating the barriers to innovation uncovered by this research.

Finally, this thesis explores online role play as a possible solution to some of these barriers perceived by IR and Politics teachers, as well as how such an approach could address the market factors currently shaping Australian higher education. There is strong and consistent support within the literature for role play as a collaborative learning strategy with identified pedagogical benefits. In the disciplines of IR and Politics, where much of the subject matter being studied concerns the concept of people and entities communicating and co-operating, role plays can help generate deeper and broader understanding.

The thesis concludes by making recommendations as to how Australian universities can move towards fostering online innovation amongst teaching staff, both to better meet institutional goals, as well as serve their students better by producing qualities conducive to their future careers.

Introduction

The research questions explored in this thesis are driven by the need for Australian universities and their teaching staff to adapt to multiple sets of workplace and market pressures that have been developing since the start of this century. Chapter 1 examines approaches to meeting these challenges at all levels of a university's organisation, from strategic planning to classroom delivery. These challenges then inform this thesis, and during its course a series of questions are addressed:

How can technology transform learning and address market pressures?

The broad, underlying query of this thesis is how technology can assist in transcending traditional models of higher education teaching delivery. Related to this foundational question is a focus on collaborative learning, with the question of its desirability and what it might offer in terms of improved outcomes relevant to 21st century teaching and learning. These questions are primarily discussed in the context of how online environments can aid collaboration and result in both discipline specific and generic outcomes. This exploration occurs primarily in Chapter 2 via a review of the literature.

What is e-learning, what are its benefits and what is its status in Australia today?

With Australian universities placing emphasis on e-learning as a solution to the challenges of the current higher education market, this thesis also addresses questions on its implementation. In doing so, it examines the *status quo* of e-learning deployment (Chapter 3), how specific disciplines can benefit (Chapter 4) and how over-stretched teaching staff might be encouraged to engage with new e-learning techniques (Chapter 5).

To what extent are Australian IR/Politics teachers using collaborative online methods and how do they feel about such approaches?

The use of the case study of Australian IR/Politics teaching as a basis for online collaborative practice provides a set of more specific research questions for this thesis. This case was chosen as an example of a discipline that had as its focus human collaboration and communication, as well as presenting challenges for teachers to offer authentic learning experiences that would develop generic skills for life beyond university. Given the evidence supporting collaborative online tasks for generating the skills applicable both to the concerns

of the discipline and graduate attribute goals it was important to determine if such beneficial approaches were being used at Australian universities. In this regard, IR/Politics also offered a case study of a discipline that was taught at the majority of Australian universities, as well as offering a cross-disciplinary tradition that would broaden the relevance of this work. To that end, the following questions were developed:

- 1) To what extent are Australian teachers of IR and Politics currently using collaborative online tasks to deliver their undergraduate subjects?
- 2) What barriers exist to such implementations?
- 3) What lessons can be drawn as to how collaborative online tools can best be implemented as part of a blended e-learning approach to teaching IR and Politics at undergraduate level?

The initial task was to gather data on the current practices of Australian teachers of IR/Politics to determine the extent to which they were already using collaborative online tasks to deliver their undergraduate subjects. This was carried out through an online questionnaire and several follow-up interviews. The expectation was that limited use of online collaborative methods would be indicated by those surveyed. Accordingly the questionnaire and interviews were designed to gather information on why usage was low and to identify the barriers that teaching staff perceived in limited fuller implementations. The collection of this data and an analysis of its results are presented in Chapter 4. Comments taken from questionnaire responses and extended interviews are also used throughout the thesis to support its contentions. This enables thematic consideration of staff perceptions of barriers and experiences in implementing online teaching.

Why are collaborative online approaches used so infrequently?

The results of this research agreed with the hypothesis that current use of collaborative online methods was low amongst Australian IR/Politics teachers. In Chapter 5 this warranted further questioning as to why this usage was so low, despite the great weight of evidence pointing to the benefits of these approaches and the pressures upon teachers to adapt to new paradigms. In exploring both the motivations and disincentives indicated by respondents to the research and the broader literature, a Technology-Assisted Teaching Adoption Model (TATAM) was created. Building upon the long-established Technology Adoption Model (TAM) of Davis (1989), the TATAM uses the data from the thesis and the wider literature to model the way in

which university teachers make decisions on whether to be technologically innovative in their teaching. The TATAM offers an original contribution to the literature on e-learning adoption and provides illustration of how a range of perceptions held by academic staff regarding technology in their teaching work are further altered by their workplace realities. The TATAM describes how teachers' perceptions of the barriers to and the rewards from technological experimentation ultimately diminish their desires to be innovative in online teaching approaches.

Does online role play offer a solution for IR/Politics teachers in meeting the challenges of teaching today?

The final question considered by this thesis is how such disincentives can be countered in order for the great benefits of online collaboration to be provided to students. In Chapter 6, the use of online role plays is examined as an ideal fit for the IR/Politics discipline because of the benefits this approach provides in terms of student engagement, improved academic and communication skills and applicability to disciplinary content such as political dialogue and negotiation. Moreover, the lack of opportunity to offer authentic learning tasks to IR/Politics students makes role play a strong substitute. There is significant evidence in the literature demonstrating the value of simple online role plays as providing engaging learning experiences whilst also producing well rounded graduates with transferrable generic skills. This finding closes the circle of questions, offering a solution to the broad challenges presented in Chapter 1 and indicating possibilities for teacher of IR/Politics, and potentially for those involved with other disciplines.

Findings and scope

The findings of the research suggest that universities should be doing more to support and encourage online innovation amongst their teaching staff. This would be beneficial to students, teachers and to the institutions themselves. How to go about such systemic change management is not within the scope of this thesis. Instead, the intention of this research is offer evidence for the *need* to implement change, some suggestions on what outcomes are desirable and some simple examples on how this process might start in the context of IR/Politics teaching. However, as will be described throughout this work, Australian universities must facilitate this at the strategic level by creating workplace environments that foster and reward innovative teaching.

Methodology and research design

A discussion of the methodology and research design for the survey presented in this thesis appears in Chapter 4, together with the results and analysis. The presentation of method and results in the same chapter is intended to illustrate their indivisibility and the collaborative and consultative nature of the project. Additionally, the focussed characteristics of the method and the sample size gives further cause not to break the methodological discussion and results into separate chapters.

Chapter 1: Australian universities in the 21st century

Moving into the second decade of the 21st century there is mounting pressure on Australian universities to deliver better outcomes for lower inputs. There are multiple factors behind this pressure, not least the trend for successive Federal governments to tighten funding to the sector relative to the costs of providing teaching and learning.¹ As the Federal Minister for Tertiary Education stated in early 2012, this trend is likely to continue because:

“...universities have had a period where they've been very well funded by the government. In a tight budgetary situation it's fair to say I have lowered the expectations of the sector” (Ross 2012).² In the light of the Coalition's 2013 election victory, Commonwealth funding commitments to higher education are expected to be subject to further pressure, with support for the Humanities and Social Sciences being particularly scrutinised.

At the same time there has been an increased awareness that Australia needs to increase the number of people in the workforce with higher education qualifications, lest it fall behind other OECD nations in terms of competitiveness (DEEWR 2008; Universities Australia 2013). There are also government policies to increase the enrolment of students with low socio-economic status (SES) (DEEWR 2008; Universities Australia 2013). These drivers imply that universities must recruit more students, that class sizes may need to increase and teachers must become more efficient in their approach – reaching more students more effectively and being responsive to a wider range of learning styles and needs. The Universities Australia report *An agenda for Australian higher education 2013–2016* specifically mentions that universities need to “further explore and adopt measures to enhance their operational efficiency” (Universities Australia 2013: 5).

These dual pressures of reduced funding and increased output have been affected by other legislative and market factors. Firstly, in an effort to increase the number of graduates in the Australian population, 2012 saw the removal of the funding cap on the number of places that

¹ The 'Bradley Review' (DEEWR 2008 : 144) for example notes “...Commonwealth funding per subsidised student in 2008 was about 10 per cent lower in real terms than it was in 1996... This was the result of a combination of direct cuts, constrained indexation and shifting of the balance towards higher student contributions. Recent initiatives will have some effect in raising government funding per subsidised student over the next few years, but partial indexation will see a subsequent decline in real terms in the amount of Government funding for each subsidised student.”

² Retrieved from *The Australian* online edition 17/02/2102 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/no-bfr-funds-before-2013/story-e6frgjcjx-1226272966524#> accessed 10/04/2104.

each university may offer. A university could provide as many places in a course as it saw fit (with the exception of courses in medicine) and those places would be funded. This heightened competition between universities, but meant that each institution needed to consider the balance between recruiting as many students as possible and what level of enrolment they could actually service. This equation would include an awareness of the opportunity costs of including or excluding certain courses and the potential drafting of resources away from research and towards teaching (Armstrong and Murawski 2012). With finite physical and human resources (e.g. lecture theatres and teaching staff), there is an incentive to find efficiencies. "The market will reward institutions that work out how to develop courses that optimise on quality and price such that they attract maximal profits" (Armstrong and Murawski 2012).

Since there is no funding limit to how many places a university can offer (other than the number of potential students in the population), the uncapped system generates a zero-sum game where universities must increasingly compete with each other for a share of the market. The institutional incentive is therefore to increase student numbers as much as possible, leading to concerns over reductions in standards, both in terms of candidates and the service with which they are provided (Group of 8 2012). Individual degrees, discipline majors and so forth are also competing with one another, both within and outside their home institutions.

At the same time, volatility in the global economy has seen a decline in the number of overseas students enrolling at Australian universities, a sector that was previously relied upon as a key source of income and growth (Whyte 2011). This drop amounts to around 30,000 fewer places (a 10% loss) being taken by international students in the period of 2010-2014 (Whyte 2011).

Since the total fees that could be charged to international students were not capped in the same ways as those of domestic students, this stream of revenue steadily became a means of making up for the concurrent decline in government funding (The University of Sydney 2010).³ This income will now be reduced and will not be dependable for the foreseeable

³ A side-effect of the international student boom of previous years has been a development emphasis on only a narrow range of disciplines. The University of Sydney's 2011-2015 Green Paper (2010:17) notes that business, commerce, law and some engineering disciplines disproportionately benefited from international student revenue. However, "[o]ther areas have been less popular and this has undermined the funding base for key science, humanities and social science disciplines that are less likely to attract international students. Thus some have argued that international enrolments have a distorting effect on the internal disciplinary economy of

future (G. Davis 2012). Coupled with the removal of the limit on domestic places, this puts Australian universities into a heightened state of competition with each other to attract both local and foreign students.

It can be argued that the pressures of resources and funding are not particularly new for Australian universities. Over the last two decades there has been a downward trend in per-student funding of tertiary education and as an overall percentage of GDP, leaving Australia amongst the lowest ranked in the OECD for these indicators (Universities Australia 2013). Nevertheless, these past and current constraints form a foundation upon which any discussion of tertiary Australian teaching in the future must be placed.

Whilst resourcing restrictions may be a familiar part of the Australian higher education landscape, there are however more recent developments that provide new challenges for the sector. These new challenges place an additional set of stresses upon those tasked with delivering tertiary education at both the institutional and classroom levels. Foremost of these is a legislative issue and concerns the need to adhere to stricter quality frameworks and address formal graduate learning outcomes across the duration of a student's studies and beyond. Another pressure is a techno-social paradigm - Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and the challenge they pose to traditional university business models.⁴

Of these two phenomena it is the need to address graduate attribute outcomes that is of primary interest to this thesis, since it is argued the use of collaborative online learning can help to alleviate the pressure in this regard.

Ambitions beyond university: Graduate attributes

Beyond the responsibility of universities to offer qualifications there is an overlying institutional expectation that students should be receiving a range of generic benefits from their education. These 'Graduate Attributes' or 'Graduate Qualities' or are not taught separately, but rather are expected to be introduced, reinforced and developed throughout the delivery of subject content and something of the 'personality' of the university.

Australian universities". This phenomenon is relevant to this thesis since the case study of IR/Politics represents a discipline area that would have generally benefitted less from the international student emphasis.

⁴ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of MOOCs.

Such ambitions are not new. At the inauguration of the University of Sydney, in 1862, Principal John Woolley's address expressed the desire that

"Our undergraduates will, we may reasonably hope, possess a well cultivated and vigorous understanding; they will have formed the habit of thinking at once with modesty and independence; they will not be in danger of mistaking one branch of science for the whole circle of knowledge; nor unduly exaggerating the importance of those studies they select as their own. Above all they will have attained the truest and most useful result of human knowledge the consciousness and confession of their comparative ignorance" (Woolley, quoted in Barrie (2004: 262)).

In this sentiment Woolley was no doubt vocalising the expectation that University of Sydney graduates would be well-rounded and humble young gentlemen, fit to take their place as educated members of polite society. The core message may be laudable even today, but more than 150 years on there are different demands upon institutions and their graduates. Financial crises, technology, shifting job markets and the possibility of multiple career changes all place a greater emphasis on life-long learning, broader skills sets and generic human qualities rather than the achievement of specific qualifications for a specific industry. By addressing these non-specific needs, universities are hoping to highlight their contribution to the overall good of society and position themselves amongst competitors as desirable places to study (Barrie 2004).

In response, some Australian universities have been offering Graduate Attribute statements for several years, whilst others have adopted them more recently. Regardless of their previous history in this regard, *all* Australian universities must now address these generic learning outcomes to comply with the legislation supporting the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). The AQF is a quality assurance process that seeks to provide consistency across education providers in terms of content and outcomes (or 'knowledge and 'skills') for similar courses.⁵ The phrasing of these graduate attributes are determined by the individual

⁵ The AQF "Learning Outcomes Descriptors" for a Bachelor degree express the following knowledge and skills outcomes: Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will have a broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines as a basis for independent lifelong learning. Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will have: Cognitive skills to review critically, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge; Cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge with depth in some areas; Cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence; Communication skills to present a clear, coherent and

university, but will be informed by the broad guidelines provided by the AQF for qualifications at particular levels. A university must be able to show that for each of the qualifications it offers "students who complete the course of study have attained key graduate attributes including an appropriate level of English language proficiency" (Commonwealth of Australia 2011).

Universities have therefore sought to create lists of skills and outcomes they believe their graduates should possess upon completion of their studies and incorporate these as strategic mission statements (See Appendix 3 for examples). Sometimes these are vague and generic. (For example, Monash University states its graduates should be able to "engage in an internationalised world" (Monash University 2011).) Other institutions have lengthy and detailed statements. (For example Deakin University expresses the aim that its students will have an "awareness of environmental sustainability issues and the contribution of the field of study to address such issues" (Deakin University 2012a).)

In Australia graduate attributes are generally expressed at the institutional level and therefore not discipline specific (Barrie 2004). Instead there is a stress upon generic values, "...equipping graduates as global citizens and effective members of modern day society who can act as 'agents of social good' has been emphasized in the Australian context" (Barrie 2004: 262). These skill sets include attributes such as good communication, ability to collaborate with project groups, self-direction, global consciousness, innovation and problem solving.

In some universities individual faculties, schools and discipline areas may put forward their own specific attributes, standards or minimum outcomes (see Appendix 4). In both university or sub-level cases, these intended attributes will have been derived through a variety of means and stakeholders, including combinations of teaching staff, marketing professionals, careers advisors and employers (The National Graduate Attributes Project 2009a). There may also be a disciplinary peak body involved, such as the Australian Political Studies Association, that has put forward guidelines for expected learning outcomes for graduates in the relevant discipline area (see Appendix 4). Specific degrees and discipline areas must also comply with the AQF framework, demonstrating how these courses fulfil the minimal outcome criteria applicable to all graduates of the same level of qualification.

independent exposition of knowledge and ideas (Australian Qualifications Framework, Second Edition, January 2013).

Beyond the legal requirements, the greater consciousness of, and marketing emphasis on, the skills a university graduate should possess at the completion of their studies is linked to the political and commercial factors mentioned above. Institutions are increasingly obliged to compete and promote the value of their 'educational experience' and its significance to success in life after university.⁶ An examination of what pressures this places upon teachers is relevant, since the need to comply with such outcomes (be they legal or strategic demands) is inherent to teaching in the coming decades (C. Hughes and Barrie 2010). Teachers in all discipline areas will need to be mindful of how their unit offerings integrate with these broader criteria. By taking note of the typical intended outcomes, a discipline-specific context can be established.

The National Graduate Attributes Project (conducted by The University of Sydney) gathered statements from the websites of 36 Australian Universities in 2008. Naturally there was a diverse range of statements but the researchers identified that these could be classified under a few common themes. These were divided into two groups: broad 'enabling' themes and more personal 'translation' attributes of how these would be applied or manifested. These were:

- Enabling
 - Scholarship,
 - Global Citizenship
 - Life Long learning
- Translation
 - Research and Inquiry
 - Information Literacy
 - Personal and Intellectual Autonomy
 - Ethical Social and Professional Understanding

⁶ See for example Deakin University's *Worldly* re-branding and advertising campaign of mid-2012 that promotes the university's degrees as just one aspect of their graduates' potential successes in life, instead shifting the emphasis onto individuals graduating with a global consciousness and polymathic range of cross-disciplinary talents. http://air.deakin.edu.au/public/media/A+Worldly+graduate+of+Deakin+University+-+TV+ad+1/0_zkz5gdpw accessed 15/04/2014.

- Communication

(The National Graduate Attributes Project 2009b)

Whilst many individual statements and phrases could pertain to more than one category, the researchers found that all statements, from the hundreds of clauses gathered, could be allocated somewhere within this eight part system, which they represented in graphical form:



Figure 1: *Map of Graduate Attributes statement themes*

(The National Graduate Attributes Project 2009b)

Of interest to this research into collaborative learning and the case study of IR/Politics is the number of statements in the survey that incorporated ideas of communication, collaboration, critical thinking and accumulation of general or discipline specific knowledge. If we accept that collaborative online tools are a way of fostering such talents (see Chapter 2), then the conclusion is that using these methods directly addresses many of the official targets of universities. Conversely, if these communicative and collaborative type skills are so important, it is difficult to see how traditional and solitary forms of assessment and learning have been serving these goals to date or will serve to do so into the future.

Moreover, graduate attribute statements are important to this thesis for two further reasons.

Firstly, by explicitly stating desired graduate outcomes, pressure is placed upon teaching staff to provide learning and assessment experiences that foster these attributes, as well as those standards set by the AQF. This pressure need not be overt or formal, but it will nevertheless exist and perhaps include some form of assessing or benchmarking outcomes (C. Hughes and Barrie 2010).

Secondly, the gap between strategic direction and classroom practice is intrinsic to many of the issues discussed within this research. That is to say, there are often discrepancies between what *can* be done, what is *desired* at a higher level and what is *actually carried out* by individual teachers. This is exemplified in their approaches to strategic statements about graduate attributes in a similar manner to their piecemeal deployment of online learning tools:

- *There are no meaningful consequences for staff for not following the policy on embedding and assessing GGA (Generic Graduate Attributes) development – and no real rewards if they do!*
- *We have a policy but no coherent implementation strategy to alter the student experience so what tends to happen is that individuals interested in embedding and assessing GGAs have just gone their own way; this just results in a lot of chaos!*
- *We have gone through the motions of changing our curriculum - but really nothing has changed except that we use some graduate attributes words in our course outlines* (The National Graduate Attributes Project 2009a).

These comments made by interviewees participating in *The National Graduate Attributes Project* describe extremely similar attitudes and experiences to those gathered within the course of this research on collaborative learning. That is, teachers are disconnected from the university executive, implementation of initiatives depends on individuals, and that changes are often cosmetic rather than meaningful.

As will be explored throughout this thesis, this schism and piecemeal individualism is central to the challenge of fostering new practices within a teaching community. This has implications not only for addressing marketplace pressures, but also for implementing new pedagogical practices, especially when they involve a technological element.

The list of challenges

The market factors, funding models, quality assurance and competing educational options described above combine to provide a list of challenges that Australian universities must face. The institutions, and those that teach within them, must therefore deal with the following sets of tensions:

- Make do with proportionally less government funding
- Provide services to more students
- Maximise efficient use of resources (such as teaching staff, physical facilities, online environments)
- Compete to attract students coupled with uncertainty over long-term market share
- React to and anticipate changes in market and delivery models
- Provide graduates with a broad range of personal skills beyond subject expertise
- Adhere to a regulatory framework of quality standards

None of these pressures are sudden ones. They represent trends that have been developing, some of them for decades (greater proportion of private versus public funding), although others are more recent (MOOCs, Global Financial Crisis). Coping with these demands has generated many reports, strategies, responses and a great deal of media comment. The 2008 'Bradley Report', for example, noted that Australia faced a "critical moment" in higher education and the nation was in danger of "falling behind" in this sector (DEEWR 2008: xi). Other commentators have declared that higher education faces such fundamental challenges that traditional approaches will soon be extinct (*Lecture theatres to go the way of the dodo* (C. Palmer 2012a), *When courses are free online, what's left for universities to sell?* (Norton 2012))

In response to these pressures Australian universities have developed a range of initiatives. These have included:

- Opening overseas campuses, which enable access to international students and thus a more secure non-government funding source. Attendance in their home country can be more attractive to those students due to the lower financial and administrative costs compared to living in Australia.
- Merging, acquiring or divesting facilities and campuses to create efficiencies. For example, the agreement between Monash University and the former University of Ballarat over the Monash Gippsland campus, resulting in the creation of Federation University.
- Developing programs aimed at recruiting low SES students and/or starting student recruitment earlier in the high school years. Monash University's LEAP Program is an example of this.⁷
- Developing alternative pathways to degrees, such as providing 'single subject study' options, conversion of credit from TAFE courses or greater cross-institutional co-operation to allow students to tailor their degree content according to their needs. In the case of single subject study, there can be the hope that an interested person can 'test the water' and then perhaps enrol in a full degree. Alternatively, with this and the cross-institutional approaches, the university can still be assured of picking up *some* revenue rather than none.
- Creating more partnerships with private investors as a means of boosting revenue.
- Acting as a professional accreditation service provider for an external organisation. For example, Charles Sturt University's provision of the *Associate Degree in Policing Practice*, a mandatory qualification for entry into the NSW Police Force and delivered by CSU staff at the Force's own academy.
- An increase in student to staff ratios (Larkins 2012) meaning that staff are responsible for greater numbers of students. This has economies but carries the risk of over-working teaching staff to the point where disadvantages in morale, innovation and service delivery occur.

⁷ "Learn, Experience, Access Professions (LEAP) is a Commonwealth funded program aimed at students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds and aims to redress the barriers to Higher Education participation and provide additional support in navigating the 'what', 'who' and 'how' of professions." From www.monash.edu.au/access/leap/index.html accessed 10/04/2014.

- A greater use of casual employees amongst teaching and general staff (Larkins 2012). This creates a more scalable workforce in times of need.
- Rationalisation programs, including closure of 'under-performing' departments, staff redundancy and/or transferring 'non-productive' staff to teaching-only positions.
- Attempts to move more teaching and learning into an online environment as a strategy for creating efficiencies and free up time and physical resources.

It is worth remarking that to date no Australian universities have chosen to follow the path of specialising in a lesser range of disciplines and thus marketing themselves as representing an exclusive pinnacle in a certain discipline. They may have shed small discipline areas such as music (ANU) or art history (La Trobe), but generally all Australian public universities offer degrees across the same five or six broad faculty areas: Humanities, Education, Law, Health/Science/Technology, Engineering, and Business/Commerce.⁸ If anything, universities are expanding their disciplinary coverage. Deakin and Macquarie University have both opened medical schools recently, a discipline area that neither institution was previously concerned with. With each university offering much the same range of discipline areas, competition for the same pool of students is therefore heightened. Indeed, universities may be competing for students (and staff) in discipline areas they were not providing five or ten years previously.

Case Study: Teaching IR and Politics

International Relations (IR) and Politics have been selected as a disciplinary case study for this thesis. This choice was made because the nature of their content makes for a compelling illustration of how even disciplines that focus on collective human behaviours and multi-stakeholder communication are not making significant use of teaching methods that utilise such collaborative practices. The cross-disciplinary nature of IR/Politics also affords some conclusions that may be applicable to wider practice, making the findings of this thesis more valuable.

⁸ The structure and the nomenclature will vary from institution to institution. For example, Education may be part of an Arts & Humanities faculty (such as at Deakin) or be separate (as at the University of Wollongong). Some elements of science may also be in discrete faculties such as 'Health Sciences' or 'Informatics'.

Politics and International Relations are two disciplines that are offered across the majority of Australian public universities (see Appendix 2).⁹ Politics (also known as Political Science) is "the study of political behaviour, governance and power and how these are shaped by institutional settings, and by the ideas, interests and resources of political actors"(Australian Political Studies Association 2011).¹⁰ It encompasses the study of the processes, policies, governance and institutions of states and the behaviour and theories related to these (American Political Science Association 2013). Such study may be focussed on or within a particular state, a region or some other basis. International Relations is a related discipline, but focuses on the relationships between nation states, as well as international institutions, NGOs, multi-national corporations and other actors (Mingst 2008). Both disciplines contain elements of theory and application and can overlap a multiplicity of other academic fields.¹¹

Whilst scholarly analysis of politics and states extends back to ancient times (for example Aristotle, Plutarch, Polybius, or the comparatively modern Machiavelli), studying IR/Politics as a discipline at university began late in the 19th century, initially at British and American institutions. The American Political Science Association, for example, formed in 1903 and published its first journal in 1906. International Relations as a discrete discipline is usually traced to the founding of the first chair in the subject in 1919 at Aberystwyth, University of Wales (Burchill and Linklater 2005). In Australia, the acceptance of these discipline areas was not far behind, though slower to be granted status in terms of separate chairs and schools. The University of Melbourne, via its Law Faculty, offered a course of lectures in 1918 called "*Modern Political Institutions*", the first formal teaching of IR/Politics content in Australia (Cotton 2013). Courses also began under the umbrella of Law at the University of Sydney at a similar time, most notably as lecture series offered through the Workers Educational Association (Cotton 2013). However it is the establishment in 1950 of a specific Department and Chair of International Relations at the Australian National University that may be

⁹ The labels of 'Politics' and 'International Relations' are used collectively throughout this research because although they are distinct disciplines, they are nevertheless linked, with subject units from both fields usually being taught within the same major or degree. The staff responsible for both disciplines areas will likely form some sort of team or school grouping or may even be the same individuals. This relationship and staffing cross-over between the two subjects means they are close enough to be considered synonymous for purposes of this research.

¹⁰ Or as the Australian Political Studies Association goes on to say in their discipline standards statement: "Politics is about who gets what, when, how and why." From <http://www.auspsa.org.au/page/political-science-discipline-standards-statement> accessed 15/04/2014.

¹¹ Disciplines such as history, economics, sociology philosophy, law, science, psychology, strategic studies or health would frequently intersect with IR and Politics. Disciplines or topic areas (depending on classification) such as gender studies, human rights, environment and media are also common crossovers.

considered the formal birth of the IR/Politics disciplines as we currently know them in Australian universities.

In the years following the September 11 attacks, the study of IR/Politics at Australian universities began to reflect global concerns regarding terrorism, human security and issues such as democracy transition and armed intervention.¹² This quick adaption to world events and the need to incorporate rapidly changing material requires IR/Politics as a discipline area to remain flexible in its methods of content and delivery. Moreover, like many discipline areas in the Humanities and Social Sciences, IR/Politics identifies multiple career paths to which its graduates might aspire.¹³ This makes a focus on generic (rather than industry-specific) learning outcomes important.

At the time of writing, 31 out of 37 of Australia's public universities offer at least a major sequence in IR/Politics, most commonly as part of a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of International Studies degree. (See Appendix 2.) Six of these universities offer designated degrees in IR/Politics, such as the University of South Australia's Bachelor of International Relations or the University of Canberra's Bachelor of Politics and International Relations. In

¹² For example, according to its handbooks, in 2002 Monash University offered just one subject dealing with security on its undergraduate program (PLT28/3850 *Defended to death? Arms control and international security*). There was just one unit dealing specifically with the Middle East and no subject units that mentioned terrorism in their titles. Five years later, there were around nine undergraduate IR/Politics units mentioning the word 'terrorism' or 'violence' in their subject titles, including the possibility of writing dissertations on terrorism and security studies. At that time there were also three units offered on the Middle East specifically and another unit dealing with 'Political Islam'. The University of Melbourne's handbooks show a similar transition, offering only a single undergraduate unit on terrorism from 2005 to 2009 but then offering two or three units each year after that plus a unit specifically dealing with Middle Eastern conflicts. This growth in unit offerings was related to the creation in some universities of specialist research centres focussing on terrorism and Islamic studies. For example, Monash University's Global Terrorism Research Centre and Centre for Islam and the Modern World, Griffith University's National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (2005) and Macquarie University's Centre for Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (2005).

¹³ For example, Griffith University promotes the following potential careers for graduates of its Bachelor of Government and IR degree: "... *career in government, business, the community or media. There are opportunities for graduates to work in a range of fulfilling and challenging roles including providing advice to government and business leaders, developing policy and managing programs with domestic and international organisations in a variety of areas. These include economic, environmental and social policy, diplomacy and strategic analysis and trade relations.*" (From <https://www148.griffith.edu.au/programs-courses/Program/OverviewAndFees?programCode=1399&studentType=Domestic> accessed 14/04/2014.) The University of Canberra states that graduates of its Bachelor of Politics and IR degree "...*can expect to find employment opportunities in a wide range of organisations and posts including business and international organisations, State and Federal government, non-government agencies, government administration and planning, national and international business, political research organisations, international, political and security analysis, foreign affairs, international development organisations, the intelligence community, diplomatic service and as policy analysts.*" (From www.canberra.edu.au/courses/index.cfm?action=detail-&courseid=146JA&year=2012 accessed 15/04/2014.)

nearly all cases, the degree structures indicate IR/Politics staff at these universities will sit within a faculty representing Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences.

Teachers of IR/Politics therefore comprise a group represented across the majority of Australia's universities. Moreover, they are in a broad faculty area that has not greatly benefitted from international student revenue (q.v.) and this same faculty area has also experienced job losses at some institutions.

Staff delivering teaching for IR/Politics therefore experience the same set of 21st century tensions exerted upon their parent institutions as a whole: the need to recruit more students, to deliver teaching economically and to 'do things smarter' are all present. However, there are some additional stresses that, taken together, create a special set of challenges for IR/Politics in comparison to other disciplines.

The first of these is the claim of relevance. That is to say, IR/Politics teachers and departments must often defend their subjects against challenges that such material is irrelevant, overly theoretical, impractical or not sufficiently grounded in 'the real world' (Reus-Smit 2012). Even IR/Politics scholars themselves can hold doubts about the relevance of their discipline area to the wider public. A global survey undertaken by The Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations noted that 76% of academics in this discipline area acknowledged that there was a gap (either static or increasing) between "the kind of research IR scholars produce and the kind of research that the policy community finds most useful" (Maliniak et al. 2012: 66). The Australian IR/Politics scholars in this study were slightly more optimistic about the relevance of the discipline, but nevertheless, only 4% felt that there was *no* gap at all between their work and that which would be perceived as useful by the wider community (Maliniak et al. 2012: 66). The wider social and economic tensions on universities described above can exacerbate this, with insinuations that such discipline areas need to better justify their access to public funding or else do not provide proven paths to sound and fiscally rewarding career options for their graduates in a shrinking employment market (Acton 2012; Cohen 2009). (The correlation between content of a degree course and workplace success is also important to bear in mind given the emphasis on generic Graduate Attributes discussed above.)

This sort of pressure is felt by many of the Humanities and Social Science discipline areas in Australia to some extent and arguably more so than other 'more vocational' streams such as Science, Business, Law and so forth. Closures, program cuts and redundancies in Australia

and overseas are stark illustrations of the relatively low value that is placed upon some elements of the Humanities and the right to exist purely for the sake of scholarship alone.^{14,15} In contrast, it is difficult to imagine a media story questioning the 'relevance' or 'social benefit' of students studying Medicine or Engineering, for example.

The second pressure leads on from the first and concerns the practicality of students being able to demonstrate or actively participate in industry relevant practice. In many discipline areas within the Humanities and Social Sciences there is some form of practical manner in which the subject matter of the learning can be applied. For instance, Journalism students can do some shifts at a community radio station. Language students can speak their chosen tongue or go on exchange. Psychology majors can run studies. Fine arts students can create artworks and historians can go and unearth something, either literally or in the archives.

Practising IR/Politics or the options for Work Integrated Learning (Patrick et al. 2008) can be more difficult to facilitate. In general, these disciplines are observational rather than experimental and it is difficult to reproduce the observable actors and conditions in a classroom (Lowell 1910). How does one *apply* the theory of how nation states interact (Boyer et al. 2006)? How can one teach the validity and application of concepts like power, negotiation, threat, the lure of populism and acts that seem irrational to an outsider? How can a student place themselves in the position of leading a state, negotiating a ceasefire or trading away sovereignty for collective benefits (Kanner 2007)? How can the pressures of needing to make a 'lose-lose' decision be conveyed in a lecture (McCarthy and Anderson 2000)? Certainly it is true that leadership and inter-state relationships are not the sum total of IR and Politics study. However such concepts are intrinsic to the discipline and if one has only approached this area through writing essays or undertaking quiz-style exams, this calls into question the depth of learning taking place (McCarthy and Anderson 2000).

Opportunities to *apply* learning can therefore be difficult to achieve in IR/Politics. Examining how this might be overcome through the use of collaborative online tools therefore provides a worthy case study for this thesis.

¹⁴ For example, in 2012 alone there were losses of 45 staff in La Trobe University's Humanities and Social Sciences faculty, 240 job losses at Swinburne University (with some of these being in Social Science areas), and general rationalisations of 'under-performing' departments and schools at the University of Sydney and The Australian National University, particularly at the latter's School of Music.

¹⁵ In 2012 the United Kingdom withdrew all direct state funding of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences tuition and shifted the onus of payment onto the students.

A further burden for IR/Politics teaching stems from its distant and observational status: the ethnocentric barriers that impede student understanding of systems and societies alien to their own cultural upbringing (Baylouny 2009; Sasley 2010; Stover 2005; Youde 2008). This can be manifested in an inability to grasp the rationale behind decisions that seem illogical to an outsider but can be crucial to understanding why agreements like ceasefires break down, why a seemingly minor concession is non-negotiable to one party, why one ethnicity will attempt the extermination of another and why some political goals are desperately sought after but simply unachievable (Krain and Lantis 2006; Sasley 2010). The ability to understand alternative viewpoints is crucial to unlocking global phenomena such as civil conflict, international security, human rights and terrorism. Such an ability also addresses Graduate Attributes of the type concerned with "Global Citizenship" (The National Graduate Attributes Project 2009b).

These pressures of relevance, practical demonstration and cultural relativism therefore combine and face teachers of IR/Politics with the need to find solutions to all of them, plus the institutional and higher education market pressures outlined earlier. Bearing all these in mind, a model IR/Politics teacher of today should ideally be delivering their teaching in a manner that satisfies each of the following demands:

- Attract and retain students
- Service a diverse cohort more efficiently/economically
- Target learning outcomes towards graduate outcomes and life after graduation
- Satisfy course and curriculum guidelines and quality assurance processes
- Meet institutional drivers towards greater use of e-learning and technology
- Cope with differing and changing learner preferences
- Keep the subject relevant
- Provide adequate demonstration of and insight to the subject
- Defeat ethnocentrism

- Teach in a manner that satisfies learning outcomes and is grounded in pedagogical best practice
- Deliver the intended content

These challenges are the underpinning 'problem' informing this thesis. The ways in which this list of pressures might be addressed through greater usage of online teaching approaches is the basis of the research. This is explored both in a generic sense and within the IR/Politics discipline as a specific case study. This list will be revisited in Chapter 6 with the contention that online role play exercises can alleviate all of these pressures for teacher of IR/Politics.

A cursory review of the list of demands may give the impression that fulfilling it would be exceedingly difficult. However there are areas where the IR/Politics discipline may actually have an advantage. For example the generic ambitions dictated by graduate attributes would seem something that the study of IR/Politics would be well placed to meet, particularly in the areas of communication, collaboration and global consciousness. Moreover, by combining *prudent* use of technology (Prensky 2009) with teaching tools and methods that are noted for their enhanced outcomes, teachers of IR/Politics may be able to meet *all* of the demands of 21st century tertiary education noted above.

Using IR/Politics as a case study, this thesis is concerned with one of the emerging responses to addressing the pressures universities face: the implementation of online learning, also commonly referred to as e-learning. As noted above, greater use of computer technologies to deliver teaching and learning can permit greater efficiencies for universities, especially in the context of catering for students who do not physically attend a campus ('off-campus' or 'external' students). A lecture need not be confined to those physically able to fit into a space, but can be heard by an infinite number of people who have the equipment to download a podcast. Access to digital content supplements physical libraries and flexible modes of delivery can be more inclusive for those unable to attend a university campus because of time, location or mobility constraints.

However, just as shouting more loudly does not necessarily improve communication, it does not follow that simply broadcasting material to greater numbers of students improves their learning experience or addresses the required graduate outcomes. An examination of the broad debates concerning e-learning and technology use in higher education is therefore

necessary in order to formulate solutions to the specific challenges faced by teachers of IR/Politics.

Chapter 2: The New Aspirations of Learning: Digital, Active and Collaborative

As noted in Chapter 1, one approach to meeting some of the pressures on universities and their teachers is to pursue a strategy of increased emphasis on 'e-learning'.¹⁶ Mixed with the institutional drivers on costs and efficiencies are the societal changes, particularly amongst the younger generations, whereby widespread use of digital tools (including social media) has produced an *expectation* of employing these technologies in most aspects of life, including education (Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience 2009; Educating the Net Generation project group 2009; Kvavik and Caruso 2005). Linked to this is the realisation that the skill sets that can be fostered in online environments (such as collaboration, communication and technical proficiency) are of increasing importance in the workplace and hence critical to the wider mission of higher education in preparing students for life after graduation (Bruns 2008; Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience 2009; Tapscott 2009).

Put simply, e-learning presents the inducement that more students can be serviced with fewer resources but with a potentially richer level of learning experience and improved post-academy outcomes. This ambition is evidenced in the strategic statements made by institutions, such as the following by Deakin University, which states goals such as

Educating learners for effective citizenship and employability through courses enhanced for highly personal, engaging and relevant learning experiences through premium cloud and located learning... This means personal, engaging and relevant learning experiences using the best available technologies including videoconferencing, portfolios, adaptive systems and other emerging tools (Deakin University 2012b).

It is the contention of this research that these benefits are indeed possible, but only if the e-learning entails a process of effective design with specific targets in mind, and with an overall awareness of what the strengths and weaknesses of the online environment are. Merely 'putting stuff on the Internet' is no more effective in terms of learning or resource usage than

¹⁶ As ever, the exact terminology will vary from university to university (e.g. 'Cloud Learning' at Deakin University), but the central premise is the idea of carrying out more teaching and learning in an online environment.

handing out photocopies or writing on a whiteboard. As was mentioned by one of the respondents to this research:

"One thing that Universities don't understand is that online is not cheaper. It's not a way to save money. If anything it's more expensive and more time consuming than face-to-face teaching....you have to disabuse your university of the idea that it will save them money because it won't" (Interviewee A).

Given the social, pedagogical and technological aspirations and tensions noted above, this thesis seeks to address whether collaborative online learning (as one form of e-learning) is desirable and what it might offer in terms of improved outcomes relevant to 21st century teaching and learning in the IR/Politics disciplines. This includes assessing what changes might be wrought by the inclusion of such technologies, both in terms of student outcomes and the teacher's role, how these approaches go about meeting institutional strategies and what evidence there is to suggest that in doing so, the results are pedagogically sound. Additionally, are there discipline specific advantages and disadvantages that are applicable to delivering IR/Politics subjects to undergraduate students in collaborative online approach?

What is e-learning?

In order to analyse why e-learning is an attractive and potentially effective option for universities, it is important to define what it consists of. Equally important is to indicate what it does not entail and the extremely loose terminologies and understanding that are often applied to such discussions.

At its most simplistic, the term e-learning refers to employing information and communications technology (ICT) in the learning environment. This can cover a wide scale of practices, from using computers to do certain exercises, right through to completely replacing any face-to-face or peer-to-peer interaction.

"While keeping a presiding interest in more advanced applications, e-learning refers to both wholly online provision and campus-based or other distance based provision supplemented with ICT in some way. The supplementary model encompasses activities ranging from the most basic use of ICT (e.g. use of PCs for word processing of assignments) through to more advanced adoption (e.g. specialist disciplinary software, handheld devices, learning

management systems, adaptive hypermedia, artificial intelligence devices, simulations, etc.)" (OECD 2005: 11).

This broad definition can therefore encompass almost any use of technology in a learning environment. Under this description, even a student using email to submit an assignment would constitute an example of e-learning. This thesis focuses on the "more advanced" end of the scale noted in the above OECD definition. That is to say, where technology is being used to *enhance* teaching and learning. This means focussing on the 'learning' rather than the 'e' (Hamid 2001). This distinction is critical because merely *using* a certain technology in teaching will not necessarily confer any transformation in learning experience or benefit to the teacher or student. Emailing a book chapter as an electronic document is not fundamentally different from providing it in hard copy, although it may assist a university in its goals of avoiding or transferring the cost of producing and distributing printed material. Given the factors noted earlier in the chapter, what is more important is investigating how online technologies can provide *increased* benefits and opportunities for universities, teachers and students. How can technology assist in transcending old models of the teacher as knowledge imparter and the student as knowledge receiver? How can online environments aid collaboration and result in both discipline specific and generic outcomes? That these benefits might address both logistical concerns (time, cost, cohort size) as well as pedagogical ambitions is central to this thesis.

A brief examination of the background of e-learning in higher education as well as some of the debates surrounding it will assist in exploring these questions.

Since the widespread adoption of the World Wide Web from the mid 1990s onwards, education providers have often been at the forefront of implementing ICT solutions, both in their administration and for their core business of teaching. There have been several reasons for this, but perhaps the most important have been the pressures noted above pushing towards greater class sizes, increased enrolments of off-campus or 'flexible delivery' students (Edmondson 2007; Perdisco 2002) and the ensuing need to compete with other institutions for a share of the market. That is not to say that universities have been seeking a shift to e-learning simply for mercenary purposes. There was also a genuine interest in pedagogical innovation and what improvements it could bring to teaching (Edmondson 2007). In Australia, pressures to broaden access to higher education have also been at play.

When e-learning became popularised with the rapid growth of the Internet (and the accompanying 'dot-com boom') in the 1990s there was a great deal of expectation regarding the large paradigm shifts that would occur in education and the tertiary sector in particular. The possibilities of new models of cost, access, distance learning and collaboration were posited by the e-learning devotees, with the ultimate aspiration being the fully 'virtual campus'(Zemsky and Massy 2004b).

As the use of ICTs increased in universities alongside market pressures and regulatory changes, there was a growing focus on implementing e-learning policies in a more formal manner, perhaps guided or supported by an 'official' strategy (Inglis 2007). Specific reasons for this would have varied from institution to institution, but common motivations included:

- Focussing staff attention on e-learning
- Ensuring staff were moving in the same direction
- Achieving consistency of process
- Sharing information and experiences
- Fostering support for e-learning
- Enabling efficient allocation of resources (Inglis 2007).

However, nearly two decades on, traditional practices have still not been replaced by e-learning technologies. They have been supplemented and amended, but not supplanted (Tapscott and Williams 2010). The implementation of e-learning tools has therefore produced incremental, rather than radical change. For example, materials such as course readings, unit outlines and lecture recordings may be made available online, but this is merely an additional method of accessing conventional resources as opposed to those resources/delivery methods being fundamentally re-designed (Kennedy et al. 2011). There has of course been some evolution, or “quiet change” as Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin (2006) put it, but nothing like the expectations of the mid 1990s.

These outcomes are also illustrated in the research conducted during the course of this thesis. Like their colleagues elsewhere, Australian IR/Politics are engaging far less in online teaching than might be expected given the decades of rhetoric and investment by their institutions.

In spite of the slow pace of progress to date, it is irrefutable that universities are still pushing towards increasing their online teaching delivery. This is evidenced by documents such as green papers, strategic plans and announcements regarding their commitment to expanding online capabilities (see for instance (Deakin University 2012b; University of New England 2011; University of Queensland 2007b; University of South Australia 2010)). Revenue and competition are contributing drivers in this resolve, with distance education, flexible delivery and cross-institutional courses representing an increasing percentage of university enrolments (DIISRTE 2012).¹⁷ Increased delivery of online material can also be seen as a means to hold on to international student enrolments at a time when visa changes, exchange rates and global financial woes have seen a drop in this lucrative sector (Birtchnell 2012; Gallagher 2012; Hare 2012). Potential competition from foreign universities (particularly in the United States) offering MOOCs is a further driver for the Australian higher education sector to innovate (Gallagher 2012; Sadler 2012).

The burgeoning deployment of MOOCs challenges many traditional university practices. Being designed for large-scale participation via the Internet, not requiring formal and long-term enrolment with the institution (i.e. to the same extent as degree-enrolled students) and offer varying outcomes for those who complete them, MOOCs offer a contradiction to the centuries-old patterns of university enrolment, teaching and award.¹⁸ These courses may be offered free of charge, at a nominal charge or at least at a reduced rate compared to traditional degree courses. Personal interaction with university teaching staff will be non-existent or extremely limited, though a supporting infrastructure of discussion forums may be offered. Assignments, if they exist, might be graded by computer or there may be a fee to undertake an exam. Provision of something like completion certificate may also attract a fee.

Although the idea of MOOCs had existed for some years, interest expanded from the end of 2011 when several high profile American universities began to offer them (Papano 2012).¹⁹ A

¹⁷ For example, The Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education reports that of those students who commenced studies at public universities in 2012, 12.4% were enrolled in an off-campus mode. This represented a 10.7% increase on 2011. A further 3.2% of commencing students were in "multi-modal" enrolment, up 17.6% from the previous year.

¹⁸ Some MOOCs may offer no formal 'reward' at all; typically those that exist only as a collection of content that has been provided online for interested parties to consume at their own pace. Others may offer certificates of completion or advanced credit status for those who wish to enrol in a more formal qualification with the provider.

¹⁹ The term Massively Open Online Course was coined in 2008, though experiments with accessible online learning existed prior to this. Britain's *UKeU* was a short-lived proto-MOOC, offering degrees from UK universities but was commercially unviable and folded after less than a year. Outside of higher education

free MOOC offering from Stanford University on Artificial Intelligence in October 2011 attracted more than 160,000 enrolments; over 10 times greater than the university's entire 'regular' student body (Rodriguez 2012)²⁰. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology attracted a similar number of enrolments for a course on circuits and electronics. Since those launches, platforms and partnerships such as *edX* (non-profit), *Coursera* (for-profit) and *Udacity* (for-profit) have each attracted enrolments in hundreds of thousands.²¹ In addition to those courses requiring some sort of enrolment, there are also 'open courseware' systems, where universities offer subject content such as lectures, notes, readings lists, suggested discussion topics and so forth for anyone to download and consume at their own pace.²² Such offerings are typically free of charge but offer no certification or access to teaching staff.

Enthusiasm regarding the possibilities of MOOCs has been high in Australia and around the world, as has discussion of how they fit with the existing university system. For example, whether the 'massive' aspect impact upon the quality of teacher-student interaction (Martin 2012) and if hasty jumps onto the 'open online' bandwagon cause a deterioration in student satisfaction and an institution's reputation (Den Hollander 2012). There is also discussion on how intellectual property might be handled in a MOOC environment, including the work of contributing academics and copyrighted course material (Thampapillai 2013). The competitive higher education marketplace also logically results in much discussion of what income stream MOOCs actually represent (Norton et al. 2013b). Likewise the quality of outcome MOOCs offer (Mazoue 2013) is particularly relevant in terms of institutional reputation and the incentive for potential students to invest time in undertaking a course. In this regard, the significant non-completion rates of the courses (Nelson and Dawson 2012) also indicate that a focus on initial enrolment numbers is a poor indicator of the longer-term market size. There is also the viewpoint that MOOCs represent a new model of constructivist learning, with students now having much greater freedom to design and control their own

institutions, the Wikimedia Foundation has also offered *Wikiversity*, a crowd-sourced portal for open educational resources. This aggregates online material such as that appearing in *Wikipedia*, along with suggested reading lists, discussion topics and so forth. No resulting qualifications are offered and the coverage and detail of the material across different discipline areas is inconsistent. The Political Science section (http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/School:Political_science) for example is quite lightly populated with content; many pages are simply placeholders and others have not been edited for some years.

²⁰ Around 23,000 of those enrolled completed the course. Although less well publicised, two other courses were offered at the same time by Stanford. These were on Machine Learning (104,000 enrolments with 13,000 completions) and an Introduction to Databases (104,000 enrolments and 7,000 completions) (Rodriguez 2012).

²¹ Coursera claims "2.8 million people from over 200 countries have signed up at least 1 course out of the 327 course catalogue" (<http://blog.coursera.org/post/44688625384/university-spotlight-see-courses-offered-by-ucsd-case>, accessed 15/04/2014)..

²² See for example the Open Courseware Consortium (<http://www.ocwconsortium.org/>), a partnership between nearly 200 higher education institutions to offer free course content.

learning or undertake learning for fun and recreation without the burden of long-term enrolment (Belanger and Thornton 2013; Yuan and Powell 2013).

Australian universities have been involved with the MOOC phenomenon. The University of NSW began offering computer programming courses in October 2012, the first Australian provider to do so (Dodd 2012). The content was delivered via a platform called *Open Learning*, a start-up enterprise founded by UNSW. Since that time, other Australian universities have launched MOOCs, whether through their own platforms, including *Open Learning* (UNSW) or *Open2Study* (RMIT, Macquarie University) or by offering their material through one of the major global portals such as *edX* (ANU) or *Coursera* (University of Melbourne).

Whether MOOCs represent an enduring shift in the university system remains to be seen. Already there are indications that they are fading from favour as some of the challenges noted above force universities to re-consider their investment in these platforms (New Media Consortium 2014). The publicity surrounding the format has been significant and in some ways parallels the expectations in the 1990s surrounding what the World Wide Web could do for learning. It is important to note that the MOOC approach is not novel in terms of technology; broadcasting content on the Internet is the basic principle of e-learning. It is the "Massively Open" aspects of MOOCs that is innovative and the source of the greatest debate. That the world's most elite universities are offering a form of education for free to the masses is one part of the discussion. The 'unbundling' of subject units from an overall degree structure is another. "Few people believe that MOOC providers are the future of higher education on their own. But they are part of a wave of innovation in higher education, affecting both educational technology and the way education providers are organised" (Norton et al. 2013b: 5).

Given that off-campus enrolment at Australian universities has a long and widespread history, the novelty of having students remote from the institution could be considered low.²³ Again though, it is the challenges and opportunities provided by the 'business model' of MOOCs that has caused debate and a renewed interest in online delivery modes (Deakin University 2012b; Den Hollander 2012; M. Gregory 2012; Universities Australia 2013). It is this

²³ For example, the enrolment statistics for the first half of 2012 show an increase in multi-modal attendance mode of over 12% from 2011 in Australian universities and an increase in fully external enrolments of over 5% (2012 *First half year student statistics*, Department of Industry, available from <http://www.innovation.gov.au/-highereducation/HigherEducationStatistics/StatisticsPublications/Pages/Students.aspx>, accessed 15/04/2014).

refreshed discussion of e-learning that is relevant to this thesis, since this strategic debate provides a greater push for developing online teaching and learning approaches, particularly given the prevailing pressure of needing to reach more students more efficiently.

A desire for internal and financial efficiencies also can spur universities toward greater investment in e-learning. The idea that an infinite number of students can listen to a recorded lecture is an attractive one given that no proportional extra cost is incurred, as is the idea that these students can utilise this material at a time and place of their choice (as opposed to the institution needing to provide the venue). Likewise the digital delivery of subject materials, assignments and so forth also implies cost savings, including printing and postage.²⁴ It is also an appealing idea that once digitised, these materials can be recycled many times without additional investment.

For these reasons, there is a growing pressure on all Australian universities to increase their use of the online environment in teaching delivery. Approaches vary, from radical transformations (for instance, totally doing away with live lectures) to more graduated attempts to redesign curricula, assessment tasks and pedagogical approaches. Whatever tactics are pursued, there is a degree of impetus throughout *every* institution towards change and all disciplines within any individual university will be affected by this. The issue is not of *whether* more e-learning roll-outs will occur, but *how* this can be done – how can e-learning be best implemented, how can specific disciplines benefit and how can over-stretched teaching staff be encouraged to engage with these changes?

As noted, the practice of utilising the Internet to deliver teaching has been an aspiration for universities around the world for nearly two decades now. Whilst progress has been erratic and perhaps slower than desired, the strategic pressure to continue is high, even if, as has been found in this research, there may be reluctance and uncertainty among teaching staff. Academic research and discussion of e-learning has been similarly conflicting, often giving a sense of dealing with two extremes. Inconsistency in the terms used in this field and the wide range of activities that can be classed as e-learning also serve to cause confusion.

²⁴ Whether these efficiencies really translate into an equivalent learning experience for the online student or are reflected in increased workload for the teacher is harder to prove. The great variation in how online teaching is delivered, even by academics in the same corridor, makes it difficult to measure the economies. Certainly many teachers would argue that online delivery actually increases their workload because of the need to address multiple similar enquiries, offer technical advice, monitor discussion boards and create purpose-built content. On the other hand, credos such as lowering environmental footprint could be seen more as a shifting of this burden and cost from the university and onto the individual student who needs to print out material at home.

For these reasons it is essential to present a discussion of the literature pertaining to online learning and to provide some definitions of the terminology.

The polarity and ambiguity of e-learning literature

At one end of the ideological encouragement to e-learning are authors who see online collaboration as a world-changing shift in human interaction of all types, not just education. These are the uncompromising 'boosters' of everything technological such as Don Tapscott (Tapscott 2009; Tapscott and Williams 2010) and Curtis Bonk (Bonk 2009). For these authors, e-learning, Web 2.0 and its associated social media tools all herald the dawn of a new era where, for those willing to take the risk, education and other aspects of society will be radically transformed for the better. They argue that participation, collaboration and customisation will make more learning, more knowledge and more options available to more people.

At the opposite pole stand the 'digital dissenters' or 'techno-sceptics', exemplified by writers such as Tara Brabazon (2002, 2007) or Nicola Johnson (Johnson et al. 2008). For this group, Internet-based technologies do not hold the key to transforming learning environments and may indeed be *exacerbating* inequality of access rather than solving it. They argue that the visions of the e-learning devotees are based upon false assumptions, a false conflation of technological innovation with pedagogical innovation (Johnson et al. 2008) and that ready access to information does not automatically lead to learning. They warn that e-learning is a poor and potentially detrimental substitute for face-to-face teaching and that it can stifle the progress of learners with an inherent one-size-fits-all approach. Lastly, an over-reliance on e-learning delivery specifically excludes those who do not have the required level of technology and Internet connection available to participate (Johnson et al. 2008).

In between these polemics exist a number of qualitative and quantitative studies that examine strategic trends in e-learning deployments (Becta 2008; Educating the Net Generation project group 2009; OECD 2005) or meta-studies of particular tools or approaches (for example Dalgarno et al. (2010) studying Virtual Worlds). Lastly there are reports of individual experiments and experiences. Much of this middle ground literature is ambiguous in its findings or is open to methodological criticism for small sample sizes or subjective and anecdotal analysis (Kirkwood and Price 2013). Some findings also contradict the memes that

form the foundations of the e-learning concept (for example Reissetter and Boris (2004), who report a low preference amongst students for interacting with each other online). Depending from what (if any) pre-conviction one is approaching the question of e-learning's efficacy, the differing findings could be seen as firm proof or dire warning. The difficulty in empirically measuring learning outcomes (or progress towards graduate attributes), particularly in subjects like IR/Politics means that there can be an impression that 'the jury is still out' on the benefits of e-learning. Two responses to the survey in this thesis encapsulate this uncertainty:

I do not use them (online exercises) because I have little information about how they could be used, and therefore do not see any benefit to teaching beyond what I currently do.

I'm not sure there's any greater value in online activities as opposed to in-class activities.

It is not surprising that teaching staff might have such thoughts given that indecision can be seen amongst university leaders themselves. In September 2012, the Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, Ian Young, said that ANU was “cautiously watching” the growth of the MOOC phenomenon, but that his institution had no plans to be involved (C. Palmer 2012b). He stated that he did not believe ANU would ever “become a major online provider” and that this form of online delivery would be damaging to the brand of the university. Yet only four months later, ANU joined the *edX* MOOC group, with Young then saying that this organisation was “the right fit” for ANU and that it would offer valuable global exposure (C. Palmer 2013). Similar ambiguity is to be found in a statement from The University of Adelaide's Vice Chancellor, Warren Bebbington, in his inaugural address. He declared that “We need to affirm the vital importance of small-group learning and close encounter with a teacher in high-quality university learning” (Norrie 2012). Such a statement is unclear because whilst it makes no mention of what medium this “close encounter” will occur through, there is the implication that a wider broadcast of teaching is of less value.

Such uncertainty is typical of the discussion around e-learning in university planning.

However, despite the growing volume of discussion there is still a certain amount of imprecision in some of the terminology employed by those involved in the decision making. This will inevitably filter downwards towards teaching staff, who may then, understandably, exhibit their own puzzlement over what is required of them. If two parties have different perceptions of what is meant by 'e-learning', it is difficult to see how they can make progress towards implementing such practices. Clarifying some of these terms is therefore important,

since without a common appreciation and understanding of the terminology involved, productive discussion cannot occur.

Terms of confusion

The growing presence of e-learning, or at least interest in it, has meant that the term itself is now often applied in the most general sense to anything happening online in an educational context. As shown above by the OECD definition, the term 'e-learning' can be used to denote nearly any activity combining learning and the Internet. This vagueness leads to confusion and imprecision in addressing the topic, including amongst those tasked with providing strategic direction. For example, it has become common to conflate and equate the idea of e-learning with 'flexible delivery', and often this latter is muddled with 'flexible learning'.²⁵ This occurs even at the peak body level. Universities Australia refers to the trend of universities expanding their "online and other flexible offerings" and the need to "integrate technologies to support teaching and enhance the student experience" (Universities Australia 2013: 5). This confusion and ambiguity results in policy documents that mention e-learning goals in vague terms such as to "enhance access to online teaching resources" (University of Queensland 2007a: 27) or where the term 'e-learning' is used interchangeably with concepts and tools such as Learning Management Systems (Australian Catholic University 2009). Over approximately the last five years there has also been an amalgamation of expressions such as 'social media', 'Web 2.0', 'cloud learning' and 'online (or) mobile delivery' into the discussion of strategies, often with insufficient clarity or distinction as to what these concepts represent in the educational context.²⁶

This confusion is to be avoided because it leads to a lack of precision in the planning and implementation of e-learning (Kennedy et al. 2011). If the institution is trying to encourage certain strategic directions but teaching staff are unclear on these goals or hesitant, then ambiguous terms and jargon will not assist in fostering change. For example, if an institution such as the University of Queensland states that it wants to "enhance access to online

²⁵ The two terms 'flexible delivery' and 'flexible learning' do have some overlap, especially when it comes to the possibility of utilising an online approach as a substitute for classroom attendance. However, flexible delivery also includes administrative innovations, such as allowing students to enrol in single subjects rather than entire degree courses.

²⁶ For example, Deakin University re-named its LMS from "Deakin Studies Online" to "CloudDeakin" in 2013.

teaching resources”, this can be interpreted in many ways by individual teaching staff. At its simplest, this could mean just making sure that more of subject unit's readings come from e-books. Many staff may then feel that their unit material being on the LMS shows their progress towards 'enhanced access'. However it will be argued in this thesis that merely transmitting subject material in a digital format does not in its own right constitute e-learning.

A further reason for establishing firm definitions of e-learning terms is to support the creation and communication of clear and realistic goals. As was noted by so many respondents to this research, when staff feel they lack technical skills, they can be intimidated by change. They may also be less equipped to engage in conversations about what is possible and/or desirable in terms of technology and pedagogy and thus less able to appreciate or support strategic ambitions. Effective communication as to goals and benefits is then required to avoid making the e-learning objectives seem overly complex or daunting.

The conflation of social media terminologies into the discussion of learning also needs clarification. Again, the simple use of certain channels of information transmission does not always constitute a learning situation nor a collaborative environment. Similarly, not all e-learning approaches involve the sort of collaboration and active learning foundation that is the concern of this thesis.

It is therefore important to examine some of the key terminologies used in discussing e-learning and the online environment. These terms are relevant to this research and the broader discourse of how these technologies may be incorporated into higher education teaching and learning.

Online delivery

Like the broad definition that can be applied to e-learning, 'online delivery' can describe virtually any use of Internet technologies to provide students with course content. The emphasis in defining this term should be on the word 'delivery', because the act of delivering content is independent of any description of its quality or aim. Like the OECD definition of e-learning, a teacher providing links to online course readings would be one end of the online delivery scale. A purpose-built virtual world would be an example from the opposite end of

the continuum. The use of such a boundless term without clarification of further details offers no real indication of what is involved.

It is the purpose of this research to determine how widespread is the occurrence of online delivery technologies that are being used to *augment* and *complement* the *learning* experience in IR/Politics, rather than just using the Internet as a means of transmitting content for passive consumption.

Web 2.0

The term Web 2.0 was made popular by technology advocate Tim O'Reilly when he used it to describe the evolution of the Internet from a passive format (where a narrow group of content authors were feeding a multitude of consumers) to a more participatory arrangement where the roles were reversed and more people were involved in generating material and collaborating (O'Reilly 2005).²⁷ That is to say, Web 1.0 was more akin to the traditional 'industrial' media processes, with, for example, a group of journalists writing news stories that were read by a wide audience. The change began in the early 2000s, where the increasing penetration of Internet access, greater familiarity with the hardware and software involved and certain key technical innovations all made it progressively easier and more attractive for 'ordinary' users to place their own content on the Internet and to interact with growing communities of like-minded individuals (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).²⁸ *YouTube*, for example launched in 2005, at a time when digital video recording devices *and* access to broadband Internet were becoming more affordable.

²⁷ It is important to note that O'Reilly did not limit himself to 'media' in his original discussions of Web 2.0. His vision was broader and had at its core the identification of "the network as a platform" and the possibilities of harnessing collective intelligence (O'Reilly 2005). He was also interested in processes such as the design and production of software and the marketing interactions that could occur between producers and consumers as the distinctions between them became blurred (T. O'Reilly, 'What Is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software', (O'Reilly Media, 2005)). This idea has also been explored by 'futurists' such as Don Tapscott (2009, 2010) and academics such as Axel Bruns (2008).

²⁸ Sir Tim Berners-Lee, credited as the 'inventor' of the World Wide Web has consistently stated that the medium was always based around community and communication, and that the idea that the Web was somehow revolutionised a decade later is false. Kaplan and Heanlein (2010: 60) provide some reconciliation between this early idealism and the term of Web 2.0, referring to the period circa 1995-2001 (when so many people had their first experience of the Internet) as the "era of corporate web pages". At this point, the dominance of large corporate websites and their contrast with fairly amateurish blogs and personal pages, gave the impression that the WWW was another commercial medium and a not a citizens' space. They refer to Web 2.0 then as "an evolution back to the Internet's roots" (ibid.).

This conversion of mass media, publishing and information flow from a one-way to an omnidirectional format also opened up greater possibilities for universities:

Students would have the ability to model outcomes, conduct experiments based on well documented laboratory simulations, rapidly exchange ideas with both fellow students and teaching faculty, and, where appropriate, join global learning communities not unlike the contract bridge communities that have made tournament bridge on the Internet an exercise in international competition (Zemsky and Massy 2004b: 2).

In the context of community building, a term related to the idea of Web 2.0 is "User-Generated Content" (UGC). If we see Web 2.0 as the *social* and *technological* shifts that occurred in the production of online material, UGC is the outcome (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). That is, UGC is the actual material that is created and made publicly available by individuals. These individuals are also end-users themselves and the content is not created as part of a commercial and professional routine (OECD 2007). Such UGC can be anything from postings on a bulletin board through to video shared on *YouTube*, a wiki project or open-source software.

In an educational context, UGC offers the potential to shift from students being passive receivers of information and towards situations more akin to a face-to-face classroom tutorial where everyone may have an input. There is also the potential to share their work and collaborate with peers. This opportunity to generate 'new' material is central to this thesis because of the potential for improved learning outcomes whilst simultaneously addressing the genuine pressures that universities and teaching staff are under.

Social Media

Popular UGC platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and the like are often collated under the term 'Social Media'. As with many aspects of the networked world, this term provokes varying definitions, not least because the concept itself is often used interchangeably with labels such as Web 2.0, UGC and the names of individual software applications. In order to assess what social media is and what impact it has upon its precursor forms of media it warrants a more precise definition.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) place social media as the umbrella concept under which specific applications appear:

Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User-Generated Content (ibid.: 61).

This definition provides a hierarchy that describes the relationships between these terms: Web 2.0 is the overall **concept** of 'ordinary' people using the Internet to publish their creation. UGC is the actual **content** that has been created, and Social Media describes a certain suite of online **tools** that facilitate this process, particularly the sharing and exchange of the content. To use a specific example, Web 2.0 opens the possibility of private citizens publishing and sharing their own videos. The videos they create are the User Generated Content and *YouTube* is a proprietary Social Media tool they employ to share and view this content.

The collaborative attributes of Web 2.0 and the way they are applied make the transcendence from 'content delivery' to 'content creation' possible. Like defining the term itself, the common features of the Web 2.0 paradigm and the manner in which particular Social Media applications make use of it are open to debate. Broadly though, these types of applications share most or all of the following characteristics:

- **Participation:** Contributions are encouraged from all interested parties and there is a blurred line between producer and consumer.
- **Openness:** Input and feedback are welcomed and barriers to viewing content are limited or non-existent.
- **Conversation:** a move away from the concept of broadcast and towards dialogue and conversation.
- **Community:** coalescing around shared interests and fostering communication between members
- **Connectedness:** linking content and communities in a non-linear fashion. Aggregating other sites, resources and people (Mayfield 2007).

Revisiting the ambitions expressed by Graduate Attributes statements, it is possible to see they have some alignment with the traits inherent to Web 2.0 applications. Taking those

broad categories identified by the National Graduate Attributes Project (2009a)²⁹ and comparing them with Mayfield's (2007) Social Media characteristics above, there is correlation in ideas such as Communication, Global Citizenship, Research and Inquiry and Information Literacy. It could also be argued that with the appropriate framework, the remaining Graduate Attribute categories pertaining to Scholarship, Life Long learning, Personal and Intellectual Autonomy and Ethical Social and Professional Understanding could also be fostered through online educational environments. Such parallels between the characteristics of online collaboration and the needs and goals of Australian universities make investigating the efficacy of these tools important.

Exhibiting the characteristics identified by Mayfield are a series of communities, concepts and tools and the specific software applications and platforms to utilise them. For example, collaborative authoring of content is an expression of the ideals of Web 2.0, UGC and social media. *One* method of collaborative authoring is a wiki structure and *Wikipedia* is *one* manifestation of this. However, these most recognisable 'brands' of social media are not the sum of the ideal. Tiny communities with niche interests using an online platform to share their pursuits are just as much a representation of Web 2.0 collaboration as *YouTube*.

In examining how these tools can be applied in teaching and learning it is valuable to discuss some of their most common forms. Familiarity with these manifestations of Web 2.0 is important firstly because it assists in defining the discussion and secondly because even in an off-the-rack LMS environment, the option of including some of these tools is readily available. Additionally, the tendency for certain specific applications to become metonyms for a whole class of tools (for example, *Wikipedia* for wikis or *Facebook* for social networking) means that it is useful to emphasise the broader entity.

Whilst it is not possible to describe every expression of Web 2.0, the following represent the most common kinds of tools. Variations of these forms would represent the bulk of social media interaction, though Internet users, both private and commercial, are constantly generating new methods and tools of interfacing.

Blogs are online publishing spaces created by individuals, groups or organisations. Blogs are not necessarily collaborative in nature, but may allow participation through a commenting

²⁹ Scholarship, Global Citizenship, Life Long learning, Research and Inquiry, Information Literacy, Personal and Intellectual Autonomy, Ethical Social and Professional Understanding, Communication.

function or through linking to the material of other bloggers. **Discussion boards** are a related concept with a potentially higher degree of dialogue occurring amongst participants. Both blogs and discussion boards are exemplars of the first wave of UGC originating in the early growth of the Internet as it transitioned from a niche network into a more public domain.

Social Networks are websites that allow individuals to construct networks of other users for sharing information. The best-known examples are sites like *Facebook*, *MySpace* and *LinkedIn*.

Wikis are collaborative authoring tools for storing and managing knowledge. Wikis are characterised by the use of cross-linked pages created via a simplified editing tool and are in effect basic database tools that (ideally) require little formal HTML knowledge for the neophyte to begin using. A wiki may be used as a general encyclopaedia (such as *Wikipedia*), or for organising information on a more limited topic (such as a specific author or hobby).³⁰

Content communities function to present and organise content from individuals so that it can be made available to a wider audience, either within the authoring community itself or beyond it to outsiders. This may take the form of sharing links to sites with a particular theme (social bookmarking), sharing media (e.g. *YouTube*, *Flickr*) or collating information. This sort of activity may also be part of a much more traditional and commercial web presence, such as the option for members of the public to review books presented on the Amazon site. Players of computer and video games or participants in Virtual Worlds and role playing environments can also be considered part of a content community if they are interacting in an online space and their actions and creative endeavours are contributing to the experience of others.

With the net being cast so wide in terms of what is covered by these Web 2.0 terms it is unsurprising that confusion occurs as to the boundaries and hierarchies they represent. If these broad definitions are poorly understood, the uncertainty they generate when applied to the narrower context of higher education is predictable.

³⁰ In 2014 *Wikipedia* claimed that in its English language version alone there were nearly four and a half million article pages that generated by 21 million authors in just over 12 years (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About> accessed 15/04/14). Each day, roughly 12-13% of all WWW users visit a *Wikipedia* page (<http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/wikipedia.org> accessed 14/10/2012). Editing *Wikipedia* has been the basis for university assessments in a range of disciplines in Australian and elsewhere (see for example Konieczny (2007), Moses (2007)).

This doubt may lead to un-receptiveness amongst academics and students towards using some of these tools and methods in teaching because of their association with frivolity, falsehood and friendship (Madge et al. 2009). For example, a statement as to the potential for using 'social media' in university teaching might be difficult for some to envisage without drawing upon their preconceptions of platforms like *Facebook*. This demonstrates again the importance of terminology being understood and communicated effectively by planners and the danger of using vague expressions in strategic documents.

Using online technologies for learning might in the first instance seem economically and logistically attractive for universities, but how might these approaches help to solve other dilemmas as well? Recognising that online communities can work collaboratively to produce content and experiences provides scope for teachers to utilise such approaches, potentially transcending the familiar Web 1.0 models of content broadcast. The solutions to those pedagogical challenges of providing an engaging experience and producing well-rounded graduates with transferrable generic skills could also be facilitated through e-learning, as could the discipline specific challenges for teachers of IR/Politics. With an understanding then of the collaborative dynamics afforded by the online environment it is next important to examine how this can be applied to learning.

Connecting, collaborating and learning

Since the coining of the term “Active Learning” in 1991 (Bonwell and Eison 1991) there has been an impetus to make students more self-directed in their study and incorporate more authentic learning tasks. The theory of Active Learning aims at going beyond just memorising and repeating the course material, with students taking a greater role in the production and delivery of their 'lessons' as well as developing generic skills that are of value to them in the wider world (Bonwell and Eison 1991; Smith and MacGregor 1992). The principles of active learning and the vision of advancing these generic skills therefore sit well with the need to address Graduate Attributes statements and the learning outcomes of the AQF.

Collaborative learning is one method of supporting active learning. Broadly speaking, collaborative learning is when "two or more people learn or attempt to learn

something together" (Dillenbourg 1999: 1).³¹ This 'togetherness' also implies that the group has shared learning objectives and there is a synergy across the project, with team members profiting from each other's expertise: "Students work on each aspect of a project by contributing and building on each other's ideas, along with sharing the workload" (Ashcraft and Treadwell 2008: 142).

Support for active learning and collaboration is strong within pedagogical literature across all disciplines. Meta-analyses of active learning find that while the reported benefits of collaborative approaches may vary in strength from study to study, the overall trend is positive (Blumenfeld et al. 1996; Michael 2006; Prince 2004; Springer et al. 1999). Any variation in results from individual studies should not be taken as a sign that the data is erratic or equivocal. The issue of defining what sort of practice exemplifies a term such as 'active learning' and how to measure and report outcomes such as 'improved engagement' means that results will certainly vary (Prince 2004). Nevertheless, the overwhelming indication within the results indicates that providing an opportunity to work with peers can offer superior outcomes to completely solitary scholarship:

...the support for collaborative and cooperative learning calls into question the traditional assumptions that individual work and competition best promote achievement. The best available evidence suggests that faculty should structure their courses to promote collaborative and cooperative environments. The entire course need not be team-based...nor must individual responsibility be absent, as seen by the emphasis on individual accountability in cooperative learning. Nevertheless, extensive and credible evidence suggests that faculty consider a non-traditional model for promoting academic achievement and positive student attitudes (Prince 2004: 229).

The range of benefits ascribed to collaborative learning typically include an improved ability to work with others, the developing of communication and persuasion skills and the ability to recognise differing viewpoints. Biasutti (2011: 1874) offers a typical conclusion:

³¹ The terms 'collaborative' and 'co-operative' learning are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature. Debate as to the difference or the hierarchy between the terms is widespread, with factors such as individual or group assessment, extent of guidance by the teacher, scope and finiteness of expected task outcomes and creation of 'new' knowledge being considered relevant. Ashcraft & Treadwell (2008) contend that co-operative learning differs from collaborative learning in that the latter approach involves dividing the task into discrete sub-sections or tasks that are undertaken in a solitary manner by each team member, before being combined at the end. In this model, there is less sharing of knowledge or skills.

Several benefits in collaborative activity participation in an online virtual environment were found, including the development of teamwork skills, the attitude to collaborate, the development of cognitive processes such as analysing and integrating different points of view, understanding of own and other people's limits, and the development of the sense of responsibility and respect for the others.

The desirability of just such outcomes is reflected in the frequency with which they appear in the graduate attributes and learning outcomes expressed by universities. (See Appendix 3 for examples.)

Another method of learning that has strong support in pedagogical literature is 'experiential learning'.³² At its simplest, experiential learning involves 'learning by doing'; the natural ability of human beings to gain knowledge and insight from having experienced or undertaken something (Beard and Wilson 2006). Stehno (1986) elaborates further, describing experiential learning as:

- action that creates an experience
- reflection on the action and experience
- abstractions drawn from the reflection
- application of the abstraction to a new experience or action (quoted in Itin (1999)).

The reflective stage is critical and stems from the scholarship of Schön (1983), Kolb (1984) and Boud et al. (1985). The defining outcome is the transformation of that which is experienced into new knowledge or perspectives which can then be re-applied or adapted to future experience. Without this reflection and assimilation, experiences just remain experiences; effective learning does not occur (Boud et al. 1985).

The communal nature of online collaborative environments can foster the type of learning cycle described by Kolb (1984). By interacting in an online space and learning from results and the actions of peers, progression of learning can occur. Moreover, the anonymity

³² The terms 'experiential learning' and 'experiential education' are sometimes used interchangeably though some authors (e.g. Itin (1999)) differentiate the two. They use 'experiential learning' to describe knowledge gained through all experiences (such as a child burning its fingers on a hot stove) and 'experiential education' to refer to more formal settings where there is a transaction between an educator and a student. For the purposes of this research, with its focus on university teaching environments, the term 'experiential learning' will be used as a default.

provided by some types of online environment can allow students a greater degree of freedom to express themselves and experiment (Wills et al. 2010).

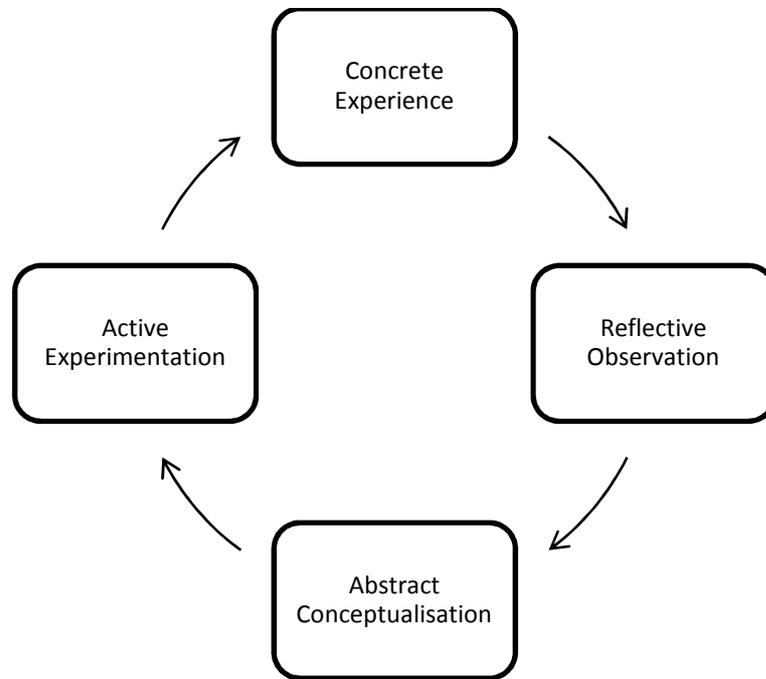


Figure 2: *Kolb's description of the reflective learning cycle*
(Adapted from Kolb (1984: 42).

Kolb's model described how new knowledge can be created through the transformation of experience. The opportunity to reflect upon experience, analyse the components and concepts involved and then test them in new situations cycles back to provide new experiences and learning. One of the respondents to the interviews in this thesis noted such progress when describing an online role play:

... instead of like sending a shallow email like 'oh I'd like to bomb this', you know, their emails towards the end will be more like 'we'd like to use our drones to do X, and we're going to target this person', and they will have researched that person, because of their political views. There'll be a whole lot more depth – it's more like a briefing paper than just a quick one-line request. And they've really thought about it, and they've thought about the outcomes – you can just actually see the depth of their knowledge in their requests. And also their interactions with each other – at the end when we have a conference for on campus students, just the confidence with which they speak as that person, because of, sort of, I guess, knowledge, whereas if you'd

had the conference on the first day, they'd have no idea. They'd be, you know, sort of flummoxed when it comes to responding in character, whereas when it gets towards the end, they are that person (Interviewee D).

Given that IR/Politics is often concerned with ideas of groups, communication and co-operation, and that it can be hard to offer practical participation experiences in real-world politics, the concern of this thesis is how the use of online environments can foster collaboration as a path to improved learning in the discipline. Whilst collaborative learning can occur in many settings, the desirability of utilising an online environment is that this can address logistical and institutional needs whilst still offering a superior learning outcome. As noted above, there is a distinct push towards greater e-learning deployment in Australian universities in any case. Harnessing this movement to provide not just dissemination of material but a significant change or improvement in learning is an extremely positive proposition. With this ambition in mind, it is important to explore the basis of how certain types of online collaboration can enable greater learning outcomes.

Changes, challenges and solutions

In Kaplan and Haenleins' (2010) definition of Social Media, the idea of users exchanging content is paramount. Without this exchange of content, there is no sociability in social media. It is the possibility of sharing and building upon one-another's content that transforms mere online *delivery* into the basis for online *community*. This exchange of ideas also provides the possibility of moving an e-learning situation from the basic delivery end of the scale and towards a richer and diverse experience where technology is being used to enhance the outcomes and/or provide an alternative to previous practices. Collaborative learning, made possible by technology, can offer improved learning experiences in terms of depth and breadth of received knowledge and skills applicable to life outside the learning environment.

In the case of using online collaboration in learning environments, scrutiny and debate has transcended the usual querying that goes with any examination of how to apply technology (e.g. "Does it work?" and "Is it better/cheaper/easier than what we did before?"). With collaborative online techniques there are also a series of larger debates concerning issues such as the more abstract notions of changing pedagogical and cognitive theories (Huijser and Sankey 2010; Lambert et al. 2009); the adaptation of student-teacher relationships

(Reisetter and Boris 2004; Xin and Feenberg 2007); how to measure comparative outcomes in different learning approaches (Prince 2004); epistemological debates (Brabazon 2002, 2007) and the financial and workplace trends in Higher Education (S. A. Brown 2012; Dalgarno et al. 2011; McKenzie et al. 2005).³³ Such debates include what is being taught, how it is being taught, how it is being assessed and who is generating the learning materials. Underlying this are the bigger questions: “What do we want students to learn from their studies?” and “How can we viably meet these ambitions?”

The slow and erratic manner in which online collaborative tools have been implemented within higher education poses a challenge to assessing their efficacy in addressing such questions. Deployment has tended to be unsystematic across the sector, within individual universities, within their constituent schools and faculties and amongst colleagues teaching in the same disciplines. Tapscott (2009: 128) blames this partly on inertia: “Old paradigms die hard,” meaning that many teachers and administrators are reluctant to discard what they see as proven teaching methods. Such a judgement is perhaps unduly disparaging, since with any form of innovation it is common for the majority of people to wait and observe the effectiveness of the new system before committing themselves to its use (Rogers 2003). The relative novelty of some platforms and the ensuing research/publication lag could also be a factor in creating a significant evidence base.³⁴ As determined by responses to the research in this thesis and supported by the wider literature, where collaborative technologies or social media type approaches have been employed, it has tended to be on the initiative of individual staff (Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience 2009; Dalgarno et al. 2011). At the very least, the body of research does not seem to suggest any obvious and proven pathways for 'model' deployment of collaborative online tools within a learning environment.

This piecemeal pattern of adoption and publication may give an ambiguous impression as to the value of these tools and act as a deterrent for undecided teachers from experimenting with their own deployments. Additionally, teaching staff are also strongly influenced by the experiences of innovation leaders in their own peer groups (see Chapter 3). Where these leaders may not be currently experimenting with collaborative tools, or have experimented unsuccessfully, there is little stimulus for their colleagues to take the initiative.

³³ For example, discussions about workload, LMS, use of casual teaching staff and cost-cutting.

³⁴ For example, research into the use of wikis in educational settings was sparse from around 2000-2005 but then accumulated more rapidly after that.

There are also a number of other barriers that mitigate social media's current impact on higher education and they occur at individual and institutional levels (see Chapter 5 for a full discussion). They include the lack of time many teachers have to develop major overhauls of their delivery methods (particularly when there is no 'official' need to), the fact that these tools may be unavailable or unsupported within their current online teaching platforms, lack of budget to procure bespoke software, and intellectual property and privacy issues stemming from using tools that might fall outside the university's control (Minocha 2009).

Lastly there are the obstacles of content. These are the practical questions of whether a particular discipline or subject unit can utilise social media effectively, what specific tools would be most appropriate and how they could be deployed.

However, despite these *current* stumbling blocks, there is an expectation that further penetration of collaborative online tools into the tertiary education sector is inevitable and that teachers and their institutions must increase their preparedness in this regard. (Bruns 2008; Tapscott 2009) The fact that some of the institutional push factors (such as those outlined in Chapter 1) could be addressed by the wider adoption of such media may help to reinforce this movement (Becta 2008).

Accordingly, there is an apparent awareness at higher levels of Australian university management of the potential of embracing social and collaborative tools and other formats of technology-enhanced learning. These may be seen as complementary to strategic ambitions and offer a market advantage. For example, the University of Queensland's *Strategic Plan 2012-2016* notes the following aim: "Focus on the development and support of technology innovations to support high-quality blended learning,"(University of Queensland 2012: 11). The University of South Australia's *Horizon 2020* plan expresses the ambition that "our teachers, learning spaces, technology-rich approaches and social environment will attract, motivate, challenge and excite students from a wide range of backgrounds" (University of South Australia 2010: 11). Similarly, the University of New England, traditionally a major Australian provider of distance education, sees increasing adoption of such technologies by other institutions as a threat to its market share, and its plans to stay ahead include establishing "Future Campuses" to offer "blended learning students everywhere with state-of-the-art learning technologies and opportunities to collaborate with peers and instructors" (University of New England 2011: 8). Finally, Deakin University stresses technology's connection to graduate life in its *Live the Future* plan: "Deakin will use located and cloud

learning to provide accessible, media-rich, interactive and active educational experiences designed for excellent learning outcomes and optimum employability" (Deakin University 2012b: 9).³⁵

Meeting institutional drivers through the adoption of collaborative approaches will cause some alteration to the traditional methods of university teaching and learning. One potential change is a greater shift away from teacher-centric (or 'broadcast') type learning towards more active, interactive and self-guided learning (Linser et al. 1999).³⁶ The non-linear and asynchronous dynamic of the online space and the ease of cross-linking permits limitless digression and taxonomies according to individual or community preferences and interests (Owen et al. 2006). Moreover, a *group* of students working collaboratively will need to establish their own organisational process for collating information, as well as being exposed to each others' knowledge, methods and ideas. Just as the online space transcends the linearity of the essay, the collaboration approach offers a more complex and multi-directional network of information exchange. This will be more reflective of the workplace environments students will encounter after graduation.³⁷

This is conducive to a breakdown in the traditional schema of self-contained 'disciplines' and 'subjects', with learners being more able to organise their learning and knowledge acquisition according to their own and their peers' needs at the time (Becta 2008; Deakin University 2012b; Owen et al. 2006). Links to related material, embedded media and the potential for the 'reader' to move through the material in a non-linear manner permit greater flexibility and greater 'choice' in how students consume and assimilate knowledge. The corollary of this is the potential for total *disorganisation* as well as the daunting task for teachers in designing and assessing such tasks. However, such multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary possibilities sit well with the study of IR/Politics, which often incorporates data from other disciplines (q.v.). The freedom to encompass diverse discipline areas, data or methods of conveying information offers more advantages than restrictions.

³⁵ It is to be noted that the universities used as examples above are all institutions where IR/Politics courses are offered.

³⁶ It should not be assumed that any teaching delivered by technological means is necessarily interactive, collaborative or 'superior' to traditional 'chalk and talk' type methods. For example, completing some sort of online training or digitised learning text can be just as solitary and passive as working through an exercise in a classroom from a hard copy book. See Race & Pickford (2007) for a discussion of these assumptions that being online is always a better option.

³⁷ In the sense that a single author (student) and single reader (teacher) document such as an essay will not be a common task in many career paths, especially those in the sphere of IR/Politics. Team authorship and wider readership and stakeholder buy-in are far more likely.

A shift away from the traditional formats of course structure, subject delivery and assessment is already being driven by some of the market factors mentioned in Chapter 1. In seeking to attract and retain students in competition with local and international competitors, universities need to be flexible in approaches to course offerings and inclusive in their appeal to students from all types of backgrounds, including those recruited through initiatives aimed at low SES demographics, those of mature age and those remote from the campus. Deakin University refers to this specific need in its *Agenda 2020* strategic plan:

Deakin will deliver responsive programs wherever students are geographically (at home, on campus, in the community, at the workplace, in Australia or elsewhere); wherever students are in their learning preparedness; and wherever students are in their career trajectory and life stage (Deakin University 2012b).

The University of Queensland expresses similar ambitions in its *Strategic Plan 2012-2016*, aiming to:

Enhance the shape of UQ's offerings to support broad educational opportunities, ensure flexibility in pathways, and meet postgraduate growth targets....Seek to attract, support and retain high-achieving students, and prioritise the need to improve the participation and success of students from low socioeconomic status (SES) and Indigenous backgrounds (University of Queensland 2007b: 11).

Online collaboration can facilitate these goals in two main ways. Firstly, the distributed nature of the Internet means that physical factors such as geography, classroom size and time zone do not present barriers to peer interaction. Collaboration can thus become remote and asynchronous. Additionally, and dependent on the nature of the exercise, there is the opportunity to offer greater equity between on and off-campus students, meaning that those remote from the physical location of the university are less at risk of receiving an inferior learning experience (Hardy and Totman 2013). This aligns well with the strategic goal of being more inclusive and flexible in the service of students.

Secondly, the community features enabled by Web 2.0 technologies offer a foundation for collaboration. Since skills in communication, negotiation, multi-disciplinary research and information evaluation are inherent in graduate attributes statements and IR/Politics discipline standards (see Appendix 4), it stands to reason that teaching methods that encourage group dynamics are conducive to developing such skills. That collaboration is

overwhelmingly supported in the literature as offering positive pedagogical outcomes strengthens the case that this format is desirable in delivering higher education in the 21st century. As exemplified in the strategic planning documents quoted above, for institutions the question of using an enhanced range of online tools is not one of 'if' but rather of 'when?' and 'how?'

The former UK government body Becta³⁸ (2008) denoted four key themes that surround the use of Web 2.0 technologies as exemplars of collaborative online practice in learning environments. These themes broadly cover the most likely impacts of utilising such tools:

- **Inquiry**

The possibility of creating new structures for learning and knowledge organisation, especially those which suit the learner's specific needs and learning style (see also Fountain (2007)). Increasing access to new tools, new sources and an ever increasing flow of available information. The challenge for students and teachers here is to use this open-endedness effectively and develop the skills for assessing the quality of information and its application alike.

- **Literacies**

Social media can expand the forms of literacy that learners experience and apply. This includes exploring non-linear presentation of material, as well as more specific media artefacts such as video and multi-format material (Owen et al. 2006). The challenge is for teachers to incorporate this material and gain confidence in using it.

- **Collaboration**

Web 2.0 tools allow for new means of collaborating, communicating and community building. This gives the potential for new paradigms of creation such as 'Producersage' (Bruns 2007a, 2007b, 2008), whereby the traditional 'industrial' production methods of producer-consumer (and particularly *individual* consumers) are broken down (Owen et al. 2006). Instead, we see the formation of communities around shared interests where collaboration, reflection and feedback are part of the creative process.

³⁸ Becta was originally known as the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency but after structural changes the acronym was used as a proper noun in its own right to describe the non-departmental public body.

In an educational context this is played out in the shifting role of the teacher away from knowledge imparter and towards 'moderator' or 'interactive guide' (Tapscott 2009).

- **Publication**

The potential for an audience beyond the traditional teacher-student relationship is now more possible than ever. Student work can be displayed to their peers and beyond if desired, often instantly. This allows for instant feedback and evaluation (with all the pros and cons that entails). Students become aware of a wider audience and can feel empowered by the sense that they are doing something authentic. This in turn can lead them to developing higher levels of skills in terms of writing, citation and evaluation of sources (Forte and Bruckman 2006; S. Wheeler and Wheeler 2007).

It is the contention of this thesis that the advantages of facilitating skills and experiences in inquiry, literacy, collaboration and publication are axiomatic. Not only are such capabilities advantageous in an academic environment, they are also beneficial in the workforce. Moreover, the ability to work in partnerships, organise information and communicate it through a variety of platforms aligns with the typical set of graduate attribute aspirations expressed by Australian universities. Finally, the discipline of IR/Politics is especially concerned with these types of generic skills, which offers the potential to benefit from collaborative practices as a form of experiential or work integrated learning process.

Implementing online collaboration in learning

Collaborative online work will have a differing effect on student experience, encouraging autonomous research, learning to work and communicate as a team (Biasutti 2011; S.W. Brown and King 2000b), improving understanding of complex systems (Lloyd 2004) and developing deeper engagement with the subject matter (S.W. Brown and King 2000b; Shellman and Turan 2006). However, all these benefits do not negate the fact that implementing collaborative online tasks may generate some challenges for teachers and students.

These difficulties should not be imagined only in the context of familiarity and applicability of a given technology. Confusion and uncertainty about such a mode of delivery can also be

produced by the 'shock of the new'. Students accustomed to writing essays and teachers used to setting and marking them may feel more reluctant about a computer-enabled group task, particularly the fear of some group member 'free loading' and/or the difficulty of marking the task fairly (q.v.). There can also be a feeling from teachers that their subject does not 'fit' with delivery in this manner (S. A. Brown 2012; Shneiderman 1998) or that the fluidity of the online environment has irreparably altered the landscape of academic life:

The communicative landscapes opened up by social media can be spaces of strangeness and troublesomeness to the academy, both epistemologically and ontologically (Barnett 2005). They entail a shift toward new, volatile forms of textual mediation and subject formation and place increasing emphasis on collaborative modes of enquiry and the importance of group self-regulation and self-explanation. They have the potential to alter relations between process and artefact, permit fragmentation over cohesion, exploration over exposition and the visual over the textual. They are characterised by a tendency toward endless re-crafting, often involving rapid patterns of amendment, truncation, revision and addition. They are perhaps a product of speed (Virilio 2000) and fast time (Eriksen 2001), operating through trust and consensus, whereas the cloistered, analogue academy has required slow time, reflection and reference to authority and the authoritative (Hemmi et al. 2009: 29).

This fear of online environments not aligning with the processes of scholarship is a reasonable perceptual barrier for academics whose careers have been based upon traditional patterns of research and peer review. However, producing original contributions to scholarship and assisting undergraduates to engage with a topic are not the same endeavour. Even when this is recognised, there can still be concern that adapting teaching practice to reflect online trends *now* may cause difficulties for students and universities *later*. That is, the perception of an online environment as a non-scholarly one or synonymous with 'dumbing down' leads to the conclusion that it is a 'wrong' approach that is sabotaging the development of students' abilities to move towards more complex academic endeavours. As one respondent to the research in this thesis noted of the push towards online teaching:

...there's an expectation both from the university and the student body, I think, that the information should be much more pre-digested, and imparted without students themselves having to do a lot of extra-curricular reading and research of their own.

And that deteriorates the potential for research in the post-graduate area, of course
(Interviewee F).

Such a response is illustrative of several typical attitudes towards the online environment in higher education. Firstly that placing content online requires it to be simplified. Secondly that the online environment encourages laziness. Thirdly that the online environment is incompatible with true scholarly endeavour and finally, a perception that *non-teaching* parties (i.e. the university and the students) are pushing for this kind of simplification, with the inference being that this is contrary to common sense and/or the better judgement of those frontline staff who have to do the teaching.

Such challenges, as well as the significant benefits offered by collaborative online learning, are central to this thesis. Whilst the primary aim is to discuss online collaboration in delivering IR/Politics subjects, it is necessary to examine the literature that covers other discipline areas. Many of the experiences and ideas there described would be equally applicable to IR/Politics. In appreciating the collaborative learning experiences of other discipline areas it is hoped that Politics and IR teachers can benefit from this knowledge and tailor it to their own needs.

The literature covering collaborative learning in a higher education context is vast since it can incorporate anything from students playing simple games together (for an IR/Politics example see Boyer (2006)), right up to involving students in internationally distributed communal projects such as *Wikipedia*. The focus of this research is on computer-aided collaboration for teaching and within that, the sort of tasks and exercises that are enabled by the concepts of Web 2.0 and UGC. In these latter categories, the available literature tends to fall into three main categories:

- Broad discussion of transforming learning through an active and collaborative approach to pedagogy
- Discipline specific discussion of the use of collaboration and social media tools
- Reports of specific deployments and experiences with collaborative tasks. (Often tied with point 2 above.)

An examination of these three categories is provided below.

Literature on transforming learning

In order to review the literature relevant to this research on teaching IR/Politics via collaborative online learning it is prudent to begin with that which deals with the topic in the broadest possible sense. Literature on the benefits of active and collaborative learning is abundant and in addressing any particular research question the challenge is in narrowing the sources to those most appropriate. For the purposes of this thesis it is apposite to present research that focuses on the concept of collaborative learning approaches made possible by online technologies, since the push towards greater delivery of e-learning is one of the significant pressures on higher education teachers at this time. Therefore, including a great deal of analysis of non-ICT enabled collaborative approaches would be less meaningful.

The changing role of the teacher in guiding collaborative and communal activities is a common subject of enquiry within the literature. It is expected that the teacher's role will differ from the traditional function of 'knowledge imparter' under the acquisitional model, though of course the teacher will still be differentiated by their subject expertise and, ultimately, their responsibility for awarding grades. In the case of collaboration between students, exploring what space there is for a teacher and how that role might be changing is an important issue (Lund and Smørddal 2006). One relevant factor is how egalitarian any collaboration is set up to be. If, for example, teachers retain sole editing or publishing rights over some elements of the task, then there is more similarity to the traditional model of the teacher having the final say.³⁹ Such power may still be important in 'gate-keeping' situations, however. For example where erroneous information has been created or students are not 'playing by the rules'.

The changing dynamics online collaboration can offer is examined in Bruns' (2008) expansive work on peer production, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond*. Bruns argues that in the context of collaborative authoring, the concept of 'production' is an outdated one (Bruns 2008). He states that individuals who collaborate to build online resources are simultaneously producing and consuming the outputs of themselves and others to perform an iterative process of gradual improvement and mutual benefit. Bruns (Bruns 2007a, 2007b)

³⁹ This is the case in the current Learning Management Systems such as WebCT/Blackboard, where teachers and other staff are privileged users and the majority of the pages are locked to student contributions.

describes this with the portmanteau neologism 'Producersage', stating that in this model, the roles of 'producer', 'consumer' and 'end-user' have become merged.⁴⁰

Enabled by the Internet, social media tools and the concept of 'The Cloud', Producersage refers to the concurrent production and usage of a resource by the same people. That is to say, elements are created by members of a community and these members are also consumers of the greater work, including elements that they may not have had a direct hand in producing. This is of course a manifestation of user-generated content and relates to the characteristics of social media described by others such as Mayfield (2007) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010).

In discussing Producersage and learning, Bruns also resorts to the label of a generational paradigm, in this case "Generation C" (Bruns 2008).⁴¹ This nomenclature stems from the initial letters of the five core traits Bruns sees vital to fostering under his pedagogical approach towards learners in the digital age. That is, students should be:

- **Creative**

This entails not just the 'artistic' type of solo creativity, but rather the successful creation of content within a producersage environment. A talent for *co-creativity* is particularly important here, that is working with others in synergy to produce work that is of genuine value to all in the group and beyond.

- **Collaborative**

Again this is more than the simple idea of working together. It means that collaborators are capable of working in heterarchical structures and in multiple roles within a single project or across several. Recognising when, how and who to

⁴⁰ The producersage concept is not new. In previous decades it has been known by other names, particularly prosumption/prosumerism. This terminology was used by futurists such as Marshall McLuhan (1972), Alvin Toffler (1980) and Don Tapscott (1995). However, these earlier discussions of the concept tended to be linked with marketplaces and economics rather than knowledge management, learning content and media. The legacy of this is that prosumption has now come to mean various things within the business world, covering practices as diverse as community vegetable gardens, professional DIY hobbyists, customisation of electronics products and incorporating high levels of customer feedback into product design. As Bruns is more specifically concerned with the creation of online communities and knowledge management, it is his terminology that will be used here.

⁴¹ Utilising terms like 'generation' is unhelpful when discussing online learning since it renders an age-based dichotomy that is not supported in the bulk of scholarly research. However, since this is Bruns' term it will be used here, albeit with a focus on the attributes of the concept rather than the demographics of the participants.

collaborate with as well as mastering the tools and procedures for doing so are also requirements.

- **Critical**

An effective producer must be able to judge their own work as well as that of others and make objective decisions on where and how best to utilise their collaborative capacity. Importantly for academic pursuits, this capacity also involves being able to evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of information.

- **Combinatory**

Producers must be capable of aggregating diverse pieces of data, artefacts etc. and combine them in relevant ways to produce new understanding or content.

- **Communicative**

Obviously relevant for all human endeavour, in a produsage sense, Communication needs to be made effective in the context of collaboration so that the above four principles can be applied to maximum effect. For example, communication in the perspective of being critical needs to be carried out in a way that is *constructively* critical. Communication concerning collaboration and creative processes needs to be effective and focussed on furthering those aims for the betterment of the community of collaborators as a whole.

Some elements of Bruns' model seem to integrate well within the ideals and graduate attribute statements of Australian universities. For example, the notion that diversity is a positive factor, that 're-thinking' existing knowledge is important and that assessment of sources is a vital process. There is also the potential for produsage projects to be perennial, multi-disciplinary and multi-cohort as the initial effort is expanded by subsequent iterations of the same exercise by the same cohort or by successive ones (Bruns and Humphreys 2005, 2007). Also, a collaborative task might include students from other discipline areas, other universities or indeed from groups outside the university environment. Such flexibility and ability to operate in multi-dynamic situations are deemed desirable for the modern workplace (IBM 2008; Thomas and Nemani 2009) and align with the values espoused in many universities' graduate attribute statements. If the generic skills desired in graduate attributes

statements are not explicitly taught (and do not stem from subject specific knowledge), then the capacity of fostering them through online activities is valuable. This would be particularly so in the IR/Politics discipline where some of these skills are intrinsic to deeper appreciation of the subject.

This idea of a task providing value *beyond* the immediate learning environment and even creating value for those not involved in the exercise can also be a potential benefit of collaborative projects (Shneiderman 1998). Ideals of contributing to the wider community and rendering assistance to subsequent cohorts of students and scholars can be found in graduate attribute statements:

- to contribute to society in a full and meaningful way (University of Sydney);
- mentor future generations of learners (University of Melbourne); and,
- contribution to new knowledge, or an original interpretation and application of existing knowledge (Deakin University).

This concept of providing value for others in teaching and learning has been referred to as “Communal Constructivism” (Holmes et al. 2001) and involves

...an approach to learning in which students not only construct their own knowledge (constructivism) as a result of interacting with their environment (social constructivism), but are also actively engaged in the process of constructing knowledge for their learning community (Holmes et al. 2001: 4).

Whether Communal Constructivism is a discrete pedagogical theory in its own right is open to some debate (Pountney et al. 2002), but regardless of this, its ideals can be facilitated by social media technologies. Hamer (2006) suggests using these tools to place the onus on students to prepare their own material and to share it with others. In this way a more rounded understanding of the topic/subject can be arrived at:

...a student's ability to understand new material depends on their existing knowledge, and hence that two students may come to construct different understandings from the same learning experience. The two conflicting views may not be equally viable, and learners must be challenged to test and justify their understandings and those of others. Shared meanings are thus arrived at through a process of social negotiation rather than individual study (Hamer 2006: 68).

Hamer bases his ideas on the work of Collis (2005), who termed this model “the contributing student” and argued that the current knowledge economy dictated educators moved away from 'know what' models of content transmission and transitioned to more collective and learner-directed experiences that focussed on the more important ideas of 'know why' and 'know who' (Collis 2005). A contributing student, Collis explains, is one that is expected to adopt several new roles, all aimed at making them function more effectively in the 'information age':

Co-creator of learning materials (study resources, quiz questions, model answers, help materials for other students, lecture materials, etc.);

- Responsible selector from a variety of real-world resources;
- Someone who extends, rather than just reads, the textbook and the work of others;
- Someone involved in self- and peer evaluation as an assessed part of the course;
- Someone who designs and builds a product with a use outside of the course.

It should be noted that these ideals are applied examples of the characteristics of Generation C presented by Bruns (2008).

Moving on from such analysis of the paradigm shifts that may be brought about by collaborative e-learning and social media tools, some of the literature discusses the practicalities of deploying such approaches within the higher education context. Lee and Duncan-Howell (2007) question some of the assumptions about e-learning, particularly its efficacy and whether the ambition of fully online learning is achievable, practical or desirable (Lee and Duncan-Howell 2007). Looking at studies from the education and business sectors, they remark upon some of the difficulties of evaluating e-learning programs and the inconsistency in some of the outcomes. This is worth noting, say the authors, since e-learning initiatives are often the subject of significant investment on the part of universities and teachers, so effective scrutiny is reasonable, if only to determine value. Additionally, the scepticism and debate surrounding e-learning also warrants a clearer investigation of this mode.

Like Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin (2006), Lee and Duncan-Howell also discuss the failure of e-learning to live up to the excitement that it generated in the 1990s. They contend that a significant factor in this was the poor differentiation of early e-learning programs from conventional learning. That is to say, that much of the early e-learning material was simply existing material that was placed in a digital medium. Any innovation was limited to the medium of delivery (ie. the Internet) rather than the method, and the particular attributes and strengths of the medium were not particularly well utilised. (see also Hemmi et al. (2009)) This approach might have fused the weaknesses of both media without utilising the fortés of either.

Another related short-coming discussed by Lee and Duncan-Howell is the tendency in e-learning to try and re-create or substitute for face-to-face learning. (This could involve ideas such as bulletin boards or emails substituting for tutorials, the use of recorded or animated 'instructors', slide presentations with embedded audio and alternatives to live assessment such as submitting a 'tutorial paper' rather than leading a class discussion.) This approach does not take into account the isolation and lack of social cues that occur in face-to-face situations, a scenario aptly described by Misanchuk and Anderson (2001) "The instructor can no longer 'look' around the room to see if students are attending to the material, are bored or confused, or are even present." It could be added that the reverse is also true and that online students do not have the chance to register these cues from the teacher or their peers either, and registering their incomprehension of a topic in writing (be it on a public bulletin board or in a private email) might offer a more intimidating barrier than simply wrinkling one's brow in a class to indicate uncertainty.

One of the respondents to this research also pointed out that overcoming the lack of visual cues meant having to pay far more attention to written communication from students and that this could become onerous:

...if I'm in a room, and I speak for five minutes to 10, 20, 30 people, and I have to sit and write that up, the written word is more difficult, you have to get it more precise, and the transcript of this, it's going to be garbage....When you are writing something...it's the same thing as a personal conversation with someone, where you've got to write them a letter, you just need to put more time and effort into it, because you can't see facial expressions, and the smile on someone's face, and when you write it down it comes out very differently (Interviewee A).

If a straight 'translation' of conventional approaches and materials for broadcast in an e-learning environment is not the ideal approach, this opens up the questions of what *will* work. This involves moving on from those simple Web 1.0 models and harnessing the online environment's potential for collaboration and social interchange. Moreover, if both the online approach and the live classroom have their benefits, how can these strengths be combined?

In a review of literature on e-learning approaches, Lee and Duncan-Howell found that a 'blended' or 'mixed mode' approach seemed to offer the best chance of positive outcomes with e-learning. This was because the benefits of online technologies could be combined with the benefits of traditional instruction modes to provide a sum greater than its component parts (Lee and Duncan-Howell 2007). They also described several guidelines and predictions for how best practice e-learning will evolve. Briefly these are:

- **Learning Scenarios Will Be Learner-Centred and Networked**

This entails a more user-determined approach where individual students choose their pace, subject content and course structure based upon their preferences, ability and logistical considerations. This more liberal methodology will be supported by an increased level of cross-institutional networking.

- **Learning Will Be Active**

Students will be actively interacting with each other and their teachers. This implies a move away from straight 'chalk and talk' and passive online reading and instead utilising the strengths of both environments. (Note this could form the basis for incorporating greater amounts of collaborative learning.)

- **Learning Design Will Be More Visual and Interactive**

Again this involves utilising the strengths of the online medium to provide greater support to interactivity. For example, using virtual environments and simulations to add greater realism and dynamism to collaborative exercises.

- **Learning will be more mobile**

This is largely a technology and accessibility issue. The authors discuss the wireless delivery of e-learning content to handheld devices, but it is difficult to see how this

will provide any particular advantage over other forms of online delivery besides some particular scenarios of accessibility.

- **Learning Will Rapidly Change and Evolve**

Again the authors discuss issues relating to technology and access here, though it needs to be understood that innovation and evolution needs to occur in pedagogy too. Teachers and institutions need to keep up with these changes and deal with the frustrations of never reaching an end-point in the innovation cycle (See also Finlayson et. al. (2009)).

Several of these themes were borne out by the Educating the Net Generation project group (2009) in a report aimed at exploring emerging technologies in Australian higher education teaching and learning. Whilst noting that the Digital Generation concept was not supported by the evidence, the group's research found that there were overall benefits and opportunities afforded by the implementation of collaborative approaches, providing it were done with appropriate planning, design and support. Often these benefits were outside any disciplinary focus and pointed to an evolution in learning outcomes:

A clear theme that emerged across all evaluations was that many students recognised or gained unexpected benefits from their exposure to the ideas and experiences of other students that were shared using Web 2.0 technologies. The use of publishing and information sharing tools, such as wikis, blogs and photo sharing sites, positively impacted on many students' engagement with the subject material, their peers and the general learning community (Educating the Net Generation project group 2009: 6).

The range of literature looking at the ramifications of e-learning, and, more pertinently, collaborative e-learning, is broadly supportive of such methods. Benefit is attributed to collaborative online delivery in terms of learning outcomes, particularly unlooked for skills that can develop for application beyond the classroom. There is confidence that online collaboration will lead to a shift in learning dynamics, placing less emphasis on the teacher and more on the self-directed and co-creative efforts of the learners. An overall theme is the slow and inconsistent rate of e-learning deployment in the higher education sector and in particular, its general failure to transition from a Web 1.0 to a Web 2.0 approach. This sluggishness and the reasons for it are explored throughout this thesis.

Specific deployments of collaborative online methods

From the broader analysis of the strategic implications of employing (or not employing) collaborative online approaches it is reasonable to move towards an examination of how such methods function when introduced to a learning environment. As mentioned above, there is value in examining case studies across the range of higher education disciplines, since some generic points raised will be applicable to IR/Politics delivery. Being too proscriptive about the discipline basis of the case studies and insisting on IR/Politics deployments only would also lead to a limitation in the volume of literature available for analysis.

In attempting to realise some of the Generation C ideals presented above, Hamer (2006) used a combination of collaborative methods with two groups of computer science students. His approach included technology based tools (a private wiki and an application called *Aropā*) and human interaction (class meetings, lab sessions). Collaboration and peer assessment were encouraged at all stages, including students posting their solutions to lab exercises on the wiki to compare the methods by which they had solved them. Class meetings, which took the place of lectures, provided a forum for sharing material, with the lecturer acting as chairperson and minutes and results being published to the wiki. Collaborative tasks were also part of the assessment regime. The study authors had anticipated that students would design their own lab exercises to share with their peers, but this proved unfeasible. Students either offered exercises that were too complex or tedious, or else posed exercises that were too simple. This suggests that there is still a need for an experienced teacher to provide a guiding hand in designing the learning tasks and the manner in which they are deployed.

Hamer felt that several advantages of this learning experience were demonstrated. The environment fostered:

- Communication (including skills of explanation, specification and summary);
- Research skills (as opposed to simple note-taking);
- An appreciation of differing perspectives; and,
- Teamwork, altruism and mutual support.

This indicates that Hamer's approach was effective at developing the 'contributing student' skills noted by Collis (2005) and student feedback was generally positive. However, some

students in the study expressed dissatisfaction with the collaborative approach because they felt that the volume of work required of them was very great and only resulted in them creating knowledge that was still inferior in comparison to the teacher's.⁴² Based upon feedback given by the participants in his study, Hamer contends that such concerns about knowledge quality reflected the students' comfort with the acquisitional model of learning and that this type of viewpoint was more common amongst students who had previously performed well in that traditional environment, whilst 'weaker' students had thrived in the collaborative work. This, he suggests, may be corrected by spending more time discussing the pedagogical philosophy behind the collaboration, but at any rate, some element of *acquisition* is still needed alongside the *participation* (see also Hardy and Totman (2012)). Hamer also admits that some of the procedures and scaffolding resulted in an uneven exposure to the course material as students focussed on their own areas of research (such as the pages of the wiki they were responsible for) and paid less attention to topics they were not directly involved in creating.

This latter observation is an important one when considering the use of collaborative online tasks and indicates the danger of universities and teachers focussing on the tool rather than the job. It is a manifestation of a series of larger questions regarding whether the nature of learning and assessment is changed by the use of online collaboration and how different subjects and disciplines may be best adapted for this form of delivery. For example, a collaborative assignment to produce a video clip may lend itself to some group members only focussing on technical tasks such as editing or recording. This may be acceptable if the aim of the subject is to teach those technical skills, but less successful if the intention was to reinforce certain historical knowledge. In a blended learning environment the appropriate steps must therefore be taken to ensure that the broader course content is still being delivered and assimilated.

Such dilemmas are no different to those posed by any approach to course delivery and assessment, be it computer aided, live or 'pen and paper'. The use of a quiz, for example, might place an emphasis on students learning dates, short facts, definitions and so on. This is in contrast to an essay format exam that might encourage more analytical responses but at the same time favour those students with better writing and/or language skills. However even

⁴² This notion of 'value for work' is an important concept in computer-aided collaboration not just for students, but also for staff, who may feel that the perceived effort they would need to expend on developing such tools and exercises would outweigh any perceived advantage gained. See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion.

with essays there would likely be a situation where students needed to focus on a limited number of themes/questions whilst neglecting the rest of the course content. Depth of knowledge is laudable; as long as there is the opportunity for *breadth* as well.

To place this in the IR/Politics context, when studying a complex environment such as a regional political system or organisation, only being fully aware of one element or one 'side' would seem to be a flawed approach. For example, if a student were enrolled in a subject unit covering the regional politics of Southeast Asia but then devoted most of their focus just to Malaysia (because they knew they were going to write an essay on it), their understanding of the 'bigger picture' would be compromised. Hamer's experience with uneven course material exposure is thus worth bearing in mind when designing any e-learning or collaborative approach to the discipline. Nevertheless, the evidence (see Chapter 6) suggests that significant benefits in terms of wider understanding can accrue from well-designed collaborative exercises in IR/Politics teaching.

It is the contention of this thesis that students of IR/Politics can particularly benefit from a more holistic approach to the subject due to the broad and interconnected nature of the subject. Additionally, well constructed collaborative exercises can encourage a breadth of learning as well as a depth. As a discipline concerned with ideas such as communication, diplomacy, international systems, human behaviour and rationality, encouraging undergraduate students to develop broad understandings is more desirable than focussing too much on a set of factual data or specific 'mechanical' components of political systems, where such knowledge may quickly become dated. Finally, collaborative online tasks can aid in the development of those more generic skills espoused in graduate attributes statements.

As Hamer noted, different learning styles can affect students' comfort with collaborative exercises. However, the potential to save one cohort's work and make it available to subsequent students can help remedy this by providing examples of different approaches. Fountain (2007) found that being able to see the various methods of their predecessors in the same wiki task offered benefit to subsequent groups. This serendipitous realisation was made when teaching a cohort of undergraduate education students a course on technology, which in previous years had involved the use of private wikis to build a knowledge base on technology topics. As Fountain discovered, the differing versions of description and explanation that each annual group had provided were appreciated differently by her current students when read comparatively. What one group of students found 'good', another didn't, and *vice versa*.

For example, some students liked explanations with lots of graphics, others preferred abstract explanations. Fountain concluded that

the WikiWork being done in the course (over semesters) - wherein multiple elaborations of any given concept are allowed – held an unexpected potential with respect to enhancing the conceptual comprehension of students with differing cognitive styles (Fountain 2007: 45).

Similarly, in the *Middle East Politics Simulation* (MEPS), an online role-play with a long history in Australia (Alexander 2006; Dracup 2009; Hardy and Totman 2011, 2011b, 2012, 2013; Vincent and Shepherd 1998; Wills et al. 2010), current students can view some of the work of preceding cohorts, most particularly the role profiles of their characters. This provides a database and demonstrates the different ways that something like a biography can be presented, allowing novices an entry point into the wider task.

It would seem reasonable to extrapolate therefore that a collaborative approach can offer the flexibility to provide for the differing learning habits and preferences of students, provided the task is elastic enough to allow for some exploration of style and form by the group. This point is fundamental to exploring how online collaboration can be implemented in learning environments, since if teachers can aid in imparting subject knowledge in a flexible manner that adapts to individual styles, the learning becomes much more inclusive.

Hardy and Totman (2012) note that this flexibility does not need to remain constant during the duration of a collaborative exercise. They argue that teachers might be 'authoritarian' and 'didactic' at the start of a task, when explanations and directions are necessary, in order that students may learn how to navigate the online space and participate in the shared learning; in effect, being taught the 'rules'. The teachers may then move to facilitating and guiding roles as students become more comfortable and adept, or as learning goals shift with the task's progression. Lund and Smørðal (2006) contend that where all elements of the collaborative platform are open, it is still possible for the teacher to guide and facilitate the learning process through the following functions:

Using discussion functions/pages to ask questions, provoke responses, suggest direction and means of improvement.

Using any log function (such as the history pages on a wiki) to assess student contributions, either as part of the marking process or as a means of understanding who might need further guidance.

- Directing attention to work that needs to be done.
- Designing and scaffolding the project(s).
- Interlinking collaborative and non-collaborative course content (Lund and Smørdal 2006).

The need to make ongoing adjustments to the teacher's role may though be perceived as a barrier to implementation by those teaching staff more content to continue with traditional practices. As discussed below in Chapter 3 the perceptions of how easy something will be to use is a significant factor in decisions around technology adoption and academics have their own particular decision-making processes. It is the argument of this thesis that certain types of online collaboration, such as role play, can work to address these perceptions.

Comfort, equality and student perceptions of their place in learning were explored by Raitman et al. (2005), who used an open-source wiki platform for facilitating a wholly online unit. Student experiences with the wiki were then compared with their experiences of using their university's WebCT system in other units in an attempt to see if the wiki offered advantages. Some of their students mentioned the wiki tool as non-confrontational or non-intimidating, providing a sense of democracy and equality in the collaboration. In contrast to this, Weaver and McIntosh (2009) found that this comfort and fluidity was not necessarily collaborative in nature, with students working on their own individual elements of the collaborative task (also a wiki) and then *aggregating* their individual pages together at the end. This resulted in a collection of individual work rather than a more cohesive output. This was also observed by Lin and Kelsey (2008) and Forte and Bruckman (2006), though the latter noted truer collaboration tended to emerge as time went on. Such findings would be consistent with non-online group learning tasks.

Hughes and Naryan (2009) reported in their survey of students undertaking a wiki-based project that whilst collaboration occurred, the communal evaluation and fluidity of hierarchy were not particularly apparent as evidenced by the relatively small incidence of peer editing that occurred. Again, this made for a final output based on aggregating individual chunks of work, though the number of students involved in the trials (2 x N=10) would seem low in

regard to the minimum 'critical mass' for something like a wiki to succeed as a content community. Nevertheless, when considering an online collaborative task, it is important to bear in mind factors such as the numbers of students involved, the workload and the time available. With limited participants, a wiki may not be a wise choice because of its dependence on a 'many hands' approach; i.e. if these hands are not then available, the writing and reviewing functions together may prove too high a workload. In such a case of limited numbers, a task such as a small role play or team debate may be more suitable.

In a detailed analysis Arnold et al (2009) found a link between individual personalities and the overall success of a collaborative project. In their wiki exercise they observed that leadership within the group quickly became rigid rather than fluid and that once this 'pecking order' had been asserted, more submissive members tended to contribute less. This is a contradictory 'group dynamic' result from the egalitarian ideals expressed by the proponents of collaborative learning. It should also be noted that submissiveness could also be a masquerade for 'laziness' or low commitment, and this incorporates the range of 'social loafing' behaviours that are a pitfall of group tasks (Aggarwal and O'Brien 2008).

A more positive outcome was reported by Frydenberg (2008), whose students found little trouble in adapting to the democratic model. In this case though, they were using a collaborative online space as a course management and knowledge base, rather than as an assessment tool. Students used this communal tool to “contribute to the course – by signing up for projects, posting collaborative questions and notes, or other items of interest for the class” (Frydenberg 2008: 175). This provides an example of many of the virtues of collaboration or Bruns' Producers model, and Frydenberg's students mostly responded positively towards the system and found it beneficial for the manner in which it enabled their participation in the course and wider peer community. However, questions of goals, compulsion and assessment are raised in any contrast of this study with others.

Perhaps the most detailed and long-running description of using a collaborative Social Media platform in an Australian context comes from Bruns and Humphreys (2005, 2007). They describe their experiences with using an internal wiki to teach an undergraduate unit on digital media at The Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Groups of students were required to create encyclopaedic articles on a relevant media topic of their choice. A wiki interface was used both to provide a collaborative group workspace, a tutorial interface and to act as a display of the 'finished product'. An internal wiki was chosen for this project so as to

offer a space protected from external interference. However, once the assessment was over, the students' efforts were made publicly available (though not editable).

Bruns and Humphreys learned several things over the course of two years of using this wiki-based assessment approach. Broadly they found:

- Technological literacy/confidence of teachers is an important variable in this sort of assessment model (see also Forte and Bruckman (2007)).
- The process of learning the software can hinder the process of learning/exploring the collaborative environment (see also Bower et al. (2006) and Samarawickrema et al. (2008)).
- The ability to facilitate and collaborate is just as important for teachers as it is for students (see also Forte and Bruckman (2007), Ioannou and Artino (2008), Samarawickrema (2008)).
- Wiki software can allow a much clearer method of tracking individual student contributions within a group (both volume and timing/consistency) (Bower et al. 2006).
- Students are often reluctant to critique/edit/amend the work of their peers (Foley and Chang 2008; Lund and Smørddal 2006).
- Students became much more aware of their writing style when realising that their work would be displayed to their peers and the public (Bower et al. 2006; Forte and Bruckman 2006; Hamer 2006; S. Wheeler and Wheeler 2007).

As noted in each point above, the findings of Bruns and Humphreys have parallels in the experiences of other educators running similar projects.

Outside of the assessment tasks, Bruns and Humphreys also used a wiki interface to facilitate tutorials and lectures. For tutorials, each week, wiki pages were set up to outline the discussion topics and gather input (comments, questions, external links) from the class. It was found that this was an effective method of involving those students who tended to be less vocal in class.

In contrast, Bruns and Humphreys' experience with wiki-based lectures was not so positive. Lecture notes were posted on the wiki shortly before the lecture. During the lecture, students were invited to add and contribute to the wiki using their laptops in an attempt to give immediate feedback on the topics and to enable demonstration of lecture content that was a point of reference for the students' assignments. Above all this was the idea of repositioning the lecturer so that he/she became, like the students, just a contributor to the overall collaborative process and a facilitator of learning as directed by the audience.

The problems that were encountered with this approach included:

- Students found the wiki lecture notes of little visual appeal
- Students stopped coming to lectures because the 'finished' lecture notes were then available in their entirety on the subject's wiki anyway.
- Few students participated in adding live content
- Few students brought their laptops to lectures in the first place.
- The addition of live content was just as disruptive to lecture flow as oral questions would have been.

Together these points equate to a low 'return on investment' given the time and input required, as well as providing an example that a blended approach is called for.

Student feedback on their experiences in the units described by Bruns and Humphreys was mixed. Whilst some appreciated the chance to be assessed on their actual contribution to the group, some perceived the assignments as too repetitive. However they report that most students apparently understood the rationale behind using the approach and the generic benefits in terms of developing skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

The conclusion for Bruns and Humphreys (2007: 8) was therefore that “Wikis are no catch-all solution to the problems encountered in the modern teaching environment.” What was suitable in a small collaborative group where all had access to a networked computer was not so suitable in a large presentation mode. Their experiences pointed towards the need for further experimentation in the form of more flexible delivery of lecture content via a suite of

new media technologies. Certainly they felt that wikis have a place in teaching and that they can make an important contribution to the learning experience.

The problematic implementation of collaborative style lectures in that case may also point towards a preference amongst students for some aspects of the traditional teaching role. There may be the viewpoint that the lecturer is the 'expert' and the learners have no authoritative input to make, or that such input is disruptive. Such a rationalisation can also occur in the practice of tutorial presentations by students, with some members of the class placing more trust in what the tutor says than the assertions of their peers. In an online format it may also occur on discussion boards or other informal collaborations, where students feel they lack sufficient authority or subject knowledge to contribute to discussions (Finlayson et al. 2009).

In Raitman, Augar and Zhou (2005) the vast majority (90%) of students reported a positive experience of working in the wiki environment, though 70% felt that online collaboration was no substitute for face-to-face interaction. However this is a curious response given that the study was conducted on students participating in a unit that was to be wholly delivered online in any case. That is to say, the collaborative platform was *not* being used as a substitute for face-to-face delivery. This could then be interpreted as a criticism of wholly online learning in general, as opposed to using blended approaches.

Overall, the advantages of the wiki that were noted by students in this work were:

- Convenience of access;
- Non-confrontational or intimidating; a sense of democracy and equality;
- The ability to view the work of one's peers;
- The record of individual contribution; and,
- Fast and easy download of material;

The disadvantages noted were:

- A lack of dialogue or discussion, with 'collaboration' often being no more than non-consultative page edits;

- A simplistic HTML interface that was not visually appealing; and,
- Some issues with the actual wiki software used (no notification of changes, unintuitive login, potential for simultaneous editing conflicts).

Major concerns that students expressed revolved around the fear of having their work vandalised and losing their work due to a simultaneous edit of the same page. In fact, neither of these things actually occurred during the course of the unit. But as the authors noted “The FEAR of losing work or having to duplicate their input was enough to dissuade them from believing the wiki environment was fiercely reliable” (Raitman et al. 2005). This perception has implications for teachers and universities considering online collaborative tasks. In essence it is a distrust of the technology and indicates the need for thorough explanation and preparation when deploying such approaches, particularly in assuaging some common fears.

Raitman, Augar and Zhou (2005) also surveyed students as to their wiki experience compared with that of using Deakin Studies Online (DSO), the university's standard WebCT environment. The themes of work protection and familiarity were prevalent. The non-editable nature of DSO made students feel more secure about their contributions. In addition, students often felt more comfortable operating in DSO simply because that was what they had done before; there was no need to learn new software or protocols. Overall though, students liked the idea of the wiki and recognised some of its advantages. Further refinements of wikis suggested by the authors include:

- Design the interface of the wiki to resemble the unit or university style
 - Allow outright deletion only of one's own work to increase the feeling of security about one's contributions
 - Make new text or page insertions visible upon login
 - Add facility for real time communication
 - Provide more documentation about HTML applications available within the wiki
- Raitman, Augar and Zhou (2005).

The scaffolding and design of the collaborative task is important according to the findings of Elgort (2007) because prior experiences and attitudes towards a technology can affect student experience. Elgort recommends that if considering an online collaborative task teachers

should make certain that this is an appropriate tool for the purpose, as well as how it is constructed, what the marking criteria are, what instruction is needed and what the expected outcomes are. (For example, in a wiki, indicating whether technical criteria such as navigability will be assessed.) Such advice is relevant to any assessment task, on- or off-line. In the study, Elgort found that referring to the final product as a “user guide” provided a different approach to the structure and content of one group's wiki, compared to the “report” or “knowledge base” that another group was asked to prepare, even though the component tasks of the two assignments were very similar operations of collaborative research gathering and consolidation.

Leadership from within and without the group was a key concern for participants in a *Wikis in Higher Education* workshop carried out by teaching staff from Deakin and Monash Universities (Samarawickrema et al. 2008). Two teams undertook a wiki building task similar to the sort of exercise that might be required of students within a subject unit. The convenors of the study intended their role to be mainly observational or as facilitators in workshop discussion. Guidance for participants was intended mainly to come from a website established for the purpose. However, it transpired that the convenors had to take much more active roles in motivating and assisting the groups.

The researchers found that both groups expressed the need for greater guidelines on teamwork and leadership. They found the self-directed approach much more time consuming than they had expected, that they had wasted too much time getting started and vacillated on defining a group strategy for the task. The study's convenors became concerned about losing the balance between assisting the participants and directing the outcomes too much. Some participants felt that a leader of each team should have been appointed, though the convenors opposed this because it defeated the ideal of an egalitarian collaborative environment and the negotiation of roles as part of the task.

The numbers of participants in this study by Samarawickrema et al. (2008) was however quite low (n=13), and participation was voluntary. Again this may point to a certain minimum number of participants that make for a viable collaborative community in a wiki exercise. Additionally, as the task was run over a period of several days, progress was often erratic as team members dealt with their ordinary employment tasks.

The results generated by this small study contrast with earlier findings by some of the same co-authors regarding another wiki project with a much larger (n=167) group of undergraduate

medical students (Brack et al. 2007). In this case, participation was compulsory and the student teams required far less intervention from the teachers, both technically and in terms of group facilitation. In the case of the students, the team sizes (n=12) were almost equivalent to the entire numbers of participants in the study by Samarawickrema et al. (2008), where the 13 members were further split into two teams of six and seven respectively. These outcomes suggest two areas for consideration:

- Compulsion or at the least, measureable incentive to the participants is important in the framing of the task.
- Cohort and team sizes are important and there may be a 'critical mass' for satisfactory progress in a collaborative project.

Some literature concerned with evaluating student experiences of collaborative online projects has included examination of the technical aspects of using these tools. The conclusions in this regard tend to follow that of the research above: that the majority of students find the tools to be less of a technical challenge than expected. Elgort et al (2008) found that in two class groups studied there were positive attitudes towards the technical challenges posed by the wiki software they used, with 70% and 88% of students respectively finding the Wiki software they were given “easy to use”. Bower et al (2006) trialled two different wiki platforms with students and found no significant difference between the two in terms of “ease of use”. Students in this study were deliberately provided with a “minimalist” level of training in order to establish how easy it would be for them to progress and therefore act as a type of control group. The students found the wiki software easy to learn, however it should be noted that the students were undertaking a post-graduate IT qualification and could therefore be assumed to be stronger in their technical skills levels than under-graduates in a non-IT discipline area.

Hardy and Totman (2011) found that students appreciated the simple user interface within their diplomatic simulation environment. The replication of familiar online tools (in this case email) made for an uncomplicated entry into the task and meant that the learning focus could be on the dynamics of the social and political interaction rather than the technology. Their conclusion is that the tools should not occlude the task.

Questions of perceived audience and the effect upon students' writing skills were explored by Forte and Bruckman (2006) with an undergraduate class studying American public policy topics. The students elected to participate voluntarily in a wiki project and were informed that the essays they would produce through this means would be used as a new online resource for their peers. The wiki platform was used as a means of choosing issues to write about, share resources, critique each others' work and then publish the final papers.

The editing record in this project showed that major updates to content followed patterns similar to what might be expected in any other type of assignment: most of the activity occurred at 'the last minute'. However, smaller contributions were spread throughout the task's duration. (Whether this sort of behaviour in a collaborative exercise is considered a negative or not would be determined by the teacher, the intended outcomes and the structure of the task.) Forte and Bruckman found that their most meaningful data came from interviewing some of the participants (n=12) about their experiences with the project. This lead to the following observations:

- **Online interactions helped improve student writing.**

Peer feedback assisted students with framing their essay questions, honing definitions, considering bias in their sources and reflecting on the world views of others.

- **Naïveté regarding public readership.**

Some students remained unaware (or unconvinced) of the public nature (i.e. outside of their cohort) of the project, despite repeated reminders and the specific consent that was sought from them. Whilst this may have reflected some technical naïveté on the part of some students, for others it was a function of their self-doubt. “Some interviewees suggested that their work was not important enough to attract readers. When asked to comment on the potential audience for their papers, many students' comments suggested that they didn't believe their writing was of sufficient quality or interest to serve as a resource for someone else.”⁴³

⁴³ The implications for this train of thought when considering collaborative public writing as a task are obvious: If students have so little regard for the value of their work, how will they perceive the value of the exercise overall?

- **Perceived audience has a role in revision.**

Some students felt that they reviewed their writing to take into account the diverse world views of their peers (as opposed to the single view of their teacher). This was facilitated by having been able to read the comments and efforts of their peers, helping to invoke an audience to guide revisions and/or produce a mental goal of wanting this audience to read all the way through a paper, rather than rejecting it outright from the first few sentences.

One of the technical aspects to come out of this study was the need to organise the output into an effective structure, since this project generated over 700 unique web pages. The authors suggest that from the outset of this type of collaboration a standardised format and hierarchy of information needs to be implemented.

The successful use of a collaborative exercise for promoting quality academic writing was examined by Wheeler and Wheeler (2007) with a small (n=35) cohort of under- and post-graduate education students. This study is vague on details as to how the collaboration worked, saying merely that the students “used Wikis as an integral part of their studies for one complete term.” The paper seems to infer that the general public could also view some elements of the wiki.⁴⁴ Feedback was then gathered from participants and the following broad observations were made:

- **Students felt that their academic writing was improved.**

The potential for a 'hidden' audience to read their work made students keenly aware of the need to write more articulately and pay much greater attention to referencing, spelling and grammar.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ A later paper involving the authors provided some further details, saying that the students “used the wikis regularly during their classroom sessions as a place to store and edit the work from their research exercises, and as a forum for discussion”. S. Wheeler, P. Yeomans, and D. Wheeler, 'The Good, the Bad and the Wiki: Evaluating Student-Generated Content for Collaborative Learning', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39/6 (2008), 987-95.

⁴⁵ The absence of a spell check function in the Wiki used within this study was of particular anguish to students who had grown to depend on the automatic (yet fallible) spell checking functions of commercial word processing software. Nevertheless the study infers the curious observation that students are less worried about turning in inaccurate writing directly to their teacher!

- **Students felt their organisation improved.**

Some participants observed that the structural process of organising a wiki helped them to reduce confusion about the topic as a whole and break information into more discrete 'chunks'.

- **Personal opinion was restricted or modified.**

To avoid conflict some students felt that they moderated their opinions or reduced the amount of personal opinion they offered. (The role of strong (and/or unsupported) personal opinion in academic writing could of course indicate this as a positive outcome.)

- **Some degree of 'impression management' occurred.**

Students were aware of a possible external audience and this contributed to them offering a more refined end product that was attributable to them. This occurred less within the discussion pages which were protected from public view.

- **A healthy critical attitude was developed**

Many of the participants learnt to provide effective criticism of the information that was being posted in the wiki.

Interestingly no observation is made by the authors regarding greater content knowledge or deeper learning. However the overall premise of the exercise appeared to be centred on improvement of academic writing skills, and this is noted as the primary outcome. Such outcomes align well with some of the typical graduate attributes statements mentioned in Chapter 1. This potential for online collaboration to support the development of post-university 'meta' skills will appear as a theme throughout this thesis.

An exercise with a different intended outcome is reported by Augar, Raitman and Zhou (2004). They used a wiki platform as an 'ice breaker' exercise to assist undergraduate students in getting to know each other at the start of the semester and to “model appropriate wiki usage and social presence” (Augar et al. 2004). Groups of approximately 10 students (total n=451) used a wiki page to collaborate in answering innocuous questions aimed at boosting their knowledge of each other. (For example, “Find someone in the group who speaks a language other than English.”) Tutors also completed this task by way of providing a

demonstration. The minimum aim was that each question would have at least one group member's name under it at the conclusion of the two week exercise. Each student also had their own user page where they could add additional information about themselves, including photos if they so chose.

The results exceeded the minimum aims. Besides the answers to the icebreaker questions, 68% of participants added material to their user pages, including links, pictures of themselves, their pets and so forth. Cultural background was also a popular disclosure. There was no misuse of the wiki (i.e. vandalism or intentional deletion) throughout the duration of the exercise. The researchers felt that the wiki had been a successful exercise, helping to not only introduce students to one another, but also to demonstrate the uses of wikis in disseminating information and facilitating collaboration. These outcomes indicate that a Web 2.0 tool can be used not just as a vehicle for imparting subject knowledge, but as a means of building generic communication and collaboration skills; perhaps as a precursor to further collaborative work.

Aside from wikis, some case studies present examples of collaborative writing in the style of online blogs/journals. Rourke and Coleman (2009) describe a blogging tool where their students wrote reflections regarding their internships in the arts industry. Prior to this format, assessment had consisted of a 1,000 word report submitted directly to the teacher by each student. However, the convenors felt that the sharing of work experiences between the entire cohort would be beneficial to all. "The purpose of the digital diary was to foster collaboration between students as well as between students and academics and to create a supportive collegial TeLT (Technology Enabled Learning & Teaching) environment" (Rourke and Coleman 2009: 892). There was also an intention of developing skills that would be of use beyond university: "It also seemed to be a particularly relevant authentic assessment task for students to undertake who were training to enter the arts industry where writing, critiquing and reflection were prevalent critical thinking skills that needed fostering" (ibid.). They chose a free online service (i.e. external to the university) to host the blogs and at the outset students were involved in the design of the exercise, being required to collaboratively establish rules of etiquette for their online interaction.

Over the course of the exercise students were required to present their own internship experiences and use the blog software's commenting features to discuss and support the reflections of their peers. This was not an assessment task, as the objective of the teachers

was to foster communication and encouragement amongst the students. As the exercise progressed, students became immersed in the collegiality of the experience and showed development in their writing skills, particularly their ability to tailor a message towards an audience (Rourke and Coleman 2009). The teachers felt that the collaborative writing task was highly beneficial and "(the students) have gained a sense of ownership of the learning space and become both collaborative as well as self-directed in their learning" (ibid. 896).

It is worth noting that in Rourke and Coleman's blogging exercise the cohort was small (n=44) and consisted of post-graduate coursework students at the culmination of their studies. A higher level of maturity and motivation might therefore be expected of the participants. In contrast, Farmer et al. (2008) launched a similar exercise on a cohort of >200 first year students enrolled in a cultural studies unit. The aim of the exercise was to reflect on the course content and comment upon the reflections of others. The exercise was assessed and some guidelines were provided in terms of minimum expectations.

In this case the inexperience and lower confidence of the students was more manifest than with Rourke and Coleman's exercise. There were some technical difficulties at the start of the semester with the software, which was designed within the university.⁴⁶ This prevented staff familiarisation with the tool prior to the teaching period, meaning that teachers were as inexperienced as the students with the new software.⁴⁷ Some students also felt that the scaffolding of the exercise was too vague and wanted more explicit directives on what to write or models of 'ideal' posts. Uncertainty about the aims and benefits of such an exercise were also expressed:

More guidance on the pedagogical aims of blogging would possibly have helped make the exercise more user friendly and critically transformative. More explicit guidelines about what constitutes 'self reflexivity' would have furthered the students' expectations on how to reflect on their daily activities in a concise and analytical manner. This would have reinforced the students' sense of themselves as articulate and analytical

⁴⁶ The challenge of in-house software development and support is a potential barrier to deployment of collaborative online tools that is mentioned by more than one respondent in the interviews gathered for this thesis. In an environment of constrained resources, it may be difficult for Australian universities to provide support for too many 'custom' projects that exist outside of the official LMS platform. Coupled with the common compulsion that a subject unit must have an LMS presence, this creates a 'feedback loop', where universities and teachers tend to focus only on those 'endorsed' technologies (Kennedy et al. 2011).

⁴⁷ As noted previously, student perceptions of teachers' competence with technology can have a large impact on the students' opinion of the exercise (Kvavik and Caruso (2005)).

commentators on society by supporting and modelling appropriate blogging techniques (Farmer et al. 2008: 130-31).

Such a conclusion is not necessarily logical. Student desires for models of ideal responses could also reflect a preference for 'spoon-feeding' or receiving a guideline as to the minimum required output. Nor does it follow that all students would have been made articulate and analytical by hearing some pedagogical rationale of the exercise.

However, survey feedback gathered from a portion of the cohort (n=56) indicated that students had reacted in a largely positive manner to the blogging task. Many of the respondents indicated an awareness of improvements in writing, knowledge organisation and social connectedness to their peers. An ironic note was provided by one student, who could not reconcile learning with enjoyment: "It didn't turn out to be that educational though... more of a fun way to discuss the subject" (ibid. 132). Such an attitude is perhaps indicative of the confusion between knowledge (fact) acquisition and broader engagement with the subject.

The authors conclude with several recommendations, including providing adequate training and technical support and building early feedback into the exercise. The latter helps explain the value of the task and aids in the development of self- and peer-assessment skills against some benchmarks.

The two examples of collaborative blogging provided thus far are not dissimilar to a discussion board situation where an individual creates a 'topic' and other users comment upon it. That is to say, the original (individual) creator of the work has a differing degree of ownership to those who comment upon it. A more truly collaborative blogging exercise is described by Philip and Nicholls (2009). In this case the blogs themselves were created as group pieces and comprised reflections and analysis of the process behind the creation of another group product: a piece of theatre. Since the task of developing a performance piece already required a high level of motivation and collaborative creativity, the group blog was expected to complement this dynamic. A free external blog site was chosen to host the exercise.

As with Rourke and Coleman (2009), for Philip and Nicholls the communal blog was designed to replace a previously 'private' journal exercise that was only seen by the individual and their teacher. An anticipated outcome of the new format was a reduction in the teacher workload required from marking multiple individual blogs.

Whilst noting similar benefits in skills and engagement to the case studies above, an unforeseen benefit of the exercise was that the blog became an effective tool for preparation and asynchronous collaboration:

Within weeks, students were using class time more effectively for improvisation and rehearsal because of the preparation that had occurred between classes via the blogs. For example, much of the collaborative building of scripts was documented on the blogs. Evidence from the data indicates that the blogs kept students on task, as they set themselves achievable goals each week and reflected on progress and issues. The assessment requirements ensured that each group member had a regular 'presence' and opportunity to contribute. It was also an invaluable forum for normally time-consuming 'housekeeping' issues (Philip and Nicholls 2009: 690).

Again similar to Rourke and Coleman (2009), the authors conclude that the exercise had significant relevance to post-university skill development and provided a deeper and more analytical means of reflection and collaboration than individual work. Student engagement was high and the feedback positive. The visible nature of the work also meant that students were conscious of the need to contribute to the group's outcomes.

Aside from writing-centric tasks there are a number of case studies that deal with more visually immersive online environments such as Virtual Worlds. Creating bespoke 3D environments for students represents the most time-consuming and potentially costly manifestation of online collaboration and is most likely beyond the talents and experience of all but a small percentage of innovators in the higher education system. For this reason they will not be explored to any great depth within this research. However, their relationship to online role play playing and interaction in Virtual Worlds is noted, and accordingly some comment is appropriate at this stage. In any case, the complexity and technical challenges involved in developing Virtual Worlds offers an example of the perceived and actual challenges that are attached to any attempt to innovate in e-learning delivery. (See Chapter 5.)

Ellison and Matthews (2010) describe their use of the Second Life platform to simulate the importance of social networking in Georgian-era London. "The purpose of our study was to demonstrate the rhetorical and practical enthusiasm about social networking three hundred years ago, long before iPhones and Blackberries, to emphasise the extent to which such communication has always been central in idea and text production, and to give students a context and set of guided assignments through which to put their own social networking skills

to use to investigate history and improve their research and writing skills" (Ellison and Matthews 2010: 306). The scope and technical complexity of this project is far greater than most of those so far presented in this review. Students were required to

...reconstruct in 3D a physical space in eighteenth-century London with at least 10 social, interactive elements and as much historical authenticity and detail as possible... The first stage of the project, 'Make Yourself at Home', required that students identify the space they would research, such as a coffee shop, chocolate house, garden, domestic residence or setting from one of the fictional works we read during the semester, and write a project proposal that explained their goals and objectives, summarised the available scholarly and popular sources about that space, projected their timeline, and outlined the visual design plan for the space.... They were also required to use social networking tools, like email, chat rooms, Instant Messaging (IMing) and texting to gather information from nonprint sources, like experts or other scholars....In the second stage, students used the building and scripting skills we learned during class to construct their site. They embedded interactive elements such as objects that, when touched or passed, gave visitors informative notecards, objects, landmarks or links to articles. During the final week of class, each student hosted an 'open house' or party that all classmates attended; the student planned and scripted a tour of the space, answered visitor questions, and gathered peer feedback. The final and perhaps most pedagogically important stage was the reflective self-evaluative essay that students wrote about their experiences researching, building and sharing the space (ibid. 300-301).

The connected and consecutive nature of the tasks is an example of an attempt to build skills beyond the subject-specific knowledge of Georgian life. The convenors held the belief that rather than harnessing the research potential afforded by the Internet, students were limiting themselves with it, relying on Google searches to find facts that confirmed their pre-conceptions and not bothering to search other sources, refine their ideas or engage in any interaction with another human being who might hold knowledge not available in an online format. The assumption that the answer to every question must be there to read on the Internet had resulted in the abandonment of other valuable knowledge seeking methods. For the authors, the irony in this case was the value placed upon *personal interaction* and knowledge exchange that was the basis for the Georgian Enlightenment.

According to the authors it was this developing consciousness of research methods and human sources that was the most valuable outcome of the project. In exploring the topic and completing their tasks, students were pushed towards taking charge of their own research in an immersive environment. In some cases this was because the limits of the Web 1.0 model were reached due to the esoteric nature of the information sought:

(A student) built a dress shop for which she conducted extensive research on the period's fashion. What she thought (or hoped) would simply be some reading about dress styles became a revealing study of class, women's roles in their communities, contemporary philosophies of embodiment, and about how dress shops functioned as social spaces for female intellectual activity. When she encountered questions she could not find answers for, such as whether a particular fabric would have been available to Londoners at that time, she emailed costume designers she found on theatrical websites, all of whom answered her questions enthusiastically. When she was not sure how a wig was anchored, she found the Facebook page of a modern wigmaker who cheerfully helped her (ibid. 302).

This is an inspiring example of the transition from passive to active engagement with the topic. The student's use of World Wide Web has moved from merely searching for material to read and on to searching for people to interact with. This student has not only directed her own learning, but been required to communicate with others outside the university, established contacts and relationships, and then assimilated the knowledge gained into her own online space for the perusal of her peers. Once again, these skills of communication and collaboration and their utility beyond the university are in evidence.

Of note in this case study is the resistance that male students had to the project, with several considering the virtual world to be un-academic. The authors speculate that this may be because of their prior experiences with video games for entertainment. However most of these students became enthusiastic participants, though still expressing incredulity that they had learnt so much from such an approach.

A snapshot of Virtual World usage in Australian and New Zealand universities is provided by the DEHub Virtual Worlds Working Group (B. Gregory et al. 2011). In a review of case studies (though not all can necessarily be deemed as collaborative) , the report notes some of the challenges and benefits of using such tools in teaching and learning. Difficulties include the high transactional cost in creating 3D environments, including the need for a high

bandwidth connection and technical training and support, as well as the incompatibility (technical and policy-wise) that external software can have with university environments. The advantages noted concur with much of the literature already presented on collaborative tasks, including student engagement, depth of learning, increased benefit for off-campus students and improved research and communication skills.

The findings in this large study serve to further strengthen the general conclusions of the literature presented throughout this chapter. Whether discussed from a theoretical or applied perspective, it appears that collaborative online approaches have the potential to deliver enormous benefits in learning outcomes and the personal development of students. These outcomes are favourable in terms of subject knowledge and study skills, and also meet the growing aspirations of graduate attribute statements, quality assurance mechanisms and the institutional push towards greater deployment of learning techniques.

With such strong evidence for online collaboration, the question then arises as to what extent this approach is currently being utilised in Australian universities?

Chapter 3: The slow and erratic pace of e-learning advancement

Despite all the drivers towards incorporating e-learning into Australian higher education and the strong evidential basis for the benefits of collaborative online learning, the adoption of such technologies and methods has been slow and inconsistent across universities and disciplines. As recently as 2007, only four Australian universities reported having a discrete e-learning plan (Inglis 2007). Whilst at the time a further nine universities had an e-learning strategy under development, the majority had incorporated their e-learning policy into a more generic document, either a master plan or an overall teaching and learning plan (Inglis 2007). There was a wide variation in the detail of the strategies, and those expressed in more general documents tended to be more perfunctory (Inglis 2007). Surprisingly, seven universities reported that they had no documented e-learning strategy at all.

Given that across the country there was such unclear direction from university leadership on e-learning, it is unsurprising that teaching staff would vary widely in their own approaches and engagement. Describing the experience of the University of Wollongong, Wills and Bowles (2009) relate what would likely be a common scenario:

Without these (concrete e-learning plans), the UOW eLearning experience had tended to develop more organically, driven by environmental factors such as the growth of staff expertise; the transformation of students' skills in online environments; global changes in eLearning systems, including those driven by corporate eLearning vendors; and other extrinsic pressures including changes to the nature of academic (and student) workloads. Communication even among early adopters and enthusiasts was sporadic, and planning for appropriate staff development was often tactical and responsive to particular circumstances, rather than oriented towards defined institutional goals. Crafting a strategic vision in such a volatile climate, while enabling the university to pursue its core teaching operations without interruption, presented a challenge at the level of workflow, to say the least (Wills and Bowles 2009: 3).

Throughout this thesis it will be shown that such individualist approaches tend to dominate. Even where firmer direction might exist, there is often a significant misalignment between

the strategic directives of universities and what is actually carried out by teachers. The reasons for the gap lie partly with the institutions and partly with their teaching staff. In exploring how this plays out amongst teachers, an initial exploration of the history and current status of e-learning innovation is warranted. The general lassitude exhibited towards e-learning in Australian universities is a product of this journey and the data presented in Chapter 4 testament to this.

The stalled e-learning evolution

As presented in Chapter 2, the pace of innovation within educational contexts has been slow and this has hampered the ability of e-learning approaches to live up to the expectations with which they were greeted in the early-mid 1990s (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2006; Tapscott and Williams 2010; Zemsky and Massy 2004b). Australian patterns of e-learning innovation and deployment have tended to follow the trend of other OECD countries (Inglis 2007; OECD 2005), so it is relevant to include some observations from literature discussing the history of e-learning implementation. Understanding the processes of how technology based teaching innovation is implemented is important to this thesis, since without adoption, the best tool remains unused.

The cycle of innovation and adoption of e-learning is explored by Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin (2006), who point out that the education sector was often ahead of the business sector in implementing online programs, sometimes on the back of radical and visionary prophecies of a fundamental revolution in the way that learning would be conducted. "Fully online learning and the shift from physical to virtual campuses was seen as a probable future for tertiary education in the medium term" (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2006: 153). They note, however, that this excitement often produced more announcements than actual deliveries.

Around the developed world universities became quickly involved with e-learning for a variety of reasons (Curran 2004). Sometimes the drivers may have been economic: a hope of establishing a brand name as leaders in the e-learning stakes, an edge on their competitors, or at least as a means of heading off any general competitive threat in the expected re-shaping of the education market (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2006). Also being considered were ideas such as increased access to new pools of students (for example, those remote from the

institution), decreased costs for students and providers, international delivery and, not least, ambitions of providing an enhanced educational experience (Curran 2004; Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2006).⁴⁸ As outlined in Chapter 2, such considerations are still evident and relevant as drivers towards e-learning today.

In discussing the penetration of e-learning into tertiary education, a study carried out by the OECD (OECD 2005) provides a graded scale that is helpful in categorising the various types of adoption. This scale places e-learning programs into the following broad classes:

1) **Zero or trivial e-learning presence.**

2) **Web supplemented**

The e-learning environment is used but really as a repository for content and in a passive manner. Course materials, links, email, lecture notes etc are accessible online but this represents no *replacement* of class time or assignments.

3) **Web dependent**

There are elements of interaction and collaboration online that are required of students, such as discussion forums or some collaborative work. This replaces some classroom time but not significantly so.

4) **Mixed mode**

As with 'web dependent' but this entails a greater replacement of classroom time.

5) **Fully online**

The greater part of the course is delivered online and classroom time is not required or is trivial in proportion.

⁴⁸ For an Australian experience, RMIT provides an effective example, not least because it is one of the few early e-learning strategies well described in the literature of the time. Many factors were under consideration at RMIT when developing an e-learning strategy in the mid- to late 1990s. Economics, legislative changes and the potential for a reinvigorated learning paradigm were all catalysts: "RMIT University has developed this comprehensive Teaching and Learning Strategy to enable and ensure that the University is able to provide students with an effective and efficient learning environment. The direct catalyst for adopting a systematic and corporate approach to the development of such a strategy is the financial pressure on tertiary education due to the change in government attitude following the advent of the Unified National System and the consequent emphasis on 'user pays' (Higher Education Contribution Scheme and up-front fees). This has caused the University to seek alternative income streams through increased enrolments of fee-paying international students and simultaneously to reduce costs which are dominated by staff salaries. While economics may have crystallised the need for a strategy and provided the political critical mass, the general dissatisfaction with the lack of a coherent educational framework based on the needs of students as learners generated the momentum to formulate the strategy and to implement it systematically across the whole University. Consequently the strategy subjugates the needs for efficiency to the imperative of learning effectiveness and relies on the impact of a cultural change to a student-centred approach to learning to generate a collateral efficiency dividend" (McNaught et al. 1999: no page).

With this scale it would be possible to describe a steady increase in the availability of the more advanced e-learning deployments in universities over the last 15 years (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2006). In the Australian context, the deployment of LMS platforms in *all* Australian universities by 2004 (Byrnes and Ellis 2004) would place these institutions nominally as a level 2 or 3 on the OECD scale.⁴⁹ This reflects the growing commitment amongst institutions in the developed world to implement some form of e-learning strategy. By the time of the OECD report in 2005, all universities participating in the survey had plans underway to further strengthen their e-learning deployments (OECD 2005).⁵⁰ However, as presented above, these plans were often non-specific and varied widely in their approaches. This was the certainly the case in Australia (Inglis 2007) and similar trends were occurring in the United States (Curran 2004). In this regard, the apparently steady increase in e-learning sophistication begins to look less uniform when the specifics of deployment are examined.

A weakness in the OECD's scale showing degrees of e-learning in higher education is that it equates incidence of classroom attendance with the degree of online sophistication. It does not take into account courses delivered to students enrolled in an off-campus (distance) mode. In the Australian tertiary education market, a course offered in an off-campus mode (especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences) would usually not require any form of campus attendance.⁵¹ Given this equates to 100% online delivery, such offerings would thus rate in the highest category of the OECD scale. Even those distance education courses that required a brief residential school attendance would still qualify as "fully online". It is debateable though whether the fully online approach in these cases is a particularly advanced model. It is more likely akin to the web supplemented/dependent categories of the OECD scale. That is to say that the Internet is being used as a medium of broadcasting the same material received by on-campus students, and that in most cases the more collaborative and social possibilities are still not being utilised. Classroom time is not really being replaced, just

⁴⁹ Whether these LMS platforms are being *used* by individual staff members is open to discussion. However, the findings of this thesis indicate that amongst Australian teachers of IR/Politics, LMS usage is universal.

⁵⁰ Of the 19 universities surveyed by the OECD, two were Australia: Monash University and the University of South Australia. Both of these universities offer IR/Politics majors.

⁵¹ For example, see Monash University's *Online distance learning* page <http://monash.edu/study/options/online.html>, which states "...you can study with Australia's biggest and best-known university without ever having to set foot on campus." Similarly Deakin University states on their *Off-campus study at Deakin* webpage <http://www.deakin.edu.au/future-students/online-offcampus-studies/off-campus.php> "Students studying off campus by distance education take exactly the same course as on-campus students, except that instead of attending on-campus classes, you receive comprehensive study materials." In most cases universities do stress that not all programs and units can be undertaken in distance mode and/or that some attendance might be required at residential schools or practical sessions. This would seem more likely in those discipline areas where lab work, practical placements or specialist facilities are required.

foregone, because there is no requirement of class time for the off-campus students. Whether a student is reading a journal article in hard copy, downloading a PDF or receiving it on a CD posted out to them is immaterial: they are still being presented the same article and this is a process of solitary consumption.⁵² That is to say, the communicative, collaborative and exploratory possibilities of online technologies are not necessarily involved; the Internet is merely being used as an electronic postal service.

Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin state that the vision of fully virtual campuses has not eventuated and that instead, the OECD categories of “web dependent” and “mixed mode” tend to predominate. At the time of the OECD survey, no university (excepting a few institutions that had no physical teaching campus) expected to provide more than 10% of its teaching in a fully online mode. Instead, the most common approach was to utilise those blended modes, with distance education provision an increasingly key driver (Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin 2006). That a blended approach to e-learning is supported as an ideal practice by pedagogical literature (e.g. see Lee and Duncan-Howell (2007)) makes for an effective synergy in this regard. Other incentives to incorporate e-learning elements into courses include marketability factors (q.v.) and an ambition to 'enhance' teaching and learning (Franklin and van Harmelen 2007).

This notion of 'enhancement' is a nebulous one since it makes the presumption that adding more technology is an inherently superior approach. At this point the expectation of e-learning (and particularly whatever types of application are fashionable at the time) becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is to say, universities and teachers *think* that their students want a lot of e-learning access and therefore they provide it (Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience 2009; Educating the Net Generation project group 2009; Kvavik and Caruso 2005). This is partially based upon the “Digital Natives” theory (Prensky 2001a, 2001b, 2009), which suggests that younger students in particular are so engrossed in these sorts of tools that they cannot do without them. The paradox is the evidence to suggest that the so-called Natives are not especially skilled with these tools (Cameron 2005; Kennedy et al. 2007; Oliver and Goerke 2007) and do not especially want to see them incorporated into learning environments (Kvavik and Caruso 2005).

⁵² Additionally there is evidence to suggest that reading undertaken online (or on-screen) will be shallower and more prone to distraction, particularly when HTML links may be embedded in the text. See for example M. Wolf and M. Barzillai, 'The Importance of Deep Reading', *Educational Leadership*, 66/6 (2009), 32-37. or D.J. Leu et al., 'The New Literacies of Online Reading Comprehension: Expanding the Literacy and Learning Curriculum', *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55/1 (2011), 5-14.

Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin do not consider these questions of digital competence, but focus on whether teaching and learning quality is improved by incorporating e-learning. They mention that all participating universities in the OECD survey reported a “positive impact” of increased deployment of e-learning.⁵³ However, measuring exactly to what extent positive outcomes have occurred is a difficult challenge. The sheer number of variables involved in teaching a cohort of students, the problem of demonstrating tangible results and the unlikelihood of being able to replicate those results elsewhere means that in an environment dedicated to evidence-based reasoning, substantiating the benefits of innovative e-learning practices is extremely problematic.

It is difficult to divorce teaching delivery, tools and technique from other factors in students' lives when studying the reality of outcomes, satisfaction and so forth. Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin state that some positive impact is inevitable due to improved opportunities for access and relaxation of time/space constraints. These spatial/logistical improvements though do not equate to a fundamental change in pedagogy, merely an alternative form of broadcast. Nor do they provide any noticeable evidence for demonstrating the 'superiority' of e-learning methods from a pedagogical point of view.

From a cost-efficiency perspective, say Vincent and Lancrin, there is still not enough evidence to demonstrate the efficacy of e-learning. As mentioned, virtual learning environments are nowhere close to replacing traditional ones. Moreover, the costs of implementing new ICT and LMS projects is steep and requires on-going maintenance, staff training, upgrading etc. Additionally, when the predominance of the 'web dependent' and 'mixed mode' delivery methods is considered, there wouldn't appear to be a great deal of saving on teaching staff costs. Staff are still required to develop courses, prepare materials, mark assignments, give lectures and so on.⁵⁴ Where there might be some gain is in making a

⁵³ However there might be some question of objectivity here. It would seem unlikely that universities that were, at the time of survey, investing in and planning expansion of e-learning programs would be unlikely to start reporting their efforts as negative or pointless.

⁵⁴ An attraction of the MOOC model for universities has been the potential to extract a new source of income in services such as students paying for examination, certification and so on, or else using the MOOC as a kind of 'loss leader' entree into a full degree course. For example, a MOOC offered by Deakin University on humanitarian intervention offers participants "*...the opportunity to have their learning accredited by Deakin for a fee of \$495. This would provide them with partial credit for acceptance into Deakin's Graduate Certificate and Masters programs in International and Community Development*" (<http://www.deakin.edu.au/news/2013/17062013MOOC.php> accessed 15/04/2014). This type of business model has been unsuccessful elsewhere though, despite the savings on offer to potential students. At Colorado State University MOOC students could have their credit counted towards a standard degree course undertaken at the same university for \$89. Despite the fact that this represented a saving of \$961, not a single applicant took up

course available to more fee-paying students in a DE mode.⁵⁵ There has still been little work done on separating the economies of e-learning out from the balance sheets of traditional institutions, especially given the overlap between the two approaches.

Zemsky and Massy (2004a, 2004b) suggest that there are four stages in the innovation and adoption of e-learning:

1) Enhancements to traditional methods

This is similar to the 'web-supplemented' mode of the OECD study and means that although digital resources are used, they do not change the basic structure of the course. This part of the cycle includes email, web links, electronic library resources etc..

2) Adoption of specialised Learning Management Systems

The deployment of these tools (such as WebCT) allows increased student-staff interaction, collation of information and greater support in many logistical areas of study (such as enrolment, grade delivery etc.) From the authors' description it is assumed at this stage of the cycle the approach is still 'off the rack' in terms of how these LMS are used by individual teachers.

3) Imported material

This refers to the use of more advanced 'learning objects' gathered from third party sources and embedded within existing LMS and course content. This could also include 'modular' general material that is adapted or organised to facilitate the bespoke needs of different teachers, courses and so on.

4) New courses and configurations

At this point the e-learning delivery transcends the traditional models and brings into play a fundamentally refreshed approach to teaching and learning. Innovation becomes the order of the day and this can apply to materials, mode of delivery, time/spatial constraints and even the role of the actors in the learning environment.

the offer within a year. (Kolowich, S., *University's offer of credit for a MOOC gets no takers*, The Chronicle of Higher Education 13 July 2013). This implies that the investment in purpose-built MOOCs by universities is not likely to be recouped in any direct fashion.

⁵⁵ The savings here might be more a case of *cost-shifting* because it is up to the DE student to provide some of their own resources, such as workspace, printing, Internet access etc. This will certainly be cheaper for the institution than the old methods of posting out hard copy materials like reading booklets, DVDs and so on. And the teacher's time is not infinite; interacting with an increased cohort of DE students via email etc. is still a cost, no matter how much it might be hidden.

It is apparent to Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin and Zemsky and Massy that the current use of e-learning has in most cases not progressed beyond stages 1 and 2 of the cycle, with fewer and fewer institutions being represented as the stages increase in complexity. The data gathered for this thesis as well as research from others (for example Kennedy et al. (2011)) supports this same broad finding in the Australian context. Responses to the questionnaire detailed in Chapter 4 elicited no indication of anyone reaching the point of 'New courses and configurations'. Only two descriptions appeared of what would be classified as 'Imported material'. Amongst respondents the almost universal use of e-learning otherwise described was of the first two stages.

However, a weakness of this classification is that within stage 2 there can be a wide spread of adaptation, depending on the exact capabilities of the LMS and how many teachers are prepared to experiment. Some may be using the LMS at a basic level, essentially for the broadcast of course materials. Conversely, others may be using tools within the LMS such as wikis and blogs (Finlayson et al. 2009; Raitman et al. 2005) and a basic LMS email system can be used to run something like a text-based role play simulation. There is really a 'Stage 2.5' lying between off-the-rack LMS usage and the recourse to imported material.

It is in this 'in-between' level that some innovation can occur. Moreover, if a blended approach to e-learning is considered best practice, then this stage of development would seem beneficial. Moreover, individual teachers may not have a great deal of say in which LMS their university uses (Stage 2) or have access to significant funding or support to design and import bespoke material (Stage 3). They will though have the possibility of seeking general material or tools from the World Wide Web and adding it into their course (Kennedy et al. 2011) as a form of augmentation.

This is where the 'macro' view of e-learning adoption and innovation distils into 'micro' cases of particular forms/tools of digital delivery. In this Stage 2.5 situation innovation is down to the choice of individual teachers, without significant institutional direction and often in the form of an augmentation to traditional course delivery. Perhaps this might only entail using an additional channel for broadcasting, rather than a significant reconfiguration of teaching practice. For example a teacher who uses *Twitter* to alert their students to relevant news or the starting of a private group on *Facebook* to centralise comment on a course or subject material. Nevertheless, such practices still form an addition to the information flow, and in the case of a micro-blogging tool such as *Twitter*, it could be argued there are additional

benefits in terms of timeliness, endorsement of the information or the chance for students to have an additional means of interacting with their peers and the teacher, assuming that they are users of these tools themselves:

I use Twitter effectively as a link-based information service. Articles that come up in the daily press, or media, or things that I become aware of that have been written immediately or have been written in response to events that have only just occurred....Twitter is a very efficient way of drawing attention to analytical coverage of those topics. So if a country's invaded, students are obviously going to have lots of information around. What they don't get of course is guidance as to what's an immediate reference point from which they can take the subject further (Interviewee F).

Beyond this would be examples of teachers using social media content within the framework of an LMS. This could be as an augmentation or collation of existing material (such as using a wiki as a means of publishing links or readings) or may progress to the point where LMS features are being used to enable content *generation* and/or assessment (such as writing assessable blogs or posting portfolios of work). At this point the use of the LMS is *replacing* rather than *supplementing* some traditional content and/or assignments (Bold 2006; Bruns and Humphreys 2005; Finlayson et al. 2009).

Of significance to this research is that utilising extra features of an LMS does not necessarily involve significant technical expertise. Moreover, as a technology platform endorsed and supported by the university, an LMS can offer fewer obstacles to accessing the benefits of collaborative online approaches.

Beyond this point we reach stages 3 and 4 of the e-learning innovation cycle where external material and more innovative practices begin to be evidenced. This might include situations where the students are using an external platform (such as *Wikipedia* or *Facebook*) to produce content that is accessible to those outside the course and may involve some element of collaboration or interaction with these non-students. (For example, see (Moses 2007) or (Guth 2007)) Another mixed mode approach might be the use of a custom-developed online tool to host another form of interaction and collaboration, such as a role playing simulation. (See for example that used by Interviewee E in Appendix 1, or the simulation described by Hardy and Totman (2011).)

Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin (2006) find that the *status quo* of most e-learning and social media deployments has been stalled for some time between stages 2 and 3 of the innovation scale. Whilst this thesis broadly agrees with this finding in purely technical terms, it contends that advanced and truly collaborative use of an LMS can be an enabler of significant pedagogical benefit, as well as conducive to reaching graduate attribute goals. Whilst an LMS may not rank highly on scales such as that proffered by the OECD or Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin, this is due to their focus on technologies rather than the manner in which they are used. In this thesis some of the focus is therefore on how to encourage the bulk of IR/Politics teachers to move from a basic use of technology to a more innovative approach.

In this vein, Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin describe two major obstacles that need to be overcome before e-learning practices can be extended into the truly innovative and paradigm-shifting stages. These are financial sustainability and stakeholder engagement. Whilst describing a global context, their observations are applicable to the Australian higher education, as is evidenced by the responses to the questionnaire and interviews in this thesis and many of the previously published Australian case studies referred to throughout.

Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin state that in the financial context, simply swapping conventional approaches into digital environments does not necessarily involve cost savings, since there will still be the need for conventional teaching staff, plus technical support and likely a lot of duplication of resources. To transcend these costs, one possibility involves the greater sharing of digital resources and multi-purpose learning objects, either within an institution or, more desirably, between multiple institutions. However, this leads to challenges in terms of staff motivation, co-operative funding, incompatible technologies and intellectual property. In the Australian market where universities are competing for a finite pool of students and funds, it is difficult to see this level of altruistic co-operation occurring.

In the case of IR/Politics, the idea of shared learning objects may produce further challenges. As noted in Chapter 1, the wide ranging coverage of the discipline and the subjective nature of its delivery make for infinite combinations. For example, whilst two teachers at two universities may teach similar content (such as 'Australian Foreign Policy'), the way they teach their subjects and the elements they deem important will differ. That makes a generic

learning object less valuable to them.⁵⁶ That there are few absolute truths or 'laws' in IR/Politics compared to science disciplines, for example, means that a particular learning object may appeal to fewer people, particularly if there is limited scope to customise it. Conversely, if one finds little value in such shared content, one is less likely to allocate time to developing it for others. Differences in the extent that various disciplines value online learning resources are illustrated in the American-based learning object repository, MERLOT. This has 488 learning objects tagged as useful for 'Political Science'. Yet it has more than 3,700 for 'Health Science', 3,000 for 'Biology' and 'Psychology' has 800.⁵⁷

An Australian example of this lack of enthusiasm for sharing is provided by the COLIS Demonstrator (Collaborative Online Learning and Information Systems). This was an early pilot project aimed at sharing learning resources between universities, running from 2001 to 2004 (Dalziel 2002; Dalziel et al. 2005). The demonstrator was designed to illustrate the technical possibilities of sharing resources and information between partner institutions:

"...to demonstrate how the seamless sharing of online learning and information resources could be managed technically, and what implications that had for the stakeholders' likely use of such systems in the near future" (Dalziel et al. 2005: 7)

Despite successfully overcoming many of the technical barriers to sharing learning material, the COLIS project did not experience great success in terms of uptake because teachers did not find it useful for meeting the realities of their work and their individual approaches. There were also technical competence barriers perceived by potential users. Assessing the COLIS project Woo et al. (2004) concluded that:

In order for a learning object system to be adopted, it must be compatible with the workflow of its users. Actualising technical possibility is exhilarating, but without understanding the end-user's technical ability and their needs the system may be left unused.

Whilst the COLIS Demonstrator was a short-term Australian pilot project the ALTC Exchange was a much better funded and supported collaborative repository. It was intended to allow Australian academics to collaborate on projects as well as share teaching resources

⁵⁶ This phenomenon is similar to the conundrum of textbooks, where the teacher might feel only a portion of the book is of value and therefore prefer to produce a course reader or series of e-readings that are more relevant.

⁵⁷ <http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm> . Numbers of learning objects as at 23/09/2013 .

and practices. However during its life the ALTC Exchange failed to attract a critical mass of users operating in a true Web 2.0 manner. That is members who were *creating* content as well as reading/using that created by others. Woo et al. (2004) note that teachers are not automatically disposed to sharing or using resources created by others, even when technology facilitates this. Without enough User Generated Content to sustain it and with its funding body being wound up, the ALTC Exchange therefore closed in 2011. The Australian experience with using shared resources as a solution for e-learning efficiency is therefore not a successful one. The experiences of COLIS and the ALTC Exchange highlights the importance of Larsen and Vincent-Lancrins' second challenge of advancing e-learning: stakeholder engagement.

Regarding stakeholder engagement, Larsen and Vincent-Lancrin state teachers and students need to be involved and motivated in the deployment of any e-learning project or else it will fail on any number of levels. In the case of teachers, some quite major cultural shifts are required. These can include anything from behavioural shifts towards collaboration with technical staff and educational designers, an openness to an increased level of evaluation and examination from pedagogic experts, and, most of all, a willingness to move on from tried and tested methods, including the acceptance that failure might occur and that an end point in the innovation is never realised (Finlayson et al. 2009). This latter point is important because technology is constantly evolving and therefore the solution of today may be less relevant or superseded in the near future. Those looking for a perfect or permanent solution will be disappointed.⁵⁸ Most importantly, attitudes towards sharing of intellectual property, the use of others' work and the possibility of not being credited for one's own contribution are significant barriers for academics inured to traditional systems based upon publishing, plagiarism and accumulated reputation (Black 2008).

Over the history of e-learning deployment in Australia, such barriers have combined to produce a similar stall to that experienced elsewhere in the world. This is not to say that innovation does not occur, but rather, as Wills and Bowles (2009) noted at the start of this chapter, it has tended to be erratic and un-coordinated; the province of individual tactics rather than grand strategy. For the main part, individual institutions (and often their sub-units) have made their implementations 'on the run', as they sought to take advantage of rapidly changing technologies and provide themselves with a competitive edge and 'point of

⁵⁸ See Chapter 5 for an exploration of the issues of motivation to innovate in an academic teaching environment.

difference' in an environment characterised by tight funding resources (Bowles 2004). Between 2001 and 2005 Australian universities were adopting, implementing and then replacing Learning Management Systems (LMS) as well as undertaking major technological reviews (Bowles 2004). In the following five years, some of these universities may have then been changing their LMS for a second or third time, or attempting to 'catch up' with technology paradigms such as the burgeoning use of mobile devices.

Given this patchwork approach to e-learning and collaboration, as well as the multiplicity of factors any individual teacher can face in utilising such tools, there is value in examining what sort of practices are emerging across Australian universities. By examining the use of e-learning practices (including online collaboration) by a sub-set of teachers (IR/Politics), this may assist in determining whether Australian universities are aligned with trends elsewhere and to what extent the opportunity of these methods is being exploited. A secondary outcome may be to determine a 'best recipe' for implementing collaborative e-learning. By collecting the experiences of others, an idea of what approaches have been successful or ineffective can be gleaned. This may be of use to IR/Politics teachers who are interested in collaborative e-learning but unsure of the suitability of specific options, or unsure of how to implement such practices effectively.

Chapter 4: The use of collaborative e-learning in teaching IR and Politics in Australia

Basis of Research

Within the literature on e-learning (see Chapter 2) there is a consensus that a blended approach is the most desirable method for achieving an effective delivery of learning material. That is, an approach that combines elements of online delivery with some 'traditional' or 'face-to-face' practices. The literature (such as OECD (2005, 2006, 2007)) also indicates that in the developed world this blended method would appear to be the most commonly applied methodology to e-learning (compared to the extremes of having zero or total e-learning content in a course). Given the drivers towards e-learning in Australia, the goals described in institutional strategic plans and the standard use of LMS technologies, this blended model would also appear to be the most common case at universities here.⁵⁹

For encouraging both discipline specific learning and the development of generic skills, there are a wide range of benefits ascribed to collaborative learning in the literature (see Chapter 2). These include an improved ability to work in teams, the developing of communication and persuasion skills, the ability to recognise differing viewpoints and the possibility of incorporating more authentic 'career' tasks and generic skills into students' work. As an enabler of active learning, the collaborative approach can also assist students to develop their own directions in learning and taking a hand in the 'produsage' of learning materials.

With the weight of evidence therefore supporting blended e-learning *and* collaborative experiences, combining the two approaches would seem to offer natural synergies, as well as

⁵⁹ Naturally the exact 'blend' of e-learning and conventional methods utilised by any individual teacher or course covers a wide range of ratios, tools and classroom practices that are all dependent on a multiplicity of factors. These would include:

- Subject matter
- Class size
- The make-up of the student cohort (age, experience, technical skills, on/off campus, proportion of Non-English Speaking Background students and many other factors)
- The teacher's skills and experience
- The goals, intended learning outcomes and curriculum
- The perceived suitability of the subject matter for online delivery and/or collaboration
- Logistical questions (equipment, time, training)
- Institutional support and pressures (technical, logistical, legal/policy)
- Intended outcomes of the course and assessment

addressing some of the market place drivers described in Chapter 1. The use of an online learning environment as a platform for collaboration is the obvious expression of this combination and therefore forms the central enquiry of this thesis.

Collaborative web-based methods can exist in a variety of formats. Such environments may reside within an LMS, involve specially-written software or be totally external to the university and provided by third parties. The collaboration might include using social media tools (as an exemplar of Web 2.0), such as wikis, blogs, social bookmarking, online simulations and so forth. Some of the benefits ascribed to these collaborative tools in learning include:

- Improved communication and writing skills, including an awareness of the *need* to communicate more clearly and a greater consciousness of academic style (Forte and Bruckman 2006; S. Wheeler and Wheeler 2007). This outcome has obvious advantages both at university and beyond.
- Co-operative skills that can be taken into one's career (Bruns 2008; Committee of Inquiry into the Changing Learner Experience 2009; Tapscott 2009). This outcome is relevant to the realities of virtually every workplace, where single author, single reader tasks (as exemplified by the traditional essay assignment) are exceptional, if they occur at all.
- Improved technical competence (Elgort et al. 2008). Given that students often exhibit low familiarity with anything other than a small number of basic online technologies (Cameron 2005; Kennedy et al. 2008a), broadening their exposure to other tools and improving their confidence to experiment with technology is relevant to university and the future workplace.
- A deeper relationship with the subject matter (Hardy and Totman 2012). This develops from the active learning basis and can be boosted by the chance to profit from the synergies of the group, as well as the views and experiences of others.
- A re-organisation of knowledge in a means more suited to an individual's learning preferences (Becta 2008; Fountain 2005). This caters for the differing learning styles of students and is particularly relevant to the Australian higher education sector, which is seeking to broaden the demographic basis of enrolment.

- A general sense of doing something relevant to the 'knowledge economy' zeitgeist (Hamer 2006; Holmes et al. 2001).

Such gains as these all combine to address the broader ambitions of universities as expressed in their graduate attribute statements and are relevant to university studies and the workplace. Combined with the possibility of addressing some of the marketplace factors described in Chapter 1, this makes for a strong endorsement of the collaborative e-learning approach.

These generic benefits are of particular relevance to students of IR/Politics. As discussed in Chapter 1, skills in communication and collaboration are central to a discipline that is concerned with relations between individuals, societies, states and institutions (McCarthy and Anderson 2000). Additionally, compared to other disciplines, there can be greater difficulties presented to teachers of IR/Politics in giving their students the opportunity to practice more authentic workplace tasks, or at the least to illustrate some of the dynamics of power and interaction that are inherent in the discipline's focus (McCarthy and Anderson 2000).

Furthermore, the online environment is particularly well suited to authentic IR/Politics tasks because of the growing volume of political activity that takes place through this medium (Hoffman et al. 2013). Political news, political campaigning, activism and revolutionary movements are all utilising the Internet as a means of broadcasting a message or engaging with constituents.⁶⁰ The focus on the Internet and Social Media as an avenue for political activity means that using these tools in university study of IR/Politics can provide extremely authentic and contemporary exercise (Blair 2013).

If we then accept that (1) there is a benefit to blending e-learning with conventional approaches, (2) collaborative tools are a particularly beneficial form of e-learning, and (3) IR and Politics represents a discipline area that could particularly benefit from such practices, this research is aiming to investigate the following:

- 1) To what extent are Australian teachers of IR and Politics currently using collaborative online tasks to deliver their undergraduate subjects?
- 2) What barriers exist to such implementations?

⁶⁰ For example, then Prime Minister Julia Gillard's "Google Hangout" of July 2012 where she answered questions that had been selected by public vote, President Obama's "Twitter Town Hall" events where he also responded to live public input and the "We are all Khaled Said" *Facebook* page that became the catalyst for the Egyptian Revolution of 2011.

- 3) What lessons can be drawn as to how collaborative online tools can best be implemented as part of a blended e-learning approach to teaching IR and Politics at undergraduate level?

In the prevailing climate of stalled e-learning innovation (see Chapter 3) addressing these questions can offer insight as to how future innovation could be encouraged. Doing so may assist in alleviating some of the pressure on intuitions and teachers and allow them to meet the many demands of the 21st century Australian higher education sector. Improved outcomes for students are a healthier consequence of such change.

Methodology

Outline of research design

Given the aim of this thesis was to investigate the benefits of learning approaches that fostered collaboration and consultation, the design of the research component reflects this. It sought to consult teachers on their practices and build a dialogue with them around their experiences and attitudes. This would acknowledge the iterative process of teaching innovation and experimentation and aid in capturing the full range of shifting and developing approaches to teaching in the discipline. An approach of using a questionnaire with follow-up interviews was thus determined as the optimum manner in which to gather the relevant data.

The questions of 'How much?', 'How?' and 'Why?' teachers are using collaborative methods and the aim of making recommendations for future guidance meant that the priority was to capture all current practices. Given that practices and definitions of the subject matter were expected to vary widely (as evidenced in the literature), utilising pre-coded or standardised questioning would lead to the dilemma of data being lost through inappropriate categorisation.

This research was therefore of a qualitative nature and was conducted by employing two unstandardised, open-ended questionnaires to gather data from current teachers of IR/Politics. The sampling was purposive and defined by geography (Australia), teaching discipline (IR/Politics) and level of delivery (undergraduate). As noted above, the use of the IR/Politics discipline as an underlying case study was due to the presence of the discipline at the majority of Australian universities and its cross-disciplinary traditions. This would then

provide a snapshot across a range of institutions and disciplinary groupings, whilst still limiting the sample to a manageable size.

Since the objective of this research was to look at the usage of collaborative online tools the first questionnaire was designed to screen out those respondents who were *not* utilising such approaches. A short, preliminary series of questions identified respondents who were not employing any online tools and prevented them from proceeding through to subsequent sets of questions. This precluded the data from being diluted with non-responses to certain questions and reduced the time burden for those respondents not of interest to this research.

The questionnaire was completed anonymously as linking the names and institutions of the respondents was not relevant to the level of analysis undertaken. There was no intention, for example, to analyse the data according to state or other criteria of location or an individual's seniority. However, respondents did have the option of leaving their contact details if they were prepared to make themselves available for a follow-up interview. These contact details were not linked to the data they provided in the survey response.

Scope of study

The questionnaire and subsequent analysis were limited to Australian universities since it is the pressures within the Australian higher education sector that form the context of this research. With regard to the market factors noted in Chapter 1, Australian universities have exhibited broadly similar strategic responses and there is value in knowing whether these initiatives (and the rhetoric) at the executive level are actually being implemented or even *considered* by teaching staff. Aside from the local market factors, the Australian limitation was also necessary because extending the coverage to include other countries would have produced an unmanageably large survey task and may have also obscured observable trends. Given the differing approaches to tertiary education that exist around the world (in terms of goals, curriculum, regulation and funding), there would also be great inconsistency in how collaborative tools were managed by foreign institutions and the relevance of considering what lessons could be learned and applied interchangeably would be questionable.

For similar reasons of scope and compatibility, this research was limited to examining the use of collaborative tools in teaching IR/Politics and then at the undergraduate level only.

Undergraduates make up roughly three quarters of total student numbers in Australian universities (DIISRTE 2012) and a focus on this 'majority' is therefore appropriate. Additionally, it is at the undergraduate level that the teacher/student/learning environment dynamic is most applicable, as is the focus on preparing learners for transition to the workplace.⁶¹ Whilst some post-graduate coursework degrees may also contain a teacher/student dynamic, variations in the approach (delivery mode, amount of self-directed research) will vary widely across Australia and therefore offer less consistency in data. For example, a post-graduate coursework unit at one institution might comprise of identical content to a differently coded undergraduate unit, but perhaps with a longer essay assignment required. At another university (or indeed even the *same* one), the post-graduate unit might be unique content, but delivered entirely through self-directed readings instead of lectures and tutorials. Given this wide variation, post-graduate teaching did not form the subject of this research, though the outcomes and conclusions are still expected to be relevant to those concerned with this level of study.

Source selection

Questionnaire recipients were identified from the websites published by Australian universities. These websites identify the faculty/department/school responsible for teaching IR and Politics subjects at the university and then list staff and their research interests. (For example <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/psi/our-staff/>.)

Whilst there is some variation in Australia as to which faculties/schools house IR and Politics teachers, only those staff identified by their online profile as responsible for teaching in these discipline areas were considered as questionnaire recipients. Staff whose profiles listed them as researchers only or solely responsible for delivering post-graduate supervision and teaching were also excluded. This approach allowed for some errors to be committed in the sample selection, mainly in cases where the public profiles were erroneous, incomplete or out of date.⁶² However, the potential for confusing or misleading responses in the gathered data would have been greater if every single staff member associated with the Politics or IR discipline at a given university were contacted because these would have included post-

⁶¹ As opposed to the higher degree by research dynamic of supervisor/researcher.

⁶² The potential problems in accurate identification also provided additional insights into the broader online 'personas' of Australian universities and the challenges they face in maintaining an accurate, effective and accessible online presence.

graduate teachers (see above), non-teachers and other individuals outside the intended scope of the study.

The author of this thesis and the primary supervisor did not contribute to the data despite the fact that they both would have otherwise satisfied the criteria for inclusion.

Collection method

Permission to contact teaching staff at each institution was first obtained from their relevant Head of School (or equivalent). In every case this permission was granted and the target staff members were emailed directly with an invitation to participate in the research and a link to the questionnaire, hosted by the *Survey Monkey* website. A plain language statement explaining the research and its human ethics approval, as well as informing participants of their rights was included with this email.

The survey was kept open for four months and the results were gathered through *Survey Monkey's* internal collection and reporting tools.

Questionnaire 1

The questions in the first questionnaire were as follows:

- 1) Do you use the Internet (including your university's Learning Management System) to deliver any aspect of any of the undergraduate subjects you teach?
- 2) Do you use your University's Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver any of your courses? If YES: What functions of the university's LMS do you utilise? (eg. discussion forum, lecture podcasts ,blogs, lecture notes/slides. posting links or readings, providing course materials or subject outlines, wikis, chat, assessment tasks, quizzes....)
- 3) Do you utilise external websites to deliver your subjects? If YES: How do you utilise these? (eg. Linking to news stories or material, posting updates, co-ordinating tasks, group exercises)

- 4) Please indicate any online tasks and tools YOUR STUDENTS are required to utilise during the delivery of any of your subjects. (Note, this research is NOT concerned with the use of email or web interfaces purely for the submission of assignments completed off-line. Eg. Emailing an essay to a teacher or submitting it via TurnItIn or an assignment management system)

TASK	Use (radio button response)
Document sharing	
Quizzes	
Presentations	
Media projects (eg. Photo galleries, videos)	
Wikis	
Blogs	
Micro-blogging (eg. Twitter)	
Social bookmarking (eg Delicious, Digg)	
Journalistic content	
Outreach tasks	
Building databases or knowledge management tools	
Web forums	
Other (please elaborate)	

- 5) Are there any online approaches not included in the matrix above that you utilise for the delivery of your subjects?
- 6) Does the use of any of these tools count towards a student's assessment?

- 7) Do students use these tools for individual or group activities/projects/assignments? (If INDIVIDUAL only is nominated, then participants are excluded from progression to the second questionnaire.)

Questionnaire 2

The second questionnaire was only offered to those respondents who had indicated that group work was employed in their response to question 7 of the first questionnaire. The questions were as follows:

- 8) What is/are the name(s) of the subject(s) you teach and what is the main theme of the content for each? (eg. IR theory, Political Economy, Regional studies, Political Issues....)
- 9) For each subject nominate whether your cohort is (a) Internal (On-campus) students only, (b) External (Off-campus) students only, (c) Both on and off campus
- 10) If (c) do on and off campus students have identical assignment tasks and criteria? If NO, describe any differences in tasks, weighting or grading.
- 11) Please outline the assessment tasks that require Internet utilisation.
- 12) Do you use any collaborative or social media platforms (LMS or external) in your subject delivery? For example, wikis (whether public or private), *Facebook*, virtual worlds such as *2nd Life* or *WoW*,⁶³ online simulations, computer role playing environments). If YES, explain how you use these.
- a) If you DO use online collaborative tools explain what advantages and disadvantages you feel they bring.
- b) If you DO NOT use online collaborative tools, explain why you don't presently use these things and any advantages/disadvantages you see.

⁶³ *World of Warcraft*.

- c) Whether yes or no, would you like to make more use of such collaborative platforms?
- 13) Would you describe yourself as an 'early adopter' or particularly 'tech savvy'?
- 14) What obstacles do you think teaching staff face in making greater use of such computer aided collaborations? (eg. Time, training, lack of IT support, lack of policy support, lack of credibility, budget, student technical competence, etc.)
- 15) Any other comments or experiences you would like to include?
- 16) Are you willing to be contacted by phone or email for some follow up questions?

Follow up

Respondents who nominated their willingness to be contacted for follow-up discussion represented a potentially valuable source of information beyond the questionnaire, since more detailed personal discussions undertaken through this channel permit more discursive analysis. In addition, since it was expected that approaches to online collaboration would vary widely, these discussions would offer the chance to explore individual methods that could not be categorised sufficiently in the survey design.

Those participants who were willing to be approached in this way had the option to leave their contact details. A mutually convenient time to undertake a follow-up interview was then arranged via email.

The follow-up interviews were open-ended in nature and did not follow a set pattern of questioning. Rather, these interviews each proceeded according to the range of issues and experiences identified by each interviewee. The purpose of this approach was to allow scope for all manner of e-learning tools, deployments and attitudes to be canvassed depending on individual cases. This also permitted the flexibility to focus on experiences and viewpoints that had not been considered in the initial research design. Although each interview was therefore unique, some general lines of questioning included:

- What online tools do you use?
- In what manner do you use these tools?

- What experiences do you have with online collaboration with students?
- How do you think students react to group-work and collaboration?
- Do you see any benefits to the students beyond the classroom in terms of learning to collaborate?
- What barriers do you think teachers face in experimenting with this sort of teaching approach?
- How do you view the relationship between teaching staff and more strategic levels of the university?

Analysis

Where use of collaborative e-learning tools was identified in the survey responses, the deployments have been analysed. This analysis of experience is intended to generate some observations on how collaborative e-learning tools are being used in teaching IR/Politics or how institutions might be supporting/not supporting teaching staff who are attempting to innovate. This is then compared and contrasted with some of the existing literature (outside the IR/Politics discipline) to see if there is any commonality experience.

A secondary aspect of the analysis was to note those IR/Politics subject units where collaborative e-learning tools are being used and to identify if there are any trends based upon their theme and content; for example, whether these units are concerned with theory, institutions, regional studies, or specific sub-topics. This question is an important one because there is some evidence to suggest that simulations in particular, are rarely used in teaching IR theory (Asal 2005). In identifying patterns of collaborative e-learning and future potential in Australian IR/Politics education, it will be helpful to understand if these tools are following similar patterns of implementation.

Results and Discussion

An invitation to participate in the survey was sent via email to 154 potential candidates identified through the process outlined in the methodology above. In the four months that the survey was open (15 June 2011 – 15 October 2011) 48 individuals responded, a rate of 31%. Regrettably many of these respondents did not answer the full survey, with many skipping one or more questions, particularly those that prompted open-ended comment.

General

A detailed analysis of the results for each question is included below. However, some of the general trends observed were:

- A high use of the Internet to deliver subjects.
 - This usage tends to be 'one-way' and solitary on the part of the student – the teacher uses an online platform to broadcast material to be consumed (i.e. read/listened to) by students as individuals and without any requirement for them to respond or to take part in any form of dialogue.
 - When an online task does require student input it still tends to be a solitary activity (e.g. a student completing a quiz or posting their own blog).
- A high use of university LMS to deliver subjects
- A moderate use of external (i.e. non-university) Internet material.
- Role play exercises appear as the most commonly utilised collaborative online task.
- A lower use of online collaboration specifically directed at off-campus mode students.
- A varied approach in the types of online tasks employed, whether they are individual or group and how they contribute to overall assessment.
- A perception that time, workload and support issues provide barriers to greater use of online collaborative tasks.

Specific Responses

Question 1 (Do you use the Internet (including your University's Learning Management System) to deliver any aspect of any of the undergraduate subjects you teach?)

There were 48 responses to this question, with all of them indicating that they used the Internet as part of their teaching.

Question 2(Do you use your University's Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver any of your courses?)

There were 46 responses to this question, with 42 indicating they used their university's LMS.

Question 3 (Do you utilise external websites to deliver your subjects?)

There were 45 responses with 28 indicating use of external websites. Expressed as percentage terms the following visualisation is possible of the first three question items:

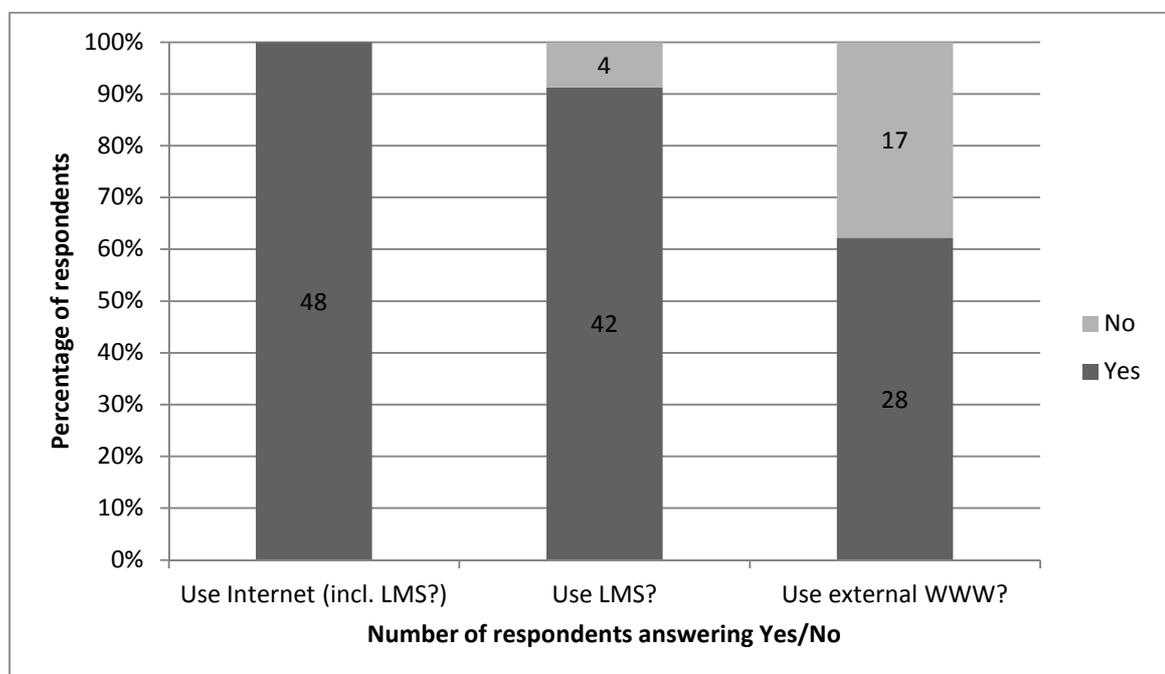


Figure 3: *Use of Internet and LMS*

The results for the first three questions indicate that there is a high usage of online means to deliver undergraduate IR and Politics subjects. This finding is unsurprising in its own right given the fact that every public Australian university utilises an LMS (Byrnes and Ellis 2004). The presence of the Internet is therefore essentially a 'given' in higher education. Added to this is the high penetration of broadband Internet to Australian households (> 75%) and the very high usage (> 96%) of this medium by the 18-24 year old age group, the demographic most closely associated with undergraduate study (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). The Internet is therefore a pervasive medium in Australia, whether in educational or private life. However, despite the predictable findings of this set of questions, there are some observations to be made.

Firstly it appears that a small number of respondents (n=4) indicate their use of the Internet but yet they do not employ their institution's LMS as part of this approach. This result is notable given that every Australian university has utilised an LMS for some years now and at some institutions some form of LMS representation is mandatory for each unit of study.⁶⁴ The questionnaire responses show though that there is a small group of IR/ Politics academics who fall outside this pattern.

The rate of non-LMS use noted in the questionnaire could be due to several factors. The first, and most simple explanation is that the respondents did not recognise the term 'Learning Management System'. Although they may be using an LMS, they may know it under another name, proprietary or otherwise. For example, Deakin University uses "CloudDeakin" for its LMS, which is based on the *D2L* software. Prior to this, the *WebCT*-based platform at the same university was called "Deakin Studies Online". Other universities, such as Monash, persisted with the same local 'brand name' across different software platforms. The changing software and institutional branding and the confusion it causes may indicate a severance between the strategic planning of the institution and the understanding of staff. At the very least, it may be that the brand names serve as a substitute for the technical term 'Learning Management System' amongst teachers.

Aside from this, it should be noted that the number of responses to the questionnaire indicating no usage of an LMS (8.7%) is almost exactly the same rate of non-LMS use (8.4%) noted by Kennedy et al. (2011) amongst Australian university staff. In this regard the figure

⁶⁴ See discussion p. 182.

is not remarkable and indicates that Australian IR/Politics staff are similar in their LMS usage to their peers across the discipline areas. Additionally, this figure also accords with the 'Laggards' population as described by Rogers (2003): those members of a community who will always resist adopting technological innovation until they consider it safe or are compulsorily made to do so.⁶⁵ There is also the type of foot-dragging as a form of resistance noted by (Anderson 2008), which could easily be applied to an academic's decision to utilise an LMS.

Another possibility with this group of non-LMS users is that they may be drawn from the opposite end of the innovation continuum (Rogers 2003). That is, that these are the truly innovative teachers who find the features of their university's LMS too constraining and have gone outside of it in their own approach to online delivery. They may use a combination of the LMS, custom-built tools or a wide variety of third party software and content to create a "Personal Learning Environment" (Chatti et al. 2010):

"...the notion that students (and lecturers) can use the services, tools, resources that they deem appropriate rather than ones that the institution controls and deems appropriate..." (Kennedy et al. 2011).⁶⁶

For an innovator comfortable with technology, eschewing the LMS completely might be an unlikely approach, but is nevertheless possible. Also possible is that such an innovator may use the LMS at a minimal level and thus indicate on the questionnaire that they do not use it at all.

The second observation to be made about the responses to this group of questions in the survey is that just over a third of respondents indicated that they made no use of public Internet sources for their subject delivery. This appears to be a surprising result given that subject matter in IR/Politics is often closely related to current events and there is so much material on the Internet that could be relevant to discussion of many topics within this discipline. However there must be some allowance made for the phrasing of the question. Since it mentioned using external websites "to deliver" subjects, this may have been misconstrued by some to mean the employment of the public Internet in a similar manner to

⁶⁵ See discussion in Chapter 5.

⁶⁶ A discussion of how an LMS or various third-party platforms could be adapted to provide innovative personalised environments such as online role playing spaces appears in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

an official LMS. In other words, some respondents may have discounted (as a form of 'delivery') tactics such as providing links to news stories from within their own LMS.

Further detail on the usage trends of both LMS and external websites are provided by analysing the responses to the open-ended comment fields in questions 2 and 3.

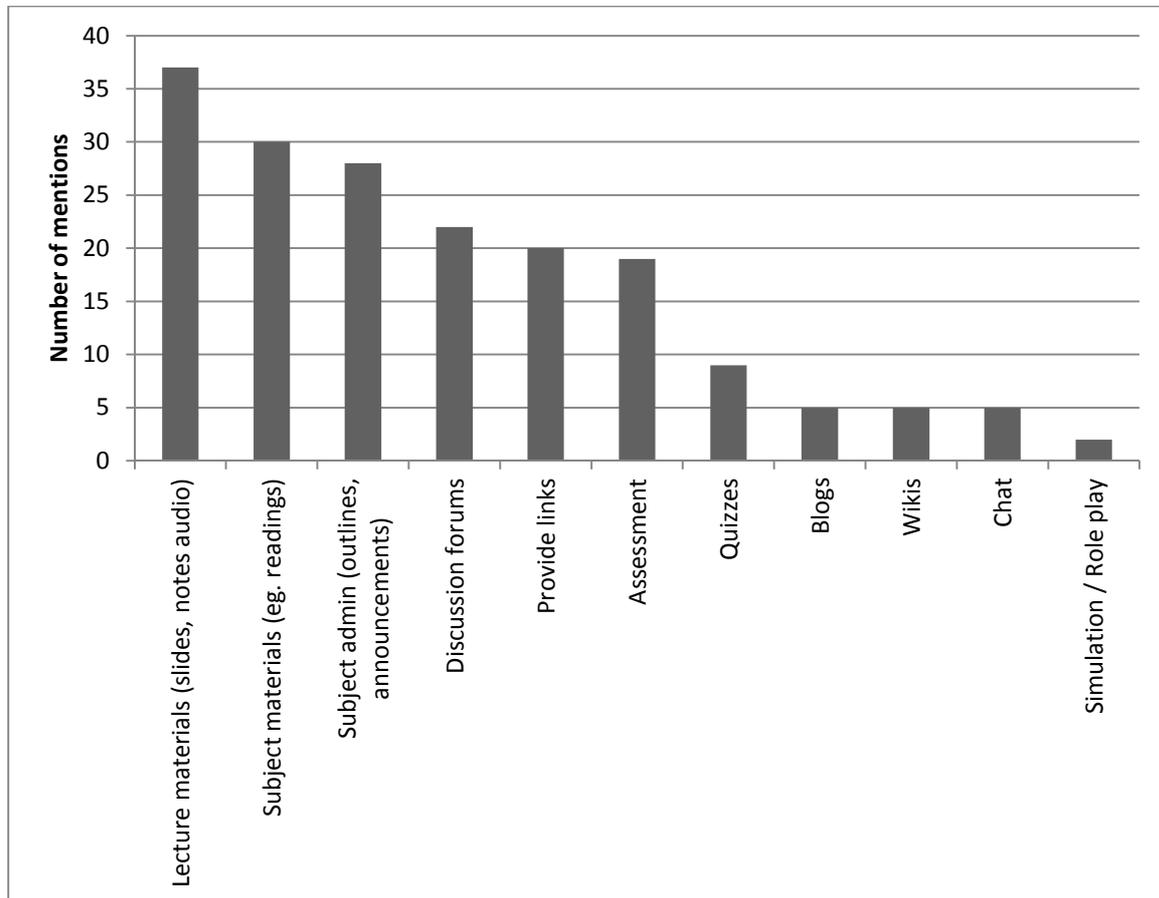


Figure 4: Usage of LMS functions

Many of the open-ended comments consisted of just one or two words or a list of items. For example, one respondent wrote "discussion forum, lecture podcasts, lecture notes/slides, posting links or readings, providing course materials or subject outlines, chat, assessment tasks, quizzes". For this reason the responses have been aggregated according to the items mentioned. When tallied by the number of times mentioned in the open-ended comments section of question 2, the most common use of LMS platforms was to provide content and materials associated with the subject. This included the provision of lecture slides, notes and recordings as well as readings and links to other subject specific materials. Administrative

uses were also high, including the posting of subject outlines, announcements and the processing of assessments.

Such uses could be described as 'one-way' in their nature because the online space is being used to provide a repository of third party material for students' consumption; the classic Web 1.0 broadcast model. This is also a 'solitary' situation, since the student is not required to interact with others. It should be noted that solitariness should not automatically be considered an inferior state or indicate that students are not learning or engaging with the material provided. Students will be engaged in solitary learning for large parts of their university careers. Indeed, it can be argued that there is an over-arching state of solitude in tertiary study, since each student is progressing towards earning qualifications for themselves alone. However, the basis of this thesis is the additional benefits that collaborative work can bring and the manner in which online environments can facilitate this. For that reason there is an emphasis on the identification of such practices and their positive contrast with the one-way and solitary modes of online learning.

More active and interactive/collaborative uses of the LMS are nevertheless evidenced in the open-ended comments. The most common example recorded in responses is the use of discussion forums. It should be noted that the level of interactivity and collaboration present in discussion forums will vary, depending on how they are scaffolded in the subject, what level of compulsion or grading may be present and other factors such as class size, teacher input, student workload and personalities of participants. For example, if discussion board posting is *not* linked to assessment or some other benchmark criteria (e.g. frequency of posts) is not explicitly demanded, this can affect the motivation of students to participate (Dennen 2005; S. Palmer et al. 2008). Two respondents gave examples of this:

- *I have experimented with discussion forums, etc, but (perhaps because they're not assessable?) nobody uses them!*
- *I have used discussion forums, but I have found that take-up amongst students is limited, especially after week 5 when the assessment in other courses kicks in.*

Even when there is a link between an assessment and the discussion board, if the task is not sufficiently relevant to the subject matter or course overall, or without clearly established goals, student motivation can also suffer (Dennen 2005). When discussion boards are not tied

to assessment, the emphasis or value that a teacher places upon participation can also affect the extent of student engagement (Kui et al. 2006).

The use of a discussion forum is therefore not necessarily an indication that any discussion (or learning) is taking place, since at its most basic a forum can just be a place for the teacher to post announcements or administrative advice. Such functionality does not then represent a *discussion*, but rather a kind of public conversation between teacher and student(s) (Edmondson 2008). With the teacher as facilitator of topical discussion, care must be taken to strike the balance between presence and 'omnipotence', since this can result in an online version of the traditional 'knowledge imparter' model. Students then become dependent on the teacher to direct and preside over discussion with the forum possibly suffering from paralysis when the teacher is absent (Dennen 2005) or else the chance of truly free-ranging discussion is stymied by the feeling of oversight (Mazzolini and Maddison 2003).

Nevertheless, a well-implemented discussion forum with clear parameters can be an effective online learning tool that encourages the exchange of ideas (Andresen 2009; Edmondson 2008; Koory 2003) and breaks away from the pattern of 'writing for the tutor' (Salmon 2011). The existence of a discussion forum does imply an invitation to discuss, whether it is taken up or not. If the discussion that takes place is not subject-specific knowledge in the strictest sense, there can be an exchange of ideas or a collaboration taking place. For example, students sharing their ideas about how to approach an assignment or solving each other's technical issues aids them in their overall progress, as well as being readable by other students not active in the discussion. That purely 'logistical' type of dialogue may lend itself to fuller discussion of the actual unit content too, as one interview respondent noted:

They try to raise, effectively the subject matter of the question they're attempting as the discussion topic in those groups. Which is understandable given...at the time they are preparing a three and a half thousand word essay...they don't want to be talking about something completely tangential or irrelevant to what they're concentrating on. So you can understand that. It makes sense. But again providing that the topics vary and not everyone is doing the same thing we can get through a broader range of subjects (Interviewee F).

Whether such discussion board activity is a suitable replacement for face-to-face interaction in terms of learning outcomes or learning cycles has been questioned (e.g. Edmondson (2008)), but nevertheless, the inclusion of these tools still provides an extra opportunity for

communication and thus, collaboration. The link between collaboration and increased learning outcomes (both discipline specific and generic) has already been established in Chapter 2. Therefore the indicated use by Australian IR/Politics teachers of any method that potentially fosters such interaction can be considered commendable.

Less frequently nominated in question 2 were the more active and collaborative activities that could be supported by an LMS. These include blogs, wikis, synchronous chat and role plays. This supports the hypothesis that online collaboration of the Web 2.0 type is the exception rather than the rule in IR/Politics teaching and that the implementation of e-learning in Australian universities remains at the "Web Supplemented" level (OECD 2005). That is, the Internet is used for making traditional content available in digital form rather than any significant transformation of teaching and learning methodology.

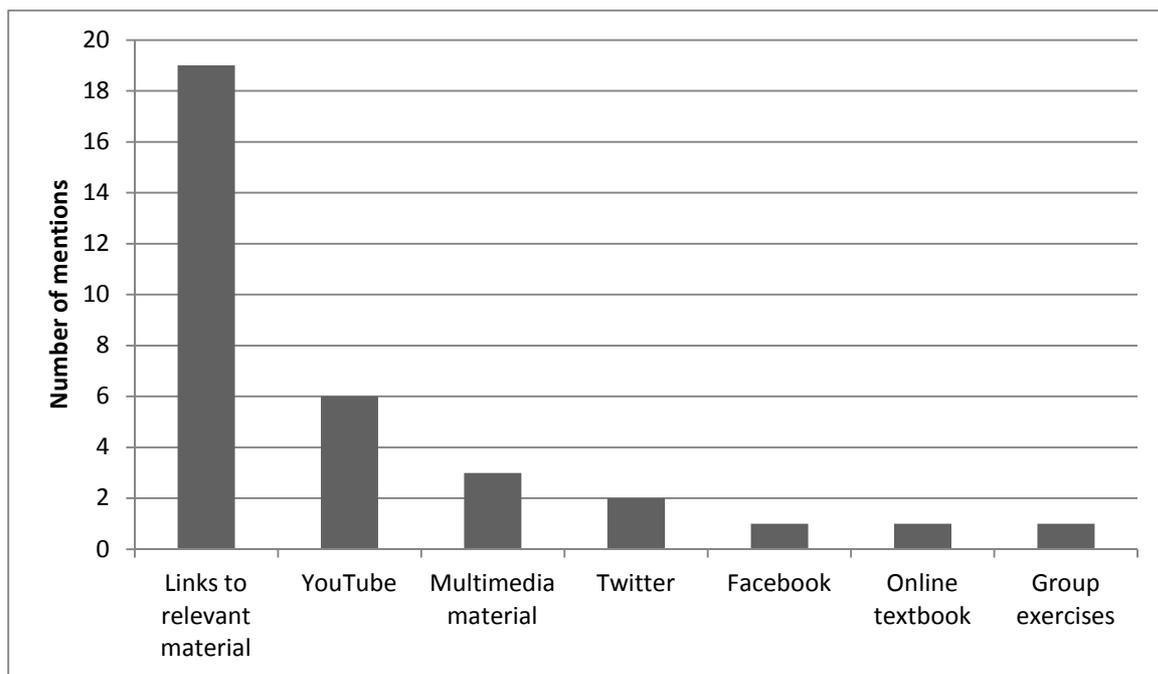


Figure 5: *Usage of WWW*

As with the LMS usage polled in question 2, the most common use of the (public) Internet was to provide content and materials associated with the subject. This was mostly described as news media content, government websites or supplementary readings. There were also a small number of respondents who mentioned YouTube or other video sites.

Once again, such use of the Internet could be described as one-way and solitary. Students are provided with links to follow and consume the material at their own rate. There was not enough extra information provided by respondents to determine if such links were then integrated into coursework, assessments or collaborative tasks.

Only three respondents mentioned the use of a social media platform (*Twitter* and *Facebook*) for their course delivery. Both the mentions of *Twitter* described its use as a method of posting links to relevant material, which is reasonable given that this is a strength of the micro-blogging tool. This use therefore follows a similar pattern (passive/solitary) to the other subject material delivery mentioned above. The message in this case is the same, only the medium has changed.

The *Facebook* usage mentioned was potentially more collaborative, though it was not clear if there was a link between the activity and the subject matter taught:

...for interaction with students outside of formal mechanisms; promote my own research to establish teaching-research nexus.

This suggests the utilisation of the social networking site as the basis for a community of learning beyond the subject-specific applications described by others. There is also one mention of using the Internet for “group exercises”, but the nature of this activity was not defined by the respondent.

There was a single mention of using an online component of an official textbook.

Question 4 (Please indicate any online tasks and tools YOUR STUDENTS are required to utilise during the delivery of any of your subjects. (Note, this research is NOT concerned with the use of email or web interfaces purely for the submission of assignments completed off-line. Eg. Emailing an essay to a teacher or submitting it via TurnItIn or an assignment management system).

Twenty three people provided a response to this question with many offering more than one example of what online tools and tasks they utilised. Of note is the relatively high mention of role play as an online-enabled activity. This is curious, since role play was indicated by just two respondents to question 2.

The significant mention of role plays as an online activity offers the observation that wider implementation of such tasks may not be too large a leap of faith for IR/Politics teachers.

Indeed it may be an indication that teachers are already aware of the straightforward manner in which role plays and simulations can be realised through relatively simple technological means, or might be open to suggestions on how these can be incorporated into their teaching.

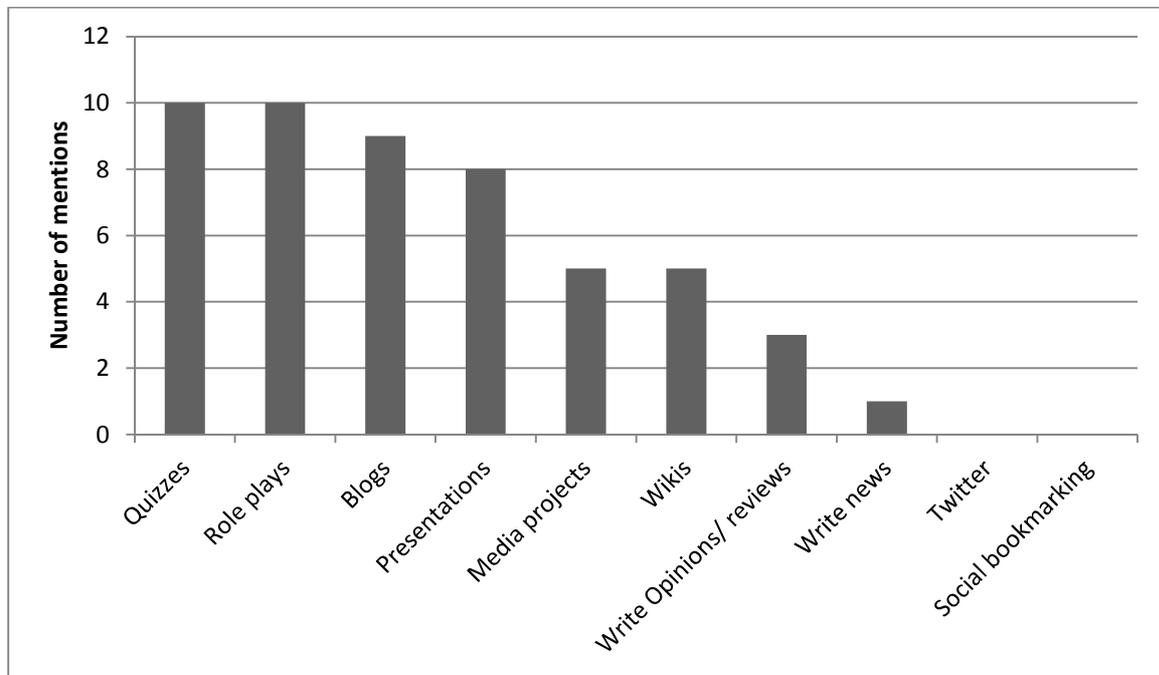


Figure 6: *Online activities mentioned*

The use and benefits of online role play were discussed in three of the follow-up interviews:

- *(The role play I use is)... an asynchronous, closed website that's been especially built as a platform for this particular role play....I think because it's such a complicated subject, it's the only way to really immerse them into it and get them to get a first-hand experience of who the people are, what the issues are, how the issues impact on each other, the relatedness of events, and it teaches that complexity in a first-hand experience, and it also allows them to immerse themselves, whereas reading or being lectured at, or discussing in a tutorial, doesn't give them that depth (Interviewee D).*
- *...I had an idea that students would come and role play in the class and represent different countries to negotiate a case in the United Nations. It was like a mock UN. And you know there's so much secret diplomacy that goes on,*

and I wanted them to understand that. So the Multimedia Centre...were quite keen on helping me. So together we developed this idea that there will be face-to-face negotiations but then there will be a platform on which different characters could engage in secret diplomacy while they would still be part of the UN (Interviewee E).

- *I also played around with – unfortunately we didn't get a critical mass to be able to do it this year – we played around with the idea of other sites for simulations, but that's a work in progress at the moment...we played with the MyLO platform but we're going to work more with external sites providers depending on the numbers we get enrolled in the program next year...And role playing, which I think international relations suits, or the learning material works really well with that idea (Interviewee B).*

A further discussion of using role play in teaching IR/Politics occurs in Chapter 6. This chapter demonstrates the significant benefits in learning and engagement that can accrue from such an approach.

In addition to role plays, 'Wikis' is the only other activity in the responses that can be classified in the active/group category. Although no elaboration was forthcoming in the subsequent open-ended question, one of the follow-up interview respondents described some attempts to use a wiki as a class project space:

For example they were given a topic on pirates in the Horn of Africa area. And they basically had to work out which aspects of that case would they choose, would they look into and they had to produce researched information, videos, interviews...some of them even on the refugee issue went and talked to people. And then they had to upload all that. Since each person was responsible for one section they were marked for that, and the group was marked as a whole on the quality of the final product. The problem was that students would have preferred to do it on a tutorial basis so that they could meet on a set time and know that they could talk to each other...But interestingly they weren't very happy with it. Because it was a group project and they didn't know if it would mark well or not. But as a teacher, when I looked at the quality of their submissions they were very good (Interviewee E).

In regards to the other responses to this question it is not clear whether tasks such as blogs, presentations, media projects and writing exercises are performed collectively or individually and whether they involve the students, the teachers or both to generate the material.

The lack of any nominations for *Twitter* or social bookmarking sites is of interest given the publicity often afforded such tools in the general media and their mention in responses to earlier questions in this survey. However it is to be acknowledged that whilst universities and staff might make use of *Twitter* as a medium for brief communiqués, this is quite different from employing it as a teaching tool or means of subject delivery. This is shown in the open-ended responses to question 3 (above) and may have been the distinction that respondents made in answering question 4.

Question 5 (Are there any online approaches not included in the matrix above that you utilise for the delivery of your subjects?)

This was an open-ended follow-up to Question 4 and there were only three responses. One concerned utilising the *TurnItIn* plagiarism system, another the use of anonymous 'clicker' hardware and the third a custom-made collaborative knowledge repository. The clicker software is of the sort used in audience testing or game show voting. The respondent indicated this system was employed with multiple-choice questions, allowing the lecturer to quickly see whether the majority of students had understood a concept according to how many gave the correct answer; in effect a kind of instant feedback.

Of greater relevance to this thesis was the response that offered insight into a system called *IdeaNet* that is run by The University of Western Australia. This is a collaborative knowledge repository that allows students to share their summaries of readings relevant to the subject of study.

...in light of the fact that there are frequently more readings that relate to the study of a particular unit than it is possible for each individual student to read. IdeaNet helps students to consolidate the body of work dealing with a particular subject and, at the same time, establish and reinforce the unit's dominant themes and concerns, creating an easy-to-use database for reference.....IdeaNet primarily involves students creating summary or critical notes for readings and then posting their notes on a central database to which the entire class has access. This database can be used as a research tool for the current students of a unit, or as an ongoing and constantly

multiplying reference database. The flexibility of IdeaNet ensures that, whatever the discipline, it can further the students' knowledge-base through an array of online notes on readings relevant to the unit. In most units students are also required to choose up to five keywords that best represent the themes and ideas being presented in a particular reading. In this way, key concepts are reinforced, and the database is made more accessible for students when undertaking research (The Multimedia Centre 2008).

In the follow-up interviews the teacher involved with this work offered further elucidation:

Well all the readings they were given, the lecturer would have told them like "You're responsible for readings A, X and Z. So put your summary of that on the IdeaNet."...And the idea was that the students would pick up the concepts and then build their own database, based on the subject that they're studying. And then all the students would keep on putting their summaries of what they understood from a reading. Now a number of students could be doing the same readings without knowing what the others have written. So they'll put it up and if they wanted to add some keyword that wasn't in the list that we had given them then they would ask the moderator to add that to the list, so that they could link it. So then it prepared a database for everyone to share out of the hundred readings. So many would say 'Islam and women' or 'Islam and politics' 'Islam and democracy'. And then all the students having done that they give one tutorial in which they'd sit down and pick any one aspect out of their whole course and say if that is essential content what other data, entries others had made as a group...what explanations and elaborations....and they learnt from that and what had been added (Interviewee E).

Such a system is a quite simple example of a collaborative database similar in nature to a wiki. It is intriguing because of the manner in which it takes a 'traditional' individual student task (doing readings, researching for an essay and/or doing a presentation to the class) and utilises technology to transform that work into a collaborative effort that has benefits for the whole cohort.

Question 6 (Does the use of any of these tools count towards a student's assessment?)

There were 44 responses to this question though 15 of them selected the field of 'Not Applicable'. Of the remainder, 19 indicated that online exercises were part of the assessment regime, with 10 saying that this was not the case.

The latter group will likely comprise mainly those situations where the use of online technologies is as a broadcast medium for unit content. That is to say, where students are consuming course material uploaded or linked to by the teacher and where the online environment is not a specific enabler of a particular assessment task. Additionally there may be situations where active and/or group tasks were facilitated through an ICT environment, but then these did not count towards assessment. For example, a discussion board where students are encouraged to post but that this does not comprise part of their grading.

The pattern of responses received suggests that teachers willingly accept the relationship between student use of online learning and assessment in online exercises. One could also hypothesise that given teacher feelings regarding time and workload barriers to online adoption (see Chapter 5), there would be the sentiment that instituting online tasks is more worthwhile if there is a contribution towards assessment. Some respondents to this research certainly indicated that this was also the case for students:

...time poor students are often reluctant to make an additional investment of time and that 'student culture' works against collaboration which is not explicitly assessment related.

Question 7 (Do students use these tools for individual or group activities/ projects/ assignments?)

This question asked whether students used collaborative online tools for individual or group activities/projects/assignments. There were only 24 responses and the results show no clear trend. Eleven respondents indicated they used online tasks purely for individual assessment, whilst just two respondents indicated their online tasks were just for group work. However a further 11 selected the option indicating a mix of group and individual assessment.

Without an understanding of the tasks and tools represented by the responses to this question it is difficult to make any assumptions about the practices involved. For example, students could receive a portion of their grade for individual work and another portion for contributing to a group component of the same assignment or series of assignments. Likewise an

individual could be assessed purely on their own contribution to a larger collaborative work, such as a wiki.

The respondents who indicated that they used only an individual approach to online assessment were at this point discounted from further progress in the survey. Those who had indicated their use of group approaches progressed to the next set of questions ("Questionnaire 2".)

Question 8 (What is/are the name(s) of the subject(s) you teach and what is the main theme of the content for each? (eg. IR theory, Political Economy, Regional studies, Political Issues....))

The breakdown of the 26 responses to this open-ended question shows no clear trend in the subject areas taught with an online group component. Although there are many more mentions of regional politics, International Relations and Political Theory, it is worth noting that these areas probably represent the largest proportion of common study across Politics and IR courses. That is to say, there would be fewer subject units convened in more specific areas such as Environmental Politics, so it is not surprising that this topic and other typical 'elective' areas do not show up with the same prevalence in the responses.

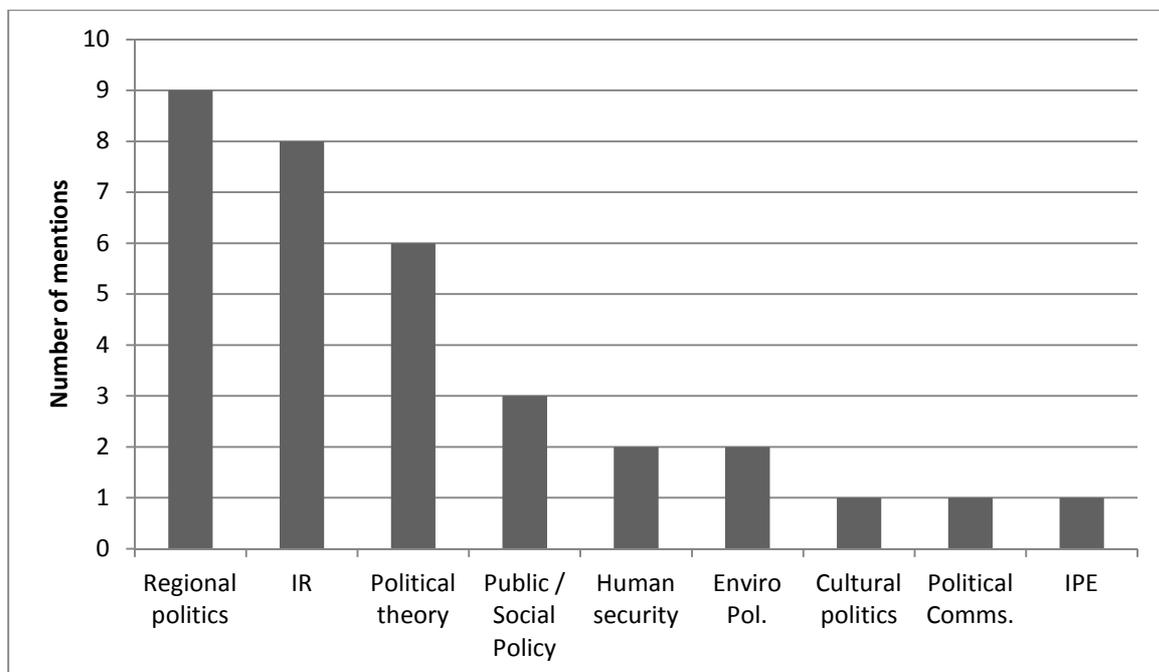


Figure 7: *Subject areas presented with an online component*

By the same logic though, it is remarkable that International Political Economy (IPE) does not rank more highly, since this too is a subject area commonly represented in Politics and IR courses. However IPE units may not always be convened by staff within an IR/Politics department, instead being presented by staff from Business or Economics divisions and such cross-faculty teaching was not within the scope of this survey's parameters. There is also the possibility that the IPE material may be delivered at some universities under the umbrella of another unit more intuitively categorised by respondents as 'IR' or 'Political Theory'.

Question 9 (For each subject nominate whether your cohort is (a) Internal (On-campus) students only, (b) External (Off-campus) students only, (c) Both on and off campus)

There were 23 responses to this question, with most of them indicating at least two subjects delivered with an online group-work element. The responses seemed to indicate that when online collaborative tasks were employed, this was more commonly the case in units that served only on-campus students. The next most frequent uses of such tasks was in units with a mixed mode of enrolment. An indicated use of collaborative online tasks purely for off-campus units was quite rare in the responses to the questionnaire.

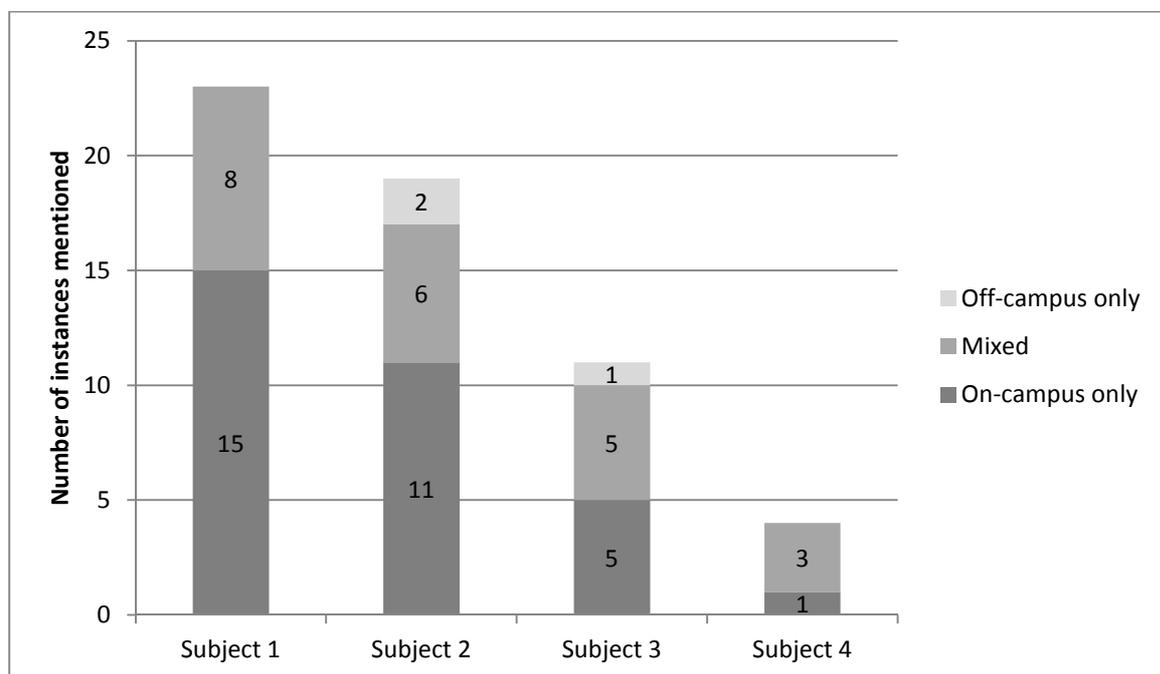


Figure 8: *Enrolment mode of units using collaborative online tools*

Taking the responses for multiple subjects collectively, a pattern becomes apparent in the study modes where online tools are most frequently used:

On-campus only: 32

Mixed cohort: 22

Off-campus only: 3

That is, the majority of respondents indicate they are using collaborative online tools for on-campus students only. This differentiation is further evidenced by the responses to the related question 10.

Question 10 (If you teach a mixed mode (on- and off-campus) course with these collaborative tools, do both types of student have identical assignment tasks and criteria?)

Here, only three respondents indicated that the assessment patterns were the same for the units where they serviced on- and off-campus students, with six noting that the assessment regime was different. A further 15 said that the question was Not Applicable.

Analysis of this trend would require further knowledge regarding the manner in which individual universities integrate their off-campus students. At some universities, mixed mode teaching will be the norm, with both enrolment modes appearing under the same subject code. At other universities, the differing attendance cohorts may be represented in separate course or subject codes, even if the content is roughly congruent. However these organisational distinctions at the unit level will not in themselves allow assumptions to be made about the assessment regimes across the two modes. It is here that individual teacher choices will have an impact. These choices may in turn be influenced by the logistical practicalities of teaching on or off-campus students. For example, one approach might be that whilst on-campus students earn a portion of their grade from an in-class tutorial presentation, these same marks will be obtained in a different manner for off-campus students. Two respondents addressed this:

- *There is an in-person 'conference' component of the online role play that on-campus students participate in while off-campus students write a paper in lieu.*
- *External students write blogs instead of having tutorials*

Taken together, the responses to questions 9 and 10 do not lead to any clear hypotheses regarding teacher preferences for collaborative online tasks and the manner in which they are employed between modes. There is a general trend in the prevalence of respondents

indicating their work is mainly with on-campus cohorts, but this may reflect the proportions of students enrolled in the different modes.

However, the very *absence* of a trend that clearly indicates the use of such tasks for off-campus students is noteworthy. If there is a lack of deployment of online collaboration with off-campus students this is disappointing given that this is one approach that provides opportunities for increasing the integration of remote students (Bernard et al. 2000). If all students, regardless of study mode, are participating in an online environment, this can foster greater equity (Hardy and Totman 2013), as well as addressing learning (and graduate) outcomes such as improved professional communications skills, teamwork and IT literacy. Moreover, it is possible that for off-campus students such online collaborative tasks may offer a rare opportunity for them to develop these peer communicative/collaborative skills or during the course of their studies. Indeed those off-campus students who are still only utilising the Internet for tasks like assignment submission and accessing readings are really being served only marginally better than their predecessors in decades past who exchanged materials with their institution by the postal service.

Question 11 (Outline the assessment tasks that require Internet utilisation.)

There were 19 responses to this open-ended question that asked for a description of the tasks performed in an online environment. Some of the responses indicated that this question was not relevant or else concerned the passive/solitary style tasks that have been discussed above, for example downloading readings.

Of the responses containing tasks of interest to this research were the following:

- *They have tutorial presentations and discussions online*
- *Students work in teams of up to 5 students to build a page in a uni hosted Wiki*
- *Group discussions mainly but looking to expand*
- *Students take part in a role play that runs over a number of weeks. They use the website (and wikis etc) to discuss strategies amongst their team Students in teams follow blogs on particular issues and report back to the class on their findings*
- *I may introduce a blog next year.*

- *Students work in teams of four or more to develop wikispaces. Students also use the Simulation Builder, and IdeaNet to provide their inputs in group situation.*
- *Students work in teams or as individuals to role play a person or a group.*
- *Students maintain individual blogs, collaborate with tutorial members in constructing tute agendas, peer review each other's draft assignments, post and evaluate postings to class blogs*
- *Students work in groups to complete background research for a position paper.*
- *Paired video presentations for online posting. Individual blog contributions.*

These responses indicate a wide variety of approaches towards online collaboration, with no clear trends. This further reinforces the hypothesis of individual teachers operating in an independent fashion and scaffolding tasks according to their own preferences, experiences and technical ability.

Question 12 (Do you use any collaborative or social media platforms (LMS or external) in your subject delivery? For example, wikis (whether public or private), Facebook, virtual worlds such as 2nd Life or WoW, online simulations, computer role playing environments) If yes, explain how you use these.)

Of the 27 who responded here, 19 said they did not use any collaborative or social media platforms. The eight remaining respondents made the following elaborations:

- *Contact*
- *Private wikis*
- *Not sure whether this is relevant - we haven't done this in our IR (IPE) course, but in a different course we set up group forums connected to the LMS site for people doing assessed group work - most people didn't use them though - they opted just to email each other or meet in person instead.*
- *Simulation Builder combines on line role playing with physical presence in tutorials to give them ideas of open and secret diplomacy.*

- *Online Simulation. To role play the international politics of the Middle East.*
- *Wiggio - online collaborative tool. Group locker and discussion space in LMS.*
- *Conversations via Discussion Board, conversations via blogs*
- *LMS. Facebook (for interaction with students outside of formal mechanisms; promote my own research to establish teaching-research nexus).*

This group of responses provides a similar impression to that of question 11: a variety of individual approaches combining different tools and different levels of collaboration. It would appear that there is a discrepancy between the number of people who mentioned role plays in question 4 in comparison to only two mentions in this question.

No mention of Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUVES) or 3D virtual worlds⁶⁷ in the responses to this survey is also an interesting result, since other research suggests that such tools are being used in the delivery of other Arts and Humanities subjects in Australian universities (Dalgarno et al. 2010). There are three possibilities for this discrepancy. Firstly the sample size for this research is much smaller than that of Dalgarno et al (2010) and therefore did not encounter the deployment of MUVES by those surveyed. Secondly, there may be a discipline specific barrier or disincentive to employing such visually immersive environments for teaching IR/ Politics. For example, it could be that in IR/ Politics visual representations of the subject matter are deemed unimportant or at least secondary in contrast to disciplines such as history or fine arts. This may make the use of non-visual or text-based role plays more expedient within IR/Politics, where the emphases might be on communication and diplomacy rather than re-creating the physical space of an environment. Finally, the fluid and rapidly changing political situations in some parts of the world may create an obstacle in terms of repeated workload demand in order for such a graphically intense environment to be kept relevant. This would be the case if a teacher was trying to create something along the lines of a 'virtual Baghdad' or represent particular individuals in a group of politicians, some of whom would need to be replaced on a regular basis.

The use (or lack of use) of MUVES in teaching IR/Politics subjects would be a matter worth exploring in future research.

⁶⁷ Such as the proprietary environments of *Second Life* or *Active Worlds*.

Question 12a (If yes, explain what advantages and disadvantages you feel they bring?)

Responses to this question tended to be negative overall, with most respondents using the open comment to explain that they did *not* use collaborative tools in their teaching, either because they did not know how to or because they did not see any benefit in them. Both of these sentiments were sometimes put in the context of time/workload pressures; that is to say that the investment in developing online collaboration was not repaid:

- *In an ideal world, I would use collaborative tools, but the job involves juggling teaching, research and admin. There are pressures to perform well in them all, and if all the efforts went into one (including planning and development), the other two would suffer. I do enough on the teaching job to 'get by' quite well (teaching ratings between 4 and 4.5 out of 5) and I cannot afford to let my other work suffer.*
- *I still base learning on interactive class-room discussion; hence I see no need to emphasise on-line collaborative tools.*
- *I do not use them because I have little information about how they could be used, and therefore do not see any benefit to teaching beyond what I currently do.*
- *Just don't have time to develop or become familiar with them - survival teaching I'm afraid.*
- *I don't have the knowledge to perform these tasks. I find it difficult to find the time to learn new skills given the demands of teaching and research. The lower status that teaching has in comparison to research means that skilling myself in this area is a lower priority than devoting time out of teaching to more teaching skills.*
- *I'm not sure there's any greater value in online activities as opposed to in-class activities.*

Negative comments were also made towards the perceived 'fussiness' of LMS software and/or the difficulty of combining external software with 'official' university systems.

- *The platforms are clunky and don't 'speak' to other platforms that the university uses.*
- *Haven't had the time to explore how to integrate them - especially when the format has just changed and I can't get into a class to learn how to use our new online system!*
- *TOO FUSSY AND NOT ESPECIALLY HELPFUL*

Another disadvantage that some respondents noted was the resistance of students to group and online exercises:

- *I can barely get the students to do readings and come to tutorials -- adding another layer of bureaucracy and requirements without clear reason to do so would just add to my workload.*
- *My main issue is how to get people to use them - connecting them to assessment can of course compel people in some respects, but it can also create ill will and resentment if people don't see the intrinsic benefits, and I'm still searching for ways to get around this.*
- *The pedagogic advantages of on-line collaboration are well described in the literature. But the disadvantage is that time poor students are often reluctant to make an additional investment of time and that "student culture" works against collaboration which is not explicitly assessment related.*
- *Advantage - Ability to collaborate regardless of time and space restrictions. Disadvantage - accountability to the group can be an issue for the same reasons.*

When advantages were mentioned in response to this question a mixture of motivations were presented:

- *Good for assessing individual contributions to a group exercise.*
- *Students can interact with each other effectively and easily at any time that suits them and with students from other cohorts.*
- *Students seem to engage more with this type of assessment.*

- *The pedagogic advantages of on-line collaboration are well described in the literature.*
- *Ability to collaborate regardless of time and space restrictions.*
- *Creates a sense of common belonging for remote individuals.*
- *They can be 'paper-less' - no need for a textbook or hard copy reader.*
- *Centralise subject material and incorporate external online content.*
- *Good way to engage students, who are already involved online through social media.*

Overall the positive and negative responses to this question indicate a varying awareness of the advantages that collaborative online tools can offer. Many of the responses appeared to be based upon individual circumstances and expediency rather than a greater desire to address pedagogic practices or the broader objectives of the institution. This is a natural response, especially when staff feel their workload is heavy, however it does point towards a possible need for better communicating the benefits of collaborative online learning in delivering subjects in this discipline.

A fuller discussion of perceived advantages and perceived ease of use in regards to technology adoption is presented in Chapter 5.

Question 12b (Whether you are or are not a current user, would you personally like to make MORE use of such collaborative platforms?)

Indecision was the dominant trend in the 26 responses to this question, with 14 people nominating 'undecided'. The remaining 12 respondents were split equally between the 'Yes' and 'No' options. Together these results could be interpreted as indicating no overwhelming desire to incorporate collaborative platforms in subject delivery. Alternatively this result may suggest that the respondents felt insufficiently informed about collaborative online tasks to decide whether such an approach is suited to their teaching objectives or their time and workload constraints.

Question 12c (If you would like to make more use of collaborative tools, please indicate in the box below what sort of things you would most like to employ.)

Since this question requested a response only from those interested in online collaboration, there were only seven responses in this comment box. Additionally, some of these responses were unclear or did not specifically address the question. Two respondents mentioned they would like to explore wikis built by students. One respondent mentioned a greater use of online discussion.

The limited range of responses could indicate that there is a lack of interest in using a collaborative online approach in teaching IR/Politics, or at least an ambivalence or confusion about such methods. However, the response rate here was too small to identify any real trends.

Question 13 (Would you describe yourself as an 'early adopter' or particularly 'tech savvy'?)

This question was intended to show how teachers of IR/Politics assessed themselves regarding technical competence. There were 28 responses to this closed-ended question, with the results breaking down as follows:

Yes: 8

No: 8

Undecided: 12

As with the question about desire to use online collaboration, there is an even split in the results for this question, with the largest group being 'undecided' in their self-assessment. The only trend that can be observed is that the majority (71.5%) of respondents *do not* clearly identify themselves as technically skilled or at the forefront of innovation. This is relevant because it could be assumed that those teachers uncertain about their technical abilities would be less likely to pursue a technology-based approach to their subject delivery, particularly if they feel that they would be unsupported or unrewarded for it. Such perceptions would provide a major disincentive to any attempt to innovate.

A fuller discussion of the impact of self-assessed technical competence and incentive to innovate is provided in Chapter 5. Of related note is that student experience and perception of the value of ICT-enhanced learning is affected by the evaluation of the teacher's technical competence (Kvavik and Caruso 2005). There could therefore be further disincentive to be at the forefront of adoption if a teacher is concerned that their lack of technical expertise may cause a negative experience for students.

Question 14 (What obstacles do you think teaching staff face in making greater use of such computer aided collaborations? (eg. Time, training, lack of IT support, lack of policy support, lack of credibility, budget, student technical competence...))

Twenty-five respondents opted to provide elaboration on this open-ended question, with most of them noting more than one obstacle that, in their opinion, hindered greater deployment of online collaboration in teaching. Some of the responses gathered were just repetitions of the examples given in the question (e.g. “Time”, “Tech support”). Other responses were more elaborate:

- *Time. The main obstacle is the demands of other work. I consider it to be a zero-sum game and trying my best to do a good/very good job of balancing all the demands but without trying to excel in any one. Something would have to give.*
- *All of the above The maxim 'keep it simple' is a good one for teaching - the more you rely on technology the more there is to go wrong - and it usually does. There is little backup when things don't work and students get very frustrated.*
- *They aren't that necessary. Besides which, it's hard enough to get a site up and running without constantly utilising these other aspects, and the workloads policy of the university would not reflect nor accept the time and effort that would be required to use them.*
- *Training, students will use online only if they are marked for the use.*
- *Time Training Relevance to learning outcomes Lack of student interest in utilising LMS etc.*
- *Time to develop activities Lack of information about what they can offer and their pedagogical value.*
- *Time beyond all else. Also the more sophisticated your approach the more than can go wrong. Also it's a bit more difficult to ensure integrity with on-line assessment.*

- *Lack of IT support, lack of policy support/support staff more broadly in learning how to set these things, managing them throughout semester, etc. More boring teaching methods certainly leave more time for research :).*
- *Fear of technology poor technology over reliance on technology.*
- *Time and training are a hindrance, largely due to heavy workloads. Also, the available tools (particularly Blackboard) are not particularly well suited to this.*
- *Time Lack of IT support Lack of support in terms of recognition of work involved.*
- *All of the above to some extent or other. Also student culture and similar staff culture.*

These responses accord with the findings of the existing literature that examines university teachers' adoption of technologies, both in Australia and elsewhere. (See for example Kennedy et al. (2011), Shannon and Doube (2003), Aijan and Hartshorne (2008), Lean et al. (2006), Moser (2007), Bacow (2012).) Across this literature there is a broad consensus that teaching staff feel pressured by factors such as time, workload and lack of support for technological change. These barriers are more fully explored in the next chapter.

In analysing the responses to this section of the questionnaire it is important to bear in mind that it asks for opinions and perceptions, not just about the respondents' practices, but also potential presumptions regarding their colleagues' or hypothetical peers' attitudes. However, in attempting to discuss these responses it may be useful to note the frequency with which some keywords occurred:

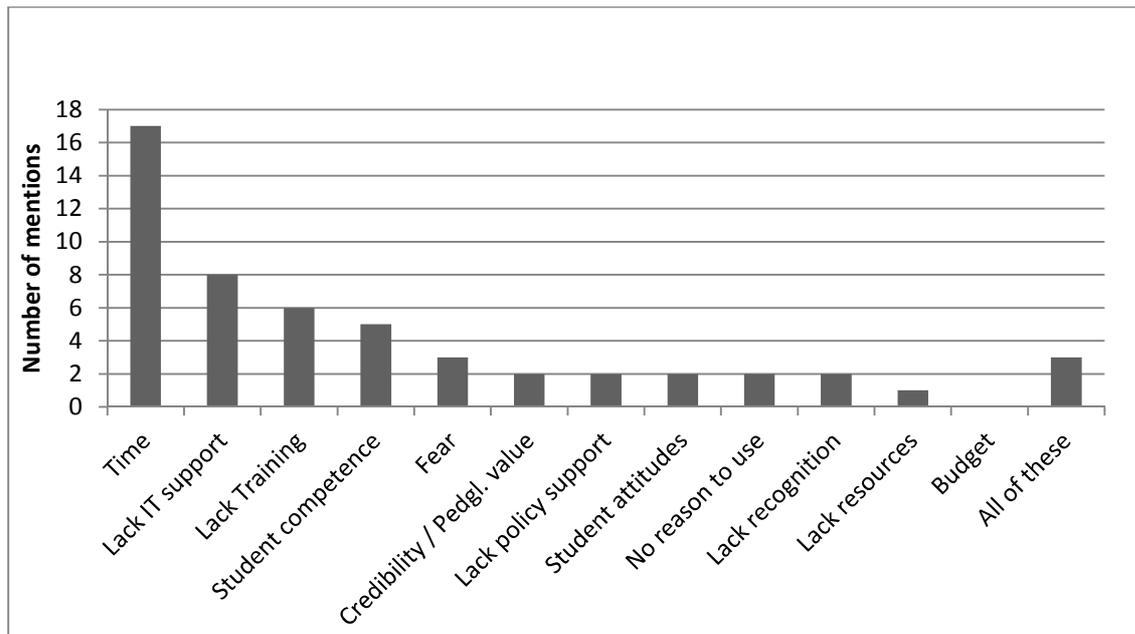


Figure 9: *What obstacles do staff face in implementing online collaboration?*

Placing the responses into these categories allows them to be grouped further. This approach is useful since there is some degree of overlap between many of the things mentioned. When this is done, three main categories of perceived barriers emerge:

- **Environmental barriers** (including time, workload, support, institutional idiosyncrasies);
- **Classroom barriers** (including Student technology access, student competence, student attitudes towards technology and group work, suitability to subject); and,
- **Mental factors** (including perceptions, fears, doubts about pedagogical value).

How these factors interact specifically within the higher education context is further explored in Chapter 5.

Follow-up Interviews

Of the 41 respondents, six indicated their willingness to be contacted for further discussion. All of these individuals were spoken to at a time of their convenience and the transcripts appear in Appendix 1.⁶⁸ The attitudes and opinions expressed by the interviewees reflected similar themes to those gathered in the short responses to the questionnaire: that online innovation was not well supported by institutions and that time, workload and other 'realities' served to stifle efforts towards experimenting with new practices.

The six interviewees did represent the full range of current practice with online and/or collaborative learning amongst Australian IR/Politics teachers. Some were using the Internet simply in the standard 'broadcast' format as a medium for providing lecture recordings, slides, readings and so on. Amongst this group there was some recognition that a higher level of online utilisation and collaboration might be beneficial for students, but that pursuing this goal was probably impractical or not a worthwhile return on investment. As with many of the short response comments, there was a viewpoint evident that could be summarised as 'I would like to do more, *but...*'.

Two interviewees were at the other end of the continuum, employing purpose-built group collaboration tools such as wikis or online role plays. Despite reporting their success with these more elaborate approaches, these respondents expressed largely the same attitudes as their non-innovating peers regarding aspects of institutional support and workplace obstacles. Their viewpoint could be expressed as 'I have managed to do this *despite...*'.

Excerpts from the interview transcripts have been used throughout this thesis to illustrate particular points.

An apparent trend: The freedom to be conservative

Despite the relative liberty they have in delivering their subjects and the institutional drivers towards greater incorporation of online teaching, it seems that there is not a great deal of variation in the way that Australian IR/Politics teachers utilise technology. Most respondents

⁶⁸ The transcripts have been de-identified, with names of people and their institutions redacted.

to this research follow similar usage patterns with online delivery, using the Internet as a means of broadcast to passive recipients. The online environment is certainly not the only innovative means of teaching and assessing students, but other evidence seems to support the uniformity of IR/Politics subject delivery at Australian universities.

For each of the Australian institutions offering an IR/Politics major some trends can be extrapolated by examining the assessments noted in the individual unit descriptions, where available. To provide an example, a Politics unit from each university was selected and the assessment schedule noted. For purposes of comparison, the units selected were all equivalent to second year offerings and all dealt with the politics of a region, such as Europe, the USA, Asia or the Middle East.⁶⁹ This information is tabled in Appendix 5.

What is apparent from this list is that the majority of assessment regimes are congruent and the tasks follow a pattern of one or two pieces of writing, a written exam and some form of attendance and participation. There are few exceptions to this rule, with only two mentions of a simulation and one of a debate. At face value, most of the assessment tasks are solitary ones, though group exercises are mentioned twice. Whilst "tutorial participation" might be considered as a collaborative task, with student discussion generating collective learning, it is difficult to determine how uniformly such a mechanism is enforced and what outcomes might ensue.

The tensions between learning, how to assess it and the need to certify it are relevant to this pattern. Boud (2010) stresses the pivotal nature of assessment in higher education but notes that over the last decade in Australia there has been "...a rationalisation of assessment influenced by adverse staff-student ratios, which has driven assessment back to activities governed more by the need to generate grades, than to promote effective learning" (p. 5-6). In such an environment, exploring approaches that seek to capitalise on the synergies between assessment and learning becomes increasingly important.

The prevalence of similar forms of assessment in Australian IR/Politics subjects could be a reflection of the staff ratios Boud mentions, as well as particular criteria at the universities, such as the need to have exams. However it could also be the "old paradigms die hard"

⁶⁹ Second year was chosen because it offered the most overlap of comparable units. For example, different universities had different approaches as to when in a course the major sequence units were offered and when (and if) content such as IR theory was presented. Regional political studies units were selected as the example because every university bar one offered such units in second year.

hypothesis (Tapscott 2009: 128). That is, teachers are persisting with 'old' models of assessment out of habit, reluctance to change or a firm belief in the advantages of such methods. Whatever the reasons, the evidence from the questionnaire and the list of assessments in Appendix 5 shows a congruence amongst Australian IR/Politics teachers in the way that they use technology and the assessment tasks they employ.

The apparent homogeneity provides evidence as to the complexity of examining the decision to implement online collaboration in teaching IR/Politics at Australian universities. It makes for a situation where one cannot model a simple yes/no acceptance dilemma. Instead there is a much more complex web of pressures and assumptions that need to be included. Some of these may be quite specific to the tertiary environment such as legislative changes or the manner in which promotions are determined. Other factors will arise out of individual judgements, preferences and circumstances.

Conclusions

The adoption of collaborative e-learning by IR/Politics teaching staff at Australian universities appears to be quite limited and inconsistent. Where usage is indicated, it tends to rely on the initiative of individual staff and there is little uniformity observed between practices. The most common use of technology in subject delivery is in the Web 1.0 or “Web supplemented” (OECD 2005) manner, whereby 'traditional' teaching materials are placed on the Internet for students to access and consume.

A recurring response in explaining this slow pace of innovation appears to be in staff perceptions of workload and reward – the archetypal 'return on investment' judgement. The data gathered indicates that at present the most common outcome of this calculation for staff considering innovation is that the effort required to incorporate collaborative online learning is not repaid. The expected forms of this repayment can include time savings, career advantage (promotion) or student satisfaction. There is also an opportunity cost factored into this judgement, particularly in terms of trading off teaching versus research time expenditure.

These findings are significant, since the current lack of innovation and the perceptions of staff regarding support for such approaches would seem to be at odds with the sort of strategic goals stated by Australian universities, as well as potentially weakening the graduate

outcomes they are aiming for. This indifference on the part of teaching staff also pays no heed to the consistently positive literature regarding the identified pedagogical benefits of collaborative learning and the long history of using collaborative learning in the IR and Politics disciplines.

Therefore, despite the market factors pushing towards greater e-learning deployment and the sound pedagogical support for collaborative online learning, this research indicates that such approaches are not commonly utilised by Australian IR/Politics teachers. Whilst this result is not unexpected, a greater examination of those institutional and personal factors involved with the 'return on investment' judgement is required. By exploring these (de)motivations some potential solutions to the current impasse may present themselves.

Chapter 5: What's stopping us?

The results of this research into online teaching practices in IR/Politics at Australian universities suggest that despite a high use of the Internet in subject delivery, relatively little use is made of collaborative online learning tasks or generic Social Media/UGC approaches. The indications from the questionnaire and interviews are that Australian teachers of IR/Politics perceive significant barriers to any move away from the Web 1.0 approach and are therefore disinclined to do so. This is despite the weight of scholarly evidence describing the benefits of such collaboration, the institutional pressures to achieve greater levels of online activity and the fact that tools such as wikis, blogs and online role plays are no longer what could be considered 'new' tools or approaches. That there is such a gap between desire and fulfilment makes it important to examine these factors noted in the questionnaire responses. If these can be addressed satisfactorily then there is potential to build greater alignment between teaching practice, institutional goals and student learning outcomes.

Moving Australian IR/Politics teachers towards greater use of online collaboration is fundamentally a question of encouraging 'innovation'. In this case, innovation does not necessarily connote *inventing* practices, but rather moving to ones that already exist but are untried by the individual. It should not be assumed either that technical innovation is the same as pedagogical innovation (Johnson et al. 2008) nor that either of these produces or requires the other. For purposes of the discussion in this chapter, the terms 'innovate' and 'innovation' will therefore be used in this sense of shifting practices. However there will be an emphasis on technological adoption and innovation, as this is necessary for the implementation of online collaborative tasks. This emphasis is justified given the demonstrated efficacy in teaching and learning outcomes that such tasks offer (q.v.), as well as the findings that technological issues are some of the greatest perceived barriers to such pedagogical innovation.

In the discipline specific framing of this thesis, it is of note that the low levels of online innovation found in the questionnaire correlate with broader examinations of technology use in teaching at Australian universities. This studies include similar decisions by staff about how and how much they use web supported teaching tools (Shannon and Doube (2003)) or how individual teachers decide to innovate by using unofficial (i.e. non-LMS) technologies (Kennedy et al. (2011)). As with the responses in this thesis, themes of time poverty,

technical competence and lack of reward are frequently cited as barriers to progressing toward higher levels of online teaching innovation.

In this research and throughout the wider literature concerning teacher attitudes to technology adoption, the pressures of time and lack of support are consistently linked to the slow rates of innovation or desire to innovate on the part of teaching staff (Bacow et al. 2012; Birch and Burnett 2009; McKenzie et al. 2005; Moser 2007; Shannon and Doube 2003; Tabata and Johnsrud 2008). However, to say that teachers are merely short of time or lack the computer skills is an oversimplification of the matter. A greater level of analysis is required to take into account some of the specific dynamics of the tertiary teaching workplace, the nature of personal incentive and the influence that one's own experiences and those of one's peers can exert. An examination of the factors that influence individuals and communities to adopt new technology practices is also relevant.

The disconnection between teachers and their universities

A disconnection between the strategic educational aims of a university and the actual practices of its teachers can occur because of the culture and systems that have arisen over time. In the Australian higher education sector competing hierarchies (particularly managerial versus academic), weak organisational communication and a history of focus on research output over teaching skills are all part of the *status quo*. Combined they can act as a disincentive towards innovative teaching practice.

In his observations of teaching practices in the scientific disciplines, Schneckenberg (2009) noted how the compartmentalisation staff tended to operate within had become a barrier to implementing university strategic policy on technology-enhanced teaching. The various sub-groupings amongst the academic staff (especially disciplinary loyalties within and without the institution) meant there was little identification with the university itself. Teaching practices therefore developed in a more or less autonomous manner and there was little 'cross-fertilisation' with other individuals and peer groups. Although reporting on European universities, Schneckenberg's findings would seem quite relevant to the Australian higher education environment, where the fragmented hierarchies of university, faculty, school, department, discipline group and campus mean that teachers are operating with a high degree

of autonomy, a low degree of cross-communication and with only a vague attachment with "the university" or "the academy". Such attitudes to and uncertainties about strategic goals were evidenced in the responses to the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews:

- *I suspect they (the university's strategic goals) are almost irrelevant (to me)... the strategic goals might vary from year to year, but I think some of that is related more to the public relations section of the university rather than anything that's changed teaching itself (Interviewee E).*
- *I think that there hasn't been a very specific drive here, there's just the idea of providing teaching and learning to students that are not necessarily on campus (Interviewee B).*

The disciplinary divisions noted by Schneckenberg occur in Australian universities and amongst IR/Politics staff. For example, a teacher of IR theory at a hypothetical Australian university might exist within the Faculty of Arts. Within that broad group, the teacher may then be accountable to a school or department (e.g. "The School of Social Sciences") and within that school to some sort of discipline group. Within that discipline group this academic staff member may be the only one teaching IR Theory to undergraduates or at least one of only a small number of teachers whose work relates directly to one another. In this case it is likely that teacher will feel more attachment to and influence from those close peers than from any of the formal organisational structures and groupings above.⁷⁰ Moreover, their chances of interaction with teaching staff falling elsewhere within the organisation are low due to this compartmentalisation. Without a specific reason, such as sitting on the same committee or working party, the IR Theory teacher is unlikely to have much professional cross-over with the journalism teacher or the ancient history teacher, although they are nominally in the same faculty or possibly the same building.

At a multi-campus institution the relationships may become even more fractured. At Monash University for example, one teacher of IR/Politics may be in a totally different school from another. Prior to the 2014 divestment of the Monash Gippsland campus, an IR teacher there

⁷⁰ The reasons for preferencing disciplinary loyalties above others can be manifold. They may include specific cultural barriers to interdisciplinarity, such as differing epistemologies, methodologies and jargon. There will also likely be some subjective aspects, such as differing approaches to teaching and learning or simply a 'distrust' of one discipline or another. See Franks et al. (2007) for a fuller discussion of the barriers to interdisciplinary co-operation at Australian universities.

would be in the History-Politics group within the School of Applied Media & Social Sciences. However a colleague on the Clayton campus would be in the Politics – IR section of the School of Political and Social Inquiry.⁷¹

This makes for an extremely splintered situation where individuals or small groups of academics exist in quite independent micro-communities. Relationships within these smaller groups become paramount and the result can be a 'de-coupling' from the strategic goals and plans of the institution as a whole as well as a tendency for decentralised decision making at the various sub-structural levels (Schneckenberg 2009). This disconnection can have a variety of consequences, ranging from weak and ineffectual compliance with strategic goals, through to outright thwarting of them, be it deliberate or unintentional. In terms of teaching practice, an individual will probably be secure in the thought that they don't really need to innovate much or concern themselves with macro- and meso-level visions, as long as they adhere to basic standards of teaching delivery. In a sense, as long as they keep on doing what they have always done 'at the chalkface', and assuming no great dissatisfaction expressed by students, the shifts in policy above them can be ignored.

"...the wider changes that emerge in the macro-level institutional environment often bear little relation to the work done within universities themselves. There is a danger that the adaptation of innovation strategies within universities tends to be more of a ritualistic or symbolic nature than to reflect a real willingness and commitment of their workforces to drive change forward" (Schneckenberg 2009: 416).

This de-coupling can be exacerbated by tensions between the academic and managerial/bureaucratic hierarchies in a university, whereby teaching staff feel increasingly isolated or excluded from decisions taken at the strategic level (Winter and Sarros 2002).

The isolation bred by disciplinary compartmentalisation also has the effect of stifling a key ideal of academia: collegiality (Franks et al. 2007). Whilst this poses obvious barriers to research co-operation, in the teaching context, staff have less opportunity to collaborate with each other and learn from each others' classroom practices (Norton et al. 2013a). This results

⁷¹ Most Australian universities operate across more than one campus, though in many cases the satellite campuses are small and are not truly independent of the main location in terms of staff or administration (for example, maintaining classrooms in a CBD location for professional post-graduate courses). Other universities though operate significant networks of stand-alone campuses, in some cases hundreds of kilometres apart (e.g Deakin University, University of Western Australia, Charles Sturt University).

in a situation where teachers tend to 'muddle on' by themselves with little outside input.⁷² Even when good practices are discovered by chance, the prospect of sharing these with peers may be limited. Such isolation is paradoxical given the type of collaborative and communicative graduate attributes towards which Australian universities are apparently striving.

Additionally, universities (as a macro strategic entity) tend to play little role in the career development of their academic staff, with recruitment, promotion and career paths being dictated through mechanisms and criteria such as research output, which can be far removed from (or opposed to) the institution's strategic ambitions related to teaching (Norton et al. 2013a; Schneckenberg 2009). This is a product of an environment where merit is determined by research output (and where this is published) and criteria such as funding, successful grant applications and so forth. Describing a similar situation in the USA, Balkin and Mello (2012: 474) comment that "Mediocre teachers with a strong research record usually fare much better in tenure and promotion decisions than outstanding teachers with a mediocre research and publication record". Chapman (2012) notes that Balkin and Mellos' findings apply equally to the Australian higher education sector, with research output data being increasingly seen as the "dominant performance measure" (Chapman 2012: 498). This is supported by a survey of Australian university leaders undertaken by Edwards et al. (2011), indicating that teaching experience and/or qualifications were of little importance when considering an employment application, as opposed to a candidate having a strong record in publication and winning funding. Norton et al. (2013a) summarise this *status quo* as follows:

Hiring effective teachers is less important than securing talented researchers who can boost research results. Academics typically prefer research to teaching and government funding directly rewards strong research performance (p. 16).

An attitude of research output being more important than teaching success is also evidenced within the responses gathered in the research phase of this thesis. This state of affairs will likely result in a lack of interest on the part of an individual teacher towards innovation and also can be a disincentive to pursue pedagogical training (or at least implement it).

⁷² Increasingly, there may be some requirement for university teachers to complete a form of qualification such as Graduate Certificate of Higher Education. Having this minimum standard is a positive step, but in its own right does not address the problem of limited opportunities to exchange teaching experiences with colleagues.

Academics feeling time poor in regard to teaching is inextricably linked to this discussion of institutional preference for research output as a performance indicator. Bexley et al. (2011) found that expending extra effort in discharging teaching responsibilities was viewed as less worthwhile from a career point of view. That is to say, that whilst lip service was paid to the mantra that research, teaching and service were of equal importance in the academic environment, most teaching staff understood that research was of primary importance, particularly when it came to applying for promotion.

Academics are concerned about the perceived lack of recognition for teaching in existing promotions processes, despite the efforts of some universities to include teaching performance and achievement in promotion criteria: 88 per cent believe that teaching should be rewarded in promotion but only 31 per cent believe it is currently rewarded.... (ibid.: xii).

...In practical terms, the present settings often throw research and teaching into direct competition for academics' time: productivity and effectiveness in one area is achieved at the expense of the other, at least in part (ibid.: xiv).

An institutional bias (or the perception of it) towards research as an indicator of merit and advancement may have particular ramifications for disciplines such as IR/Politics because teaching in these disciplines has a more significant role in comparison to 'hard' discipline areas such as the sciences (Neumann 2001). In the Humanities-type disciplines, classroom instruction is more central to practice and involves a greater amount of time spent preparing and delivering subject material to students (Neumann 2001). By having a 'one-size-fits-all' system of promotion, universities can inadvertently make promotion more onerous for Humanities and Social Sciences academics (Neumann 2001) and particularly so when promotion panels regularly include staff from other discipline areas that may have differing views on the importance and quantification of research output (Chapman 2012).⁷³ This offers a disincentive to place too much effort into teaching innovation in these disciplines because of the need to pursue research activities that are quite separate to classroom teaching and

⁷³ The Monash University *Academic Promotion Advice and Checklist for Candidates Applying for Promotion to Levels C, D and E* document makes specific note of this possible discrepancy between the disciplines and urges candidates to explain in their applications the relevant disciplinary standards: "publishing one paper a year in one discipline might not be understood by a staff member whose discipline produces an average of five papers per year". (<http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/human-resources/academic-promotion/docs/candidate-checklist.docx> accessed 15/04/2014.)

where the higher level of classroom activity is already causing a time deficit.⁷⁴ Discipline-specific promotion procedures would help here, as would the recognition of teaching excellence as an indicator of contribution to the field:

"Formal recognition of teaching contribution to the discipline through both teaching portfolios and strong teaching weightings could form part of the promotion process. Thus discipline-sensitive promotion criteria, expectations and performance indicators are central to fair and effective institutional practices" (Neumann 2001: 142).

"There was a strong feeling by our interviewees that publications based on genuine scholarship in teaching should be valued to the same extent as publications based on disciplinary research. In addition, some interviewees felt that scholarly innovation products which have been extensively adopted and implemented by peers should be accorded legitimate status as peer reviewed academic outcomes" (McKenzie et al. 2005: 168).

It is important to note that high standards of teaching are highly relevant to achieving many of the graduate attributes goals expected by universities. This disconnection between 'old' promotion structures and ambitious 'new' policies and outcomes is a conspicuous paradox and illustrates the complexity of trying to encourage innovation amongst Australian academics. In this institutional context of diluted organisational hierarchies, disconnected leadership, promotion concerns and personal autonomy the decision to make technological innovations in teaching delivery is affected by a range of factors and private judgements of the sort noted in the responses to the questionnaire. An examination of some of these follows.

Time

In the responses to the questionnaire in this research the most frequently mentioned obstacle to greater use of online collaboration was that of 'time', with some respondents placing this in the context of institutional factors such as workload expectations, perceived recognition for

⁷⁴ If, for example, teaching workload is calculated on a 'research active' basis, whereby those with higher publication/grant records are required to do less teaching, it may be harder for Humanities and Social Sciences teachers to reach the minimum outputs, thus locking them into a cycle of time poverty or at least dictating a less 'extra' effort be made towards teaching.

the effort expended and the need to reconcile time spent on teaching with demands for research output (q.v.). For example:

- *The main obstacle is the demands of other work. I consider it to be a zero-sum game and trying my best to do a good/very good job of balancing all the demands but without trying to excel in any one. Something would have to give.*
- *The workloads policy of the university would not reflect nor accept the time and effort that would be required to use them.*
- *Time and training are a hindrance, largely due to heavy workloads.*
- *More boring teaching methods certainly leave more time for research.*

The themes of these responses were discussed in more depth during the follow-up interviews. As can be seen, the over-riding sentiment was one of time poverty and a pragmatic judgement about the lack of reward for innovation.

- *Well the important barrier is really the time allocation, we – strictly speaking, we haven't got allocated time to experiment. So it's experimentation in our own time. If something is working already and has been working, I have very little incentive in trying something new, because that would require the expenditure of time for something which may not be rewarded in any way, and for which the students may not be rewarded in any way, and it may not work. (Interviewee C).*
- *There's no additional workload recognition, there's certainly no recognition of how much time it takes (running an online role play), it's very difficult to then have sessionals in the running of it or the marking of it, because it's completely exploitative. It's not the equivalent of marking if you said 'there's 40 students doing it, it's the equivalent of marking 40 essays', well it's not. It's the equivalent of probably 200 essays. And there's no way of paying a sessional fairly to be part of that, so it has to be permanent members of staff, but then there's no workload recognition for it. And so, really, you're doing this out of the goodness of your heart, but certainly doing it for the betterment of the students is a reason to do it, not because it's recognised or supported in any way (Interviewee D).*

- *I think some of them (colleagues) are time poor, it does take a lot of time to set up, it takes a lot of time to organise and to administer and to mark. I think the workload issue is huge – they don't see the benefit in terms of their workload, you know it's more work and for less recognition (Interviewee D).*
- *...if you realise that you're putting in all that effort to get to some point and then that effort is not being appreciated in the whole university system, which is moving more and more in terms of research output, well I can see some people saying “Why do I have to put so much energy into that?”(Interviewee E).*

Such responses correlate with the findings of larger surveys regarding academic workloads and working environments. For example, Bexley et al. (2011: xi) found that:

Overall, less than one third of Australian academics believe that their workload is manageable, while just under one half indicate that their workload is not manageable. Close to half of mid and late career staff indicate that their work is a source of considerable personal stress.

Such perceptions about workloads have been borne out by research that measured academic time commitments in Australia and overseas. A report carried out by Melbourne University's LH Martin Institute (Coates et al. 2009: 27) found that Australian academics described longer working hours than most of their international peers:

Australian academics – both in junior and senior ranks – report among the highest number of hours worked per week among the countries so far included in the international study...Indeed, senior academics report among the highest of any group internationally.

In addition, the report depicted a decline in the time spent on teaching each week in both real and percentage terms over the previous 30 years (Coates et al. 2009). This had occurred through increased hours generally, with more time being spent on research and administration.

This barrier of time poverty has been observed since widespread technology deployment began in the 1990s. Tennent (2003) surveyed Australian academics in the teacher education discipline in 1997 and 2002. She found that her 1997 respondents had a low use of multi-media technology in their teaching and that they cited the following factors:

- Lack of technical support/expertise;
- Time;
- Lack of evidence of improved student learning; and,
- Such approaches not valued by employer (Tennent 2003)

When the follow-up research was done five years later, Tennent found that although there was then a greater presence of multi-media technology in the classroom, none of these barriers had disappeared, and indeed, their significance had grown, with staff struggling under increased expectations of online output (Tennent 2003).

Although Tennent was concerned with multi-media tools rather than online collaboration, the findings of this thesis a decade later are strikingly similar to those polls taken in 1997 and 2002. However, it may have been reasonable to expect that observations taken in 1997 and 2002 might have found teachers struggling to cope with the first wave of digital technologies applied to teaching, or else there being a lack of evidence to support their efficacy. However, the existence of such attitudes more than a decade later suggests that these institutional barriers and staff perceptions regarding technology have become deeply entrenched.

It would seem therefore that there is a genuine pressure on Australian academics in terms of time and the way that they utilise it. Moreover, this time poverty is particularly pernicious towards teaching delivery, with this being seen as a lesser priority or a matter of 'survival' rather than an area for investment. It is unsurprising therefore that the responses gathered by this research indicate time as a major disincentive towards adopting online collaborative tools for teaching amongst Australian IR/Politics teachers as a discrete community of practice.

However, if we accept that time is limited we are still left with the question of how best to use it. That is, if a means can be found of increasing the efficiency of time inputs, would this not be desirable? It is important therefore to examine *why* IR/Politics teachers consider time a barrier to greater utilisation of online collaboration. What are their perceptions regarding the volume of time that would need to be spent setting up and administering an online collaboration and are such estimations accurate? For example, if someone believes that implementing an online exercise would involve building and developing completely new tools or virtual environments, or a great deal of customisation of existing environments, it is not surprising

that they would deem the effort too great. Such assumptions may also be related to prejudices against off-the-rack LMS and their inflexibility for re-purposing (Ajjan and Hartshorne 2008; Conde et al. 2013), as well as negative opinions (real or imagined) regarding university IT support and policy. (This latter point of 'support' is discussed below.) The unknown time factor involved in marking an innovative online collaboration might also be a factor modifying intent. The time required to mark a 2,000 word essay would be a known 'cost' to most academics and also a task considered simple to delegate to tutors and sessional staff.⁷⁵ In contrast, an online collaborative task might create anxiety about how long it will take to grade, with what accuracy individuals can be graded and how the grading might be delegated to less experienced staff. Combined, these fears may create a sense of such an exercise not being worth the perceived workload involved.

The counter-argument for this perception of time poverty in regard to online tools is that they may be time-saving in the longer term. Whilst there will be a requirement for an up-front effort in installing, learning or designing a new online tool or assessment task, this investment may pay off at a later point. In this regard, comparisons must be drawn with other forms of class assignment and activity, such as the essays or exams indicated in Appendix 5. The time required to mark individual essays for a certain number of students may be greater than that required to set up and run a collaborative online exercise, where the same number of students could be marked collectively or more rapidly. Moreover, the grading of essays is not scalable in terms of time input per student; twice as many students means twice as many essays and twice as much time to mark them. In comparison, some types of online collaboration may offer a 'saving' in overall terms of time per student. This may be as a result of their inherent structure (for example, a wiki platform being able to log and collate student contributions) or because in a collaborative and co-operative environment, students may assist each other with problems, rather than each problem being referred to the teacher (Felix 2005; Fellenz 2006). These benefits may come at the expense of needing to spend more time online or more concentrated intervals of increased availability during the building or running of the exercise. For example, a teacher may have to give a considerable percentage of their time (to the exclusion of other activities) if they are running an online role play over the course of a week; there is less option to parcel the time out over a longer period. As mentioned by Interviewee

⁷⁵ A unit's budget for sessional staff undertaking marking may even be calculated in terms of word count multiplied by student load.

D in the comments above, it may also be less practical to delegate to sessional staff, depending on the nature of the exercise.

The frequency with which staff mentioned time and workload as disincentives to experimentation and innovation is essentially a question of institutional/managerial support and their approaches to staffing levels. IR/Politics teachers feel as if their efforts are unrewarded and/or that other of their duties and performance indicators will suffer as a result of devoting too much time to trying new approaches. This again points to a clash between strategic aims of the university and the experiences and perceptions of teaching staff.

It is worth noting that a shortness of available time is not a perception restricted to teaching staff. Students may also feel that their time is limited and that greater use of online collaboration does not accord them the same flexibility in time management that an individual assignment would. Conversely, the flexible nature of online education may offer students so much freedom that they get lost, particularly those learner styles that benefit from a little more rigidity in deadlines. Hardy and Totman (2013: 146) record the responses of off-campus students juggling work and family commitments with their studies:

- *I am living overseas and I have an extremely hectic work schedule with erratic hours so I am always afraid that if I'm stuck in other commitments I may end up being the one who doesn't contribute effectively...*
- *The sim (simulation) is quite a hard thing for me to do after work during the week. I normally do a majority of my uni work on the weekend, because by the time I finish work of a day it's normally around 1800.*

Student perceptions may be a factor in influencing teacher decisions on the use of greater online collaboration. There may certainly be an indirect pressure in terms of student feedback and/or any gathering of satisfaction data, since these will be considered in promotion applications. A consciousness of how students might react to the time demands of greater online collaboration may therefore affect the teacher's decision to adopt such an approach. In the case study offered by Raymond (2010), the teacher found that students' dissatisfaction with a role play assessment had a negative impact on their final evaluation of his teaching overall. For staff members on limited contracts or otherwise dependent on maintaining high levels of satisfaction feedback from students, experimenting with new approaches may be an

unattractively risky proposition despite the theoretical benefits that could accrue to the students.

The investment of time in innovative teaching practices appears to be a low priority for Australian IR/Politics teachers at present. Questions of finite time, workload and competing priorities all featured repeatedly in the questionnaire and the supporting literature. However, the observation must be made that it is *lack of reward and recognition* that appears to be the real disincentive for staff rather than the number of hours they have in a day. The perception of a slim return on investment for devoting time to teaching development is the root cause of stagnation.

This is an encouraging conclusion because these perceptions can be ameliorated. Providing the appropriate reward, resourcing and encouragement for innovative teaching would obviously be a challenging organisational transformation for Australian universities. Yet such adjustment is possible and infinitely more achievable than adding extra hours into the working day or somehow enforcing teaching development activities against the popular perception of their worth. The solution to changing staff attitudes about time and return on investment is available should it be desired. If a university is successful defeating negative attitudes in this regard they will have removed the most significant impediment to progress towards their own institutional goals.

Technology and Technical Support

In the questionnaire, technical competence, training and support were the next most frequently mentioned barriers after 'time' to implementing online collaboration. Expressions of technological impediments were further described in the open-ended comments:

- *The more you rely on technology the more there is to go wrong - and it usually does. There is little backup when things don't work and students get very frustrated.*
- *Lack of IT support, lack of policy support/support staff more broadly in learning how to set these things.*
- *Fear of technology poor technology over reliance on technology.*

- *Time and training are a hindrance, largely due to heavy workloads. Also, the available tools (particularly Blackboard) are not particularly well suited to this.*

Such perceptions were also presented in the follow-up interviews:

- *Our IT department seemed to make everything more difficult than it needs to be, and because it's unusual and it's a one-off and we're wanting something specific, they're not inclined to go out of their way to help us. They don't see the benefits perhaps, to the university to actually house something at (name of university) that we could own...I think perhaps it's just not out of the box, and they can't understand why I would want something like this, why don't I just use the Blackboard site or D2L site, why can't I just use what I've got and tailor my simulation to fit that, rather than having them tailor something to fit my simulation (Interviewee D).*
- *Mature aged students in general will have some difficulty in using the technology, and consequently at the end of the day are disadvantaged. They simply are not used to the technology as it were (Interviewee B).*
- *So I thought the best way would be to have a sort of very minimal teaching relief which would allow you to get training in new technologies. And I remember in the old days when I did some professional courses in teaching where I got teaching relief for that, and that was really great, I learned a lot (Interviewee C).*

These perceptions of 'lack of support' by IR/Politics staff in the survey are central to the indifference many exhibit towards online collaborative activities. This notion of being unsupported should not be thought of merely as a lack of access to or flexibility of formal technical assistance. Feeling unsupported can also include other factors, including impediments provided by policy and workplace culture. For example, having a lack of spare workload capacity could itself be demonstrative of weak institutional support for exploring new teaching approaches. Similarly, budgeting constraints or inflexible bureaucratic procedures over software purchasing and licensing may demonstrate further weaknesses in this regard.

Beyond unhelpful or under-resourced IT departments, the technical barriers can include not having access to the appropriate software, the training in how to use it, a lack of personal technical expertise, poor or inflexible LMS tools and lack of access to discrete server space for online projects.

Continual changes in university LMS platforms was another de-motivating factor mentioned in the responses. This created a sense of frustration and futility with the underlying rationale that building something within the LMS was pointless since it would be done away with before any long-term benefit had accrued. Also, the time taken to learn a new LMS was seen as a recurring demand on time and the desire to innovate:

Distrust in the technology. The continued changing interfaces, so the, for example, our contract with MyLO is expiring, so we're using a new form of – I think it's called Desire to Learn – the platform we're going to be using...So there seem to be constant changes in what it is that we're using to deliver this. ...I think this is the third year – I've only been here for two years – but I'm fairly certain MyLo has been used for three here, so a contract expires, someone comes along with a better deal, and a new one gets rolled out...you want to feel confident with what you're using and that you can do what you want using that platform and you don't have the same confidence with it – I mean, obviously with a new one it takes a long time to understand what you can and can't do with a new platform (Interviewee A).

For institutions this dilemma is something of a no-win situation. Failure to upgrade to a 'better' LMS may save the pain of re-training, but this comes at the expense of access to new features and improvements, some of which may facilitate the types of improved learning outcomes presented in the literature (Ajjan and Hartshorne 2008; Conde et al. 2013) and provide marketing opportunities in the competition for student enrolment. In other cases, the university may have little choice about changing their LMS, such as when a software provider launches a new product and withdraws support from the old version.⁷⁶ The only option to assuage discontent in such cases is for the university to ensure the reasons for changing the LMS are clearly and effectively communicated (with a heavy emphasis placed upon the potential benefits) and with appropriate re-training provided.

⁷⁶ This occurred at Deakin University in 2011, necessitating a change from Blackboard Vista to the D2L platform. (<https://www.deakin.edu.au/its/newsletter/11q2/1.php>)

In contrast, the longevity of the *Middle East Politics Simulation* (Hardy and Totman 2011) and other perennial IR/Politics role plays (see Chapter 6) might be explained by the fact that they have been kept separate from official (university-licensed) LMS platforms.⁷⁷ However, in a case described in one of the follow-up interviews, an attempt to use non-university software also created problems that detracted from the overall experience:

...something happened in their WikiSpace software. So they'll put stuff up and suddenly it will change from font 12 to font 58 or something. There were times it drove them mad. It changed group time quite a lot and all of them together were spending more time trying to deal with technology than with the ideas themselves (Interviewee E).

In the survey for this thesis, technological difficulties were often mentioned alongside concerns about time. For example: "Time and training are a hindrance, largely due to heavy workloads." Again the idea of an appropriate return on investment is the obvious root cause of attitudes towards adopting new technology-based approaches. Just as with attitudes towards 'time' though, addressing the underlying symptom is more important than cosmetic cures, such as adding more IT staff or compulsory training. If the return on investment can be demonstrated through reward and recognition, this offers more incentive to be open to technological innovation.

Further to this, it is worth noting that in common with most workplaces, technical innovation and/or progress is always occurring in the university environment. There will always be a need to learn new systems, processes or programs, even if this is merely an upgrade of existing word processing software or a new online expenses package. The case could be made that staying abreast of and developing competence in such technologies is now an intrinsic part of the tertiary teacher's job, just as it is for workers in other industries. Therefore, if universities are developing strategic goals for technology-enhanced teaching, there is an onus for them to provide not just the requisite training, but also the reasons for its requirement, the incentive to undertake it and *then* the opportunity to implement it. Finally the cycle should be closed by a genuine mechanism for staff to provide feedback on the training, its quality and relevance. There is little point in providing the training if institutional

⁷⁷ By remaining outside 'endorsed' systems, these online tools are protected from changes. However this approach may also provide a liability in terms of support and issues of intellectual property and legal/policy compliance.

factors such as promotion practices and workload are still discouraging of efforts made in teaching (Norton et al. 2013a).

Students and technology

The question of student experience can also be a factor in a teacher's judgment about whether to employ a teaching approach with greater levels of technology and/or collaborative work. The fear of presenting students with a negative experience of technological innovation would be worrying for a teacher already operating in a culture where few career or workflow incentives exist for departing from the norm (q.v.). They may conclude that students themselves would 'push back' against this innovation and desire a return to more conventional approaches. For the teacher, concern over such rejection may be heightened by apprehension over feedback and evaluation of teaching mechanisms that depend on student input. Such responses obviously represent quite a 'worst case' viewpoint towards technology usage, but nevertheless, such attitudes can be persistent and are obviously factors in determining whether to adopt a technology.

Nevertheless the assumptions made about those of typical undergraduate age and their attitudes towards technology are a pervasive paradigm in the current Australian higher education sector. The idea of catering for a "Digital Generation" (Prensky 2001a,b 2009) is central to the drive that some institutions have toward increasing the online aspects of their delivery. However, despite the popular image of this generation, technological competencies, preferences and practices vary widely amongst Australian tertiary students. Particular weaknesses are evident in student competence and experience with Web 2.0 tools and contributing to UGC (Cameron 2005; Kennedy et al. 2008a). Humanities and Social Science students are weaker in these competencies than other discipline areas (Kvavik and Caruso 2005). This presents challenges to implementing online collaboration and creates a tension between institutional policy and the realities faced by teachers. This incongruence between strategic goals and classroom realities is precisely the 'de-coupling' described by Schneckenberg (2009). Two interviewees noted the discrepancies between their own experiences and the theoretical assumptions of what students wanted in terms of technology:

- *Part of the problem is that a lot of people who push this (greater online delivery) are not exactly nerds, but are not in the mainstream of teaching and*

learning stuff, they're different, and a lot of them get quite excited about stuff that, you know you say to them, you don't need to exactly dumb it down, but you need to recognise that you are dealing with people who are often not technologically specialised (Interviewee A).

- *I think the students are like everyone else. There's a huge variety of confidence and skills with the online technology. There's some for example I know who simply download the lecture in both slideshow and audio form onto their device of one form or another and listen to it when they're walking the dog or exercising in a gym. For them, that's the perfect way to keep on top of the subject. But you can't generalise from that experience and say that's going to be the same for all (Interviewee F).*

The evidence within the literature suggests that beyond basic personal use of common applications such as word processing and email, there is a wide spread of skill levels and familiarity with online technologies in any student cohort (Cameron 2005; Kennedy et al. 2007; Kennedy et al. 2008b). Just as in any given workplace situation, there are those with advanced skills and experience, but also those with very limited exposure to anything beyond the most basic applications. If we accept this general premise, then what more specific technical barriers might occur when dealing with collaborative projects? Kennedy et al (2008) found that students were particularly unfamiliar with participating in Web 2.0 phenomena such as wikis (as opposed to consulting them, one would imagine). This opens up a variety of technical concerns about training the students to use such platforms, as well as the structure of the project itself.⁷⁸

To explore whether technical ability is really a barrier to online collaboration it is useful to begin at one extreme of the complexity range. There have been several research projects aimed at evaluating student experience of wiki projects and some of these incorporated assessment of the technical experiences and concerns of participants. This research is worth discussing, since it concerns the use of a collaborative UGC platform; likely one that the participating students had little prior experience with if the wider usage patterns described by Kennedy et al. (2007, 2008) and Cameron (2005) hold true. The findings of this wiki-based

⁷⁸ In trying to solve such technical barriers we also need to keep sight of the more social and organisational aspects of Social Media, such as developing the appropriate types of assessment for this medium and the most effective means of communicating that need to occur in online collaboration.

research could be extrapolated to apply to other implementations of UGC platforms that require students (and staff) to use new software and new online behaviours. Of paramount interest is whether meeting this novelty posed a barrier or offered some form of negative consequence in the overall subject delivery or learning outcomes.

All the wiki research concluded that the majority of students found the system to be less of a technical challenge than expected. Elgort et al (2008) found that in two class groups studied there was a positive attitude towards the technical challenges posed by the wiki software they used, with 70% and 88% of students respectively finding the wiki “easy to use”. Bower et al (Bower et al. 2006) trialled two different wiki platforms with students and found no significant difference between the two in terms of “ease of use”. Students in this study were deliberately provided with a “minimalist” level of training in order to establish how easy it would be for them to progress and therefore act as a type of control group. The students found the wiki software easy to learn, however it should be noted that the students were undertaking a post-graduate IT qualification and could therefore be assumed to be higher in their technical skills levels than under-graduates in a non-IT discipline area (such as IR/Politics).

In the experiences of Bruns and Humphreys (2007), gathered over several iterations of in-class wiki use, differing wiki programs can make a significant alteration to the user experience and learner outcomes:

“...the user interface and functionality of MediaWiki was such that it presented a significant obstacle to successful work in the wiki environment for our students. The process of learning how to operate the MediaWiki environment emerged as a hindrance on the way to learning how to operate within a wiki environment...” (Bruns and Humphreys 2007: 5-6).

However, in their first examination of a student cohort using a wiki environment (2005), the same authors found that the technological challenges provided by the wiki interface were not as significant as the cultural and creative obstacles of understanding how best to write the actual content they were publishing in response to the assessment task at hand:

“...while students relatively quickly began to feel familiar with the technological environment of the wiki itself (the ability to add and edit pages, and the formatting

codes used by the MediaWiki system), they continued to struggle with the content format required for encyclopaedia entries..." (Bruns and Humphreys 2005: 30).

It seems therefore that the technical challenges posed by the software aspects of wiki projects are not as great as might be imagined given the low usage rates noted in studies of tertiary student groups outside of the learning environment. Whether the findings of this wiki focussed research extends to other collaborative platforms is open to speculation. However, since wiki editing could be characterised as one of the more technically demanding collaborative online activities and one that is least within the experience of most students (Kennedy et al. 2007), an assumption might be made that other types of applications might present fewer technical challenges.⁷⁹

Designing online collaborations that involve those types of tools most commonly used by staff and students (e.g. projects that utilise email, word processing, chat interfaces or discussion boards) may be a means of minimising technical anxieties. The Middle East Politics Simulation at Deakin University, for example, is fundamentally just a private email environment (Hardy and Totman 2011). This functionality is quite limited compared to a commercial email client, though adequate for the purpose of the simulation. The simplicity of the system allows students to concentrate on their interactions and role playing rather than having to surmount technical challenges (Hardy and Totman 2011).

Questions of etiquette, layout, navigation and other structural conventions represent a further set of technical barriers that can occur in projects that require computer-aided collaboration, although these are not 'pure' technical challenges in the sense of learning a new software package, but rather issues of how to approach a task. Such concerns are common to many types of creative effort (ie. not just online projects) and can be encapsulated in the questions "What is expected of us?" and "How do we go about it?". The answer to these questions may differ in an online collaboration compared to a traditional learning task or assessment item of the sort shown in Appendix 5.

The vast majority of Humanities and Social Sciences students could be assumed to be familiar with the concept of the essay or report and how its content is organised, although

⁷⁹ It is worth differentiating the platform technologies from the content technologies in any discussion of UGC collaboration. For example, learning to upload a video to YouTube will not provide a challenge to most people familiar with the transfer and attachment of digital files. However, being asked to create the video itself utilising cameras, editing software and so forth is a much more elaborate task, and not really a Social Media activity *per se*.

they may execute it less than perfectly. An essay is linear (one starts at the first line and reads through to the end) and contains features such as an introduction, argument, conclusion, citations and bibliography. The reader/assessor will progress through the work, noting all content in between. If the assessor remarks upon such things such as “poor structure” or “not relevant to the question” or “no conclusion”, they are making the assumption that the student should understand these criticisms and the criteria under which they are being judged. Additionally, if a student is struggling with essay writing, universities tend to have many avenues of assistance available, such as writing workshops, referencing guides, peer mentoring and so forth.

In contrast, online forms of information and communication (such as websites, wikis or role plays) are not often linear and the use of embedded links can make every reader's experience different as they divert to other pages of their choice (Elgort et al. 2008). Not all content will necessarily be read and the way in which the pages are organised will affect the finished work:

...decisions need to be made not only about how information is structured but also what navigational support (if any) is provided to the reader, and these decisions are crucial to the ways in which the reader interacts with the wiki (Elgort 2007: 234).

In a project such as building a wiki, this creates a conceptual gap for teachers and students in how to approach and measure the learning objectives of the task. Both parties need to be aware of the target outcomes in criteria that could include such things as word count, page count, links, media objects, writing style, citation format and so on. In the case of an online collaboration that was not focussed on building page-type content, such as a role play, these parameters may be less obvious. Moreover, if an assessor were to remark to a group of students that their web-based project showed “poor structure” or “no conclusion”, it may be less likely that they would be able to equate this criticism with an established standard, unless a specific framework or template had been provided for the project pages. Moreover, unlike the skills required to write an essay, assistance with how to complete an online assessment will be less commonly provided by the university, placing a burden back upon the teacher as the primary means of support. All of these combine to create an uncertainty over online format versus essay format (equally applicable to the teacher) and thus a disdain for the new approach.

Beyond the structural questions inherent to online presentation there are other conventions that apply to other forms of collaborative work. For instance, contributing to a database of

readings might present new users with challenges such as which key words to use, active or passive voice, first or third person narrative and so forth. An online role play will have rules or turns or limitations that must be created and administered by the teacher and learnt and observed by the students. All of this 'new' material risks interfering with the subject matter learning process.

Some of the difficulties stem from the fact that collaboration requires the interaction of a community and that there is more to being involved in such a society than just being together in the same class. For example, in any community, whether online or not, there will be some amount of conventions that have been developed surrounding behaviour, organisation, membership privileges and so forth. In a collaborative project this will also be the case, and the large and public collaborations will often have formalised rules established either by the 'owner' of the project (such as Google in the case of YouTube) or by the common agreement of users (such as the policy committees of *Wikipedia*).

For academic use of these platforms, specific rules might cover how content is organised, displayed and presented. Known as 'folksonomies' (from *folk* and *taxonomy*), these 'house rules' establish methods for collaboratively categorising and managing content. These folksonomies can either be very broad, for example classifying Politics into the 'Social Studies' group, or else specific, such as developing a norm for how pages are named within a small group of related articles. On top of this might come a raft of policies covering everything from writing tone, spelling conventions, citation style and so on. Teachers of IR/Politics planning such exercises will need to consider their own folksonomies relevant to the exercise imagined, since by providing such a framework, some of the uncertainty (and need for support) can be negated. In addition to these formatting and folksonomy norms a separate set of *behavioural* expectations will need to be established. For instance, in a wiki can one student totally delete another's work? Or in a role play whether any communication 'out of character' is permitted?

With this in mind, the teacher trying to create a collaborative project in a learning environment will be faced with different technical barriers depending on whether the plan is to use a public or private platform. In the case of using a large public environment, such as *Wikipedia* or *Second Life*, the students will have to operate within a rigid system of folksonomy and behaviour, often zealously moderated by outsiders. This will inevitably lead to *faux pas* and errors as students transgress the house rules and policies of a public space that

they may not be familiar with. The fact that the moderators of these platforms will most probably be external to the university and indifferent (or hostile) to the students' learner status can cause discouragement.⁸⁰

If, alternatively, a private collaborative space is employed, the surfeit of rules and folksonomy is then replaced by a vacuum. Unless a comprehensive scaffold is provided by the teacher, the complete lack of folksonomy can cause confusion, duplication and frustration as groups struggle to define their project on a clean slate. This may lead to a poorly organised flow of information and a feeling of anarchy (Samarawickrema et al. 2008) that then may or may not be replaced by a few individuals dominating the project (Arnold et al. 2009).

For example, Elgort studied the use of a private class wiki as a group project in two different subjects (Elgort 2007). The two subject cohorts were using their respective wikis for different assignments and there were separate wikis built by sub-groups within each subject unit. The navigational structures that the various groups developed were quite different. Some relied on in-text hyper-linking only, which created a rather random progression of pages with no clear hierarchy. Other groups used traditional structures such as a navigation bar on one side of the page to provide some classification and hierarchy. Groups with higher levels of skill and familiarity with web publishing (deduced from enrolment in the respective subjects) presented better organised wikis.

Without clear briefing from the teacher, uncertainty may also occur because of student confusion regarding the nature of the exercise and the online platform itself (Macdonald 2003). This doubt may be rooted in the blurring of the lines between an academic environment and what students see as a social and non-academic tool (Elgort et al. 2008). One response is for students to be overly casual and non-academic in the presentation of their work online because they have made assumptions about the lack of academic rigour inherent in such web-based platforms. (The debate surrounding the credibility of *Wikipedia* is an example of this. (Elgort 2007)). At the opposite pole are students who may not be able to divorce themselves from their assumptions about the norms of academic writing and assessment. This can result in them producing online content that is little different to an essay:

⁸⁰ Wikipedia, for example, has often been criticised for the zealous nature of its moderation and the self-defeating pedantry with which the work of new contributors is subject to. See the Wikipedia community's own discussions on the matter at http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Why_is_Wikipedia_losing_contributors_-_Thinking_about_remedies and http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Please_do_not_bite_the_newcomers.

And we (had to) put on a limit of entries. It's not like they could go on and write two pages, five pages for one article. It had to be short....And students tried that (long entries). But then we told them, no, it doesn't work like that (Interviewee E).

Addressing such confusion might largely be solved by providing an effective framing for the task. One of the most important elements of this is to be definitive about what the end product is supposed to be. An encyclopaedia? A study guide? A peer resource? A summary of lectures? A collection of opinions? A discussion? A role play? An effective definition of the proposed outcome can have a large impact on how the students approach the task and what sort of writing and structural style they will adopt. In the case of Bruns and Humphreys (2007) where their private/public *M/Cyclopaedia* has gone through a series of iterations, incoming students have the luxury of seeing what their peers have produced previously and adopting a similar approach. However, the question then arises as to whether this is proscriptive in its own way.

In the Middle East Politics Simulation some students in each iteration have played before in previous semesters as the exercise is offered throughout the units of Deakin University's Middle East Studies major (Hardy and Totman 2012). This provides a staggered infusion of 'culture' and expertise to help assist with the neophytes' understanding of the game's universe and etiquette. This might include a veteran team playing the US President coaching and organising inexperienced teams tasked with playing his cabinet members, whether that might occur within the role play environment or informally outside of it. In this example, whilst the role play 'rules' and standards of conduct will be confusing to some players, there are an equal number of participants who can lead by example and therefore minimise the chaos.

However the technical structure of an online collaboration is organised, it is likely that it will require some greater degree of effort by the teacher, both in designing and establishing the task, then in briefing and training the students and then finally in moderating and assessing it. What is important to remain aware of however is that the literature suggests this technical demand is not always as great an obstacle as anticipated. Both students and staff seem to cope with the demands of new technologies and this challenge can be ameliorated by simple design, appropriate learning objectives and relevant training:

Innovations are more likely to improve teaching and learning if implemented in student-focused ways. Student-focused approaches to teaching are associated with student-focused conceptions and with perceptions of transformative leadership,

departments which value teaching and workloads which are not too high. Leadership and perceived recognition and rewards are important in supporting transformative change (McKenzie et al. 2005: 24).

Students and group work

Beyond the technical challenges of designing collaborative online tasks there is the barrier offered by their social and inter-dependent nature. Fears and prejudices held by students regarding group work (or the presumption of them) will be of concern to the teacher, as evidenced by some of the responses to the questionnaire. In this regard, student opinions and feedback may become an influencing factor in any decision to employ collaborative online methods. The literature on collaborative online learning suggests some broad classification of these biases:

- Dislike of group work
- Protectiveness over individual work
- Self-consciousness of own work or performance being on display to others
- Discomfort in editing/critiquing work of peers
- Low confidence in own communicative ability
- Pressure to contribute at a given point
- Pressures imposed by quantifiable measurements within a web-based system
- Concern of work being lost
- Image of Social Media tools and their academic value

Of course many of these perceived negatives have a positive corollary. For example, concerns over one's writing ability may result in more care being taken with the work presented and its style (S. Wheeler and Wheeler 2007), itself a common objective of graduate attribute statements. Likewise, any implied pressure to contribute may spur on those students who would normally avoid making a contribution at all. Obviously the measurement of

student contributions that tools such as a wiki or an email system allow does cause pressure, but it also establishes a framework that is arguably fairer than many group-based projects where a collective grade may be awarded to all members, with no evidence as to individual contributions.

The issue of group work projects is not a challenge exclusively for online collaboration, but for all types of co-operative tasks. Evidence suggests that many students have a dislike for group assignments, with the principle objection being a fear of unequal contribution amongst the group. This can be referred to in many ways, such as "social loafing" (Aggarwal and O'Brien 2008; Ashcraft and Treadwell 2008), "commitment imbalance" (Capdeferro and Romero 2012) or "trust amongst teammates" (Tseng et al. 2009). It is to be noted that differing structures of assessing/grading group versus individual contribution to the overall task can affect the strength of such feelings.

Group dynamics questions include the challenges of co-operation, communication and contribution, and these dilemmas apply equally to teachers *and* students. Group work in higher education (and indeed in any non-educational setting) is notorious for its pitfalls of ensuring that a fair input is made by all team members, that individuals are rewarded fairly for their part of the work, that the team communicates effectively as to tasks and goals and that some form of equality exists amongst members. Students themselves tend to be averse to group assignments and this general negativity may reflect upon their perception of and satisfaction with collaborative tools (Capdeferro and Romero 2012; Dirks and Smith 2004). Elgort et al (2008) found that while students generally found their Wiki assessment a positive experience, there were still a significant number of respondents who felt that they could have performed better working alone. However, the distance students in their study appreciated the chance to collaborate with their peers. This latter point is reinforced by the findings of Hardy and Totman (2013), where off-campus students are noted as being enthusiastic about the chance to interact with other students, though they sometimes express concern over the potential for *themselves* as freeloaders, owing to work and life commitments.

Fair assessment and measurement of group work is no less a problem for the teacher. There may be doubts over who has contributed what, whether learning outcomes have accrued evenly and the dread of dealing with student apprehension over the group work format. As noted above, this can work as a disincentive towards adoption.

In the questionnaire and follow up interviews for this thesis respondents had mixed attitudes towards setting group exercise for students:

- *Accountability to the group can be an issue (Survey response).*
- *The students hate them (group tasks). They really don't like them (Interviewee A).*
- *They get pissed off if they have to work with someone who they feel is not pulling their weight, and their mark gets pulled down. They get very touchy about that sort of stuff (Interviewee A).*

These responses indicate distrust amongst students regarding the grading of their efforts within group work, or at least a perception amongst teachers that students feel this way, but it is important to reiterate that this behaviour is not unique to online group projects. Moreover, working collaboratively and communicating effectively is a common theme in graduate attributes and reflective of any future workplace, as is the reality of unequal participation and reward. The extent of social loafing may also be directly attributable to the size of any particular group/team, with loafing more likely to occur in larger groups (North et al. 2000). Such attitudes point towards the needs for teachers considering online collaboration to take pains in explaining to students the benefits of the approach as well as the grading mechanisms to be used. However as one respondent noted, a teacher's own scepticism can be a barrier too:

I've been to two professional courses training in group work, and I haven't been convinced, either in practice or in these courses, that group work allows for accurate assessment. I have anecdotal evidence that it doesn't, and that comes from my children who went to uni and did some group work. What I've seen of group work at unis, in other words, in the group work that I've seen, and I've done a fair bit of group work in China where I was teaching there, there is all these one person carrying the stuff, and the others following, and I don't think that's fair in terms of assessment and also in terms of learning. I'm not sure that this is a good learning process. So I'm not convinced that group work – at least not in my field...in what I teach I can't see either the learning or the assessment advantages of group work (Interviewee B).

It is worth noting that staff scepticism over group work has parallels in the autonomous and solitary nature of the academic workplace noted above. If teachers themselves do not operate in a work environment that fosters collaboration and teamwork, it may present them with their own psychological barriers to seeing benefit in such approaches.

The disconnected and impersonal nature of computer-aided collaboration was also noted as somewhat incompatible with the idea of group work, with the feeling that computer-mediated collaboration was a poor substitute for face-to-face interaction:

- *We set up group forums connected to the LMS site for people doing assessed group work - most people didn't use them though - they opted just to email each other or meet in person instead (Survey response).*
- *Since each person was responsible for one section they were marked for that, and the group was marked as a whole on the quality of the final product. The problem was that students would have preferred to do it on a tutorial basis so that they could meet on a set time and know that they could talk to each other (Interviewee E).*

These responses are supported by Raitman et al. (2005), who found that some students felt that the collaboration in a web-based project was not really encouraging to a true group learning experience. In this small study, 70% of the students felt that operating online was less preferable than working in a face-to-face group. Furthermore, the students considered the asynchronous nature of the work and the editing process itself was not truly a 'discussion'.

Students felt that the wiki with its faceless contact was not personal enough for real research to develop. A student might post some thoughts, which could be edited upon by the next participant, but essentially, no discussion ensued. A comprehensive research response may have been evident but students felt that it was more from additions to the text, rather than back and forth discussion (Raitman et al. 2005).

The opposite side of this concern is that online group work might be more empowering for those 'quieter' students who are less likely to contribute in face-to-face situations or be successful in asserting their view in a classroom situation (Wills et al. 2010). Additionally, this analysis does not take into account the possibilities for off-campus students, who may have little other opportunity to interact with peers:

I would say that they enjoy it. Particularly off-campus students who don't get that opportunity to do group work. You know, they sit at the end of a computer and occasionally have discussions online with students, you know, about a discussion point for that week, but they don't actually get to work with another student. You can sort of see friendships developing, particularly amongst the off campus students...and they're actually sort of developing a friendship with another student which they don't get the opportunity to do. I think even the on campus students develop certainly a little cohort. You see them greeting each other by their simulation name in class. They may not know their real name but they'll know them as, say, that's Hezbollah or that's the PIJ. So they develop that. The other thing too, that I've noticed, is that those friendships remain after the class is gone. You'll see them having coffee down at the coffee shop with people from that tutorial or because they're actually shared that experience. So I think the group work part of it is really important (Interviewee D).

Other responses indicate an opposite reaction towards group work and the ability to transcend that original suspicion:

I think that lots of group work is badly done, I think it's done perhaps - I won't say laziness – but it's an easy way of doing a lot of assessment at once. You know, you can have four people do a talk, and it's four talks out of the way in one go. So I think students don't like it because of that, they don't feel that their contribution to that piece of work is recognised. Whereas in the simulation, there are freeloaders for sure, and there are people who say 'my partner sucked' but it doesn't mean they didn't really enjoy the experience of the simulation. So the group work aspect of it is bad and the feedback that we get from students is that they actually really like the chance to work with somebody, and the ability to bounce ideas off somebody else. It gives them, I guess confidence, if two of them agree that that's a good idea or a good course of action rather than just them sitting alone by themselves thinking 'oh, I could do that', they've got somebody else to bounce ideas off (Interviewee D).

In the context of IR/Politics it is worth questioning whether students in this discipline area are more or less likely to be comfortable with group work, especially in assessment. Whilst on-campus students may be familiar with tutorials and discussions in the course of their classes, when it comes to assessment there is a strong association with long-form writing, which would be considered an individual pursuit. This is in contrast to some science disciplines, for

example, where group lab work and collaborative research is far more common. For off-campus students, the option of participating in assessed group work may be more alarming given that they will not likely have had the chance to form any peer relationships in the same way as those physically sitting in a classroom are able. Whether these 'standard' approaches (e.g. essays) generate positive desires is questionable, especially if an IR/Politics student has never had the option to do group work before.

The self-consciousness that some students develop about their work being open for their peers (or the public) to read is of special interest precisely because of the benefits that this transparency can bring. Whilst students are accepting of the need for a member of the teaching staff to see their work (perhaps because of entrenched notions of hierarchy and relationships), they feel much shyer about their fellow students scrutinising their writing and/or performance. They may perceive their style and presentation to be weak and/or be afraid that they have provided a 'wrong answer', opening them to ridicule or loss of face. They may also hold a minority view and thus feel excluded by the mainstream consensus or timid about presenting alternatives. These insecurities may be exacerbated by the fear that their work could then be corrected before the eyes of the entire student cohort. Wills et al. (2010) contend that the anonymity conferred by online role play can go some way to defeating this self-consciousness.

Interestingly, there are also students who do not consider the public nature of collaborative projects at all. Forte and Bruckman (2007) (q.v.) found that some of the students in their pilot study, despite repeated reminders and a specific consent required for publishing permission, still expressed uncertainty about the public nature of the wiki project they were engaged with. Whilst this may have reflected some technical naïveté on the part of some students, for others it was a function of their self-doubt; they did not think their work was of sufficient expertise to warrant consumption by others (Forte and Bruckman 2006). There is an interesting comparison here with the tutorial paper tasks that are used in IR/Politics classes, whereby a student presents a paper to their peers.⁸¹ Perhaps in such a case the physical presence of the teacher as an arbiter of discussion and grader of the paper provides some extra credibility to what is, in essence, the same thing as a student posting their findings on a class blog.

⁸¹ See Appendix 5 for an indication of the frequency of this exercise.

The reverse (and perhaps the result) of these worries about protecting one's own work and being self-conscious of others viewing it is the sympathetic tendency of students to avoid critiquing the work of others. This can be out of deference to or solidarity with peers; a kind of 'do unto others' mentality. It can also arise, again, from a fear of giving the 'wrong answer'. Students may worry that the original contributor is right and there is no incentive to alter the work without at least some adjudication from the teacher. The entrenched educational hierarchy may also be apparent here; students are accepting of a 'learning contract' between themselves and the teacher(s), but less confident or accommodating of this occurring between themselves.

However, having one's work on display to peers aligns with the sort of workplace preparation that graduate attributes seek to address. Outside the university one's outputs are rarely under the scrutiny only of a single immediate superior and working in some form of team is likely. A report or presentation may be distributed to many recipients at all levels of an organisation. Learning to accept and meet this challenge is therefore a significant skill. In a situation visible to peers, students will be more likely to take more care in presenting their work and develop higher levels of academic skills such as structured writing, critical thinking, source evaluation and citation (Forte and Bruckman 2006; S. Wheeler and Wheeler 2007; S. Wheeler et al. 2008).

When given the opportunity, it appears that IR/Politics students do appreciate the benefits of group work. This is evident in the case study described by Hardy and Totman (2013). Students in their cohort are offered a choice of a group-based role play or an individual essay for the equivalent portion of their final grade. The authors note that once exposed to the collaborative task students will seek out such opportunities in the future:

One almost invariable trend is that once students have done one (Middle East Politics Simulation), they will continually opt for this assessment (over the essay) if they do subsequent Middle East politics units. In the latest session, not a single off-campus student chose the essay as their major assessment option if they had previously done at least one simulation. Students who have previously done one MEPS apparently come to the exercise feeling confident and enthusiastic about it, despite realising that it will be more work and more logistically difficult for them to fit in (Hardy and Totman 2013: 147).

Whether such a response from students is reflective of the group work element or the specific simulation task is difficult to determine. However, it does indicate that students can be enthused about group exercises when they encounter an example that they enjoy and/or can see the value in. When used in teaching IR/Politics subjects, role plays (or simulations) in particular seem to have an overwhelmingly positive response from students and provide an indication that the mental barriers towards group work can be defeated. For this reason it is worthwhile singling out simulations as a potentially valuable form of online collaborative exercise and this approach is explored more fully in Chapter 6.

Other perceptions

In addition to the time, support and technology barriers described above, there is another raft of factors that can be influential in decision making on the use of technology. Some of these could be loosely categorised as 'psychological' or 'social', with others perhaps labelled as 'institutional' or 'pedagogical'. Together these will exert a degree of effect on an individual considering innovation in their teaching. An analysis of these factors follows, since although they tend to be mentioned with a lesser emphasis than time or support, they still form part of the decision process and will contribute to any attempt to analyse academic technology acceptance.

Experiences

Prior experiences can have an influence on the decision to use a technology (Venkatesh 2000; Venkatesh and Bala 2008). In higher education this would include the experiences of a teacher, the experiences of their peers and the experiences of students. In this it is important to remember that the discussion in this thesis is not about a simple use or non-use of technology, but rather the decision to try a more innovative approach. If, as the data presented in Chapter 4 suggests, we assume that *basic* or *mandatory* use of an LMS is now the norm in Australian universities, but largely in a Web 1.0 manner, then it is the next level of innovation that is of concern: the use of the LMS to foster a more collaborative experience or the use of 'non-endorsed' (Kennedy et al. 2011) technologies with the same intention.

The importance of peer support and opinion is a strong theme in the literature concerning technology adoption by university teaching staff. The experiences of peers and the development of supportive formal or informal 'communities of practice' can be strongly influential in informing individual decisions to innovate or adopt new technologies in teaching delivery (Ajjan and Hartshorne 2008; Nicolle and Lou 2008; Samarawickrema and Stacey 2007). Any negative experiences of 'early adopters' can be particularly influential here. Those within a teaching community who tend to lead the innovation cycle hold a prominent influence over the opinions and ambitions of their less innovative peers. If those 'technology leaders' relate difficulties, criticisms or frustrations with a new tool, their opinions will have a disproportionate effect on the intentions of the majority, who will either abandon or never take up the new technology in the first place (Moser 2007). Note that the relative autonomy of tertiary teachers is relevant here; with so much freedom to adopt the teaching practices of one's choice, the opportunity to gain 'hands on' experience (Venkatesh and Bala 2008) upon which to base an informed decision may be less applicable.

Pedagogical concerns

Questions of pedagogical awareness and training are factors in the decisions of teachers to use online collaborative approaches. If teachers are unaware of the benefits that collaborative practices can bring in terms of learning outcomes or workload reduction, then they are not likely to consider them, especially if they feel their current practices are sufficient. Of importance here is the extent to which individual IR/Politics teachers are conversant with the general scholarship of tertiary teaching and learning and that concerning their discipline specifically. Without this pedagogical evidence supporting online collaborative e-learning, teachers will likely be less compelled to move away from 'proven' practices such as essays. Moreover, being made aware of the weight of scholarship and successful examples of such practices in IR/Politics teaching may help to 'tip the balance' in the case of a teacher on the verge of innovation.

Some factors in the Australian higher education sector serve to impede the widespread awareness of innovative pedagogical methods:

Academic staff in Australia will vary in their possession of formal tertiary teaching qualifications (Bexley et al. 2011).⁸² When these are obtained there is little pressure to maintain their currency;⁸³

Demonstration of expertise within one's subject area (i.e. through research output) is considered far more important in one's career path than developing or maintaining an awareness of pedagogical practice (Bexley et al. 2011; Chapman 2012; Norton et al. 2013a);⁸⁴

Changing workplace conditions such as increased use and turnover of sessional and contract staff and dealing with larger class sizes (Bexley et al. 2011; Ling and Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development 2009); and,

There is a low level of communication between the various 'silos', preventing sharing of practice (Schneckenberg (2009), Norton et al, (2010, 2013a)) and related difficulties for any centralised professional development of staff within an institution reaching discipline groups with specific assistance (Ling and Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development 2009).

If one is unaware or unconvinced of the general benefits that more active and collaborative learning can bring, or ignorant of where these approaches have been successfully used elsewhere within the same school or faculty, it is unsurprising that changes in approach are slow and erratic. There may also be an element here relating back to the perceptions of time and workload; that it is not worth pursuing pedagogical development or publishing in the area since it is unrewarding in terms of career path, especially if one is already unsure of one's ground:

And I think that in terms of recognition a big one is the promotion process, it's so focused on research that doing something like this would take you away from your research significantly. And even though it might make you a really good teacher, they don't see the trade-off there personally, I suppose, in doing that....I think you could

⁸² The report by Bexley et al. (2011) indicates that about 65% of Australian academics report having undertaken teacher training of some sort. However, only 23.7% of those respondents indicate that this involved a formal qualification specifically suited to tertiary teaching. The majority of those who had received training indicated that it was some type of short course covering one or more aspects of teaching, such as assessment practice.

⁸³ The report by Bexley et al. (2011) records that of those who had received training, 30.1% indicated that the training occurred > 2 years prior to the survey.

⁸⁴ With the obvious exception of those academics operating within the discipline of Education.

also say that it's something they're fearful of doing because it might not work and what do they do? There's that sort of barrier of failure. Or perhaps the feeling of 'I don't have the expertise to run this', and 'what if it all goes horribly wrong'. So there's that as well; lack of confidence (Interviewee D).

Online collaborative tools can also carry the stigma of being unacademic and therefore not suitable for deployment in higher education (Badke 2008; Kennedy et al. 2011; Waters 2007). This negative image is most likely generated by the controversies that frequently surround the well-known public tools such as *Facebook*, *Wikipedia*, *Second Life* and so forth. Even the World Wide Web *in toto* has a credibility problem in an academic context (S. A. Brown 2012; S. Jones et al. 2008). Allegations of untruthfulness, untrustworthiness, vandalism and a largely unqualified editorship have provided a demonised image of *Wikipedia* in the context of its dependability and academic rigour (Eijkman 2010). *Facebook*, on the other hand is seen as a personal and 'fun' tool (Burhanna et al. 2009; Roblyer et al. 2010), as well as something that can be associated with salacious and juvenile behaviour. Virtual worlds such as *Second Life* are often negatively depicted in the media (Kennedy et al. 2011), often as lurid habitats for vicarious sexual liaison. Whilst this has not stopped their usage in teaching by some innovators, the negative impression of such tools may modify the intentions of the next levels of adopters.

This reputation of Web 2.0 platforms can transfer itself to students who are eager to exhibit what they see as correct academic behaviour. When presented with the requirement to use, for example, a wiki platform in a higher education context, students may be apprehensive or potentially exasperated by what they see as a 'double standard'. Bruns and Humphreys (2007: 9) note the response of some students participating in their *M/Cyclopaedia* project:

“...we also received a number of interesting comments on the role of wikis in the wider intellectual context of the academy. In particular, students noted the irony of being asked to work within a wiki environment in this subject, while in some other subjects lecturers were still warning them against using the Wikipedia as a reference for their assignments.”

In this case both viewpoints are valid, particularly when viewed in the context of graduate attributes that seek to develop research skills, collaboration and IT literacy. However, encouraging scholarly judgement of sources is not the reverse of fostering collaborative authorship, nor is the use of online environments an invalid medium of publication.

Such perceptions of the credibility of Web 2.0 tools are certainly potential barriers to student engagement, but likely not insurmountable ones given a well scaffolded and well explained task being put forward. However, when the same ideas regarding such technologies are held by teachers, this would seem to be a more intractable obstacle. At issue here may also be an awareness of peer judgement; that is a teacher may feel that their peers might regard these collaborative tools as academically illegitimate and this then presents a psychological barrier of being uncomfortable in employing them. The danger is in confusing the tool with the task. The remedy is proper understanding and explanation of the potential outcomes.

Other realities

Once the perceptual influences have come into play there are a series of logistical realities that will also have a bearing on any decision to innovate. Some of these are concrete expressions of those abstract perceptions. For example, the amount of workload one has is a reality, though the way that any one individual *perceives* whether x hours is a heavy workload or not will vary. Obviously if one feels overworked, regardless of the empirical amount of time available, there is less motivation to pursue non-essential activities such as pedagogical experimentation. The logistical realities of workload will therefore act as a type of filter towards intention.

Aspects of what might be called teaching logistics are another type of filter. How many students are in a subject cohort? What is the format in terms of lecture and tutorial frequency and duration? How many students in a tutorial? How many sessional staff are involved and what degree of delegation can occur? Is the subject taught across different campuses and does it involve on and off-campus students? What portion of instruction time can be devoted to preparing and running the collaborative task? There will be discipline specific questions here too. For IR/Politics teachers these may include reflecting on the unit content and the desired outcomes. Is the content theoretical or applied? What aspects do students usually struggle with? What controversies surround the material and do different viewpoints need to be incorporated? What is the teacher intending the students to come away from the subject with? A certain set of facts? Or something more intangible, such as deeper understanding of a situation or improved negotiating skills?

Linked with the concerns over time, workload and career path is the reality of consequence. That is, if a teacher does not innovate, what will be the consequences? If the realistic answer to this question is "Nothing", then this produces a further disincentive. If, as discussed, there is no 'carrot' in terms of reward and recognition for innovation, it can be expected that teachers willing to experiment will be few in numbers. An institutional culture that also has no 'stick' to push innovation will naturally create less impetus to undertake such change.

All these questions will need to be considered in the final decision to innovate. Obviously the logistical elements should also play a large role in the choice of *how* the innovation should occur, though this will depend on the individual's starting knowledge of possible approaches. That is, the reasoning "I want to try something new. What can I do?" is more likely than "I want to try a group based role play using an LMS email system. How can I make it fit this class format?" Naturally the logistical filters themselves can form a barrier to intention if the teacher considers their particular teaching/cohort dynamics too complicated. For example, the inclusion of off-campus students in a cohort could act both as an inhibitor to choosing collaborative methods ("How would I include them?") or conversely as a natural impetus towards adopting a more online approach, given that the framework for interaction is already there, as is the assumption of carrying out work online.⁸⁵

Such decision making is obviously complex, but the evidence presented in the literature and in responses to this thesis suggests that the general trend amongst Australian IR/Politics teachers is to decide against utilising greater amounts of collaborative online learning in their subject delivery. At present there would seem slim hope that any positive transformation of this attitude is occurring, despite the evidence describing the benefits afforded by collaborative online learning. A deeper appreciation of why this decision is being made can be obtained through exploring some of the theory related to technology adoption in general and how individuals are motivated to innovate. Understanding this theoretical basis can then help to address the industry specific factors presented in the higher education sector.

⁸⁵ The responses to the research for this thesis indicate that off-campus students are less likely to be the targets of online collaboration.

Why do people innovate?

University teachers are like any group in that there will be a small percentage of people who always seek to innovate (Rogers 2003). These venturesome few are attracted to new ideas, accepting of risk and able to accept failure or ostracism. In his influential work analysing the diffusion of innovations within communities, Rogers noted five categories of adoption based upon the point in time when an individual will begin to use an innovation:

Innovators (approximately 2.5% of the population)

These are the venturesome experimenters that introduce new ideas and approaches into the system. "Their interest in new ideas leads them out of a local circle of peer networks.....the innovator plays an important role in the diffusion process: that of launching the new idea in the system by importing the innovation from outside of the system's boundaries." (Rogers 2003: 282) The boundaries referred to do not need to be physical or geographical ones. They may be boundaries of perception or culture; breaking the conventions of "How we do things here". For this reason, Innovators can be considered as 'loners'; not closely bonded to the main group and perhaps not respected or followed by the group. Their decisions and practices won't necessarily spread to the others.

Early Adopters (approximately 13.5% of the population)

This segment is the key to spreading an innovation within a community. They are integrated with the group and their opinions are respected. "The early adopter is considered by many to be the 'individual to check with' before adopting a new idea...early adopters help trigger the critical mass when they adopt an innovation....(they) put their stamp of approval on a new idea by adopting it" (Rogers 2003: 283).

Early Majority (approximately 34% of the population)

This group will adopt an innovation just slightly before the 'average' member of a community. They are a large portion of the group but not influential within it. They will spend longer making a decision about whether to adopt, but do not want to be the first or the last to take on a new idea.

Late Majority (approximately 34% of the population)

This group will adopt an innovation just slightly after the 'average' member of a community. They may adopt only because of increasing peer pressure or because older practices are becoming untenable or 'expensive'. "Most of the uncertainty about a new idea must be removed before the late majority feel that it is safe to adapt" (Rogers 2003: 284).

Laggards (approximately 16% of the population)

The last to adopt an innovation, the laggards are conservatives who place everything in a context of tradition and what has been done in the past. Laggards tend to associate with other laggards and as individuals or small groups may be isolated within the wider community. Rogers is careful not to disparage Laggards, pointing out that their viewpoint may be entirely rational, especially when their resources are limited and failure is unaffordable. This logic could be translated into the academic community where the prevailing view is of limited time and small gain to be had from teaching innovation.

Under this categorisation, it is the early adopters who are fundamental to spreading new ideas throughout the community. An innovation, no matter how brilliant, may never spread if it does not pass the scrutiny of these 'approvers'. Whilst the innovator group will be constantly trying out new things, it is the early adopters who will be making a more shrewd judgement on the innovation and subjecting it to more of an evaluation on practicality and usability. This gatekeeper role brings status within the group and the early adopter knows "to continue to earn the esteem of colleagues and to maintain a central position in the communications networks of the system, he or she must make judicious innovation decisions" (Rogers 2003: 283).

This raises the question of what makes a teacher (in this case an early adopter) decide to employ new technologies or apply existing ones in new ways? What are the incentives to adopt a new approach and why are they not consistently interpreted? Answering these questions requires some examination of the thought processes people exhibit towards technology adoption, as well as an understanding of their workplaces.

Examining the factors involved in individuals adopting new technologies has long been of interest to information systems theorists, particularly in the private sector. Attempts to describe what makes people and organisations adopt and use one technology whilst rejecting another has major financial and efficiency repercussions for both developers and consumers

of technology. The efforts in this regard have naturally paralleled the increased penetration (and thus market value) of digital information systems in work, home and study applications.

An early attempt to explain patterns of computer technology adoption was that of Davis (1989). Building on earlier modelling of behaviour, particularly in the consumer context, Davis developed what he called the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (F. D. Davis 1989).⁸⁶ The TAM and its subsequent modifications have become extremely influential in the study of information systems and acceptance of innovation (Richard P. Bagozzi 2007; Benbasat and Barki 2007; Persico et al. 2014) and thus warrant discussion in this thesis, with its context of technology uptake amongst a specific group.

According to the TAM, the two most critical factors in technology adoption were:

Perceived Usefulness (PU) – the belief that a technology will or will not help someone perform their job better.

Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) – the estimation of how simple a technology will be to learn and apply, and whether the required effort might negate the potential gains imagined under Perceived Usefulness

The attitudinal decision on whether to use a new technology was seen mainly as a tension between these two factors. Combined, they would create a Behavioural Intention that resulted in the actual use or non-use of the technology. It is important to note that under the TAM process, the most potentially useful tool could be ignored if the individual felt that “the system is too hard to use and that the performance benefits of usage are outweighed by the effort of using the application” (F. D. Davis 1989: 320). This model has significant relevance to this thesis, given the indications of a prevailing disinclination towards adopting and innovating with technology amongst Australian teachers of IR/Politics. The responses gathered to the research in Chapter 4 point to low judgements of both Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) amongst this group, and this *despite* the significant evidence supporting the benefits of online collaborative learning environments.

At a deeper level, the TAM adoption decision can also be applied to the individual components and tools within something like a software program. This rationalisation may be

⁸⁶ This first Technology Acceptance Model also became known as TAM1 once subsequent versions appeared in 2000 (TAM2) and 2008 (TAM3).

illustrative in analysing the responses to the questionnaire, where there was a trend of IR/Politics teachers using the LMS, but merely as a repository for readings, lecture slides and so on, rather than using the active features allowing for things like a course wiki, online grading system or collaborative authoring. That is, under the TAM process, the effort required to use the system in more innovative ways is judged as unrewarding in its potential outcomes or applications.

Naturally the TAM model looks at an individual faced with free choice and able to apply their own rationale. In a workplace this may not be the case. Whilst personal choice might still exist in some form, such as the *extent* to which one makes use of a technology, wholesale rejection may not be an option. However, widespread approval or resistance to a new technology or tool can have a 'ripple effect' within an organisation and between peers. The PU and PEU attitudes of individuals may be informed by the experiences and attitudes of their peers. This may then affect the longevity or subsequent iterations of a technology. In a university environment, where a great deal of free choice exists, this can be particularly significant. Whilst an individual teacher may not have the option of completely ignoring a technology such as an LMS, the extent to which they make use of it and which features they use beyond some minimum level *are* a matter of choice.

Later work on the TAM concept (R. P. Bagozzi et al. 1992) recognised this greater complexity of human decision making and, importantly, the fact that perceptions and attitudes were not always well-founded. It is important to note the dates that these theories were being discussed, since Davis *et al.* were working in a period that could be described as the dawn of widespread personal computer adoption. That is to say most people had no prior experience with computers at home or in the workplace. Their attitudes towards using computers were therefore not likely based on personal experience and their perception of the complexity (or indeed benefits) of such equipment was potentially exaggerated. A skilled clerical typist, for example, may have seen no great advantage in a word processor, especially if they had a fear of 'deleting everything by accident'.

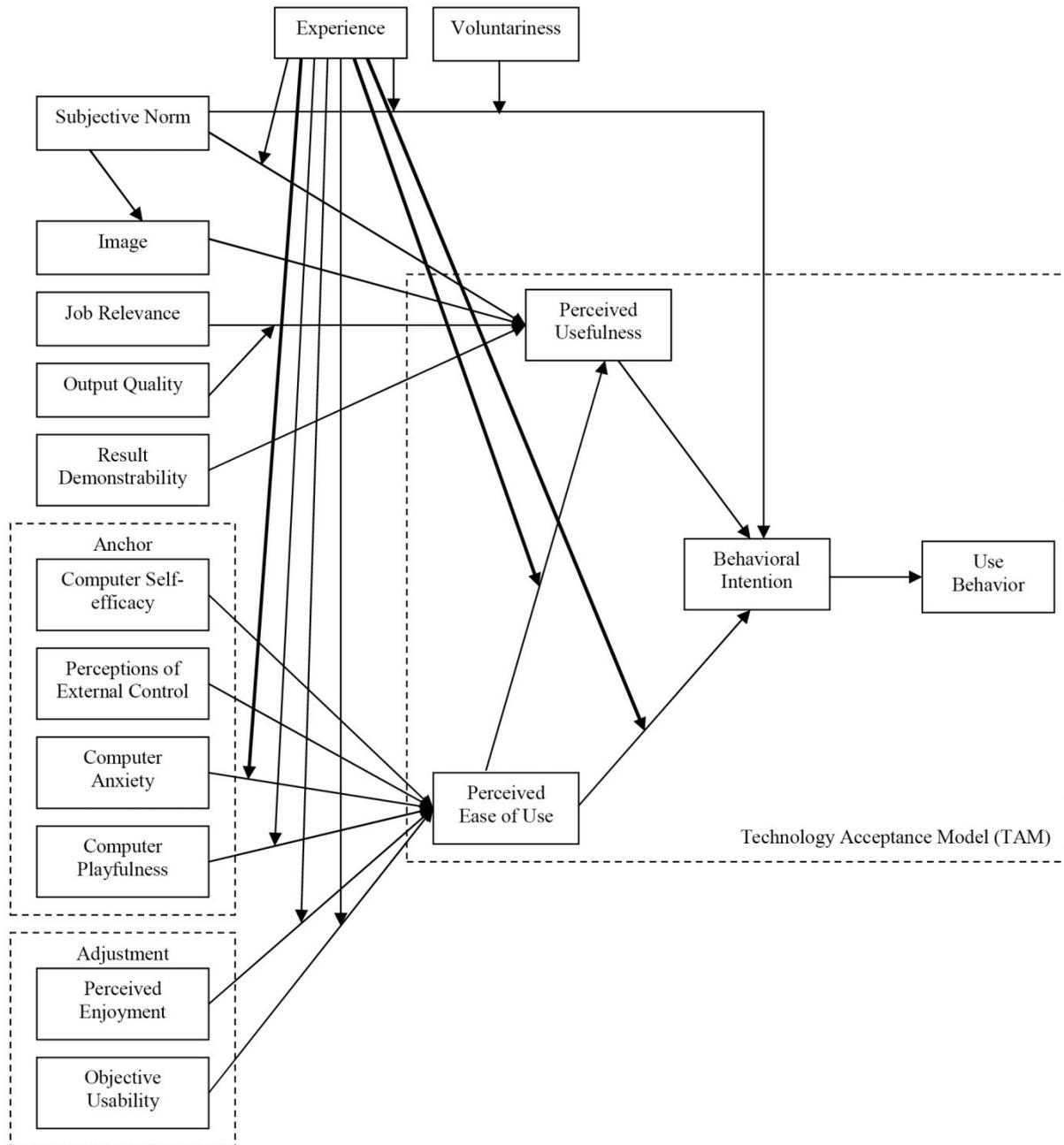


Figure 10: TAM3 model
 (Venkatesh and Bala 2008: 280)

Since the work of Davis (1989) and (Bagozzi et al. (1992), the deployment of technology in the workplace, in education and in domestic situations has increased exponentially. Computer usage in the developed world is now a norm. The “Digital Generation” has lived their entire lives working and playing with these technologies, though their skill levels will vary and their own PEU and PU decisions will still be evident.

This change in the *status quo* has seen some efforts to adapt the original TAM model, making it more complex and more reflective of workplace and societal changes. A TAM2 version was put forward in 2000 (Venkatesh 2000) and was in turn updated into the current version known as TAM3 (Venkatesh and Bala 2008). TAM3 incorporates a range of other input factors that would have been inconceivable in the late 1980s when Davis was developing his theory, such as “Computer self-efficacy” and “Computer Playfulness”. TAM3 also utilises 'Experience' as a widespread modifier towards PU and PEU, making for a much more complex network of tensions affecting ultimate Use Behaviour.

As a model of technology adoption the TAM hypothesis has strong support (Benbasat and Barki 2007) but it is a general model of human behaviour, unspecific to particular groups (Richard P. Bagozzi 2007). Such groups will have their own inputs and perceptions and therefore differing values of judging usefulness. In this thesis the concern is with Australian university teachers and particularly those responsible for IR/Politics subjects. In order to explore why there is currently a low deployment rate of collaborative online learning amongst this group, further analysis of the responses to the questionnaire and some supporting literature is pertinent. This may assist in determining what factors are contributing to the PU and PEU judgements that are being made.

Why do university teachers innovate?

In addition to the generalised approaches to model technology adoption there have also been attempts to examine the factors specifically relevant to teachers in the Higher Education sector (Anderson 2008; Kennedy et al. 2008b; Kennedy et al. 2011; Schneckenberg 2009; Tabata and Johnsrud 2008). These studies (outlined below) find that in the delivery of university teaching, there are some key differences to technology use in comparison to other public sector roles, private enterprise and personal (home) computing. These differences can contribute to a different decision-making process in an individual's technology adoption.

One distinctive aspect of contemporary higher education is the use of the LMS and the fact that such tools are of shared use between the teachers and students. In a private enterprise sense, this is like a business and its clients operating within the same software platform or database; a highly unusual occurrence. As early as 2004, every Australian public university

had an LMS in use (Byrnes and Ellis 2004). Since then the LMS has become the standard portal between a university, its students and its teachers, and operates as a platform for administration, communication, teaching and learning. This would be particularly the case for off-campus students, whose interaction with their institution, teachers and peers may come largely through this medium. The responses to the research for this thesis indicate a high (>90%) usage of an LMS in teaching delivery at Australian universities and this finding concurs with that of Kennedy et al. (2011) who report a figure of 91.6% usage.

However, whilst many public and private sector organisations may have some sort of intranet and one or more 'obligatory' applications (for example, a centralised invoicing system), universities may differ from other industry sectors because of the discretion individuals have over whether and how to use this institutional technology. That is to say that the level of employment of and the features used within the LMS are left up to the individual staff member. For example, Charles Sturt University requires all of its subject units to have an online presence offering, at a minimum, the unit's outline and a discussion forum (Tinkler et al. 2012). Beyond this though, there is no onus on the teacher to utilise any of the other features of the platform or carry out significant teaching and learning activities online. Deakin University had a similar compulsory 'internet presence' policy in the past (Wells 2006), but has since repealed it. However, in such cases where use of the LMS is not mandatory, other policies can make its employment inevitable. For example, a policy that states a unit guide must be made available to students (without stipulating the mode of delivery) leaves the teacher with the choice of providing hard copies, emailing individual students with the document or placing it on the LMS. The latter would seem the least logistically onerous option. In such a way a *custom* of basic LMS usage can develop without it necessarily being enforced.

The decision on whether and how to use the LMS may also be influenced by the enrolment modes of the student cohort. A subject unit including distance education students may require more online presence than one taught only on campus.

This results in a wide range of LMS adoption amongst teachers, from a bare minimalist approach to total subject delivery (Kennedy et al. 2011). Students too can exhibit this variance, with some using the LMS on a daily basis, whilst others rarely log-on, or do so only to meet compulsory targets that may exist for a particular unit (such as an assessed weekly posting on a discussion board).

Likewise, and potentially contrary to other employment sectors, there is also scope for individual teachers to employ 'non-official' software and technology in their course (Kennedy et al. 2011). This could involve anything from a link to a YouTube clip, a free online tool such as MediaWiki or Google Docs, and right through to specially developed and subject-specific tools through a commercial or non-commercial arrangement. These may be hosted within the university or completely outside it, and operate through financial contract, commons license or private, *ad hoc* arrangements. In this latter category would sit examples such as Deakin University's *Middle East Politics Simulation*, a built-for-purpose tool used by only two or three teachers and hosted on a server in the UNSW School of Computer Science and Engineering (Hardy and Totman 2011). The implications for teachers following this approach are varied, with issues such as intellectual property rights, third party stakeholder involvement, and the possibility of endorsing student interaction in online environments where they may either affect the university's reputation or be subject to harassment.

An impetus towards the use of an LMS by university teachers is the growing proportion of off-campus or mixed mode students (q.v.). Whether these cohorts are enrolled in discrete units of study or combined with on-campus students, the LMS will be their primary means of connecting with subject material and the institution. This can provide further pressure on teachers to utilise the LMS, though again individual approaches will vary in their level of adoption. Paradoxically, one study carried out in the USA found that institutional (i.e. official) pushes towards off-campus delivery can make staff more reluctant to engage in the technologies associated with this mode (Tabata and Johnsrud 2008). The authors attempt to offer some explanations for this, though the motivations they consider seem to equate to little more than obstinacy and a petulant desire by staff to 'push back' against perceived authority. This latter point is explored in the Australian context by Anderson (2008), who sees this as a form of resistance by academics against the managerial/bureaucratic forces within universities.

Investigating the barriers to e-learning deployment in European science faculties, Schneckenberg (2009) noted two 'tensions' that worked against more widespread and successful incorporation of technology in teaching:

- A disconnection between university wide strategic policies and the individuals who were to deploy them. This was mainly due to the traditional structure of universities into semi-autonomous faculties, schools, discipline groups etc. Essentially, teaching

staff could 'hide' from change in their silos and certainly have no idea what was happening across the institution.

- A lack of perceived recognition, status and reward for delivering high-quality teaching outcomes. Schneckenberg felt this was largely due to the heavy emphasis on research output in the science community (Schneckenberg 2009).

The data gathered during the research for this thesis shows that these tensions between strategic ambitions and the day-to-day practices are just as applicable to Australian teachers of IR/Politics as they are to European science educators. Feelings of being remote from executive leadership, being foisted with impractical and/or fashionable schemes that would soon be shelved, and of being unrewarded for teaching innovation were commonly expressed:

Interviewer: So when you get presented with a new strategic plan...how do you react as a teacher?

Subject: How do I react? I'd say I react with indifference. Because in the sixteen or seventeen years that I've been doing some of the units, there hasn't been a huge revolution in the way in which it's been done. I adopted online technologies pretty early on, and I think it's very useful. Particularly in getting to people who can't get on campus, and also getting comparative justice across campuses. But as for waiting for the publication of a new strategic plan to see how that's going to impact on my methods of teaching...I'd say that's negligible (Interviewee F).

These tensions between individual perceptions of strategic policy are likely to contribute to an academic's technology acceptance under a TAM-type process model. Perceived reward or encouragement for innovation is also a significant factor. In related research, Schneckenberg (2010) suggested that

Universities have to create innovative portfolios for faculty development which extend both the scope and breadth of formal training with non-formal measures like communities of practice, peer groups and networks. Beyond these competence development measures, institutional incentives like eLearning rewards and career opportunities for eLearning champions increase the motivation of faculty to sustainably use learning technologies for their courses. (Schneckenberg 2010: 979)

These suggestions accord with those of McKenzie et al. (2005) when examining innovation in the Australian higher education sector. They found that where innovation does occur, it is cultivated by several factors that provide incentive and support from within the institution:

- supportive and proactive leadership;
- provision of support and advice for those seeking to adapt and implement innovative approaches
- creating the perception that teaching, innovation and the scholarship of teaching were valued
- recognition and reward (McKenzie et al. 2005).

In this light, the inconsistent rate of innovation amongst Australian university teachers reflects a complex set of pressures, perceptions and logistical realities. The assumptions made by staff and students directly influence the PU and PEU inputs described under the TAM model and are therefore critical to comprehending attitudes that inform current and future usage in universities. Central to the argument of this thesis is the idea that technology adoption amongst university teachers of IR/Politics *does not* follow identical patterns to those described under the generic TAM process. This is demonstrated by the findings of the research, which depict little use of collaborative online learning technologies despite the broader goals of universities and the identified and evidenced pedagogical benefits of such approaches. Although IR/Politics subject delivery may benefit from collaborative online experiences (see Chapters 2 and 6), they remain under-utilised, and this is further evidence that a logical chain of adoption modelling is not applicable. A judgement is still made by staff on 'Perceived Use' and 'Perceived Ease of Use', but the factors that influence this in higher education are different from those in other sectors.

A Technology-Assisted Teaching Adoption Model

As shown throughout this chapter, in the higher education context decision process on technology adoption and the outcomes of this are more complex than the simple binary evaluation described by the basic TAM model. For example, judging the opportunity cost of a research versus teaching dilemma and its influences in the promotion process is less likely to

occur outside of academia. The autonomy over individual technology adoption (and its extent) may also be greater than in other industries. Moreover, the findings of this thesis and the wider literature suggest that the rate of technology adoption amongst academics is consistently low (or limited in scope) *despite* the demonstrated benefits of online approaches.

The original TAM concept is therefore not sufficient to describe technology adoption in educational contexts (Persico et al. 2014). Such modelling needs to account for a wider range of perceptions pertinent to the sector and the local logistical/practical/legal factors that modify them. In an Australian university an initial intention to innovate (be it an individual decision or an imposed one) will be subject to the staff member's existing perceptions about technology. These will include attitudes to technology *per se*, as well as assumptions regarding factors such as student attitudes to group work. These perceptions are then further affected by realities, such as pressure to service more students online, increasing cohort sizes, IT support, threats to departmental funding and so on.

To describe such variables, a modified version the TAM is here proposed. This "Technology-Assisted Teaching Adoption Model" (TATAM) attempts to present the processes involved in an individual's decision to employ new technology-based teaching approaches (see Figure 11). The TATAM draws upon the research gathered by this thesis, which is in turn largely supported in the wider literature. It is therefore Australian-centric, but given the literature describes similar attitudes towards e-learning adoption in other parts of the world, it is arguable that the TATAM could have general application. Whatever locality is applied, the TATAM should still serve as an illustration of the general mindset of teachers when it comes to their consideration of whether to be innovative with technology in their teaching. It also indicates a general misalignment of university strategic goals (pro-innovation) with the practices of the teachers themselves (disinclined to innovation).

In the TATAM the initial consideration of whether to innovate is subject to a range of perceptions. These include:

- The teacher's actual experiences, those of their peers and any student experiences that may inform them.
- Their beliefs and values surrounding teaching, attitudes towards online interaction, technical competence and judgements on workload and career development.

- Pedagogical stances regarding the value and legitimacy of technology in teaching, including what demonstration of value they may have been shown.

These 'Perceptions' are then subject to adjustment by the 'Practicalities' of the higher education workplace. These encompass the everyday realities of teaching, or at least the individual's judgement of what these are. They can be divided into two groups: Pressures and Supports. Pressures include:

Policy: What policies does the institution have that affect the decision to innovate? Must a unit have an online presence? What rules are there regarding assessment? How are off-campus students incorporated? How is development time for online teaching material accounted for in workload? What are the strategic goals of the university? What are the *minimum* standards for unit delivery?

Consequences: How are standards enforced? What happens if a teacher fails minimum standards or far exceeds them? Can strategic direction be realistically ignored?

Payoff: Is innovation and/or teaching excellence rewarded in career terms? Is the teacher better off pursuing research activities? How might student (dis)satisfaction affect the teacher's plans?

The Support series of modifiers can serve to enhance or diminish the teacher's evaluation of whether to innovate. They include support (or lack of it) at various levels:

Technical support: Is there the required level of technical assistance available (and do staff perceive this to be so)? How flexible are IT support staff in assisting with innovative solutions versus standard approaches? Can non-university resources be incorporated and supported? Are there logistical barriers in place such as server space, access permissions, WiFi coverage etc.?

Organisational support: How does the university help, hinder or ignore innovation? Is there funding and resources available to assist technical innovation? What bureaucratic or legal criteria might be involved? What are the realities of workload, career development and promotion processes? Are different discipline areas treated the same or differently with respect to policy?

Leadership support: Are the teacher's line managers encouraging of innovation and prepared to support it with time and resources? Does the leadership group enforce policy

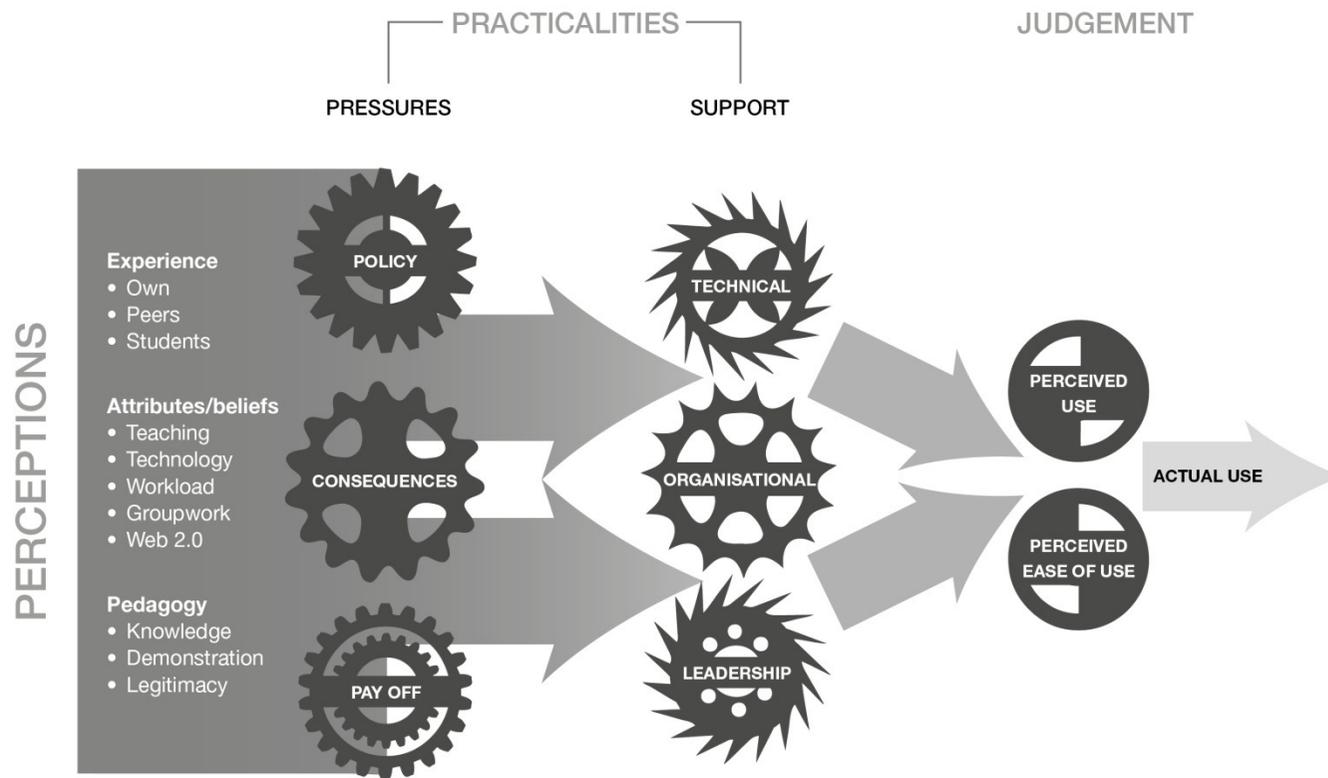


Figure 11: *The Technology-Assisted Teaching Adoption Model (TATAM)*

rigidly? Will career possibilities be enhanced or stifled by time spent developing new teaching approaches? What praise and recognition is forthcoming?

The Perceptions, modified by the Pressures and Supports combine in the final judgement of the original TAM process: Perceived Usefulness versus Perceived Ease of Use. After this summation will come the decision on whether or not to innovate and also *how* and *to what extent* that actual innovation might occur.⁸⁷

At present, the over-riding output of the TATAM process appears to be a deterrence to innovation or else a severe diminution of original intentions. The Perceptions and Processes are largely negative factors that overcome all but the most determined intention to innovate. It can be argued that the low rate of innovative output then feeds back towards the perceptions of other teaching staff, resulting in even weaker initial intentions.

This is certainly the case evidenced by the responses gathered in this research. Innovation, at least in terms of collaborative online learning, seems largely blocked amongst Australian IR/Politics teachers. The perceptions, pressures and supports apparently create a judgement of disincentive, resulting in low rate of adoption. That is, the decision to innovate is seen as too difficult or not worth the investment of time.

There are of course those true innovators under Rogers' classification who will always be changing or developing their online practices. However the machinery of the university system seems to choke off that next wave of diffusion - the early adopters - meaning that innovation never spreads into wider practice (Freeman 2012; Treleaven et al. 2011). Under such a paradigm, Australian universities are currently trapped in a paradox: their strategic ambitions can never be realised due to the impediments of their own internal organisational culture.

The logical question that ensues is what can be done to change this?

The systemic and institutional conditions noted above rest with the universities themselves. Providing more incentive to experiment with teaching, recognising teaching excellence in promotion processes and increasing intra-organisational communication would make significant contributions to encouraging adoption of new practices such as collaborative

⁸⁷ For example, an original intention might have been considering an ambitious project with custom-built software. However the machinery of the TATAM process may result in that same teacher eventually opting for a more modest plan utilising the university's LMS.

online learning. Additionally, implementing new technologies that assist teaching innovation may also facilitate this. However such approaches would involve substantial investment and change management across the whole of an institution, possibly over a time span of years before any significant effects could ensue. Offering change management strategies for shifts of this magnitude is not within the scope of this thesis, although the objectives noted throughout should inform the impetus for such change.

However, in addressing the use of collaborative online learning amongst IR/Politics teachers, some suggestions can be made. The focus should be on proposing a relatively simple solution (or set of solutions) to fostering collaborative online learning, one that satisfies many of the pressures on IR/Politics teachers noted in Chapter 1. These solutions should have the additional benefit of assuaging some of the barriers noted in this chapter, thus subverting the negative process of the TATAM model.⁸⁸

In this respect the approach of online role play could offer an answer. Demonstrably effective from a pedagogic point of view and with a strong record of employment in the IR/Politics disciplines, role play offers a collaborative approach that can be implemented without necessarily requiring significant technological investment or innovation.

The manner in which online role play can satisfy all of the pressures on IR/Politics teachers and offer students learning outcomes of value beyond the university is discussed in the following chapter.

⁸⁸ Obviously no single solution will be the remedy to the exact circumstances of every individual IR/Politics teacher in Australia. Likewise, encouraging spontaneous innovation amongst the more resistant groups in Rogers' (2003) continuum is unlikely. However, if the benefits of certain techniques and ideas can be properly exhibited amongst the Early Adopter and Early Majority groups, more general innovation will ensue.

Chapter 6: Role play as a collaborative solution to 21st century IR/Politics teaching

The use of role play in exploring political subject matter has a long history, originally with strong links to game-based dilemmas of warfare and strategy. The Prussian *Kriegsspiel* was an early example of this, intending to simulate the complexities and randomness of strategic warfare in a table-top version for purposes of training staff officers (von Hilgers 2000).⁸⁹ However, even chess is an ancient representation of dynastic conflict, whilst at the other end of the chronological scale today's combat flight simulators and first-person shooters all have at their core the idea of pretending to be undertaking military activity.

The discipline of IR/Politics notes however that there is more to political activity than just warfare. Indeed, armed conflict between nations can be seen only as one amongst many aspects of statecraft, or perhaps an indication of its failure. Off the battlefield there is a raft of abstract concepts: power, negotiation, threat, populism, democracy, rationality. These ideas do not always translate well into 'facts' that can be imparted in a lecture and committed to memory as inviolable laws or rules in a game.⁹⁰ Often they are matters of the behaviour displayed and perceptions held by individuals or groups at fixed points in time and geography and thus hard to quantify or explain in a classroom. So whilst *Kriegsspiel* may have been helpful for 19th century Prussians planning troop logistics, it is unable to explain modern dilemmas such as Saddam Hussein obstructing weapons inspectors when he had no weapons, how the Tea Party has affected American conservative politics or why democracy has not evolved the same way in Russia as it has in Poland. Communicating the layers of complexity, context and constraint inherent to IR/Politics is a difficult task for teachers, but when dealing with the abstract, such as IR theory or economics, it is the tangled connections and compromises of political life that form the bridge between theory and real world examples.

⁸⁹ An ironic outcome of the German devotion to war games was that many of their key local commanders were absent for the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944 because they had been called away to participate in a collaborative simulated version (Shirer (1959), Ryan (1959)).

⁹⁰ A commercially successful board game that attempted to simulate the political nature of international conflict was *Diplomacy* (1959). The game contains no random elements and revolves purely around negotiations of support and betrayal between players representing the various European empires. In a pre-cursor to collaborative online gaming, *Diplomacy* was even played by groups of people exchanging moves by post, sometimes using specialist magazines as a neutral party to publish and referee the outcomes of the moves. *Diplomacy* however does not involve a particularly deep role playing aspect, since the overall objective for each player is a zero-sum game of territorial acquisition and military build-up.

One of the most difficult challenges for 21st century IR/Politics teachers is how to foster greater disciplinary understanding amongst students within the finite limits imposed by time and resources. The complexity of political processes and systems can mean traditional methods of teaching and assessing this subject are prone to offering only a shallow overview or else narrow learning outcomes (McCarthy and Anderson 2000). For example, essays can obviously encourage student exploration of a relatively narrow topic or argument. However, as noted in Chapter 4, writing a paper is unlikely to translate into skills beyond the classroom. Gaining an appreciation of the power and subtleties of negotiation in politics and everyday life is unlikely to ensue from a traditional lecture and assignment structure (Shaw 2006).

To make this leap of understanding occur, IR/Politics subjects can benefit from the experiential or 'learning by doing' approach. As Grant (2004: vii) (quoted in Coffey et al. (2011: 14) states "...like card games and sports, politics is something that makes the most sense if it is actually played, not just talked about". Such thinking involves considering the experiential learning theories discussed in Chapter 2, where the ideal sequence involves creating an experience, reflecting upon it, drawing conclusions and abstractions from it and then applying these outcomes and new knowledge to a new experience or action (Beard and Wilson 2006; Itin 1999; Kolb 1984).

Of course a student of Politics cannot just become a real politician for practice, particularly in the case of a foreign country. It is necessary to pretend and for this reason, the use of role plays and simulations have been applied with effective results in the delivery of IR/Politics teaching (Asal 2005; Boyer et al. 2006; Chasek 2005; Dougherty 2003; Hintjens 2008; McCarthy and Anderson 2000; Sasley 2010; Simpson and Kaussler 2009).⁹¹ Stemming from a case-study type approach, role plays (or simulations) allow IR/Politics students to experiment with variables and hypotheses in the same way that engineers or scientists might test the boundaries of a bridge design or a physical theory in a laboratory (Asal and Blake 2006). These role plays can operate in a variety of formats, including face-to-face, via computer, in class, out of class and so on. They may form part of an assessment regime or be linked to the production of other assessment items such as reports or essays. Their duration can be limited to a single class or be spread over weeks. There may be only a handful of teams or students or potentially hundreds.

⁹¹ See elsewhere in this chapter for a fuller review of the literature detailing the use of simulation in IR and Politics teaching.

Whatever their format, a consistent theme in the literature covering political role plays has been the depth of the learning outcomes they can potentially deliver (Austin et al. 2006; Dracup 2009; Frederking 2005; Galatas 2006; Sasley 2010; Shaw 2004; Shellman and Turan 2006; Stover 2005; Vincent and Shepherd 1998). Indeed, literature surrounding the use of role plays in IR/Politics is so overwhelmingly positive when describing the resulting learning outcomes (S. M. Wheeler 2006) that it is difficult to find counter-examples of failed or unsatisfactory role plays in this discipline area.⁹² Increased depth and breadth of subject understanding, improved negotiation and collaboration skills, increased empathy and overall improvement of grades are all purported benefits of using role plays in IR/Politics.

Of further interest to this research though is the potential for computer-based role plays to satisfy many of the demands upon higher education institutions and IR/Politics teachers, whilst at the same time alleviating some of the technological and attitudinal barriers to greater deployment of collaborative online practices. In essence, computer-based role plays provide for an immersive and engaging learning experience that promotes a range of skills, yet they can also be quite simply delivered using familiar tools such as an LMS or webmail. Moreover, the use of an online environment will be more conducive to involving off-campus students in an equitable manner.⁹³ If such efficacy and simplicity can be demonstrated by this research, progress may be made towards a fuller implementation of such approaches.

This chapter assesses the weight of evidence supporting the use of role plays (of all types) in teaching IR/Politics subjects and the benefits that can arise in terms of student engagement, improved subject understanding and the development of skills transferable beyond the learning environment.

In order to analyse the evidence supporting the use of role play in IR/Politics, it is first important to develop a familiarity with some of the expressions relevant to the discussion.

⁹² One factor for the lack of negative role-play experiences to be found in the literature may be the tendency for people not to write about (or publicise) their failures; even if this sentiment stems from a desire not to waste further time on a unsuccessful experiment rather than simple embarrassment.

⁹³ The type of connection an off-campus student has available for connection to the Internet and the nature of the role play software will be a factor in this equity. A graphically rich role play environment would be less accessible to those using slow speed data connections or facing other infrastructure challenges.

Games, Simulations and Role Play: a question of definition

As noted in Chapter 2, misunderstanding and conflation of key terminologies can offer barriers to better understanding of collaborative online tools. Additionally, the impression of certain online activities as fun or frivolous can offer a perceptual barrier to their adoption in academic contexts. Online role plays and simulation are no different in this respect from phenomena such as wikis and social media. The inclusion of the word 'play' in role play may indicate to some the idea of a fun and non-educational endeavour (Schrader et al. 2006; Wills et al. 2010). There can also be uncertainty over the use of the word 'simulation', since the popularity of computer-based flight or racing simulators can encourage the idea that simulations are always visually or physically immersive experiences. The perception of such simulations as 'video games' played for entertainment further biases discussion of these terms in an academic context.

In addition to this, the prominence of online role playing in virtual worlds (such as *World of Warcraft* or *Second Life*) can add further preconceptions to any discussion of the topic. The link between these virtual worlds and the genre of fantasy (*World of Warcraft*) and even sexual activity (*Second Life*) may also affect the way that teachers and students think about these sorts of tools and their place in the classroom.

As with the terminologies related to e-learning, definitions of games, role-play and so on may be contested, leading to further uncertainty. In many cases, there is no universally accepted designation. For the sake of clarity in the context of this thesis and its recommendations, it is therefore important to offer some definitions of key concepts and discuss the similarities and differences that arise.

Games

Games are abstracted representations with tightly defined rules, usually with an element of competition and the goal of winning (Asal 2005; Gredler 1992; Wills et al. 2010). Although they may be based upon real world concepts (such as warfare), they employ non-real devices such as randomness, teams, turns or other restrictions in order to function. They will perhaps also need specialised paraphernalia such as dice, boards, cards, tokens and so forth in order to progress (Gredler 1992). Players will have some freedom of action, but this will likely be

only within strict limits set by the rules. (e.g. “This piece may move sideways or forwards but not backwards.”)

Simulations

Simulations present more complex functions than games and are based upon realistic problem solving (Gredler 1992; Wills et al. 2010). They imitate a real world issue or process and will typically allow participants more freedom of action, particularly in the way that participants interact with the problem (Gredler 1992). There will not necessarily be the aim of winning, though achieving a specific outcome (e.g. landing a plane safely) may be inherent. Simulation does not necessarily involve visual representation of its subject matter, since in the case of mock diplomatic communication, there will not always be anything to visualise. In simulation it is usually the process that is important rather than the outcomes.

Gredler (1992) outlines two major types of simulation:⁹⁴

Tactical Decision – Analysis of data or other inputs to arrive at a decision offering an outcome. The emphasis is on selecting the data, interpreting and managing it successfully and then applying the analysis to influence the outcome. A flight simulator would be an example of this, with the participant interpreting flight instruments, weather, airport layout, air traffic control directives and so forth to achieve a successful landing. Such a simulation will often involve just one player (or team), perhaps playing 'against' a computer.

Social Process – Interacting with parties or people to gain an improved understanding of a system or environment. The emphasis is on communication and empathy and the ability to react appropriately to the actions of others. The simulation of diplomacy or a business meeting would fit into this category, as would most of the role play deployments relevant to this research. Such simulations will usually involve more than one party or team and could occur in a face-to-face or computer mediated environment.

At a basic level there could be room for Tactical Decision simulations in teaching IR/Politics, perhaps in the simple demonstrations of economic theory (see the card game of Boyer et al.

⁹⁴ A third category also exists where the term 'simulation' is often applied. That is the use of mathematically-driven computer *modelling* in fields such as science and engineering. This would be applied to represent complex systems such as global weather or structural design, or else used as a more expedient test bed for experiments problematic to enact in the real world. This type of simulation does not involve the sort of human interaction and active learning elements relevant to this research and is hence not explored.

(2006) described below). However, the latter category of Social Process simulations is of greatest interest to this research since ideas of communication, empathy and the behaviour inherent in complex social systems (such as states) are the province of Political and International Relations study. Social Process simulations are also of more value in building the generic skills of communication, collaboration and so forth, as well as the subject-specific experiences and knowledge applicable to IR/Politics (for example diplomacy and negotiation).

Role play

Role plays assign specific roles to participants, requiring them to act within a given social, political or cultural setting (Wills et al. 2010). The intention is for participants to base their behaviour upon that of the person/organisation they are representing. This requires an understanding of the role and the projection of it during interaction with other participants.

The term 'role play' does not itself dictate any particular relationship with either games or simulations. Acting on a stage or children playing 'mothers and fathers' are types of role play that involve neither gaming nor simulating. However a role play may be an element of game or simulation for learning or other purposes. For example, simulating the diplomatic processes around a UN Security Council meeting may involve students playing the roles of delegates.

Virtual Worlds

Also called Virtual Environments (or Virtual Learning Environments in an educational context), these are computer based representations of a (usually) three-dimensional space. They may be based upon real world locations or fictional settings. It is important to note that Virtual Worlds are not themselves a type of game, simulation or role play, but rather they can form the stage for any of these.

The cross-over

Bearing in mind the above definitions it is easy to see why confusion occurs. Games, simulations and role plays can involve elements of each other. There are role playing games (*Dungeons and Dragons*, *Call of Cthulu*), simulation games (*Call of Duty*, *IL-2 Sturmovik*) and simulations that require role playing (Model United Nations, mock trials). Any of these

combinations may also take place within a Virtual World. Some of these activities may involve gaming elements such as cards, dice or abstract restrictions. Some will have an emphasis on winning or accumulating some sort of status, currency or experience. Some will be problem based and others have no other aim than building more intangible factors such as empathy or improved communication skills.

In dealing with role plays and simulations that utilise computers, Wills et al (2009, 2010) describe the continuum between "computer-mediated" and "computer based" simulations. In the former case, the computer is mainly used as a facilitator for the role play, perhaps as a means to exchange emails or for posting role profiles, such as the Middle East Politics Simulation described by Hardy and Totman (2011). In contrast, in 'computer based' simulations technology has a more central and indispensable function. A flight simulator would be an example of this. In this continuum, Wills et al (2009, 2010) also state that 'computer mediated' simulations will be more 'role based' and the 'computer based' ones will tend towards a focus on rules over roles. Gredler's (1994) Social Process and Tactical Decision labels (q.v.) also work along this continuum of roles, rules and technological facilitation.

In this research, which concerns the use of online collaboration in the Politics and IR disciplines, the focus will be upon simulations achieved through role playing, since these are the most prevalent examples. For this reason, the terms 'simulation' and 'role play' will be used interchangeably.

Simulations in the study of IR/Politics

Research on the experiences with role play in IR/Politics teaching has been published for decades.⁹⁵ Much of the earlier material does not consider technology-enabled simulations, but this online/offline watershed is generally true of all literature concerning collaboration in learning. However, even long after the proliferation of technology into educational environments, a large portion of the literature discussing role plays in teaching IR/Politics

⁹⁵ For example, see Banks et al. (1968). "Gaming and Simulation in International Relations." *Political Studies* 16(1): 1-17 or Fuller (1973). "Simulation in a Political Science Classroom." *Improving College and University Teaching* 21(4): 284-285.

subjects continues to describe purely face-to-face implementations, for example, classroom simulations of diplomatic summits or conflict resolution negotiations.

This does not however render such studies of face-to-face simulations irrelevant. Any investigation of collaborative role play in IR/Politics subjects is a vital foundation for this research, particularly since the literature is supportive of such activities. Moreover, highlighting the benefits of face-to-face deployments adds greater weight to the contention of this thesis that online delivery of such tasks offers the same and further advantages. There are also some case studies of recurring simulations that describe the eventual adoption of online technology to enhance the experience of the role play, particularly in terms of facilitating communication and allowing off-campus students a more active level of participation in their learning (for example Kinder et. al. (1999) and Lloyd (2004)).

For this reason it is important to explore the research on role playing and simulation in teaching IR/Politics subjects, even that which concerns non-technological examples. It should be noted that the majority of the literature is case study driven, written by the convenors of simulations and is often concerned mainly with outlining what was done, why and what ensued. In many cases a positive recommendation is made about the benefits of using simulation as an active learning technique, but with little empirical evidence to support this contention. The evidence is mainly anecdotal, either consisting of teacher observations about increased student engagement and awareness of the topic, or else relying on more formally gathered student feedback or questionnaires. In the few cases where empirical evidence of the advantages of role play is offered, it is often in the form of comparing two groups' performances in exams. Such comparisons may not be particularly valid because they can conflate the concepts of knowledge retention and learning. However, such difficulties in quantifying learning are inherent to any discussion of education.

It is the non-empirical outcomes in terms of learning that dominate the literature concerning the use of simulation in teaching Politics/ IR. Here there are two overwhelming trends within the literature, both of which tend to be mentioned in every piece of research discussed below:

- 1) Students exhibit improved levels of broader subject understanding, empathy, and ability to appreciate the wider contexts and complexities of an issue/region. This includes improved abilities in skills such as communication, negotiation and self-evaluation, transferrable beyond academia.

- 2) Higher levels of student engagement in the subject, including motivation to work beyond expected requirements.

Outcomes such as these are central to this thesis since if simulations can provide a means of addressing the institutional and discipline specific needs outlined in Chapter 1, then their use is to be encouraged. Moreover, if they can be shown as a means of overcoming some of the barriers to technology adoption outlined in Chapter 5 then they may provide an optimum solution.

IR/Politics role playing prior to the digital age

As discussed above, the use of role plays in teaching IR/Politics has a long history. Although the focus of this thesis is on computer mediated collaboration, it is nevertheless pertinent to examine the non-digital heritage of role plays in IR/Politics teaching, since the efficacies demonstrated in the literature point towards general benefits obtainable through any medium, on- or off-line. In building this evidence base, further support is provided for the argument that online role plays satisfy both pedagogical and market-based dilemmas confronting teachers of IR/Politics.

An early mention of the use of computer mediated simulations in teaching IR is provided by Banks et. al. (1968). In a paper describing the general merits of simulation as a teaching tool, the authors offer computers as a potential new approach, though their assumptions are that this would involve the processing of numerical calculation, in what we would really describe today as computer modelling of a system: "The function of the computer is to work out the implications, in accordance with the rules, of the differing resource distributions and aims decided upon by the players when faced with their environment. The computer is simply a convenience; the calculations could also be undertaken manually" (Banks et al. 1968: 8). The use of the computer here as a mere communications channel is not imagined.

The more general use of "crisis games" and "Inter-Nation Simulations" (INS) is enthusiastically endorsed by the authors as a means of teaching IR and Politics. They conclude, four decades in the past, that the practicality and rewards of role playing simulations are so self-evident that they should soon be used as an integral part of delivering IR subjects at all British universities (Banks et al. 1968).

Another early study of role play in teaching political subject matter is presented by Fuller (1973).⁹⁶ The purpose of the research was to observe changes in political attitudes and performance in exams of student participants in an introductory Political Science course. Some students were selected to take part in the role play (n=100) whilst the control group (n=494) did not. Both groups were evaluated before and after the simulation and the data analysed for variations in age, sex, major and year level of university. The research does not describe how the "political attitude" factors was determined, but reports that whilst changes in beliefs did occur, exam scores were not improved (Fuller 1973). This last conclusion points to a discrepancy in the types of knowledge relevant to role plays and exams; empathy and understanding as opposed to fact recall.

These two publications on IR/Politics role playing stand out for two reasons. Firstly, their early dates. The fact that in the late 1960s academics were earnestly advocating the merits of role play in this discipline area highlights how reticent progress towards fuller implementation has been. Secondly, and related to the early publication dates, is that the pedagogical issues raised in the papers pre-date terminologies such as 'active learning', but nevertheless depict exactly those attributes and outcomes relevant to such labels as well as the issues of depth and breadth of learning that is a permanent challenge to teaching IR/Politics. Finally, in a period long before codification of graduate attributes became fashionable, these publications espouse role plays as conducive to developing those broader 'soft skills' :

Both the crisis game and I.N.S. are excellent vehicles for teaching decision-making and providing examples of microtheory. Perception, communication, consensus formation, timing, interpretation of documents, environment, escalation, tension spirals are but a few of the topics that can be covered and experienced in a game-simulation. In a seemingly inevitable fashion student interest and motivation increases. Emotional involvement in the game is exceedingly high, as even some sceptical university lecturers who have played roles ruefully admit, and discussion is stimulated. From the teaching point of view the de-briefing sessions are exciting spectacles of uninhibited discussion with universal participation (Banks et al. 1968: 16).

⁹⁶ The assumption can be made that, given the date of 1973, this was not a computer mediated simulation, though the mechanics of the task are not explained in the article.

That there is 'nothing new under the sun' is not a remarkable conclusion. However, it is more curious that the evidence of the benefits of role play in IR/Politics teaching around the world has been gathering for at least 40 years, yet in the findings of this thesis, contemporary usage in Australia remains an exception rather than a rule.

The bulk of publications describing role play in delivering IR/Politics subjects occur more recently and are thus more cognizant of terminology *and* technology. However the themes borne out in the literature are often close to those described in the early publications: improved subject understanding, high levels of student engagement and the disconnection between factual recall and wider insight. Following is an examination of the more contemporary literature on the use of IR/Politics role plays and those themes.

Improved levels of subject understanding

Brown and King (S. W. Brown and King 2000a) studied a class of IR students participating in an International Communications and Negotiations Simulations (ICONS) task as part of their coursework. ICONS is a large-scale computer-mediated role play platform that has been used since the early 1980s via the University of Maryland.⁹⁷ Brown and King were investigating the students' experiences from a constructivist context; that is where learners are able to "construct their knowledge of, and give meaning to, the external world" (S. W. Brown and King 2000a: 245). They saw the ICONS exercise as a collaborative, Problem-Based Learning task and sought to explore what learning outcomes might occur. By surveying participants before and after the ICONS exercise, the researchers attempted to record changes in student understanding and attitude in criteria such as Knowledge, International Relations, Attitude towards computers and Attitudes towards school.

A noteworthy finding of this study was that students reported a statistically significant increase in the categories of 'Knowledge' surveyed. This included "Knowledge of country assigned", "Interest in country assigned" and "Knowledge of US foreign policy" (S. W. Brown and King 2000a). The results did not differ according to which role (country) the students groups had been assigned, suggesting that the collaborative role play exercise itself

⁹⁷ See <http://www.icons.umd.edu/> for details of this simulation platform.

had been the factor in this perceived knowledge increase. Additionally, the teachers involved recorded a statistically significant increase in student motivation.

Most importantly, the outcomes of this research suggest that role playing exercises do serve well to help students construct meaning and improved insight into the political world beyond the learning task. Free-form answers to a question asking what students felt they had learned exhibited this understanding:

- *How to resolve issues effectively.*
- *Many negotiations and group skills that will help in other things I do.*
- *I learned a lot about India's history in the assigned topic area (specifically conflict and compromise).*
- *It is very difficult to negotiate with persons who have different traditions of foreign policies.*
- *It is important to look at issues from all perspectives.*
- *The ability to negotiate with others without losing the main goal in the struggle.*
- *The differences of opinions between developed and developing countries.*
- *I became better able to work with others on group projects (S. W. Brown and King 2000a: 251).*

Such comments are valuable because they seem to illustrate the type of gains that are applicable to both an understanding of politics and in the generation of skills suited to the workplace.

Translation of generic skills beyond coursework was also observed by Brynen (2010) during a role play concerned with peace building in a fictional state, Brynania.⁹⁸

"Both anecdotally and in end-of-term evaluations, students have generally praised the simulation for having made a major contribution to their understanding of the politics and processes of peace operations. This has been especially strongly reiterated by

⁹⁸ See <http://brynania.mcgill.ca/> for details of this simulation.

those students who have gone on, after graduation, to careers in aid, diplomacy, and the military.... Student evaluations often highlight the perceived contribution of the simulation to negotiation and other interpersonal skills, as well as to formal and professional communications" (Brynen 2010: 148).

In comparison to other IR/Politics role plays described in the literature, Brynania has several differences. First is its fictional setting; a backdrop that is made further conspicuous by jocular place names such as Brynania (after the convenor himself), McGilldishu (after the university) and Cyberia, the virtual continent where the scenario takes place. Brynen justifies this fiction as conducive to free thought, since students will not feel hampered by historical precedence whilst exploring the major objective of the course, peace building and conflict resolution (Brynen 2010). The paper also contends that an imaginary setting will be less culturally offensive to some participants. However it could equally be argued that a fictional setting may be regarded less seriously by students or carry a sense of less being at stake than if they were negotiating a real-world crisis. Aspects of reality are present in the simulation though, since many of the teams represent real-world entities, such as the permanent members of the Security Council, certain NGOs and national teams contributing to peace-keeping forces.

A second distinction of the Brynania simulation is that it involves students at all levels of study, including doctoral, masters and undergraduate students. This is a marked difference from most role plays described in the literature, which are typically deployed amongst a more homogenous cohort, such as a single class or year group. Blending such a diverse range of students into one task presents some obvious advantages in terms of the leadership roles, subject expertise and mentoring that the advanced participants could offer. Conversely, such a potential disparity in knowledge (or confidence) may relegate the undergraduate students to a second-rank status or limit their potential for free exploration of the simulation's potential.

Finally, in comparison to some other simulations, the Brynania simulation forms a small (10%) portion of the students' overall mark, with an additional 10-15% awarded for an individual reflection paper completed subsequently (Brynen 2010). Running over a week for 12 hours a day, such a low grade weighting may seem unrewarding for students cognisant of the workload. However, Brynen reports that this has not been the case, and the available places in the simulation fill extremely quickly with enthusiastic participants. Such eagerness

to sacrifice extra time for an immersive learning experience is also reported by Hardy and Totman (2011) and Vincent and Shepherd (1998).

The ICONS platform as a vehicle for diplomacy and political simulation is also described by Starkey and Blake (2001). The authors make the point that the complexity and multi-actor input allowed by simulations mirrors the evolving intricacies of IR and the movement away from purely state-to-state relations:

New IR encompasses ethnic and transnational dimensions of conflict in addition to the traditional state-to-state modes. In negotiation, this means increased attention for Track Two approaches, for example, which focus on the societal level of analysis and “citizen diplomats” working for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or individually outside of the formal political arena. Issues at stake in international negotiations have broadened tremendously as well (Starkey and Blake 2001: 545).

Reflecting this complexity is the number of simulations described in the literature that involve teams or roles aside from what would be considered traditional brokers of diplomacy. Besides official state roles, Brynen (2010) describes the inclusion of aid NGOs, military commanders and 'civil society actors' such as trade unions, media and human rights activists. Hintjens (2008) mentions the inclusion of the Rwandan President's wife (who does indeed wield political influence) as a role in the post-conflict simulation she runs. Hardy and Totman (2012) describe the inclusion of terrorist groups and their intelligence service opponents in their Middle East Politics simulation.

Chasek (2005) describes a simulation with a triple objective: to increase student understanding of the mechanisms of international organisations; to facilitate understanding of the dynamics between international organisations, their constituent states and the member states themselves; and to enhance the ability of students to empathise different international perspectives of the same event. Based upon reactions to a fictional international terrorist incident, the primary context of the simulation was centred on negotiations within the UN Security Council. Completed over four 55-minute periods, this simulation was shorter than other examples within the literature, though it is notable that it spanned a weekend and students were free to work and collaborate outside of class time.

Whilst there was no empirical aspect to Chasek's study, she reports (anecdotally) that during the debriefing phase of the task all the original goals seemed to have been fulfilled. Students

had a greater interest, enthusiasm and appreciation for topics such as the Security Council apparatus, its tensions, flaws and the question of reform, as well as the difficulties of combating international terrorism. The debriefing led to a discussion and debate of the topic areas, with a deep level of understanding displayed (Chasek 2005).

Post-conflict Rwanda was the setting for a role play described by Hintjens (2008). The goals of the exercise were to "to explore the challenges for social justice and rights being realised in Rwanda today, and what role different actors, including the media, might play in reconstruction processes at local and national levels" (Hintjens 2008: 884). There is no empirical attempt to measure the experiences of the students in this role play, though Hintjens reports advantages in student recall and analysis provided by the simulation and its requirement for students to experience a more personal viewpoint of Rwandan political dilemmas:

From the subjective feeling of playing a person come memories of filtering material, reading texts, sim-mail communications, discussions and the face-to-face conference. Memory is likely to be sharper because the information is absorbed in a way that is strongly relational. If they remember the simulation longer than other things done in class, this is mainly because the simulation is constructed as a narrative (Hintjens 2008).

A multi-disciplinary and cross-institutional role play centred on economic development in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam is described by McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick (2011).

Participating students came from engineering and humanities backgrounds at four universities and the simulation was aimed at providing a constructivist learning experience in discipline skills, as well as "developing transferable skills such as communication, research, negotiation, decision-making, and ICT skills as well as an understanding of the range of perspectives that could be taken with regard to complex situations" (McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011: 841).

In the case of this "Mekong e-Sim", the authors record similarly positive outcomes to other examples of political role plays in terms of student engagement, empathy, insight and so forth. Additionally they discuss the logistical difficulties of applying a role play across different universities and discipline areas, including aligning assessment practices and expectations, in order that the different cohorts did not approach the task with different game play behaviour (McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011). This alignment contrast with the Middle East Politics Simulation described by Hardy and Totman (2012, 2011) where students from two

universities and discipline areas (Politics and Journalism) are assigned roles and responsibilities according to their field of study and assessed by their own teachers separately and with differing criteria and objectives.⁹⁹

McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick contend that a totally online role play is not conducive to building relationships aimed at reaching consensus. They suggest, at least in the initial stages of the role play, that some face-to-face element is incorporated in the design. Additionally, whilst commending the learning outcomes that can occur from such simulations and their active learning basis, they warn that not every student may have the learning style and skills suited to realisation of these objectives. "To what extent there is a need for students to have a minimum set of skills to be able to effectively participate in these types of learning activities has not been well tested" (McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011: 849).

The compromises of development in Vietnam was also the subject of an online simulation described by (Lloyd 2004). Improved outcomes of student engagement and understanding were evidenced from student feedback. Of particular note was an increased awareness that multiple stakeholders could have competing and valid viewpoints on a controversial issue. Ninety five percent of the students involved in the exercise reported that the simulation "increased their ability to see development issues from multiple perspectives and specifically increased their awareness of the political, social, and economic dimensions of decision-making in the Ha Long Bay region" (Lloyd 2004: 176).

Another advantage of the simulation discussed by Lloyd was the possibility of including off-campus students in the exercise in an equitable manner. Using the WebCT platform, on- and off-campus students were able to interact with all their peers. Feedback indicated that this was most appreciated by the off-campus participants, whose ability to contribute to a face-to-face role play would have been minimal (Lloyd 2004).

Kinder et. al. (1999) report on the contrasting experience between the same diplomacy simulation that was run in a face-to-face only format one year and then included an online element the following year. Whilst the facilitators were enthusiastic about the original simulation as a means of assisting students in appreciating the complexities of international

⁹⁹ The Politics students are assessed primarily on their in-character role play and the depth of research and understanding they exhibit in their interaction. The Journalism students are assessed on their journalistic writing and technical skills, for example, their proficiency with publishing software (Hardy & Totman 2011, 2012).

diplomacy, there were some disadvantages it was felt detracted from the merit and administration of the exercise. These were:

- **Continuity:** students had to meet face-to-face and this proved difficult outside of set tutorial times. This restricted the progress of negotiations.
- **Oversight:** Tutors had no access or record of negotiations and this restricted the assessment process to only those live sessions.
- **Logistics:** Elements of the exercise, such as team position papers, needed to be distributed in hard copy amongst multiple groups, which proved unwieldy (Kinder et al. 1999).

Using tools such as bulletin boards and synchronous chat software in the following year's simulation addressed these issues. It should be noted that with the move to an online format, the simulation moved to a potentially 24-hour basis. This 'creep' into non-class time can be significant for both students and teachers (Hardy and Totman 2011), but is perhaps indicative of the nature of 21st century life, study and work, be it academic or private sector. A possible solution here is provided by the Brynania simulation, where an overnight curfew is placed on online activity (Brynen 2010).

Tempering student idealism and dogmatic world views through the use of in-class simulations is described by Youde (2008). This simulation concerned conflict resolution in Darfur, and Youde initially aimed the exercise at two objectives: converting theory into practice and forcing students to adopt a different world view. However, Youde was also challenged by the idealism that many of his students expressed in terms of wanting to fix the world's problems without really appreciating the complexity that any such attempt would involve. There was an ethnocentric conviction that Western states had the power and authority to intervene in global crises and all that was lacking was the goodwill and energy. Youde saw this belief as problematic and hoped that a complex simulation could help to convey the nuances and intractability of a conflict like Darfur: "I did not want to eradicate the optimism or idealism of my students, but I did want them to understand why finding a solution to these sorts of conflicts was often so difficult. I did not want to crush their hopes, or have them leave the class thoroughly depressed about humanity's ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. What I did want, though, was to temper the notion that conflicts could be easily resolved in all instances" (Youde 2008: 351).

As Youde expected, the week-long simulation disabused most students of their simplistic worldview. The objective for the teams was to produce some form of peace instrument agreed to by all parties and overseen by international state and NGO actors. This proved much more difficult than students had expected and during the course of the negotiations, most students formed a more nuanced understanding of diplomacy. Whilst their underlying political beliefs mostly did not change, their appreciation of the difficulties of intervention and negotiation had evolved.

"...they still believed that the international community should do something to stop the genocide in Darfur, but they appreciated the difficulty in figuring out what an appropriate response would be and how it would be implemented. They understood how the different interests of the competing parties could significantly affect the ability of any group to craft a solution. They recognized both the opportunities and limitations on external actors getting involved in conflicts" (ibid.: 355).

Such a result seems ideal as a learning outcome from a course on conflict resolution. The empathy engendered by the role immersion of the students, including those who played roles diametrically opposed to their personal ideologies, had assisted them in grasping the complexities of the political situation. This had not defeated their desire to change the world, but led them to a first-hand understanding of the challenges.

The nature of failure in inter-state dialogue was the basis for a simulation described by Sasley (2010): "...we want our students to learn how international interactions work, but too often we emphasize how actors obtain particular goals. What we do not seem to focus on as much is how actors really fail to reach their goals. Students need to understand that world politics is as much about failure as it is about success" (Sasley 2010: 62). The author saw the need to raise awareness of failure and the need to make painful compromises as culturally relevant to his teaching of young American students, amongst whom 'losing' was intrinsically considered as something shameful. "This clashes with some of the most deeply held cultural values in American society, one that outside observers from de Tocqueville to Einstein have referred to: that with enough determination individuals can achieve whatever they set out to. But in world politics this is simply not always the case"(ibid.: 64).

The scenario for the simulation was based upon the need to arrive at a mutually agreed position on Iran's nuclear program. Students were divided into four national teams (Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) and within those teams existed various roles (heads of state,

ministers, advisors etc.). The role play was carried out face-to-face, with each team having a physical space to meet amongst themselves and with other delegations.

As Sasley expected, the task of producing a common statement on Iran was unachievable for the four national teams. Although they came close at points, the tendency to be dogmatic about one's own interests derailed the consensus. Also noted in the debriefing stage were failures of communication *within* teams, where members were deliberately or accidentally presenting an erroneous picture of what they had been discussing or agreeing to with the other parties. Discussion of which team was most to blame for the break-down led to the Israelis, Turks and Saudis accusing Syria, a charge that was greeted with genuine bewilderment by the latter team, who felt they had worked hard for consensus. With these sort of outcomes, Sasley felt that the simulation had provided an accurate reflection of the real world and taught valuable lessons transferrable from the learning environment into future life:

I cannot say with certainty that any student from my class who enters a career that deals with world politics will think back to this simulation and what it taught them. But I am convinced that they will be better prepared to work through their given problem fully aware that failure is a distinct possibility, and that to avoid it requires devoted effort and a willingness to explore various and alternate solutions. This is, I think, exactly the kind of lesson we should want our students to take with them as they move from the comfort of the academic world to the harsh realities of global politics (ibid.: 71).

Compromise between groups with differing objectives also formed the basis for a role play carried out by Schaap (2005). This simulation is notable because its objective was to increase learning of abstract political theory, a subject area that may seem less obvious a theme for role play than studies of international institutions or specific regions. However, the use of role play in this case was precisely intended to defeat the idea that political theory was divorced from reality. The focus was on establishing the basis for various political philosophies and how they can then come into conflict over issues such as human rights (Schaap 2005).

In terms of mechanics, Schaap's role play was amongst the shortest described in the literature, being entirely conducted within one two-hour seminar, aside from a pre-reading task. Whilst allowing for focus on key issues, such an exceedingly short duration can result in less immersion for participants (Wills et al. 2010).

Related to the question of immersion, Schaap's example employed an entirely imaginary plot, setting and suite of actors, far beyond the partially fictional environment of the Brynania role play (Brynen 2010). Concerned with a mutual declaration of rights between five superpowers merging into a single planetary federation, the primary tasks involved teams presenting clauses to be included in the declaration and then objecting to or endorsing those of other parties. Schaap describes the exercise as a success, though without any empirical or anecdotal evidence measuring outcomes or student feedback. Like other authors though, he concludes that the role play was successful in bridging the gaps between theory, practice and insight into the topic:

Role playing offers one valuable technique to overcome this divide by demonstrating in practice why we cannot do without theories of politics. By participating in this role play, students experienced at first hand how arguments made from within five traditions of political philosophy come into conflict in relation to the issue of human rights. Even self-avowed pragmatists have their own theories – only they are implicitly assumed rather than explicitly articulated. In role playing the pragmatists' self-deception is exposed: they are forced to declare their (imagined) hands and hold their (assigned) theories open to scrutiny. Once drawn into the game, in this way, they are on their way to becoming political theorists (Schaap 2005: 51).

Loggins (2009) presents a simulation of the American foreign policy decision making process that varies with each iteration according to current issues and specific learning objectives. The teacher adapts the simulation parameters and goals according to the needs of the cohort which is participating, particularly aiming to address issues that the students have had greater difficulty in coming to grips with through more traditional delivery modes. As with many other convenors of simulations, Loggins notes improved learning outcomes in terms of critical reasoning, subject understanding and engagement with the topic. Student satisfaction is described as high, with a majority of students noting the simulation as the most enjoyable and useful component of the course. This concurs with the sentiments expressed in student feedback described by Hardy and Totman (2011).

Simpson and Kaussler (2009) attempted to use simulation as a means of studying political realities and the skills of diplomacy. Whilst mentioning several scenarios they have used (Cuban Missile Crisis, Falkland Islands War, intervention in Zimbabwe), the main exemplar in the research describes a Middle Eastern crisis resolution role play, with the main tensions

between Iran and the United States. This simulation utilised a mixed mode of delivery, with the face-to-face element important, but a lot of the back-channel negotiation taking place via WebCT or *Facebook*. The onus was on the students to keep the controller (known as 'God') appraised of all negotiations.

In contrast to many of the more fulsome descriptions of role play in the literature, Simpson and Kaussler offer the caveat that this approach is not perfect for all types of learner, with non-English speaking background students offered as an example of a student cohort that can find it harder to grasp non-traditional approaches. They also note that assessing role play can be subjective and involve a burdensome amount of record keeping on the part of the convenor. The obligation on the part of the students to inform the controller of their negotiations may have been a factor in both these noted limitations. In the case of students with weaker communication skills, it would have been difficult for the controller to be aware of any developing problems unless specifically informed. Students therefore might progress through the whole exercise in an 'off track' manner. Secondly, if student notification of negotiations to the controller was irregular, inconsistent or untruthful, this would have made the task of collating this information and accurately assessing it difficult.

The authors also recommend the use of films as a complement to the role playing, providing a further source of information "that students can readily assimilate" (ibid.: 425). They contend that given the inter-disciplinary nature of IR, using multiple media and pedagogical approaches to teaching is not incongruent and assists in linking the theoretical to the actual:

In our experience, the use of these media managed to bridge what students often perceive to be a gap between reality and academic debate. After years of using simulations and movies as complementary teaching tools for IR courses, we found it to be the most effective method of explaining abstract theoretical concepts and approaches as well as providing a holistic and truly objective way of teaching such charged topics like war, terrorism, civil war, and conflict (ibid.: 427).

Evidence of the efficacy of the role play is presented by summarised student feedback: "The vast majority of student evaluations for this course indicated that the use of simulations was the single most useful tool to teach both negotiation as well as the subject matter of conflict in the Middle East" (Simpson and Kaussler 2009: 419).

A comparison between active learning techniques (including simulations) and traditional teaching methods is provided by McCarthy and Anderson (2000). Students in two cohorts (one Politics and one History subject) were split into groups, with one section receiving information in a lecture format and the other group participating in an active learning activity. (For the Politics students this was a small group collaborative exercise of independent analysis and inquiry concerning bias in political opinion polling. In the History cohort this was a role play based around ethnicity in 19th century America.) The lectures to both subject cohorts were given by the same lecturer. The performance of the groups was measured via an exam and in both subjects, those who had participated in the active learning exercise performed significantly better than their peers in the control group. Of the two active learning approaches, the role play provided a higher increase in student performance.

The authors speculate that the role playing students spent a lot more time involved with their subject material outside of class (see also (Vincent and Shepherd 1998)). This then translated into high in-class participation. Moreover, the learning acquired seemed to apply across the breadth of the subject, not only the finite boundaries of the roles they had been immersed in:

The role playing history students participated more in class and did better on the exam by nearly a whole letter grade than their peers engaged in the teacher-centred discussions. This is even more significant when one considers that the group role play students assumed the role of only one historical group. Despite writing about four different groups on the subsequent exam—presumably three that they did not even "play" in class—they still did better (McCarthy and Anderson 2000: 290).

A similar experiment was carried out by Krain and Lantis (2006). Two groups of students participated in either a role play or a more traditional lecture format of instruction and were subjected to pre- and post-tests of their knowledge. In contrast to McCarthy and Anderson, Krain and Lantis found no clear statistical difference between the groups in test results. However, they note the possibility that whilst the two approaches may have generated similar *knowledge*, there may have been a difference in the type of *learning* that occurred. "The evidence presented here suggests that role playing simulations such as the Global Problems Summit may be particularly well suited for helping students to go beyond the boundaries of their own locales and experiences, and to develop empathy" (Krain and Lantis 2006: 404). The authors point to their observations that for the role playing group, some broader

understanding of international systems and co-operation seemed to be gained, as well as perhaps a greater awareness of the consequences of political decisions. For example, students who had participated in a role play on the use of torture in national security were less likely to support relaxation of restrictions on this form of interrogation. Moreover, they were more aware of the moral dilemmas involved, and, most interestingly, more able to appreciate and respect the perspectives of *all* sides in the debate.

These wider, more universal benefits of simulation to different learning styles are mentioned by Ip and Linser (2001). In a study of a simulation called "World Politics in Transition", they note that "...weaker students who participate in the simulation tend to understand the material better than weaker students who do not participate" (Ip and Linser 2001: 6). Furthermore, in this simulation, which runs over three weeks, Ip and Linser note that the type of 'mistakes' students might make in an essay or exam are dampened out. That is, events like a student freezing in an exam or misinterpreting an essay question are not as critical as single point events and so have less impact on overall grades. Finally, this ongoing task allows teachers to make clarifications, expansions and corrections, thus guiding students in their learning (and grade outcomes) in a more productive manner than just retrospectively marking a 'finished' assignment (Gibson and Shaw 2010).¹⁰⁰

As with much of the other literature on simulations in IR/Politics subjects, Ip and Linser offer anecdotal evidence of high levels of student engagement and satisfaction. Like Hardy and Totman's Middle East Politics Simulation, students in the World Politics in Transition course are offered a choice between the role play or an exam to generate 50% of their total grade. Around 72% of students choose the simulation (Ip and Linser 2001). In the Middle East Politics Simulation, students choose between the simulation and an essay. Depending on cohort, around 80% choose the simulation and in feedback gathered after each iteration, around 86% nominate that they would do a further role play if given the chance (Hardy and Totman 2011).

Providing an appreciation of the Clausewitzian dilemma of balancing military force with other means of statecraft was the objective of Kanner (2007) in choosing to convene a simulation in a course on War, Peace and National Security. Kanner wanted his students to comprehend why and when international force could be used by states, as well as what

100 Gibson and Shaw (2010) discuss the distinctions between and role of assessment and learning that occurs *during* a task (formative) and that which occurs *after* a task as an end point (summative).

constraints and costs this had in the short and long term. The simulation involved a fictional setting, with seven differing states in a situation of relative parity. Run over an entire semester, the simulation took place in and out of class time and was supported by WebCT tools. There was a round-based approach, with a weekly deadline for finalising certain actions and state expenditures.

Kanner's simulation had more rigid game-type rules than many other described in the literature. The state teams were given budgets, either financial or diplomatic, that they had to allocate into economic, military or diplomatic activities. These expenditures affected outcomes and/or represented investments that might be recouped through successful actions. For example, military actions had to be budgeted for and in the case of conflict, the belligerents would match their totals, which were also subject to a randomised factor. Losers would forfeit half of their committed resources, whilst winners would lose a fifth. The pay-off or penalty for military action, trade agreements or successful negotiation was in the accrual of diplomatic points, a type of in-game power index initially generated as a function of GDP, population and military size.

In contrast to many other political simulations, this empirical approach was directly linked to student grades. Although the overall grading of the simulation included subjective marking of a series of reports and analyses, teams who had ended the game with an increase of >25% of their starting diplomatic points were awarded additional marks. Any team who had lost >50% of their diplomatic points was declared a 'failed state' and this resulted in a loss of marks.

This approach of blending fixed game rules along with subjective and quantified marking makes Kanner's simulation an uncommon example in the literature. Freedom of action was provided by diplomatic negotiation between the teams, but the options were otherwise quite limited in scope compared to more open-ended role plays. This perhaps though accords with Kanner's aims of illustrating the costs and constraints of war and peace. It is to be noted that the multi-week running time of the simulation was supported by lectures presenting themes and theories of IR that were emerging within the game, allowing opportunities for theory-practice assimilation.

A very simple game-based simulation using playing cards is described by Boyer et. al. (2006) as a tool for teaching International Political Economy theory. Using the commercially available family game *Pit* (first released by Parker Brothers in 1904), students compete to corner the market on certain commodities. By adjusting the rules over several iterations, the

teacher uses the card game to represent different economic theories such as free-trade liberalism, mercantilism and neo-Marxism. The game can be used to either introduce or illustrate the theories, which will also be presented more formally in a lecture format. Stimulated by the game, discussions on fairness, co-operation, realism, rationality and so forth are then borne out in class.

The simplicity of the game itself (trade cards to complete a suit) requires little prior instruction compared to other simulations. Despite this uncomplicated basis, the authors see the game as an ideal tool for closing the gap between theory and application and as a foundation for post-academic success and graduate outcomes:

Although most of us in academia view theory as sacrosanct and can hardly imagine teaching students without it, we must also recognize that most of our students will graduate and go into careers where theory is less relevant than practical knowledge. Thus, if we are to produce better and more productive citizens, one of our jobs is to educate students so that they can recognize how theories, wherever they are applied, condition and constrain practice and impact the workplace. This set of abilities and critical thinking skills will produce citizens who can better understand the problems confronting the world political economy in the coming years and be ready to pursue change where and when it is needed (Boyer et al. 2006: 76).

A discussion of simple games for introducing IR theory is offered by Asal (2005). The merits of three simple in-class games are presented:

- *Classical realism*: A survival game where players compete to be the last one standing. Used as an entree to discussion of Hobbesian theories of realism and dispute.
- *Prisoner's Dilemma to the Nth degree*: A game of co-operation or defection with gradually increasing group size. Used to illustrate the dilemmas of realism vs. Liberalism and rational self-interest.
- *Diplomacy*: The commercial board game. Prompts discussion of security dilemma, resource competition and competing interests.

Asal concludes that all three games have merit and the choice of which to use will depend on the teacher's intended objective and available resources. This conclusion is significant since it illustrates the fact that the intention to use a simulation need not result in an assumption that

it must be a *certain* simulation. Teachers have the option of employing a variety of approaches, from the quick and simple upwards. The adaptability of more complex and computer-mediated political simulations to individual teacher/class objectives are further explored in Asal and Blake (2006). The authors provide an overview of the sorts of parameters teachers should consider when designing a simulation and examine the ICONS platform as an expedient tool for this.

One of the few negative reports of a simulation concerns an opposite outcome from a similar research methodology. Raymond (2010) investigated the relationship between use of role play and exam results amongst his students. Where some students participated in a simulation exercise and others did not, Raymond found that exam scores for the two groups were little different. He concludes that “Because the simulation was not associated with statistically significant improvements in exam scores, it appears that the simulation did not help students meet the learning objectives of the course” (Raymond 2010: 58). This seems somewhat illogical and begs many questions regarding what the objectives were, their validity and the differences between exam-style recall and deeper subject understanding. Of paramount importance is whether the “stated learning objectives” were written with the simulation in mind, or whether the simulation had been an appropriately designed tool for meeting these objectives. Bizarrely, Raymond’s students themselves “...believed that the simulation helped them gain knowledge related to stated learning objectives” (ibid.: 59); an outcome where students seemingly felt they had increased their learning but the teacher disagreed. Lastly, the simulation participants gave slightly lower unit evaluation scores than the non-participants. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the simulation students still had to complete all the other assignments their non-simulation peers did, effectively increasing their workload by a significant factor. Raymond concludes:

Overall, the simulation consumed substantial amounts of time and effort for both students and the instructor inside and outside of class, but it was associated with only a tenth of a point increase in students' scores on the third exam—a negligible and probably statistically meaningless improvement in learning outcomes for students. Although students indicated that they thought the simulation was a useful educational experience in relation to the learning objectives of the course, the simulation was associated with lower student evaluations of the instructor's teaching. Given these results, it is questionable whether this simulation was a useful pedagogical exercise (ibid.: 59-60).

Raymond's findings are congruent with those of Krain and Lantis (2006), who noted no real statistical difference in exam scores between simulation and non-simulation groups. In contrast to Raymond though, Krain and Lantis were not so proscriptive in equating exam performance with pedagogical value.

Frederking (2005) took a statistical approach in a longer-term analysis of students playing a simulation of the US Senate. This included a control group that did not participate and who received a more traditional set of readings and assignments. When asked about their evaluation of the course in terms of interest, learning achievement, presentation skills and critical thinking, the ratings were consistently higher amongst the simulation participants and moreover, borne out over six annual iterations of the exercise. Average exam results were also part of this study. Facing three exams in the semester, the results for the first test were similar for both groups. However, in the second exam, the average result was higher for the simulation participants, and in the final; exam, even more so.

These results suggest that (at least eventually) a simulation positively influences student performance in other aspects of the course...these effects seem to go beyond the experience of the simulation itself and positively influence the entire course. There is only a small amount of overlap between the Senate simulation and the content of the exams. While there are no intrinsic connections between "getting into" the simulation and knowing exam material, the results suggest such an effect (Frederking 2005: 391).

The literature presented here concerning learning outcomes of simulations in Politics and IR teaching is a representative sample. As demonstrated, the reporting of improved general understanding, empathy and extra-curricular skills are almost unanimous observations. As tools for expanding the grasp of students and offering them the chance to gain talents useful beyond their finite academic experience, simulations seem to have a great deal to offer teachers, students and institutions conscious of their graduate attribute outcomes:

(Students) gain a greater appreciation for the subtleties and complexities of the art of international mediation. They learn to listen, strategize, to advocate their own position, and to work toward compromise for an optimal outcome. Although students will not become experts from this single experience, and they are unlikely to become international diplomats, all of them will use these negotiation skills in their daily lives and professions in the future (Shaw 2006: 63).

Improved Student Engagement & Outcomes

The feedback given by students regarding simulations in the IR/Politics discipline is substantially positive when described in the literature. Obviously there needs to be a differentiation between what is popular and fun and what has educational merit, though these are not mutually exclusive ideas. Indeed the literature suggests that students enjoy the simulations they are presented with as well as reporting that they feel they have learnt more from the experience than from a more traditional assignment task.

Shellman and Turan (2006) measured student response to their simulation that was based around exploring theories and state behaviour in International Relations. Their questionnaire asked students about whether the simulation had enhanced their overall understanding of aspects of IR theory, IR concepts, the role of international organisations and so forth, as well as more generic skills such as analysis and problem solving. The responses showed that students felt that their substantive/topical knowledge had been significantly increased, as well as their academic skills. Over half the students felt it was the best learning experience they had had in their college studies and 95% recommended that the simulation be included in subsequent iterations of the course.

Galatas (2006) conducted similar research on his European Union political simulation. His students' feedback was more emphatically positive than for Shellman and Turan (2006), though it should be noted from a much smaller group. A noted occurrence amongst the students was the extent to which they communicated and collaborated on the simulation and subject material outside of class time, thus experiencing a more active role in their learning.

The same sort of extra-curricular and extra-topical learning is noted by Newmann and Twigg (2000) amongst students in their Kashmir conflict simulation.

Students seem to value the opportunity for active learning; they consistently report surprise at the degree to which their understanding of textbook concepts is enhanced by "living" those concepts in practice... As we have developed the simulation over the course of the last several years, we have witnessed consistent student enthusiasm and substantial benefit in terms of student understanding and learning. Perhaps most importantly, virtually all the participants come away from the simulation having had fun. Given the number of times we hear comments like 'I never used to read anything

but the sports (or comics) section of the newspaper, but now I check the world news section every day,' we feel confident that we are helping students develop a positive attitude toward the course and, we hope, toward continued attention to international affairs (Newmann and Twigg 2000: 842).

Dougherty (2003) reports that students in a Middle East Politics simulation felt “empowered” and more motivated to learn and research because they felt they had more at stake in presenting arguments and opinions. Students stated that they had learnt “...to troubleshoot and to think more broadly about outcomes; rather than viewing events as fixed and closed, they come to see them as the product of myriad interactions and decisions. This perspective contributes to a more complete understanding of the material, which in turn helps facilitate long-term absorption. As one student put it, 'I actually remember what I learn'" (Dougherty 2003: 242). In addition to these positive learning outcomes, in open-ended feedback the word 'fun' was a recurring response .

The interdisciplinary nature of IR/Politics is reflected in the feedback given to Austin et al. (2006) with their post-war Iraqi justice simulation. The cohort was blended from two classes, legal studies and American Government, and all of the participants were officer cadets from the United States Air Force. The convenors felt that such a combination was an accurate reflection of the real-world competing tensions of US law, International Law, Politics, media and the military. Moreover, there was an extra-curricular gain in terms of the effort and research the students devoted to the simulation:

By combining two different classes our simulation experiment in synergy further enhances the educational advantages of peer collaboration. Our experience told us that students became more involved and competitive when the simulation involved students from another class. Because there was a lack of familiarity between the students from different classes and the "comfort zone" students develop with their in-classroom peers, the level of preparation and performance was heightened... Additionally, the familiarity (outspoken students, etc) that often creeps into classroom discussion was absent as the simulation created a new environment where there was no established hierarchy of students and students had to "re-establish themselves" and their classroom reputation in front of a diverse group. The synergy—and resultant educational benefits—was readily apparent between two diverse groups of

students from different disciplines who operated at a higher level under the conditions created by this unique mix (Austin et al. 2006: 103).

Such a conclusion opens intriguing possibilities for sharing workload between different disciplines or institutions. Hardy and Totman (2013) note their use of journalism students from a second university to fill the roles of reporters within their Middle East Politics simulation, which is predominantly played by Politics students at the 'host' institution. Such a symbiosis might have some logistic and administrative challenges, but it should be noted that the different groups within the simulation do not need to be graded according to the same rubric. As long as they are playing within the same role playing framework, their relevant teachers can choose to focus on different aspects of learning. In the above example, the media students are largely graded upon their technical output (mock newspapers), whilst the Politics students are being judged on their role playing, research and communication. Such inter-iversity and inter-disciplinary collaborations have the potential to produce efficiencies for the staff involved, or at least go some way towards reducing perceptions of workload.

Student satisfaction with the Middle East Politics Simulation (MEPS) is extremely high, whether measured by the convenors themselves or independent parties. In a post-simulation questionnaire, 57 of 58 respondents nominated their overall experience as being positive, with all respondents describing learning experience in the categories of 'Excellent' or 'Good', and a 'Much Better' or 'Better' learning experience than traditional forms of assignments they had encountered in their time at university (Hardy and Totman 2011). Over 90% indicated they felt their understanding of the Middle East overall and their engagement with the subject had been increased by participating in the simulation.

Describing another iteration of the same simulation, Dracup (2009) found a similarly high level of student experience and satisfaction. Over 95% of respondents expressed the opinion that they had an improved understanding of Middle East politics as a result of undertaking the MEPS. This research also noted that students self-assessed an improvement in more generic academic skills such as creative thinking, communication, team work and problem solving.

Where student *dissatisfaction* is noted in the literature, it tends to concern the workload that simulations can entail (Hardy and Totman 2012; Raymond 2010), though this complaint is not always expressed in a negative manner when students can see the greater benefits arising (Hardy and Totman 2011). A similar value judgement can be observed in those simulations where the teaching of 'failure' was an intrinsic objective (Sasley 2010; Youde 2008). That is,

students may be temporarily disappointed or frustrated, but the realisation that they have learnt something along the lines of a greater truth overcomes this short-term discontent. Indeed, the assumption made by some students that a simulation is intended to be 'won' in the same manner as a sporting match can be the basis for this initial dissatisfaction, before those greater insights arise.

Dissatisfaction with role plays can also occur due to the skills they require and the nature of group dynamics. Student behaviour is another important consideration when planning a simulation exercise. Dougherty (2003) discusses the behaviour and attitudes of students as one of the "pitfalls" of implementing role plays, with a fear of tasks such as public speaking being behind the lack of enthusiasm shown by some of the students in her case study. Online role plays may largely remove the element of public speaking and thus this fear (Wills et al. 2010). However it should be noted that developing competence in speaking before an audience is a generic skill, one widely alluded to in graduate attribute statements on communication. Creating the balance between skill-enhancing challenge and overwhelming apprehension is thus a more desirable approach than erasing public performance altogether.

Dougherty (2003) also noted some students with concerns over freeloading team members. In the case of social loafing, unique log-ins can be used in online platforms, so that a digital record of participation is available to the teacher (and *known* to be available). Sometimes though, the ability to deal with non-performing team members is in itself a valuable skill, one that may have value beyond the classroom. One interview respondent noted that students can develop various tactics to endure social loafing:

Generally my first response is to say to the team "See if you can work it out amongst yourselves. You know, have a chat to that person, perhaps email them if they're not doing their work and copy me in on it and say, you know, 'I feel like you're not working hard enough'." Generally they manage to sort it out within their team, only a couple of times we had some serious team dysfunction where I've said to one of the players "You've never logged on and you haven't done anything and I think perhaps you should do the essay". But generally the team – in a lot of the cases players will say "They haven't done anything and I don't care as long as they don't do anything to mess it up, I'm happy for them to just freeload". So there are lots of different responses to that (Interviewee D).

The tendency of some students to monopolise proceedings is also mentioned by Dougherty (2003). This can impact on other students' enjoyment of the exercise and needs to be dealt with swiftly. At the other end of the spectrum is the ill-prepared or disengaged student who affects the role play because their lack of contribution may have an impact upon the actions and possibilities open to other players. Again the best solution here is to warn and counsel the student as early as possible and penalise their grade as appropriate (Dougherty 2003).

It is important to stress that these challenges of disengaged, shy, egotistical and lazy students are not exclusive to role play exercises. Tutorials and other group exercises will exhibit the same behaviour patterns. However, as stated above, dealing with these challenges of group dynamics is part of that wider skill set that will stand students in good stead after graduation. Working and learning collaboratively is itself something that needs to be learned (Gardiner and Robinson 2011) and it is not remarkable that some students will take longer than others to catch on.

Another consideration to bear in mind with IR/Politics is that students may not initially appreciate the flexibility and patience that real-life political actors might require. In role plays designed to explore political dimensions like negotiation and consensus, there can sometimes be an inherent mental barrier provided by students' assumptions that they have to 'win' the game (Baylouny 2009). As politics is rarely a zero sum situation, the folly of such a mentality must be explained to students prior to the simulation and also accommodated in the design and (if relevant) assessment of the task. If the point of the exercise is consensus and communication, these are the things that need to be emphasised in the preparation of students for the role play (Hardy and Totman 2012). If the learning objective is to deepen understanding of an electoral system, then developing this understanding must be rewarded as opposed to winning the election. (This will be particularly the case where some students are playing minority roles without the hope of ever taking centre stage (Baranowski and Weir 2010).) Above all, a valuable outcome is getting students to understand that there often *are* no winning moves and that political actors often face situations of selecting 'the least worst' choice (Sasley 2010; Youde 2008).

It can be seen therefore that instituting an IR/Politics role play offers teachers a great deal of flexibility in design. Moreover, many of the design decisions will be easy to make, since they will be a product of the learning objectives and the environmental factors the teacher is operating under. If the intended learning outcomes are rooted in the context of Graduate

Attributes, such as "develop communication and collaboration skills", the role play can be quite a simple vehicle for meeting this goal, whilst at the same time building discipline-specific knowledge.

What do role plays offer IR/Politics teaching?

If we accept the evidence that well-executed political role playing offers benefits in terms of learning depth and student engagement, it is important to examine what other benefits may accrue from such an approach to teaching the discipline. Moreover, what generic benefits can such tasks provide to teachers and students beyond the classroom and outside the university? If role playing can be shown to provide benefits in terms of addressing graduate attribute goals then this offers an additional advantage for teachers, since one of the 'pressures' of contemporary IR/Politics teaching in Australia can be mitigated. Moreover, with reference to the demands on teachers noted in Chapter 1, online role plays may also alleviate drivers such as requirements to make greater use of e-learning, work-integrated learning and managing students with different learning preferences.

In a simulation exercise students can be forced to adopt the role of researcher, teacher, editor, peer reviewer, project manager or technical advisor before role playing task begins. Depending on the format of the role play, the preparation phase may include tasks such as researching the role, producing a role profile and establishing objectives and priorities (Wills et al. 2010). In the case of a team playing a single role or a connected series of individual ones (eg. a delegation representing a state), this will necessitate a certain amount of collaboration and symbiosis. Individual talents such as IT skills or particular subject knowledge can be shared and assigned for mutual benefit. Once within the simulation, on top of taking a new identity, students must also adopt the functions of actors, presenters, publicists, planners, diplomats and, above all, researchers.

Such a shift away from the passive status of 'learner' or 'essay writer' can be every bit as difficult as adopting a whole new personality, but also just as valuable in terms of learning and personal development outcomes. The self-directed aspects of taking responsibility for and developing the role accord with the principles of active learning, so that even in the pre-simulation phase positive learning outcomes are occurring. In a team-based exercise, there

can also be a realisation that research and learning can occur as collaborative efforts that require effort in interaction and communication (Linser et al. 1999). This is a different experience to that offered by individual essay-type assignments or the passive experience of listening to a lecture.

For the teacher involved in a simulation the role change may require them to transition from their authoritative function as subject expert and into new responsibilities as moderator, technical supporter, technology trainer, referee and counsellor. Such shifts may be daunting for teachers, but there are certain inevitabilities about this shift from 'sage' to 'guide'. The ease with which specific *information* can be obtained today by anyone makes simply holding this data less valuable. Instead the teacher needs to become the one who adds value by creating understanding and building the capacity of the learner to deal with new information and assimilate it into a wider understanding applicable beyond the parameters of the classroom and subject unit (A. N. Jones 2006; McWilliam 2008). In role play the demonstrable benefits of facilitating broader subject knowledge are obtained through this process of discovery and student freedom to pursue information that is then incorporated into the framework of their role as the need arises.

In the cases of both students and teachers these conversions can happen to different degrees and may occur as a gradual journey through the course of the simulation (Hardy and Totman 2012). For example, a teacher's 'authority' may be a necessary tool in the early stages of the exercise where technical questions and understanding process and etiquette will be amongst the dominant needs of the participants. As the simulation progresses though, this early support can help provide the platform for greater independent learning as students then become more deeply involved with their research and role playing (Hardy and Totman 2012).

At this point...the student has greater spontaneous involvement and the teacher is becoming more of a facilitator and consultant, perhaps suggesting sources or ideas that the student can investigate for themselves to improve their role even further (Hardy and Totman 2012: 195).

Obviously the extent of this journey will be dictated by the parameters of the simulation; a face-to-face iteration undertaken in a single class period will likely not result in as profound a shift as a longer and more unrestricted example. Nevertheless, appreciating that within collaborative online tasks there is a place for different styles of teaching and learning is an important realisation, since this can make employing such tools seem less intimidating. That

is to say that evolution is less formidable than revolution, and teachers need to appreciate that striving for innovation does not always require radical shifts in approach.

If convinced of the benefits of using role play in their subject delivery, a teacher of IR/Politics must make a critical initial choice: whether the simulation will take place in a face-to-face or online format.¹⁰¹ Both approaches have their merits, but here the emphasis will be on exploring online role plays because of the manner in which they address so many of the institutional pressures for teachers of IR/Politics outlined previously. Additionally, online role plays provide demonstrable pedagogical outcomes in terms of collaborative learning. However in order to appreciate the benefits of the online format, it is necessary to first provide a brief discussion of the face-to-face arrangement.

Face-to-face role plays are the oldest, most common and least technically demanding format. They require nothing more than a space for people to talk and interact around a given scenario. Conducting such a 'live' role play can offer an easier path to role immersion, as participants have to not only understand their role, but physically 'be' it too. Likewise, in being forced to interact with their peers in a public manner, some benefit may be gained in non-subject specific skills such as public speaking, presentation, speech writing and so forth. The public nature of the role play can also assist with clarity of assessment, since the differing qualities of each individual or team's performance will likely be apparent to the participants.

The weaknesses of this format stem from this reliance on physical (located) performance. Needing to be in a common space in a synchronous manner limits the possibilities of including off-campus students, those with other commitments, clashing timetables and so forth. This performance element can also alienate students self-conscious about public display, including those unconfident about their speaking skills, language ability or with a special need that limits their options for such interaction. Time-keeping is also a restraint, with definite deadlines that need to be carefully managed in order for equal participation. For example, given that 'classes' are usually composed of discrete blocks of an hour or less, the time given to each team to perform must be strictly adhered to ensure fairness.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ For a thorough treatment of the design process in role play, see Wills et al. (2010). *The Power of Role-based e-Learning: Designing and Moderating Online Role Play*. New York, Routledge.

¹⁰² Paradoxically, such temporal equity may actually be quite unrealistic if trying to simulate a real world situation.

Aside from these logistical limitations, face-to-face role plays pose a risk of emphasising the aspects of performance over 'quality'. That is to say, a student who is a talented actor or who produces a rousing oration may be better rewarded or better received than a less competent thespian who nevertheless has developed a deeper understanding of their role. Likewise the louder and bolder student may dominate proceedings, to the detriment of their quieter but more well-researched peer (Shaw 2012). Careful control must be exercised to ensure that there are balanced opportunities for participation. It should be noted that such issues of performance confidence and competence can also present in some traditional forms of assessment such as in-class tutorial presentations.

Related to this issue of physical performance is the problem of live role playing sometimes degenerating into stereotyping and cliché, with an emphasis on character rather than role. This may occur when participants highlight the shallow or typecast characteristics of their role rather than the more authentic realities.¹⁰³ For example, a student playing a notorious dictator may act in a bombastic and buffoonish manner, an interpretation that belies the extreme cunning and terrifying conduct that has kept the real world tyrant in power for decades. Logically the teacher should respond to this with some redirection or threat of a lower grade, however the typically short duration of live role plays as well as the inter-dependability of roles can mean that such shallow performances can serve to disproportionately fetter proceedings. For example, an extended comic interlude of the type mentioned above can derail the progress of more valuable objectives, such as arriving at a compromise. Even five minutes of wasted time in a 40-minute role play can have an impact, if only because it may prevent progress towards larger goals of empathy and understanding.

In summary, face-to-face role plays offer great advantages in terms of simplicity, but can be hampered by the physical, temporal and behavioural aspects of their conduct. The face-to-face simulation is not to be discounted, especially given its long and successful use in education (Asal 2005; Wills et al. 2010). If, for example, the focus of the exercise is on the process and dynamics of negotiation *per se* rather than any specific content or setting, then a simple face-to-face exercise can be extremely effective. However, depending on the goals of the convenor and the logistical realities of the current higher education environment,

¹⁰³ Such a tactic can occur as a defensive mechanism where participants feel exposed and self-conscious about the need to perform in front of others. They therefore *deliberately* 'play for laughs' as a means of ensuring that the laughter is under their control – with them rather than at them. See for example Carroll and Cameron (2005) on the notion of "role distance" in drama education games or Bell (2001) on emotional risk in role playing.

replacing or augmenting face-to-face simulation with an online deployment may offer superior outcomes.

Firstly, using an online role play can eliminate many of the temporal-spatial limitations of face-to-face role play noted above. Depending on how the exercise is designed, asynchronous and remote participation are possible, meaning that off-campus students are much more able to take part (Hardy and Totman 2013; Lloyd 2004). Given the burgeoning off-campus enrolment pattern in Australia, this is a significant advantage. Student cohorts that may be geographically dispersed, part-time and with significant commitments to paid work and family can be accommodated more easily in an online format.

A further benefit of online role plays is noted by Wills et al. (2010), who emphasise the anonymity and asynchronicity provided encourages the journey from passive learner to active participant. Where online roles remain anonymous participants can feel more liberated in their engagement with the exercise and in the adoption of their character. Their performance is less likely to be fettered by external, real-life factors such as power relationships, gender, reputation, cultural restraints or language ability. For example, it may be less credible, more uncomfortable and more likely to result in stereotyping if a very masculine student is required to play a female role in front of his classroom peers, compared to him being able to do it anonymously. Likewise the student well known for their strong left-wing and humanitarian views may also seem less plausible when trying to *publicly* play an ultra-conservative politician. Yet such examination of contrary viewpoints is a rewarding and encouraging possibility with role plays.

Beyond these practicalities though, Wills et al. (2010) suggest that asynchronicity generates a greater depth of research, reflection and learning. Participants are not so much 'on the spot' as they are in live role play and can therefore put more thought into their words and actions, both before and after their 'turn':

“Face-to-face role play cannot be sustained for long periods and demands spontaneous action, with little time for planning or analysis before action. While it may be of value to some training situations (e.g. sales presentation), it offers little opportunity for reflection. In contrast, online role play can occur over several weeks providing more opportunity for research, data gathering, reflection, consolidation and internalization of the implications and consequences of the actions taken” (Wills et al. 2010: 15).

For the purposes of fostering collaboration (and associated pedagogical advantage) as well as addressing many of the realities of teaching IR/Politics in Australia today, online models of role play seem to offer the best overall format option. However, in light of the evidence that Australian IR/Politics teachers are disinclined to adopt innovative approaches to e-learning, there still remains the challenge of changing this mindset. The need for a technology platform *can* make online role play much more complicated to arrange than face-to-face sessions and present staff with those perceptual barriers surrounding time, cost, support and technical competence. This is acknowledged, but it should be noted though that familiar technologies can be co-opted to form the communication basis for a simulation; email, video conferencing/VOIP tools (such as Skype) or social media platforms such as Facebook or YouTube can be employed 'in role' or out to facilitate informational exchange. A simulation that has at its heart the need for participants to privately negotiate with each other really requires no more technology than that which would be used in the real world – a telephone and an email account. Specialist email addresses could be set up via free commercial services such as *Gmail* or *Hotmail*.¹⁰⁴ The challenge then becomes one of providing examples and training, particularly in defeating the idea that online role play involves complex graphical environments.

In the face of the technology adoption processes noted in Chapter 5, it is therefore important that teachers of IR/Politics can be shown that implementing an online role-play does not necessarily involve a high level of computer efficacy. Furthermore, the world of online role play can be entered gradually. For example, a small face-to-face simulation in a tutorial this year could be moved online next year and then increased in size gradually after that. A gradual process also allows for improvements and amendments to be made according to which elements are found to work or not. Just as students need to learn collaboration, so too do teachers need to learn how to foster it. Again the importance of encouraging, communicating and rewarding innovation by the institution comes into play, for without these supports, the incentive and example is not there.

¹⁰⁴ Whether the use of such third party providers for housing student assessment material would be sanctioned by the university would need to be determined. However since some universities (such as Monash) already use these providers for their student email systems, the impediment may not be great.

How do simulations solve the pressures on universities and teachers of IR/Politics?

The worth of role playing in teaching IR/Politics needs to be evaluated against the institutional and subject-specific pressures outlined in Chapter 1 together with the real and perceived challenges to adopting innovation discussed in Chapter 5. When this is carried out, it is possible to see that not only does the concept of role play satisfy many of these requirements, but that *online* role plays, if well-designed can meet *all* of them.

To explore the solutions offered by online role plays a discussion of how they address each of the pressures on IR/Politics teachers noted in Chapter 1 is set out below. Each of the challenges on the list is provided as a sub-heading with analysis following.

Attracting and retaining students

Role plays in general are shown to have high student satisfaction ratings and kindle high levels of enthusiasm and engagement amongst participants (Dougherty 2003; Dracup 2009; Galatas 2006; Hardy and Totman 2013; Newmann and Twigg 2000; Shellman and Turan 2006). Given this high level of passion, it is likely that the opportunity to undertake subsequent simulations in other units of study would function as a factor in student retention. Hardy and Totman (2011) report that those students who participate in a simulation are more likely to opt for this form of assessment in subsequent units within their Middle East Studies major and that this activity is consistently mentioned in anonymous feedback as the most interesting and enjoyable undertaking participants have encountered in the course of their studies. An identical sentiment is also attributed to students by Loggins (2009). Brynen (2010) reports that some of the students who participate in his simulation bond closely and remain in contact for years afterwards, with there being a Facebook group devoted to the imaginary world of Brynania. While it is probable that would-be students would not make their decision to enrol in a particular university or major based upon the availability of role plays, being able to market an innovative teaching practice such as this would certainly be no handicap to the institution.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ For example, Deakin University uses a *DeakinSims* microsite to publicise some of the simulations used within the university (<http://www.deakin.edu.au/itl/insims/index.php>). Specific initiatives are also presented in the forms of news releases or project pages, such as the Digital Humanities program at The University of Adelaide (<http://www.hss.adelaide.edu.au/historypolitics/digital-humanities/>).

Service a cohort more efficiently/economically?

Online simulations allow economies of delivery because of their web-based nature. That is, greater number of students can be reached because their presence in a physical learning space is not required. Whilst this is true of any form of online content delivery, it is important to reiterate that there is a significant difference between merely uploading something like a document in comparison to using the Internet for an activity that is purpose-built for the online environment and that incorporates curriculum content with valid learning objectives (Edmondson 2007). To that end, well-designed online simulations not only *service* a blended cohort more economically, but they also *serve* them better in that journey from recipients of information to active directors of their own learning. In this regard, online role plays offer a superior solution to face-to-face examples. This is firstly because of their potential to be asynchronous, negating the need for simultaneous and co-located gatherings of people. Secondly, controlling or moderating a face-to-face role play may become more difficult as the number of people involved increases. Ensuring that everyone has their say and that proceedings are not hijacked by some louder or more physically commanding players will become more challenging in larger, physically present groups. Online simulations therefore provide an option for including more people with less difficulty in moderation due to their asynchronous nature.

The question arises though as to whether online simulations create a greater workload for teachers, firstly in the initial design phase, then in the execution and assessment stages. In comparing workload the only real measure that could be applied is to weigh a simulation against what other means of learning and assessment would otherwise be used. This will vary from case to case due to the range of possibilities available to any simulation designer and the contrasting options for alternative assessment tasks. It is therefore not possible to make a definitive statement along the lines of "an online simulation will be more/less work for the teacher than setting and marking a 2,000 word essay". It could be assumed though that in establishing a 'new' simulation exercise there will be an additional workload input required, just as there is with setting up any enterprise for the first time. This will involve the broad and specific design, resourcing requirements and any content production. It could be expected that this initial input would reduce with subsequent iterations, apart from any modifications toward improvement, content updates and so on. There may also be additional workload involved in the briefing phase, where students would need to be taught about the simulation, its mechanics and tasks. This input would likely be required for every iteration with a fresh

cohort. The moderation of the simulation would require teacher effort, though this will depend on the design as to how much time is involved and what elements of the simulation are being assessed.

In accounting for workload of students and staff, convenors of online simulations should consider the potential results. As described, role plays offer great benefits in terms of student learning, engagement and satisfaction. If the simulation is deemed to require a greater workload, the question then arises as to whether this is 'worth it'? Evidence from the literature suggests that the answer here is an affirmative one (Wedig 2010). Obviously though this final reckoning will depend on upon an individual's willingness to confront the perceptual and real barriers they work with, as well as the institution's willingness to support and reward this innovation. Offering workload discounts for the design phase of such enterprises would be one method of encouraging this shift.

Target learning outcomes towards graduate outcomes and life after graduation

The available case studies of simulations in IR/Politics subject delivery consistently mention the post-academic validity of the skills developed (S. W. Brown and King 2000a; McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011; Sasley 2010; Youde 2008). These include abilities such as communication, negotiation, collaboration, conflict resolution, empathy and synthesis of diverse positions. Since these multiple skills are applicable to so many professional situations it can be argued that using educational simulations is an approach well suited to fulfilling multiple graduate attribute criteria, perhaps more so than traditional assessment tasks such as essays or written exams. Moreover, online simulations include the elements of digital communication and collaboration, considered a standard skill-set of the modern workplace (IBM 2008).

Adhere to course and curriculum guidelines and quality assurance

Meeting the guidelines for entire courses/degrees mandated by external regulators such as TEQSA and the AQF is not the province of an individual unit chair. However, subject units where online simulations are used will contribute to the overall ability of courses and majors to meet the course learning outcomes mandated by the AQF. An online role play could arguably satisfy more of these criteria at the undergraduate level than an assessment such as an essay. For example, the AQF requires outcomes from a Bachelor degree such as

- *cognitive skills to review critically, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge;*
- *cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge with depth in some areas;*
- *cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence; and.*
- *communication skills to present a clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas (Australian Qualifications Framework Council 2013: 48).*

Moreover, graduates should be capable of applying these skills in the following ways:

- *with initiative and judgement in planning, problem solving and decision making in professional practice and/or scholarship;*
- *to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts; and,*
- *with responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice and in collaboration with others within broad parameters (Australian Qualifications Framework Council 2013: 48).*

The evidence that role plays satisfy these criteria is well attested to in the literature, particularly the implication that broader subject knowledge and the ability to place it into wider contexts is a regular outcome. The criteria dealing with communication and collaboration are also satisfied by the demonstrated benefits of such exercises.

In addition online role plays could satisfy institutional criteria that individual teachers or course convenors need to respect. For example, depending on the design and execution of a role play, they could offer evidence that a subject or course included elements that were formative, group-based, utilised blended year levels/cohort groups/disciplines and so on. In short, the use of online role plays can provide some broader advantage to satisfying guidelines because of the possibilities of demonstrating pedagogical best practice and improved learning outcomes.

Meet institutional drivers towards greater use of e-learning and technology

Online role plays satisfy the push towards technology usage in a manner that face-to-face role plays cannot. Whether using custom-designed software, the university's LMS or public, third-party tools such as webmail or *Facebook*, online simulations are, by their nature, delivered technologically. This is extremely significant in terms of involving off-campus students or those whose lifestyles do not permit regular campus attendance. Whilst the level of technical skill required to design and participate will vary according to needs, the 'e-learning' element is nevertheless present. As shown, basic tools such as emails and LMS discussion boards can be employed to structure an online simulation, meaning that a small amount of adaptation can be held up as a shining example of innovative e-learning practice.

Cope with differing and changing learner preferences

Utilising simulations as an example of active learning provides an engaging and fulfilling student experience that suits a variety of learner styles (Wedig 2010). Leaving aside the debate over Digital Natives and related labels, if used in a blended combination with other methods of delivery, online role plays can therefore offer a means of meeting changing learner preferences in terms of asynchronicity, task type and technological presence. The wide variety of sub-tasks and skills that can be required in a role play offers potentially more access for different learner types than traditional written assignments, as well as placing less emphasis on a single skill or point in time, as with an exam. Additionally, if online role plays are offered as an option in conjunction with traditional assignments, or the role play contains conventional writing and research exercises within it, then the range of learner types and skill can be incorporated.

Keep the subject relevant

As Starkey and Blake (2001) describe, the evolving complexities of IR/Politics means that simulations can be a highly appropriate way of demonstrating the intricacies of modern political relationships. The incorporation of multiple stakeholders - state, non-state and citizen - into issues of global consequence can be accommodated by role plays. The same role play 'system' can be updated with different roles for each iteration as required.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, simulations can be an appropriate practical demonstration of theory-based subjects, offering a

¹⁰⁶ For example, Hardy and Totman's (2011, 2012) Middle East Politics Simulation adds or subtracts roles for every iteration according to changing circumstances in the real world.

relevance to what otherwise may have been abstract knowledge divorced from any real-world context (Boyer et al. 2006; Kanner 2007; Schaap 2005).

Provide adequate demonstration of and insight to the subject

The regular mention within the literature regarding the increased subject understanding generated by IR/Politics role plays is perhaps the strongest endorsement of this approach. Improved comprehension and awareness of the subject matter is noted by virtually all authors, even when they may have been comparing empirical measures such as exam scores. Moreover, this improved insight is sometimes placed in the context of a transferable skill, that is, an outcome relevant to post-academic life. This is noted in areas such as bridging the theory-practice divide (Schaap 2005; Simpson and Kaussler 2009; Youde 2008), tempering idealism (Sasley 2010; Youde 2008) and the validity of multiple stakeholder perspectives (Lloyd 2004; McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011).

Defeat ethnocentrism

Another consistent theme within the literature is that IR/Politics simulations enable students to appreciate perspectives dissimilar to their own (Austin et al. 2006; Baylouny 2009; S. W. Brown and King 2000a; Hardy and Totman 2012; Hintjens 2008; Sasley 2010; Stover 2005; Youde 2008). By grasping the viewpoints of multiple actors, students develop a deeper understanding of the realities of politics and the need to reject simplistic interpretations. It is not necessary that students *agree* with an alternative viewpoint, just that they are *aware* that it exists and that the holder has valid reasons for their convictions. Such an outcome is difficult to find fault with, whether the student undertakes a career in politics or not. In addressing ethnocentrism there appears to be no significant difference in the efficacy of face-to-face and online role plays; both are equally powerful.

Teach in a way that satisfies learning outcomes and is grounded in pedagogical best practice

As shown in Chapter 2 an approach that encourages active and experiential learning is preferable from a pedagogical point of view. Moreover, when collaboration is added to this active learning strategy, greater outcomes can eventuate. Simulations satisfy this formula since they are acknowledged within the literature as being effective tools for encouraging authentic experiential learning (Wedig 2010; Wills et al. 2010), and as vehicles for self-directed or team-based research and learning (Dougherty 2003; Hardy and Totman 2012;

McCarthy and Anderson 2000; Shellman and Turan 2006; Simpson and Kaussler 2009; Vincent and Shepherd 1998). Using an online platform for delivering the role play offers the additional advantage of presenting a blended learning approach, which is also considered a sound pedagogical practice (Graham 2005; Lee and Duncan-Howell 2007). Once again, the fact that online simulations can incorporate off-campus students also permits the benefits of the approach to be extended to the entire cohort in an equitable manner (Hardy and Totman 2013).

Deliver the intended content

Content delivery is not in itself dependent on a specific means of transmission but rather on the purposeful and effective creation of the message and its ensuing *reception* by the audience. Whether subject content is delivered via lecture, discussion board or an online simulation is therefore irrelevant, as long as the learning objectives are well considered and the students are assimilating the required material. Where a simulation can differentiate this process is in facilitating *greater understanding* and *application* of content, as well as perhaps positioning this content in a real world (and thus relevant) setting. For example, Boyer et al. (2006) contend that their simple card game offered a more concrete demonstration of economic theory than any lecture could alone. The various IR/Politics role plays presented in the literature that concern conflict resolution all point to the improved level of understanding participants gained of stakeholder perspectives, the complexity of political realities and the reasons behind certain dilemmas. Simulations therefore assist in the content delivery, but more importantly, they permit the content to be understood, applied, tested and investigated. As described above, online simulations offer further advantages in this regard because of their more inclusive and more anonymous nature.

How does online role-play facilitate technology adoption?

It can be seen that online role plays offer a potential solution to all of the pressures facing IR/Politics teachers in the coming decade. They are not of course the *only* possibility, but given the volume of support in the literature, online simulations appear to be extremely proficient at providing high levels of learning outcomes. The challenge though is to present these positive outcomes against the weight of those perceived barriers to greater technology

uptake amongst staff. The difficulty lies with these advantages being communicated and demonstrated to teachers with no experience in online simulations. As evidenced in the responses to this research, the idea of using online collaboration is currently of little appeal to teachers of IR/Politics, with most respondents wary of the workload and technology/support aspects of this approach. If possible solutions to these dilemmas can be conveyed, perhaps the uptake would increase.

For example, it may be advantageous for universities to encourage and support a limited innovation to 'test the water' and move towards more involved subsequent iterations if required or desired. Ideally, a basic and generic IR/Politics role play template and platform could be offered as an entry point for teachers willing or interested in experimentation. Naturally this sort of offering must be well supported by educational development personnel, including the provision of technical support, training, pedagogical explanation and fostering peer interaction (McKenzie et al. 2005).

With regard to the barrier of time (both perceptual and authentic), the argument that online simulations do not need to be complex is paramount. The image of online simulations being necessarily akin to 3D virtual worlds requiring high-level programming and graphical skills to facilitate must be defeated. If potential users are made aware that an online simulation need be nothing more than pretending to be someone else in an email, some of this exaggerated image may be diluted. Moreover, there are 'off-the-rack' simulations in existence (such as ICONS) that can also help alleviate the start-up workload and design process.

As with other innovations, peer experience and interaction is the key to communicating the benefits of online simulations and thus diffusing the innovation through a community. In studying how innovations in teaching with technology spread through higher education, McKenzie et al. (2005) found the following to be the most common vectors:

- Talking with a colleague;
- Participating in conference sessions, workshops or seminars on a specific innovation or regarding an issue that the innovation could address;
- Discussions or correspondence with convenors or project developers, perhaps as a result of participation in conference sessions, workshops or seminars or arising from invitations to do so; and,

- Discussion with key personnel such as department heads, teaching and learning support staff, librarians or educational technology developers.

Once an innovation was discovered, McKenzie et al (2005) then found that the decision to adopt it was based largely on a judgement of its value in delivering improved teaching outcomes and the scholarly quality of the project. In making this assessment, "prior personal interest in and understanding of the teaching and learning ideas underpinning the project" was an important influencer (McKenzie et al. 2005: 122). That is to say, that some personal knowledge and exploration of pedagogical issues was a significant driver. It therefore seems that in teaching communities where there is little pedagogical expertise, a lack of professional development in this area and little opportunity for staff to exchange ideas, less adoption of innovation will occur. This places an onus both on institutions and innovators. The latter to communicate their experiences and knowledge and the former to facilitate these messages whilst at the same time raising the skills of their staff and the status of good teaching.

Here the two barriers put forward by Schneckenberg (2009) (disconnection between universities and their staff and perceived lack of recognition for good teaching) become relevant. These issues will affect the rate of uptake of online role plays. If, as the research in this thesis suggests, innovation is occurring solely on a teacher-by-teacher basis, no real consistency is likely to be generated and the innovations and good practices will have little impact in terms of peer adoption. Likewise, improving the status and reward for good teaching cannot be addressed on a piecemeal approach, but requires instead a whole of institution methodology. If greater capture of the efforts of innovators can be achieved and their work recognised and publicised, this could provide a trail for the next wave of more timid teachers. Offering templates and examples to staff to tinker with allows for differences, originality, flexibility and so on whilst reducing that start-up workload of constructing something from scratch.

However both of Schneckenberg's barriers are products of institutional culture, and fundamental shifts in such ingrained traditions are difficult and time-consuming to achieve. At stake here is the underlying tension between the strategic management and promotion of universities - the concern of vice chancellors, executives, strategists and marketers - and the day-to-day business of teaching and research by academic staff who may be managing increased class sizes and the need to address different modes of lesson delivery. Alleviating this tension is not within the scope of this research. However it is contended that by making

small steps towards more innovative online collaboration, some incremental change can also be directed towards these meso- and macro-level barriers.

The value of using role plays in teaching and learning is therefore supported by a great deal of evidence indicating improved outcomes in engagement, subject knowledge and transferrable skills. They are a method conducive to encouraging active, collaborative and experiential learning and the overwhelming evidence in the literature is that they are effective tools in delivering IR/Politics content. However the terms 'role play' or 'simulation' can cover a wide swath of approaches, as demonstrated from the review of literature above. Anything from simple card games to full 3D virtual worlds is encompassed and this may cause confusion in teachers considering the idea of implementing a role play exercise. There may also be an element of intimidation and disincentive when the choice and parameters can vary so widely.

However, *simple* online role plays offer IR/Politics teachers a potential *entree* into the benefits of collaborative online methods. If they can be made aware of the relatively straightforward possibilities of implementing basic online role plays, teachers (and students) may then gain greater confidence in progressing to more complex forms if desired. In so doing they can ease many of the pressures they and their institutions are currently under.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the ways in which Australian universities were meeting the challenges of their current market, legislative and regulatory conditions. These challenges have meant an increasing emphasis on technology as a solution, and this thesis has sought to examine how collaborative online approaches could offer benefit in this regard. More specifically, the thesis employed a case study of IR/Politics teaching at the undergraduate level to illustrate how a discipline area that involved the study of collaborative human behaviour and communication could benefit from using an online environment to develop discipline knowledge as well as offering generic skills applicable to the workplace and in line with university graduate attribute goals.

With this basis, the research carried out within the course of this work sought to investigate the following further questions:

- To what extent are Australian teachers of IR and Politics currently using collaborative online tasks to deliver their undergraduate subjects?
- What barriers exist to such implementations?
- What lessons can be drawn as to how collaborative online tools can best be implemented as part of a blended e-learning approach to teaching IR and Politics at undergraduate level?

These objectives have been achieved, with a significant finding being that there are considerable disconnections between the current teaching practices of Australian IR/Politics academics and those methods that would meet the multiple challenges facing themselves and their universities in the 21st century. Despite strong pressure from institutions towards greater e-learning activity and compelling evidence that collaborative online approaches are beneficial, there remains little uptake of such methods amongst Australian teachers of IR/Politics. Moreover, teaching staff do not feel that there is sufficient current incentive for them to be change their teaching practices, particularly if it involves innovative online activities.

This low uptake of collaborative online methods belies the rhetoric and investment that Australian universities have expended on e-learning over the last two decades. It also defies the increasing pattern of off-campus enrolment, flexible delivery strategies and the generally renewed discussion of e-learning in reaction to phenomena such as MOOCs. Whilst the online presence of teaching units (via an LMS) is high, practices have advanced little from the Web 1.0 model. Overwhelmingly, Australian IR/Politics teachers use the online space for broadcasting content for solitary consumption by their students.

In Australia it appears that IR/Politics teachers (and seemingly their institutions in general) have long been stuck at the halfway point of e-learning innovation. For example, in the scale identified by Zemsky and Massy (2004a, 2004b), the practices recorded in this thesis are placed at level two of the four levels identified in the "Adoption of specialised Learning Management System".¹⁰⁷ However, as has been shown throughout this research, adoption of an LMS does not always entail its use for anything more than a repository of soft-copy 'traditional' teaching material. Similarly, by the standards of the OECD (2005), Australian practices rank somewhere between level two and three on their five point scale.¹⁰⁸ Despite the strategic plans and public marketing of Australian universities regarding their commitments and achievements in e-learning, scant progress is evident to demonstrate any real advances in technology assisted teaching and learning practice.¹⁰⁹

At the same time, the focus on graduate attribute statements and their enshrinement in regulatory frameworks over the last decade has provided further impetus towards utilising teaching methods that develop generic skills in areas such as communication, collaboration and global awareness. Emphasising these skills as concrete objectives is an acknowledgment by Australian universities (and their regulators) that subject-specific knowledge is only part of a student's total development for the workforce. In preparing undergraduates to make the transition to life after university, teachers need to consider these wider communication and collaboration attributes; skills that can be applied to a range of situations and dynamics. However, whilst collaborative online techniques have a strong evidence base for developing such generic skills, they are still not being used. Moreover, a snapshot of current assessment

¹⁰⁷ Level 1 is "Enhancement to traditional methods", Level 3 is "Imported material" and Level 4 "New Courses and configurations". Refer to page 91 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁸ Refer to page 87 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁹ It can be noted that the scales offered by the OECD and Zemsky and Massey are both already a decade old. This is further evidence of the lack of progress in Australian universities over this period.

practices in the IR/Politics discipline shows a focus on solitary tasks such as essays and exams that are less capable of addressing these post-university skills.

That IR/Politics is a discipline area concerned with communication and complex interaction between parties makes it especially troubling that there is a lack of opportunity provided for collaborative work in the course of undergraduate study. The question then arises as to how well Australian students of IR/Politics are currently being prepared for their professional careers during their university studies, particularly in light of those graduate attributes deemed desirable. For example, it is difficult to see how a preponderance of essay writing by an IR/Politics student develops competence in some of the following graduate attribute statements regarding communication and interpersonal skills:

- Communicating effectively and appropriately in a range of contexts (Deakin University);
- Be adept at learning in a range of ways, including through information and communication technologies (Monash University);
- Apply discipline knowledge, principles and concepts (Curtin University); and,
- Collaborative team workers (University of NSW).

In contrast, there is a great deal of evidence that supports active and collaborative learning as a route towards developing such attributes and learning outcomes. This is not to say that learning how to write an essay is an irrelevant ability. However, in IR/Politics, learning to work collaboratively and the ensuing experiences in negotiation, synthesising different viewpoints and utilising team strengths will magnify the writing skills and subject-specific knowledge gained during one's studies and aid in future working life (Schneider and Andre 2005). Future research in an IR/Politics context could focus on different forms of collaborative tasks and how they do or do not facilitate common graduate attributes.

In regards to the second objective of this thesis, it was demonstrated that the low rate of adoption of collaborative online approaches by IR/Politics teachers is primarily due to the workplace paradigms they experience and the organisational patterns and hierarchies that have developed within Australian universities. The expectations of university policy-makers and managers do not apparently align with the perceptions of teaching academics. Perceived

barriers of time, workload and career prospects reduce the incentive for IR/Politics staff to devote their efforts to innovate in their teaching.

The Technology-Assisted Teaching Adoption Model was derived from the data gathered during the course of this thesis and informed by the wider body of literature. The TATAM diagram attempts to further the discussion of teaching innovation by illustrating how a range of perceptions and pressures factor into academics' decisions on adopting technology-based teaching practices. Based on the evidence gathered, the general result of this TATAM process appears to be a stifling of innovation or at least a significant reduction in its scope. Where innovative practice has occurred it has been through the actions of individuals with sufficient personal motivation. It appears however that such practices rarely spread within teaching communities due to other barriers posed by organisational culture, hierarchal fracturing and lack of opportunity to exchange or train in new methods.

The strategic leaders of Australian universities should be mindful of this TATAM pattern. It serves as an indicator of failure at the institutional level given the time, research, money and resources that have been tipped into e-learning strategies over the last two decades. If the result of all this has been an environment where teachers feel uncompelled and unmotivated to bother with innovative online practices, this should register alarm. Strategic statements about the value the university places on e-learning are worthless without genuine efforts to open up the choke points of the TATAM process.

Possible solutions to this impasse rest largely with the universities themselves. Systemic disincentives towards teaching innovation, be they genuine or imagined, must be addressed. Some simple solutions are presented by McKenzie et al (2005), although some are admittedly 'difficult' in the scale of institutional shift required:

- Workload recognition of time taken in teaching innovation and development;
- Research and career path recognition of teaching scholarship and presentation of innovations to the wider academic community;
- Seed funding for innovations or adaptations of innovations;
- Nurturing cross-institutional networks and idea sharing; and,

- Encouraging and rewarding participation in formal teaching and learning courses aimed at sharing good practices and developing skills not only in innovating, but in disseminating ideas.

The first two of these points accord most fully with the issues commonly raised by participants in the research for this thesis. The perceptual barriers created by concerns over workload and the career impact of sacrificing research time for teaching duties cannot be underestimated. The prevalence of this attitude amongst respondents was overwhelming, including amongst those who were currently utilising innovative practices. The responses indicated that the link between workload and career progress is an intrinsic one and largely a matter of assessing return on investment. The prevailing sentiment was that time spent developing new teaching practices was wasted time, especially when current methods seemed to be working. That same time would therefore be *more rewarded* if it was spent on research pursuits. For university leaders the challenge is therefore not to reserve or allocate time for teaching duties, but to ensure that achievements in teaching and learning are rewarded and recognised. Without this motivation, resources tipped into IT support or LMS upgrades will be less fruitful.

In this regard, as McKenzie *et al.* note in their list of recommendations above, supporting and spreading innovation is just as important for fostering change. Innovation cannot spread within a community if it is not shared. Communicating new practices will require a solution to the fractured organisational structures of Australian universities and the tendency towards 'silos'. Here the strategy of "nurturing of cross-institutional links and idea sharing" may be less important than the need to build *intra*-institutional links. Therefore the last of the points above becomes important: encouraging and rewarding efforts and training not just in achieving teaching innovation, but in spreading it to one's peers.

These are just some of the 'carrots' that can be offered to staff for improving their practices. The 'sticks' are the corollaries of some of these. For example, linking promotion opportunities with good teaching practice and innovation is both an incentive to improvement and a disincentive to lagging. It needs to be recognised that not every teacher will have the capacity to develop new tools and approaches from scratch. Encouraging willing adoption amongst the majority should therefore be the goal, supported by incentives and effective peer-to-peer demonstration. Major conceptual shifts might be required in some teachers, especially those who still consider the Internet, and their institution's LMS, as a means of broadcast rather

than a space for interaction and learning (Huijser and Sankey 2010). Achieving such a transformation may be difficult, but the aim should be to help staff get aboard early rather than leave them behind.

As for the third objective of this thesis, concerning what practices could assist in implementing a greater rate of online collaboration in IR/Politics, online role plays were shown to be an effective and technically simple route to improved learning outcomes. In teaching these subjects, role plays have a long and successful history and there is a demonstrable weight of evidence pointing towards improved outcomes for students and teachers.

In the shorter term, online role play could provide a solution to many, if not all, of the pressures facing Australian universities and teachers of IR/Politics. The list of challenges presented in Chapter 1 was tested against the established benefits of online role plays, with the following findings (as described in Chapter 6):

- Attracting and retaining students

Online role plays achieve this by creating high levels of satisfaction and engagement amongst students (Dougherty 2003; Dracup 2009; Galatas 2006; Hardy and Totman 2013; Newmann and Twigg 2000; Shellman and Turan 2006). When given the chance to participate in subsequent role play exercises, students do so willingly (Hardy and Torman 2013).

- Service a diverse cohort more efficiently/economically

Online role plays benefit from the economies of any web-based platform in that remote and asynchronous access is possible. In addition to this aspect of sheer reach however, online role plays can also produce more effective learning outcomes due to their active and collaborative nature. There are questions as to whether setting up and running such tasks creates more or less workload for staff and students in comparison to conventional assessment tasks (Wedig 2010), and this is a possible direction for future research.

- Target learning outcomes towards graduate outcomes and life after graduation

Case studies of simulations in IR/Politics consistently mention the improved skills developed in communication, negotiation, collaboration, conflict resolution and

analysis of diverse sources and viewpoints (Brown and King 2000a; McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011; Sasley 2010; Youde 2008). Given the alignment of these skills with graduate attribute goals and workplace requirements, online role plays are obviously appropriate vehicles for addressing these needs; potentially more so than traditional tasks.

- Satisfy course and curriculum guidelines and quality assurance processes

Online role plays can help address regulatory demands by providing a task that satisfies the requirements for critical thinking, synthesis and communication skills (see for example, Australian Qualifications Framework Council 2013). Additionally they may help to address criteria that call for learning that is formative, group-based, broad and cross-disciplinary.

- Meet institutional drivers towards greater use of e-learning and technology

Given the intrinsically computer-based nature of online role play, these tasks accord fully with strategic ambitions for greater e-learning delivery. Moreover, they can assist in meeting the need for greater involvement of off-campus students and facilitating flexible delivery for students whose circumstances do not permit located and synchronous participation.

- Cope with differing and changing learner preferences

As noted above, online role plays can provide a collaborative task that is available to those remote from the classroom in time or place (Hardy and Totman 2013). As an example of active learning, they can also allow students to follow their own methods of research and synthesis and incorporate a greater variety of sub-tasks and skills than traditional written assignments. The duration of role play tasks and the potential anonymity of the online environment also allow for sustained performance and thought, rather than emphasising excellence in a short period of time (like an exam) or in a public task that might be intimidating (such as an oral presentation) (Wills et al. 2010).

- Keep the subject relevant

The complexities of multi-stakeholder political relationships are demonstrated admirably by complex, multi-stakeholder role plays (Starkey and Blake 2001). The

ability to update and adjust the elements of a role play according to real world changes also serves to keep them relevant across multiple iterations. Lastly, theoretical concepts can also be implemented into role play tasks, allowing demonstration of their application to 'real' situations (Boyer et al. 2006; Kanner 2007; Schaap 2005).

- Provide adequate demonstration of and insight to the subject

Improved subject specific learning (in both breadth and depth) is a consistent theme throughout the literature on role plays (Schaap 2005; Simpson and Kaussler 2009; Youde 2008; Lloyd 2004; McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick 2011). There are also benefits in terms of creating transferable skills (q.v.) and bridging the theory-practice divide and tempering idealism. The role play approach also addresses the challenge of providing practical demonstration of IR/Politics material.

- Defeat ethnocentrism

Another constant theme in the literature is the manner in which role plays allow students to appreciate differing viewpoints (Austin et al. 2006; Baylouny 2009; Brown and King 2000a; Hardy and Totman 2012; Hintjens 2008; Sasley 2010; Stover 2005; Youde 2008). Online role plays may allow for some extended benefit here, since this format may permit a longer duration and hence greater immersion.

- Teach in a manner that satisfies learning outcomes and is grounded in pedagogical best practice

Online role plays offer an active experiential learning environment that is also collaborative and communicative (Wedig 2010; Wills et al. 2010). The online aspect also provides a blended learning approach, which is noted in the literature as being ideal (Graham 2005; Lee and Duncan-Howell 2007). The greater active involvement afforded to off-campus students is also beneficial (Hardy and Totman 2013).

- Deliver the intended content

Role plays do assist with content delivery but are demonstrably effective in allowing content to be applied, tested and investigated (Boyer et al, 2006). By promoting student engagement and active learning, online simulations can facilitate greater understanding and self-directed analysis of subject content. Improved appreciation of

stakeholder perspectives and the reasons behind political impasses are also benefits (q.v.).

To reap these many benefits and overcome the existing institutional disincentives towards technical innovation, online role plays need to be presented as tools that need not be technically complex nor overly time-consuming. Indeed, they may offer time and workload savings in the longer run. Focussing on the *added* benefits towards learner outcomes offered by online simulations will assist in framing a positive message. That is to say, new practices should not be described as a remedy to the old, but rather as a source of bonuses hitherto unrealised. Naturally any encouragement towards these approaches needs to be strongly supported with appropriate technical and pedagogical guidance and this should go hand-in-hand with the more systemic incentive changes noted above.

Harnessing the influence of the 'early adopter' staff members and helping disseminate their positive experiences is paramount to spreading approaches such as online role plays. As presented in Chapter 5, peer experience is a major influence on an individual's decision to innovate. As the influential gate keepers to new ideas in a community, a positive verdict from early adopters can push others in new directions. If these linchpins can be identified, motivated and supported through developing online collaborative approaches it can stimulate positive perceptions at the start of the TATAM process for others. In conjunction with systemic changes, this positive peer experience will arguably have a greater influence on individuals than just trying to solve one of the other barriers alone. The challenge is therefore not only to lower the obstacles, but also to offer teachers of IR/Politics enough information and incentive that their estimations of the 'usefulness' and 'ease of use' of online collaborative approaches are raised beyond the current levels. If this can be done, their intentions will trump the perceptions and realities of the institutional machinery:

"... increasing resources for supporting simulation use per se may not have a significant impact on the uptake and maintenance of simulations, games and role plays as active learning approaches. The results suggest that academics make the decision to use these techniques based upon their professional judgement of benefit and risk, rather than on the resources available. If academics are motivated to use simulations, resource limitations will generally not stop them. In the light of the influence that suitability and risk seem to have on the propensity of staff to use

simulations, there may be a role for awareness building activities and improved information about these approaches. This would assist academics with an interest in such approaches to make more informed judgements as to their suitability within a given learning context, the possible risks that might be involved and how these can be minimized. Further, such information could stimulate an interest in simulations amongst staff not familiar with the method" (Lean et al. 2006: 239).

In conclusion, the current teaching practices of IR/Politics staff in Australia are not meeting the needs of their students, their employers or the wider societal pressures they are under. Despite the initial optimism over online learning and the push towards it, teaching methods have remained largely static; mainly manifesting as a translation of conventional material onto the Internet. Furthermore whilst collaborative learning has significant evidence as to its benefit, it remains an under-utilised approach in any form, not just online. For the future benefit of teachers and students in these discipline areas online role plays offer a chance to redress this and truly provide a continuation of politics teaching by other means.

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Appendix 1: Transcripts of follow-up interviews recorded in this research

Interviews were conducted with questionnaire respondents who had indicated their availability and willingness to discuss their use of technology further. These interviews were conducted via telephone and all interviewees agreed to have the sessions recorded.

The names and some identifying data have been removed in the following transcriptions. Also excluded have been instances of word repetition, noises of assent, hesitation and other extraneous vocalisations that interrupt or overlay the main flow of dialogue. Introductory and concluding pleasantries are likewise redacted as irrelevant.

Interviewee A

Interviewer (I): Run me quickly through what sort of online elements you use in your teaching?

Subject (S): We're learning about online teaching, and we're still at the stage of developing it, and we range from really just putting words and on-campus course sort of on the web, whereby things like any sort of piece of paper given to student is put up as a PDF, and all lectures are recorded. We range from that to more sophisticated people who have been doing it longer who have created virtual communities and much more focused on getting interaction between students online in discussions and so on. I'm sort of halfway, well probably still back at the training wheels then, I've tried different things to involve the online group, assessment would be to – ah – put up posts each week instead of going to tutorials, or they have to go to each other, we have a thing called Learning Online, it's a bit like Skype, where everybody can log into a room and chat. Although, I've found that Skype is probably easier, so I tend to use Skype to keep in touch.

I: Is that for distance or off-campus students?

S: It's just distance students. I'm one of the few people who have an undergraduate course online, and so we're trying to develop that. Half of it's online. The only students that are allowed to do it are the ones who come to us with credit from TAFE diplomas, which means that we can limit the number of ones who do. We are trying to do more and more of that. At the moment we're still not claiming any great knowledge or precedence in this area of learning.

I: Do you sort of have off-campus students enrolled in separate subject codes, or something?

S: We have two things: separate subject codes, for example one subject, (*name redacted to avoid identification*), and (*name redacted to avoid identification*), which are two separate topics. What I've done this year is get a full-time tutor in the online topic with a lot of experience in online teaching and she is doing it more vigorously and spending more time involved in the discussion boards, which take the place of tutorials, more vigorously than some of my colleagues. At this point, for background, you may have the same thing where you are, but we have something here called (*name redacted to avoid institutional identification*), and we have a project in the University called (*name redacted to avoid institutional identification*), which means web presence in every topic, so the basic backbone of the system of lecture capture, where if lectures aren't recorded automatically, we record them and put them online, so there are very few lectures aren't recorded online so it's relatively easy to have that sort of halfway house of having stuff recorded for people who aren't here. We are trying to increase the number of topics, so there are some topics without an external topic code, we just tell students to enrol in that and you'll be ok, the lecture will be online for you to be assessed. Looking at my online topic here for example, we've got each tutorial, the requirement is to put on some poster to discuss the tutorial topic. And looking at it, they seem to be pretty active in doing that.

I: So each week's sub-topic is discussed on a mandatory basis?

S: They're supposed to put up some sort of topic and I've got a dedicated tutor to this course, which is an absolutely critical thing, if you try and do both is very hard. I pay her on the basis that she'll be spending an hour in a tutorial, and an hour over the week online responding to these people. One thing that universities don't understand is that online is not cheaper, it's not a way to save money. If anything it's more expensive and more time consuming than face-to-face teaching.

I: Why do you say that?

S: Well because if I'm in a room, and I speak for five minutes to 10, 20, 30 people, and I have to sit and write that up, the written word is more difficult, you have to get it more precise, and the transcript of this, it's going to be garbage. I have a deaf kid in one of my classes, so all my lectures, and he gets a transcript of the lectures which I also get. And I put that up on the website as well. Reading my transcripts, you know, try it yourself, when you read a transcript of your lecture

I: Verbatim is a cruel thing, isn't it?

S: When you are writing something, that is going to be in writing, it's the same thing as a personal conversation with someone, where you've got to write them a letter, you just need to put more time and effort into it, because you can't see facial expressions, and the smile on someone's face, and when you write it down it comes out very differently.

I: Right, ok.

S: So various colleagues around the place that I've talked to have said exactly the same thing. First you have to disabuse your university of the idea that it will save them money because it won't.

I: Do you think there's a disconnect between these high-level policies that come out of meetings vice-chancellors offices and what happens at the chalk face?

S: Well, I think if anything here, we're not a university, where the new VC was pushing online stuff. The previous VC wasn't interested, so if anything I'd welcome a few more pronouncements from those on high. Moving that aside, part of the problem, what academics need, what we need, what I'm going to do next year, there's too much discussion about the pedagogy of all this, what we really need is a template. We spend a lot of time, there's so much you can do, you get lost in all the stuff, there's so many links out there, you could spend hours creating links for all your topics. It's like sitting in front of a computer with the internet, you get sucked into it, and you emerge 6 hours later and wonder where you've been, there's so much stuff, where do you stop? I mean I do it, I listen o radio and send my students out links to stuff, like podcasts, films and stuff and put them up. But that's actually very time consuming. It takes a lot of your time to do this well.

I: and what do you think the student appreciation or consumption of that work is?

S: Because we're starting and the classes aren't big I was concerned – the critical thing is to contact them. two years ago we would literally just pick up the phone and ring them. In the early days when we had 15 students, now we have 30 or 40 in some classes, we would ring or email them. I think most students complain when they don't get any contact with the uni at all. You have to realise that some of them – there's a difference between online and distance. Some of them want to be involved, and some of them just want to sit at home and do the work. If we make a decision, sometimes we think they're missing out on the wonderful interaction of being with us intellectual giants at the uni, sitting around in tutorial, gazing at their navels. And we try and reproduce that online, and I'm not so sure that we need to. I'm just not so sure, I mean I think we need to recognise that some students who are doing it by distance just want to get the work done, and most of them are working hard, they've got kids, working in jobs, and doing this at 10 o'clock at night, and they're struggling to balance everything. If we try and assume that something like the university experience we had four years ago is going to be reproduced online, it's just not going to work. We can't do that anyway. I think it's a judgement, I don't know the extent to which we need to do that. A lot of them just want to get the work done, those I call distance students, the ones who just want to work at a distance. Others are quite keen to be engaged and online. It's hard to know. When I have had the online stuff, when I say I'm going to be available, you have to have decent connections online, decent broadband, because there's no point running an online tutorial at 2 in the afternoon because they're all at work. When I say I'm going to do these online things, I say I'm going to be on Skype tonight, just come into the room, when I do that, I have to do that from my house at 8:30 at night, because I have students overseas and students all around Australia. So there's no point in doing it during the daytime.

I: How do you think that sort of thing, on your part, how does that gel with workload and policy and what the expectations are from the uni?

S: It doesn't at all. I do it because I want to, but it doesn't at all. I mean I think that's a problem, I think that if you want to do these things well, it's much harder, it's not easy. Online teaching is not easy. There are some good things about it, I think the fact that we can, I mean I'm determined to keep this going, it gives us the capacity to reach people that we wouldn't otherwise reach, and it gives us the capacity to market the topic more widely, and all sorts of things, it's worth doing. All universities are under incredible stress at the moment financially, so nobody really wants to talk about more money and stuff, but it is an issue, and I think at the moment nobody should really think through how much it costs. Part of the problem is that a lot of people who push this are not exactly nerds, but are not in the mainstream of teaching at learning stuff, they're different, and a lot of them get quite excited about stuff that, you know you say to them, you don't need to exactly dumb it down, but you need to recognise that you are dealing with people who are often not technologically specialised. Having said that, one of the biggest problems in (*name redacted to avoid institutional identification*) is that we've run out of wireless space. So every kid has a mobile phone, laptop and tablet, and that's how they're accessing stuff. Students in my lectures Google stuff and answer my questions before I've got to them. It's quite fascinating. On campus were running out of wireless space because so many people have got wireless devices. Whatever we like as academics, kids are going that way.

I: OK so you're running out of bandwidth.

S: Yeah, yeah, it's fascinating. It's got to happen, in my view, I mean I'm no expert, but there's got to be another way to do online teaching. I've said to people that I want to try and get some money together – why for example, we record lectures. I'll give you an example. I recently gave a lecture and I forgot to take my recorder, so I didn't have any audio of it. So I came back to my office and I gave a 2 hour lecture in that 45 minutes, going through Powerpoint slides, going through them and explaining what I was trying to get across. And my students said that was the best lecture I'd ever given. The answer is that I was not giving a performance to a room, I was communicating with them, through the screen. So I was having a conversation, instead of them listening to a person in a big room, I was sitting and having a conversation. It's like the difference between listening to Philip Adams on Late Night Live or listening to Philip Adams making a speech. I mean he's having a conversation with the listener, as he calls it. Listener, singular. I thought that was an interesting lesson for me. I thought 'that was interesting', I now understand, so what I would like to do is have a studio where I give lectures and record them, and I can stop and cut and paste. I can stop the lecture and say 'now I'm going to show you a film', and I can get it absolutely right. I can get it done well, and have that conversation with the student rather than just speak at them.

I: Do you use any – it doesn't sound like you do – but do you use any sort of group or collaborative exercises in your assessments?

S: No, but I think I need to. The students hate them. They really don't like them.

I: OK but so why do you think you would like to do something like that then?

S: Well I thought that – I guess I thought to try and – I'm still wedded to the idea that the uni experience has to be more than just the dark room late at night. I guess I'm still thinking that I need to think of ways that I can get the students to engage with each other and if – I have to recognise that (*name redacted to avoid institutional identification*) has the requirement of what we call 'graduate qualities' and one of the graduate qualities is to work collaboratively. So there is a requirement on me to design my topics and my teaching to marry up with the graduate qualities. So we are aiming to produce graduates who can work collaboratively. Therefore it's worth doing. Otherwise why have these objectives?

I: Yeah, well I think that from the literature that I'm reading for my studies there's a recognition that working collaboratively is important in the workplace these days.

S: Yeah, exactly. I think that having worked, you know, a latecomer to academic life, having worked in government and organisations, I know that myself. So in a way it's worth doing whether they like it or not. But working collaboratively, and doing a group assessment maybe that's two different things. That's a minor point, you know, but they get pissed off if they have to work with someone who they feel is not pulling their weight, and their mark gets pulled down. They get very touchy about that sort of stuff.

I: Yeah well certainly the literature supports that point of view that students –

S: Yeah, they don't like it at all. But it's interesting, I have a son at uni right now, he was a mechanic but he's come back to university, and he's doing education. I must say. I know enough to know that we here in politics aren't doing it very well. The sorts of things that he's doing, the group exercises that he's doing in education, they're obviously quite sophisticated and he enjoys them. He's not a child, so I happily admit that just because I haven't done a lot of collaborative stuff, it's probably a judgement on what I know and where I'm at than saying that it's because of that.

I: Yes well certainly, again, the literature and the big gap and part of the gap I'm trying to fill with this research is that teacher education has been studied and is very innovative in the way that they deliver the subjects, but subjects like ours are a little but more old fashioned in the way that they're presented.

S: Absolutely. We have a number of things at (*university name redacted*) in the uni teaching course that everyone has to do, and, we have, we can also actually do now a grad diploma in education, and in fact new staff starting have to do it, so there's certainly a lot more emphasis on learning to teach properly. And the strategies for teaching, having said that, there could be a thousand online workshops on online teaching that I could go to if I had the time.

I: Do you think that time and support are barriers in you implementing this sort of thing?

S: Oh, I think it is, I think we're – I'm not sure if my uni is approaching it in a strategic way, I mean it's – we're getting to it – we're slowly sort of getting ourselves geared up to do more of

this, and we've finally got a VC who I think wants to support it, so I think it will get better. But you know - what uni are you at?

I: I study at Monash but I'm actually a politics lecturer at Deakin.

S: My daughter's at (*university name redacted*), she teaches um – I should know this shouldn't I? - she's in something creative, her name's (*name redacted*).

I: It doesn't ring a bell.

S: She doesn't teach politics but she teaches something. Actually I've learned a lot from her about online teaching. She does, I know occasionally I chat to her about it, because she's been an academic longer than I have. She does things to try and get the students paired up and organised into online groups. So I get the impression that (*university name redacted*) is far further down the road than we are. She's in the School of (*redacted*). She teaches a lot of her course online I think.

I: Oh, OK.

S: You should go and talk to her, I'm pretty sure a lot of her stuff is online.

I: OK, she's in (*location redacted*) and I teach at (*location redacted*). That's probably all the questions I've got for you, but you've been good. You probably represent that broad middle class in terms of being half in one camp and half in the other.

S: The other too, is that, I the interest of privacy you don't ask peoples' ages and experience – but in my background I'm 62 next year.

I: Right

S: I've only been an academic for ten years, nine actually. I got into this by accident, I'm not the classic - I don't have a PhD. I spent 20 years of my life in politics and working with politicians and doing politics. So I've come through a different avenue, of practical political life. I used to be the chief of staff to a premier here, and I've been involved in politics for most of my life. So I'm only saying that – it's interesting I'm actually quite interested in [*unclear*]

Interviewee B

Interviewer (I): What do you use online tools for at the moment in your teaching?

Subject (S): We use them for distance learning, primarily.

I: OK so you don't use them so much with on-campus students?

S: Can you elaborate on what you mean by on-campus students?

I: Students that come in to a classroom and get taught by you, I guess, in a traditional way.

S: Then probably not, no.

I: Alright then, sometimes people say 'on campus' or 'internal' or whatever.

S: Yeah, sorry, indeed.

I: So how do you use an online environment for your off-campus or external distance students.

S: We use a platform, (*software name redacted as it includes institutional identification*) is the platform we use here primarily. We've also just started developing, which you'll be aware of being at Deakin, an online Masters by Coursework Program. We're using Echo 360, a program called Echo 360, and again (*software name redacted*) as a base to deliver that program.

I: OK and so what elements of that program do you use, is it discussion boards, is it posting up documents, what is it?

S: We use Echo 360 to provide a Powerpoint and recorded lecture, or 'seminar', and then we provide an e-reading list that's available via (*software name redacted*) and we also have a variety of assessment tasks that require discussions via the (*software name redacted*) interface.

I: OK so you use the discussion board tools there?

S: Indeed.

I: And that's parts of their assessment, to participate?

S: It is indeed, I also played around with – unfortunately we didn't get a critical mass to be able to do it this year – we played around with the idea of other sites for simulations, but that's a work in progress at the moment.

I: Were they external providers?

S: Again, we were looking into it, and because we didn't get the numbers enrolled, we played with the (*software name redacted*) platform but we're going to work more with external sites providers depending on the numbers we get enrolled in the program next year.

I: And what sort of simulation were you talking about here, are you talking about just via text, or via you know graphics, or what?

S: Both. And role playing, which I think international relations suits, or the learning material works really well with that idea.

I: What sort of subjects do you teach, (*name redacted*)?

S: In the Masters level, or the undergraduate level?

I: Keep it just sort of undergrad at the moment.

S: I teach into a broad introduction to International Relations, a first-year subject. I teach second and third year subject called (*unit name redacted*), and a third year core unit called (*unit name redacted*), which is a theory unit.

I: OK so you cover a lot of bases between theory and issues there, don't you?

S: Yeah, it's a small teaching team.

I: When you look to the simulation, was that undergraduate or postgraduate you were looking at there?

S: Postgraduate.

I: You mentioned that was a bit of a work in progress, one of the things I'm looking at is what are the barriers people are facing in terms of implementing some of those more collaborative tools?

S: Distrust in the technology. The continued changing interfaces, so the, for example, our contract with (*software name redacted*) is expiring, so we're using a new form of – I think it's called Desire to Learn – the platform we're going to be using.

I: Yeah we're getting that at Deakin.

S: Yeah, so there seem to be constant changes in what it is that we're using to deliver this.

I: OK that's a common problem that I'm finding, that those learning management systems seem to be changing every two or three years.

S: Indeed, yes, I think this is a third year – I've only been here for two years – but I'm fairly certain (*software name redacted*) has been used for three here, so a contract expires, someone comes along with a better deal, and a new one gets rolled out.

I: How much does that impact on your workload and your implementation of new ideas in terms of on-line learning?

S: Heavily, because you want to feel confident with what you're using and that you can do what you want using that platform and you don't have the same confidence with it – I mean, obviously with a new one it takes a long time to understand what you can and can't do with a new platform.

I: That's for sure. And do you think students want a greater presence of these technologies in their learning?

S: I think the feedback we get from students is contradictory. They sort of talk about the desire for more face-to-face contact with lecturers, and yet at the same time demand more and more uses of technology in their learning.

I: I know one thing I find in my teaching is that making everything available online just stops people from coming to lectures.

S: Exactly, so while students are somewhat upset about the lack of collegiality, they don't seem to be able to sort of understand that relationship between putting everything online and that collegiality is somewhat related.

I: So when you do use the online environments, you mentioned the discussion boards, you were investigating role plays, are there any other sort of – how does the discussion board work in terms of – is there a real discussion going on or is there just sort of people posting and not listening?

S: Yeah it's just people posting, it's not what I would understand normally of a discussion, it's a groups of questions that are responded to, and the students don't generally interact with each other – it more sort of a posting and responding to the questions that the tutor or the lecturer has posted on the discussion board. It's a discussion board in name only – it's not a virtual tutorial.

I: Your experiences sound pretty exactly the same as mine and other people I've spoken to.

S: I don't have any solutions to it, I don't know what the answer is.

I: No, I guess that's what I'm trying to work out in my PhD, I guess I'll never come up with the ultimate solution. Do you use the external internet at all in your teaching?

S: As in do I sort of occasionally run a YouTube video or something like that in my lecture?

I: Yes that's right.

S: Yes I do.

I: And posting links to material and news sites or stuff like that?

S: Yeah we do a lot of that in the distance Masters and I will occasionally, if I find something useful I think is relevant to my students at a particular time, I will post it on the subject (*software name redacted*) page.

I: Your experiences sound pretty down-the-line according to what I'm finding. So how do you go – many people have mentioned time as a barrier to these things, you talked about the new systems you're getting in, how does it go with workload and trying to innovate?

S: I think if you keep it fairly – I mean I don't think that I'm cutting edge with my use of the technology, I'll put on – I'll put my Powerpoint slides on (*software name redacted*), I'll put interesting links on, or what I think might be relevant links and perhaps videos, but other than that – I'm sort of – I'm frustrated, for example, that I have a Mac here at my desktop, and it's a PC in the lecture theatre, so I can't embed videos into my Powerpoint for example, but other than that I don't think my ongoing use of it to be too time constraining, no.

I: Some of the people I've interviewed have mentioned some kind of disconnection between what teachers are doing in the classroom and the broad strategic things that say VCs are talking about, eLearning and the way of the future – do you find that?

S: No I don't, I think that there hasn't been a very specific drive here, there's just the idea of providing teaching and learning to students that are not necessarily on campus. The tools we've got is what we've been using. So I don't think there's a disconnect there as such, no. Look, not for me personally.

I: One last question: do you in undergraduate or postgraduate do any group assignments, where there's a collaboration between small teams?

S: Yeah I do, I have a – in (*unit code redacted*) – I have what I call a class debate, where I give students in teams of four or five – and present an argument in a debate style, I give that as a 20% assessment task.

I: And how do you think students react to group work, what's your impression of that?

S: This time was the first time it was run for this unit here. In the past I've found them to be really positive towards it. There will always be the sort of 'our team didn't work well together, we had passengers etc.' but I think overall it's been positive.

Interviewee C

Interviewer (I): I'll start by asking what sort of online practices do you have when you're teaching your units?

Subject (S): They differ – you're interested in politics or international relations?

I: Both is fine.

S: In political theory I have a course that has written up lectures on the web, so each lecture is like a small essay, and these essays are related to the readings and are common to the readings. The students are supposed to read the lectures and the readings and come to the lecture class and have a discussion on the questions given in the particular lecture. So it's a discussion class at the uni on the written-up lectures, so on-line is used for that purpose. So there are no recorded lectures in this unit, and that produced a bit of a question mark because the university wants all the lectures to be recorded. But that was OK. The [?] and other units all have discussion boards. The major problem with those is that student participation on the discussion boards is varied. This year I instituted a replacement of actual tutorials for internal students which would take place on the Blackboard, on line, and the response to that was pretty good. I would have people giving tutorial presentations online and having people comment on those online. The quality of the comments and the quantity of the comments was pretty good. This was the first year that we've done that – replaced an oral tutorial with an

online one. The other units have recorded lectures which are linked to the online – they are online so they can be downloaded. The normal practice in those recorded ones is to post the lecture outline in Powerpoint beforehand, so the students can look at that, or print it out and use it in class as the lecture goes through it. That kind of thing allows for revision as well, so this stays online and consequently for purposes of revision and they can do that. Now in the international relations school we have a – we use online (*software name redacted*) for external tests – in other words for replacement of an exam – for the external students, they would have a take-home exam which would be posted online and they would have answers online within 24 hours. So the online facilities are used for testing as well. In addition to discussion – in International Relations discussion is obligatory, for external students, for distance education students, so they would have specific questions each week to which they have to respond.

I: So do you keep a note – so what you're saying is that they have to respond in a mandatory fashion every week as part of their grade?

S: That's correct. They are marked from that – in a sense quality of response. But those – the primary purpose of that is to have a response, even if it is in some sense misguided or wrong in some strong sense. If they got it wrong, they haven't understood, and they will be told by the moderator that something is wrong. But otherwise they – the quality of the response would not be marked, the fact that the response is important.

I: In the same way that if you were in a classroom tutorial, you don't lose marks for saying the wrong thing.

S: That's right. The marking is for participation, not for quality of participation.

I: OK and so is that only for external students?

S: That's only for external students. That's only because internal students have that same procedure but done in a class, so they don't need the online participation.

I: And do you find any of the internal students will still be bothered to participate in discussions online?

S: In some cases, yes, but mostly no. In my experience with discussion, unless it is marked, unless it is obligatory, the students don't tend to participate.

I: Yeah I think that's a pretty common response.

S: It's quite rational, you wouldn't make the effort. And that's possibly the rationality.

I: So basically what you're saying is that you have discussion exercises, and the other use of online is to put up lecture support materials.

S: That's correct, we would have the study guide, we would have marking criteria, we would have additional readings if the library can't provide for some reason the readings, we would put some additional readings, and we would have quite important are the writing essay guides,

and also instructions about essay writing in general. So, there is a fair bit of stuff on essay writing put up on the web as well.

I: So that's study skills material.

S: That's study skills material, that's right – which is specific to the course, they can obviously access through that page the university study skills, but we have specific ones for the course.

I: OK, so do you – that's all something you're talking about within the (*software name redacted*) system – do you use external internet in any way?

S: Usually in the lectures I use that to download images primarily for PowerPoint lectures. But in the actual course direct links to internet are not prominent or not frequent in any way. I had internet links given in my political theory course sometime ago, but I found this is an invitation for plagiarism and consequently discontinued that.

I: Excellent, OK. I guess a question I would ask is do you think that there's a benefit to using these online tools for any particular reason?

S: I think that without them - I can't imagine running courses without online now. In other words, the idea of putting PowerPoint beforehand is very important, particularly for [?] student, but also for [?] because it gives them an idea of what's going to happen in the lecture. So those students who are keen or who are not, or who have difficulty following the lecture can prepare for the lecture. It also gives them revision material when they need it, and gives them a guideline for the recorded lectures. So I think that both recording and the PowerPoint is quite essential now for teaching, I can't imagine teaching without that now. There might be – I had been thinking of extending this written lectures business but I am somewhat doubtful that other courses – apart from political theory – can be taught like that, because political theory doesn't require the [?], and consequently one can discuss ideas in class, and it's much easier than to have written up lectures in that way and they read it and discuss ideas. Then it comes to changing political situation where you would have to rewrite your lectures in a year and update to make sure that they contained the relevant facts. And also, whether the students would be able to retain [?] and further the question is what would you discuss if you haven't got them – if you've only got the written lecture in class. All this I hadn't tested all this, so I can't say that I would extend written-up lectures to non-theory courses. But at least at the moment there are written up ones for the theory and they work very well.

I: OK, some lecturers are making use of some things like wikis and blogs and lots of collaboration exercises –

S: We use the blog facility for discussion and for the tutorial discussion. They are really not blogs they are really blog-type comments on other people's presentations or other people's comments. But in terms of using blogs for our own sort of exchange with students, we haven't tried that and I haven't tried that as well. I have been thinking about that, but we haven't got round to doing that.

I: I think that there's a lot of teachers in your position, who would like to do things but haven't got round to it. What do you think are some of the barriers to making that jump?

S: Well the important barrier is really the time allocation, we – strictly speaking, we haven't got allocated time to experiment. So it's experimentation in our own time. If something is working already and has been working, I have very little incentive in trying something new, because that would require the expenditure of time for something which may not be rewarded in any way, and for which the students may not be rewarded in any way, and it may not work. So I thought the best way would be to have a sort of very minimal teaching relief which would allow you to get training in new technologies. And I remember in the old days when I did some professional courses in teaching where I got teaching relief for that, and that was really great, I learned a lot.

I: So you think that it's a matter of an institution providing some formal support?

S: That's correct, we have got plenty of access, but very little time-related incentive.

I: OK so it's got to be justified against your full time workload?

S: That's correct.

I: OK, and do you think that's a common response from teachers?

S: I really don't know, it depends how they say – it depends on how much general belief in or inclination to use new technologies that you have. I do and I have had that. However, at some point I thought what kind of reward do I get; I faced this problem with the written-up lectures that I did, and everything, and then the question arose 'is this right?' and then we discovered that it is right. So I thought OK, if I do new things, and the uni questions or changes its policies and says 'oh well we don't particularly favour this', then why am I doing that? What's the point of it? That why some more formal encouragement would be needed. Some people simply take up anything new and do it gladly but I have no got that particular drive.

I: That's fair enough, you're not alone. Do you – all your assessment tasks and all your online stuff sounds fairly individual – like when it is discussion?

S: That's right, we don't have group work.

I: Why is that?

S: Why is that? Well I've been to two professional courses training in group work, and I haven't been convinced, either in practice or in these courses. That group work allows for accurate assessment. I have anecdotal evidence that it doesn't, and that comes from my children who went to uni and did some group work. What I've seen of group work at unis, in other words, in the group work that I've seen, and I've done a fair bit of group work in China where I was teaching there, there is all these one person carrying the stuff, and the others following, and I don't think that's fair in terms of assessment and also in terms of learning. I'm not sure that this is a good learning process. So I'm not convinced that group work – at least not in my field – I can't say anything about other fields, more creative fields like English

literature or creative writing – I could see the point there, I've seen that done in creative writing. I've seen other fields which might have that, but in what I teach I can't see either the learning or the assessment advantages of group work.

I: OK that's a great response – what do you think the students think of group work?

S: Well it depends on their cultural background and on their previous experience – some who have done group work before would probably say 'oh this is really great stuff'. And it does, I think it does, allow for more interaction, but I think the disadvantage of one person carrying the work is sufficient to discourage some. It's just that those who naturally take up the leading role don't mind that, so they will not say 'this is unfair', and the ones who are following the leader will say 'this is really great'. So there's no one to object, but I think from an outsider's point of view, you don't see the particular advantages in that.

I: OK what do you think of student preferences in terms of having more or less technology in the delivery of subjects?

S: This is a very difficult question, because I haven't done any tests, and I think that should be done. I would really encourage universities to do that thoroughly (?) and professionally. The fashion of the uni inclination is 'the more technology the better'. I have, however, friends who claim that this is highly regarded because what the students come to university for is to hear the performance (?) and they don't really want to replace it with their games, and that universities tend to think that this model of video games and interactive video games is what the students want from university when in fact they are coming for something different. I have no opinion, because I have no evidence for either. What I can say is that if the incentive is there, in terms of marks or mandatory participation, the students will use the technology, at least the younger generation. Mature aged students in general will have some difficulty in using the technology, and consequently at the end of the day are disadvantaged. They simply are not used to the technology as it were. Normal students have no difficulty using it, but whether they prefer it and more importantly, whether that enhances, in all cases, their learning processes, I am simply not sure.

I: So it sounds like sometimes, a common impression I'm getting, is that there is a disconnection between the policies that come out at a high university level and what actually happens in the classroom.

S: I think we have seen no, at least it wasn't presented once, any hard evidence that the increased use of technology – the replacement of traditional university tutorials and lectures – their replacement by online activities, I haven't seen evidence of that enhancing learning processes and learning outcomes. They may be, but that hasn't been presented once. What I am operating on is that the online systems enhance the actual traditional deliveries. And I am convinced that this is the case, the online is certainly both now essential and highly productive. I haven't been convinced that this can replace the traditional activities.

Interviewee D

Interviewer (I): So, what online tools do you use?

Subject (S): The standard things, such as the discussion board, e-readings and putting up unit guides and things like that, but the biggest online tool that I use is the online simulation.

I: What sort of simulation is that?

S: It's a Middle East politics simulation, where students role play characters from the Middle East over a two-week period, in character in groups, and at the end come together and try to sort of debrief on what they've learned.

I: And so, where do they role play and how does that work with what sort of interface – is it live, is it online?

S: It's an asynchronous, closed website that's been especially built as a platform for this particular role play. Students play in groups as a rule, generally two, sometimes three for some of the larger simulations. Occasionally they'll play individually, depending on their circumstances they can request for that. So it's flexible, but generally teams of two, and it's all done by text.

I: So, not text on a phone –

S: No, definitely not using a phone, that's one of the things they're not allowed to use, but as in writing emails to each other and sort of corresponding by email only.

I: And why do you use this sort of tool to teach your subjects?

S: I think because it's such a complicated subject, it's the only way to really immerse them into it and get them to get a first-hand experience of who the people are, what the issues are, how the issues impact on each other, the relatedness of events, and it teaches that complexity in a first-hand experience, and it also allows them to immerse themselves, whereas reading or being lectured at, or discussing in a tutorial, doesn't give them that depth.

I: So when you say it that's immersive, and it's deep learning, what sort of durations and what sort of commitment does it require on the part of the students?

S: Well I guess it depend on the student, it depends on what kind of grade that they want and who they're playing, and all sorts of other factors, but on average I would say that they spend 3-5 hours a day engaged in the simulation, and probably 20 hours of the day thinking about it, even when they're not online. It lasts for two weeks, but then a lot of them continue to log on and check what's going on, and certainly long after the simulation finishes they're still talking about it. It's very immersive in that sort of way.

I: And where is it housed, in what sort of environment is it housed?

S: I actually believe it's housed on a server at (*location redacted*) under the computer scientist's desk.

I: So it's not in your university?

S: No, not at all, in fact we've had huge issues trying to get them to build something for us that's similar. It was built by (*name redacted*) who is the original computer scientist, when he was at Melbourne Uni. He moved to (*location redacted*) about 15 years ago now, and he took that platform with him, and we still use it out of his university.

I: OK so you mentioned you had problems with your university housing it, can you expand on that?

S: Our IT department seemed to make everything more difficult than it needs to be, and because it's unusual and it's a one-off and we're wanting something specific, they're not inclined to go out of their way to help us. They don't see the benefits perhaps, to the university to actually house something at (*location redacted*) that we could own.

I: Is that because of the way that you run your simulation or the way that it runs doesn't fit or doesn't dovetail with the university system?

S: I think perhaps it's just not out of the box, and they can't understand why I would want something like this, why don't I just use the Blackboard site or D2L site, why can't I just use what I've got and tailor my simulation to fit that, rather than having them tailor something to fit my simulation.

I: So why can't you make your adjustments?

S: Because I don't have the power to issue log-ons and passwords and set up an actual site myself, I don't have that technical ability. I'm sure it would be easily done if they would kind of say, 'ok', instead of a student having their own personal account and their name on it, and they could actually set up a generic account. The other thing too is that I only want those students playing to be able to email within that class, within that group, and they can't work out, or they don't seem to be inclined to say that they're going to set up something like an email simulator rather than just an email system.

I: So, what's the issue then with students logging in to a uni system under their own 'John Smith' name?

S: It doesn't give them that sense of actually being that character, I mean, the thing about my simulation that is kind of good is that they log-on as, say, President Obama or President Assad, and they all share an account. So the three members of Obama will have the same log-in and the same password, and they can be on at the same time, while they're all logged on, but when they send an email to another character, it comes up as President Obama. So there's no sort of email traffic that's personal, it's all simulation traffic.

I: You mention that the students put in quite a commitment of time, in working through the simulation, what kind of commitment or burden of time does it have for the teachers who are administering it?

S: Well, every spare second of the two weeks is spent checking emails, and then way after that as well. And even beforehand, just setting it up is a huge undertaking. You know, working out what the roles are, organising the passwords, signing people up, you know, making sure the teams have signed consent forms that they're going to be careful of their communications, making sure everybody knows what the deadlines are for the various bits of assessment, you know, writing a scenario that's fitting for the time. All that happens beforehand, and then in the actual emailing, there are generally 5000 to 7000 emails that are sent during that two week period, that we monitor and read, all of those plus we actually communicate with the students – you know, when they ask permission for things or ask clarification on things. So it's a huge amount of work and you can't actually get behind because once you do, it's very hard to catch back up. But also to give the students to give the support that they need.

I: Speaking of support, what sort of support do you get for the efforts that you expend from your school? Or your faculty?

S: None, basically. None. There's no additional workload recognition, there's certainly no recognition of how much time it takes, it's very difficult to then have sessionals in the running of it or the marking of it, because it's completely exploitative. It's not the equivalent of marking if you said 'there's 40 students doing it, it's the equivalent of marking 40 essays', well it's not. It's the equivalent of probably 200 essays. And there's no way of paying a sessional fairly to be part of that, so it has to be permanent members of staff, but then there's no workload recognition for it. And so, really, you're doing this out of the goodness of your heart, but certainly doing it for the betterment of the students is a reason to do it, not because it's recognised or supported in any way.

I: It's a team-based approach that you take. How do you think students react to this sort of group work and collaboration?

S: I would say that they enjoy it. Particularly off-campus students who don't get that opportunity to do group work. You know, they sit at the end of a computer and occasionally have discussions online with students, you know, about a discussion point for that week, but they don't actually get to work with another student. You can sort of see friendships developing, particularly amongst the off campus students, and you'll see them in the diary section of the simulation talking about like 'this weekend I've got X on', and they're actually sort of developing a friendship with another student which they don't get the opportunity to do. I think even the on campus students develop certainly a little cohort. You see them greeting each other by their simulation name in class. They may not know their real name but they'll know them as, say, that's Hezbollah or that's the PIJ. So they develop that. The other thing too, that I've noticed, is that those friendships remain after the class is gone - you'll see

them having coffee down at the coffee shop with people from that tutorial or because they're actually shared that experience. So I think the group work part of it is really important.

I: In a lot of cases students don't like group work assignments, do you think your simulation contrasts with that experience?

S: I think that lots of group work is badly done, I think it's done perhaps - I won't say laziness – but it's an easy way of doing a lot of assessment at once. You know, you can have four people do a talk, and it's four talks out of the way in one go. So I think students don't like it because of that, they don't feel that their contribution to that piece of work is not recognised. Whereas in the simulation, there are freeloaders for sure, and there are people who say 'my partner sucked' but it doesn't mean they didn't really enjoy the experience of the simulation. So the group work aspect of it is bad and the feedback that we get from students is that they actually really like the chance to work with somebody, and the ability to bounce ideas off somebody else. It gives them, I guess confidence, if two of them agree that that's a good idea or a good course of action rather than just them sitting alone by themselves thinking 'oh, I could do that', they've got somebody else to bounce ideas off.

I: Speaking of grades and assessments and freeloaders, how on Earth do you assess something this complicated?

S: certainly not by a standard rubric, and I think that's one of the things about the simulation that turns people off doing it, is that you need a lot of specialist knowledge to be able to actually grade it. So you need to be able to know what is a good Obama and what is a bad Obama. You need to know, you know, what is in character role playing and what is out of character role playing. So you need to be familiar with all the characters. We also weight it, so a big role is – there are bigger expectations, and students know that, so if they want to - if they have a wife and kids and whatever, they can say, 'ok, I'm going to do a smaller role, but do it really well'. But the expectations are different for smaller roles, they need to have more, perhaps, depth, so it's sort of a very complex way of marking it. We mark across four different criteria: there are the role profiles, which is essentially not about the marking of it it's about getting to know their character, and it's also about the other students being able to have a quick reference section so they can know who else is playing. It's more pragmatic but we use it as a piece of assessment, to make sure that they do it, they do it on time and they do a good job of it. The second part is the quantity, and that's weighted on how many people are in a team, what size the role is, you know, very sort of a complex measurement system. The quantity part of it is marked across a lot of different factors, you know, are they in character, are they sort of acting in the best interests of their character, are they responding the way their character would, is it proactive, all those sort of things, you know, the depth of their research and the gains that they've made from, say, the first day, in the first three days to the last three days, you know, how much can we see that they've learned, how much has their character improved, how much is their role playing more coherent –

I: So when you say 'gains', how do you classify a gain?

S: Well instead of like sending a shallow email like 'oh I'd like to bomb this', you know, their emails towards the end will be more like 'we'd like to use our drones to do X, and we're going to target this person', and they will have researched that person, because of their political views. There'll be a whole lot more depth – it's more like a briefing paper than just a quick one-line request. And they've really thought about it, and they've thought about the outcomes – you can just actually see the depth of their knowledge in their requests. And also their interactions with each other – at the end when we have a conference for on campus students, just the confidence with which they speak as that person, because of, sort of, I guess, knowledge, whereas if you'd had the conference on the first day, they'd have no idea. They'd be, you know, sort of flummoxed when it comes to responding in character, whereas when it gets towards the end, they are that person.

I: So you just mentioned a conference, can you explain what that is?

S: So at the end of the two weeks of role playing, the students who are on campus attend an in-person conference, it's about three hours. It's kind of like a peace conference, but you know, I guess some rules waived in terms of, some terrorist characters turn up as well, so there's a little bit of a suspension of reality. But they get to – there's panels that come out of the simulation itself. Every year the conference topics are different, and they basically write a position paper beforehand, so a briefing paper of what their main points are, and they actually just speak and try to work out some of the issues. They don't ever bring about world peace but at least they discuss the main points that relate to whatever it is they're talking about. And it gives them a sense of closure, I guess, and it gives them a sort of oral aspect as well as – it sort of rounds-out that text communication that they're doing. Off campus students are welcome to come, if they can, but otherwise they just write their position paper.

I: So they're not expected to attend the conference.

S: They don't have to but in a lot of cases, if they're close to the uni, or even when they're not, they make an effort to come and dress up, because they just want to be part of that.

I: How do you I guess cope with different learning styles, different experience levels in the way that you administer this assessment? I mean, you could have first years or third years, people who are 20 years old, people who are 60 years old, how do you adapt to that?

S: Well, we – I mean, the first year, third year thing – we divide the roles based on, I guess, their assumed knowledge or their previous experience. So for third years they play bigger roles like the Secretary of State or the President of the United States, and the first years get to see the third years in action and learn from them and then the following year that's what they'll be. We've had people who are in their 60s playing, and they really enjoy it because it gives them a chance to I guess use their historical knowledge and their background knowledge and shine that way, and young people like it because it's online, it's like a game, but they're learning at the same time and doing their uni assessment, so they enjoy it for different reasons.

I: So, everybody has to do this assignment?

S: No, it's always an option, it's always got a choice. So, generally we say it's a simulation or an essay topic in lieu. And the essay lieu topics go out before the simulation sign ups or anything to do with it starts. So people are very well informed about the essay. And we also say to students that for some reason they drop out of the simulation, like they have a catastrophe or something, they can always do the essay in lieu. Or if they do badly on the simulation, or much worse than they thought they would do in an essay, they're welcome to do the essay and we'll take the best mark.

I: How do you deal with freeloaders, if you can identify them?

S: Generally my first response is to say to the team 'see if you can work it out amongst yourselves', you know, have a chat to that person, perhaps email them if they're not doing their work and copy me in on it and say, you know, I feel like you're not working hard enough. Generally they manage to sort it out within their team, only a couple of times we had some serious team disfunction where I've said to one of the players 'you've never logged on and you haven't done anything and I think perhaps you should do the essay', but generally the team – in a lot of the cases players will say 'they haven't done anything and I don't care as long as they don't do anything to mess it up, I'm happy for them to just freeload'. So there are lots of different responses to that.

I: When people think of simulations and online environments, I guess they often think of very visually immersive ones, how does your simulation compare with that?

S: I guess it'd be described as very ugly and plain and boring, but very very functional. And I think there's no distraction of the visual, either. It really is about the content, and I think if you had nice graphics and nice pictures and, you know, avatars or whatever, you could hide the fact that somebody has not got the content there, has not got the depth. Whereas, there really is nowhere to hide, it's all about the written word, all about the content.

I: What barriers do you think teachers who might be in your position and they think 'I might like to experiment with something online and something collaborative', what barriers do you think they face in doing that?

S: I think some of them are time poor, it does take a lot of time to set up, it takes a lot of time to organise and to administer and to mark. I think the workload issue is huge – they don't see the benefit in terms of their workload, you know it's more work and for less recognition. And I think that in terms of recognition a big one is the promotion process, it's so focused on research that doing something like this would take you away from your research significantly. And even though it might make you a really good teacher, they don't see the trade-off there personally, I suppose, in doing that. I think you could also say that it's something they're fearful of doing because it might not work and what do they do. There's that sort of barrier of failure. Or perhaps the feeling of 'I don't have the expertise to run this', and 'what if it all goes horribly wrong'. So there's that as well. Lack of confidence.

I: OK, I guess I'd finish off by asking if you've got any tips or any best practice example of integrating online tools into your teaching, integrating role plays – you could respond in

terms of the way you do it, or the technology involved. For example a lot of people get freaked out by the technology – 'I'm not a computer programmer, I couldn't do this sort of thing' – what do you do to engage students – anything you want to say?

S: I guess the computer technology thing – I'm not a computer expert either, but there are plenty of computer experts out there, there's no reason why you wouldn't collaborate with someone from computer sciences to research and develop something like that. But I will say that the thing about integrating it is that you have to integrate it from the start. You have to tell student straight up what this is, you have to explain it really thoroughly. It helps now that I have students who have done one, who will be in a class with students who haven't done one – they're the best ambassadors for that kind of thing. So the more you do it, the easier it gets because students actually help other students. But in terms of I guess, my role play, I learn something every time. You know, I learn that teams of two are probably the best team number, more than three. You know, that some characters work and some don't work. That some scenarios work every time, some scenarios never work, you know, they just never get picked up. It's a constant learning thing as well. I think the thing though in terms of the bug thing I would encourage people is to perhaps for their first role play to pair with someone who's done one before. If you're nervous about it, find an existing role play and learn from that.

I: So you actually use this across multiple units?

S: Multiple units, yeah.

I: So students can do more than one? Example?

S: They're running three units out of the four that I teach. And often students will do one in the second year unit, a very big unit that's offered across majors, and they'll say 'hey, I really enjoyed that, I'm going to go and do the one in the first year unit', and the students who are already in the first year unit will be playing with people who have done one already. And so they sort of get that option – and they meet other cohorts that way as well.

I: What are you – how would you compare the benefits of something like an essay, which is a traditional assignment, and something like you use, not just in their actual unit administration, but beyond the classroom as well?

S: Well look I think an essay is a one-topic thing, really, you learn about one topic and in most cases for an essay you do it and you forget about it. You know, it's not lifelong learning, it doesn't stay with you. But I think if you've walked in the shoes of someone for two weeks, that person's always close to you, and I have students who, you know, if something happens to Gaddafi, will email me and say 'I remember when I played Gaddafi and I've been watching it really enthusiastically', because they develop some kind of deep interest in that, and they develop a deep interest in the region. So, I guess it takes them out of just 'I've written an essay and I know about, you know, whatever it might be, weapons of mass destruction' to 'I know a lot about this country or I know a lot about that person', and they have that sort of ongoing interest that lasts.

Interviewee E

Interviewer (I): OK there are two things obviously that I am interested in talking to you about. First of all IdeaNet and then your use of role playing simulations. So maybe if we start with IdeaNet?

Subject (S): How about if we start with simulations because that's what came first then we went on to IdeaNet.

I: We can start with the simulations, that's fine.

S: OK, tell me what sort of subject areas do you use simulations for?

I: Well I've used it for issues related to International Relations....I started it with the first-year course. This was in the early 90s so the people had to develop the software first for this purpose. So like I had an idea that students would come and role play in the class and represent different countries to negotiate a case in the United Nations. It was like a mock UN. And you know there's so much secret diplomacy that goes on, and I wanted them to understand that. So the Multimedia Centre, it had another name in those days I think, the director and the software development person, Mike (surname unclear) were quite keen on helping me. So together we developed this idea that there will be face-to-face negotiations but then there will be a platform on which different characters could engage in secret diplomacy while they would still be part of the UN.

I: OK. So you mentioned one of your objectives there was to make people aware of secret diplomacy. Why did you think it was important to do that?

S: Because I think they needed to know that not everything is done in the open and that you could have some understandings evolving in the background while the UN diplomacy is going on and that can affect the final outcome of the resolution.

I: And do you think that's important to the understanding of your subject areas.

S: I think so because then you get to realise the limit of your understanding. And you don't get to see that in the data that's coming out in world politics to say that A leads to B. Sometimes A leads to X. To see what's happening in the background.

I: Right so it's not all out of a textbook?

S: That's right. And what I realised was, and I think I might have mentioned it, that the students actually learned that. Because, one, they got into it quite enthusiastically. They knew that they could actually play games, but those games had to be sort of valid games. You couldn't befriend countries that were your arch enemies or that you couldn't turn your best friend into an enemy overnight. But you could still work out which country was friendly to which one and what kind of resolutions you could come up with, what kind of carrot you could offer, what kind of stick you could offer. All that I think they got into quite

enthusiastically. And then at the end of the exercise sometimes you found that they were quite passionately involved and very hooked on what was going to be the outcome. So I think they learnt a lot in terms of how international politics really works.

I: And how would you compare the outcomes of that exercise with say just doing an essay or something?

S: Very different. An essay is where you'd think about it in your head and work out arguments and come to a conclusion that's yours, but you don't really know how the real world works. I mean you do, but you don't experience it. And in the simulation exercise it really was, it was a combination of your knowledge...so you had to write a piece before you started....you had to give your position on the political issues (indistinct). So you needed to do research. But to then realise that whatever positions countries or non-governmental actors had, they interacted with the positions that other countries had. So I think that working on that relationship and the intended or unintended consequences of that is something that you need to have a working experience of. And if I could say, and again I don't know if I mentioned it or not,....I haven't done that for a couple of years, but for years every time I'd go somewhere they'd say "Oh we were talking this morning..." so they asked us if we were still doing simulation exercises. So that apparently seems to be the highlight of the unit.

I: OK I can imagine that would be the case. How do you moderate it (subject's name) in terms of....you mentioned not letting teams make enemies overnight. Is it you, or other teachers, who moderate what's going on?

S: Yes. We have a constant access to information on what's happening, so when they do secret diplomacy, the students engage in secret diplomacy but the tutors can see it.

I: Right. So you have your own sort of tailor-made website?

S: Right. Multimedia actually designed the website. So it's fully designed, the software, which we kind of modified over the years. So now it's being used (indistinct) Multimedia, so other units as well. So if you contact Arts Multimedia at (*university name redacted*) they could give you access to the simulation.

I: OK I might try and get a look at it. And you mentioned that there was some pretty positive student feedback from it?

S: Yeah well I haven't done it for a few years, but...even then the students would constantly say "This was the best. I learnt a lot." And with my own observation I often saw that students would be so keen to know what was happening. I think more than they would otherwise. Like they go and they're looking for the position of their country on a certain issue...what it would be or what it wouldn't be.

I: So you think they were seeking out more info....

S: I think so. Definitely. And I still remember there was one guy...Israel I think...and in the tutorial the final resolution had to be discussed in the class. And some secret diplomacy had

gone on the night before. And I still remember him pacing up and down and quite angry and saying “My ally ditched me! They were giving me this understanding and now they have backed out of that. And I am not happy with them.” So it's kind of real. This is a simulation but it happens in real life. He was just in that. He couldn't separate himself from the exercise.

I: OK so we're talking about some quite deep immersion in that case.

I: So you seem to have a combination of face-to-face role playing and online role playing? Is that right?

S: That's right, yes.

I: So what are the tasks when you used that....how did it break down?

S: Right, well the students would be given a question. Which was a mock UN situation, that the UN was being offered a resolution on say the Kashmir issue or the Iraqi issue.

I: Right.

S: And the UN had to come to some sort of agreement. And each country, a student would represent each country or an organisation. They'd have to go and research their respective rights and roles and responsibilities....their relationships. Then they'd draft a position paper that would be uploaded. Then the students would come and summarise that in the class. And then everybody would listen, even if they hadn't read it on the web before. And then they go back, between the first and the second week, and engage in secret diplomacy.

I: And how long would that run for?

S: The exercise would normally run for three tutorials. So there were three face-to-face and then by the third tutorial they had to come to a resolution. And what they would resolve, it had to be voted on.

I: And the secret diplomacy thing was running in the background the whole time?

S: Yes. For two weeks. And then they had to finish 15 minutes before the class and then discuss amongst themselves how they were going to write a report as a group. What they had learned about politics and to place out all the factors that influence international political developments. Then instead of being participants they had to become analysts; to say “Ok we were given the issue of say the role of (unclear) in world politics and this is where we all started from in our respective positions and this is where we ended up. The relations we have learnt about and the extent to which it is followed or not followed in world politics and why.”

I: OK

S: And then they had to link it with some research they'd already done. So their final paper it would be submitted afterwards as a group report. But that reflected the group's understanding of the dynamics of world politics.

I: So let me just look at how it was assessed. Was it just assessed as one grade or were there different parts that...

S: No. There's a mark for the position paper and participation in the group report.

I: And they were participating as individuals or as teams?

S: Position paper was individual. Participation was individual because it was tutorial based. But the group report was for the whole group. But they also had to, which was my husband's idea, to give us their personal reflection on the exercise.

I: OK. And what percentage of their overall grade for the semester did that role play form?

S: Now you're testing me. I think it was thirty percent overall. It was anyway a large enough chunk for them to take it seriously.

I: It's OK, I don't need an exact answer. You mentioned that you haven't done this for a couple of years now. Is that because you're not teaching so much now or why?

S: No, no, no. I'm still teaching that much but I've also tried something else. Because I know it was the university that developed the software I know it's there. And if I want to use it again I can. But because I stopped teaching first years...I think that was probably one reason. I think...I think it's been three years. And because I was mad enough to put in all the time....someone else took over from me and his main concern was how would he manage it?

I: OK. I guess that was going to be next question from your point of view as the teacher. How do you think this compared in terms of your workload compared to other sorts of assignments?

S: It definitely adds to workload. But if you think about input loads and outputs, or the end result, where you want the students to go it was hugely useful. Definitely there is greater workload but the benefits are worth it.

I: Do you think the questions of workload are barriers for teaching staff in implementing this sort of thing?

S: They are because...you see I got into it...we're talking about the early 90s. And I was very keen on the Internet, using it and doing things. So if you have a passion for combining knowledge with these technologies you don't worry about workloads. But if you realise that you're putting in all that effort to get to some point and then that effort is not being appreciated in the whole university system, which is moving more and more in terms of research output, well I can see some people saying "Why do I have to put so much energy into that?" So indirectly, yeah, it would be. But then in the case of someone like me who's passionate, you just do it.

I: Yeah one of the consistent things I've got out of these interviews and my surveys was that people were saying "Well why would I bother? That sort of teaching won't help me get a promotion. It's more about research." Do you think that's a common feeling?

S: I think it might be coming up. But...definitely in the last two years I've noticed a lot of people saying that. And I think that's because universities have sort of contradictory approaches...an oxymoronic attitude towards education. They say they value teaching, but then they value research and don't value teaching.

I: Right I think that's a pretty consistent theme that I'm getting. That often what policy statements are made in the very high administration are not reflected at the actual teaching side of it.

S: Yes. And I think my concern is that in the long term this is going to impact on the quality of research. Because I do think that students, when they are really enthusiastic about an issue using these sort of approaches....they tend to *learn* how to do research. But if we are focussing so much on research for the teachers, then their attention on teaching goes down and the students can't have a research capacity don't develop that. So if you think about it over the next 10 years, the pool of graduates that will actually come will be less proficient in research techniques than those who had all this attention from their teachers.

I: Right that's a very interesting long-term perspective. I hadn't actually considered it in that way. What about IdeaNet then? Are you still using that approach?

S: IdeaNet I haven't used in the last two years because I started using WikiSpace....I think I used that last year and the year before. IdeaNet was actually a concept builder, that's how it evolved. And my husband, who is actually a professor in mechanical engineering, and another friend of ours (name withheld), she came along later. But basically what we were concerned with was that students could read, but not really *connect* ideas. But what we really expect students to do is when they read something they need to know what's significant in it and what points are being made that they could share with others.

I: OK so you're talking about the case where students are presented with dozens and dozens of quite heavy readings for a unit?

S: Yeah. Well all the readings they were given, the lecturer would have told them like "You're responsible for readings A, X and Z. So put your summary of that on the IdeaNet..." And again that was a specially designed website which now the university has modified and now they're calling it IdeaNet. And the idea was that the students would pick up the concepts and then build their own database, based on the subject that they're studying. And then all the students would keep on putting their summaries of what they understood from a reading. Now a number of students could be doing the same readings without knowing what the others have written. So they'll put it up and if they wanted to add some keyword that wasn't in the list that we had given them then they would ask the moderator to add that to the list, so that they could link it. So then it prepared a database for everyone to share out of the hundred readings. So many would say 'Islam and women' or 'Islam and politics' 'Islam and democracy'. And then all the students having done that they give one tutorial in which they'd sit down and pick any one aspect out of their whole course and say if that is essential content what other data, entries others had made as a group...what explanations and elaborations....and they

learnt from that and what had been added. So they were made to draw more like mind maps and then write a report on that.

I: OK So who assigned the students to the readings?

S: They were tutorial based assignments so the tutors did that. Initially we were telling them "Which one do you want to read?". And then that was taking too much time so we just randomly assigned them.

I: And so this was an assessable part of their unit?

S: Oh yeah. Again it took a lot more effort and so we made it a significant...I think it was 20, 25%.

I: OK so was it all done at once or was it week by week that it was put up?

S: Over the semester.

I: Oh OK because I was just thinking if I gave an assignment like that everyone would want to do it in the last week of the semester and it would all be a bit pointless.

S: Yep. No, they were required to do it by a certain time, so they had to do it week by week.

I: So everybody had a different deadline?

S: Everybody had to do, for example, students 1, 2 and 3 each one of them had a reading and they had to put a certain number of (unclear) by the end of first week, by the end of fourth week, by the end of eighth week...

I: I can see that's a lot for you to administer then.

S: Yeah. But I think that's where Multimedia Centre were very good. Initially because of the technology we couldn't do it that well. But then they worked it out in a way that you could look at it straight away, you could comment on it, you could get the mark that would be assigned straight away. You could pull out, and I could often be like that, if I was being lazy, if I didn't see the person on the fourth week, on the fifth week I could sit down I could see 'student X' and what is her contribution and all that would come up straight away.

I: Oh, OK, that's always handy.

S: And we put on a limit of entries. It's not like they could go on and write two pages, five pages for one article. It had to be short.

I: No point in doing a summary if it's five pages, I guess!

S: And students tried that. But then we told them, no, it doesn't work like that.

I: I have a similar problem when I try to get people to summaries and so forth on discussion boards. Some people end up writing a whole essay.

S: Yeah that's....we were very strict. And I think that's where Multimedia were good. So now in fact we can get students to do that, they can enter their contribution, we can search it by student, we can search it by topic, we can search it by the group. So it's pretty good. And it's mainly like a list. You start from A to Z and you can get the picture of what has happened.

I: How do they access that? Is that through their Learning Management System or is it a separate site?

S: We developed a separate website. But now the Multimedia Centre has an access and they put a link to that on the Learning Management System.

I: Right. What Learning Management System do you use at (*university name redacted*)?

S: We were using (*software name redacted*) and only now this year we're moving on to (*software name redacted*).

I: Oh OK. Fair enough. Is there anything else you've been doing in the last couple of years that's also to do with that collaboration amongst students?

S: We've been using *WikiSpace*...which I've tried both for post grad and undergrad. At Masters level and second and third year level. And basically, the second and third year level....I had given the third year level students who were doing the same unit, responsibility for being the grown-ups, and the second year level to learn from their grown-ups. So there was a mentoring going on in there.

I: So they were producing a wiki, were they?

S: Yes they were producing a wiki. And they were given different cases. The class was quite big, so they were not tutorially based, they were class based. They had different times outside the class to work out what roles to do. It was mainly *their* research project. For example they were given a topic on pirates in the Horn of Africa area. And they basically had to work out which aspects of that case would they choose, would they look into and they had to produce researched information, videos, interviews...some of them even on the refugee issue went and talked to people. And then they had to upload all that. Since each person was responsible for one section they were marked for that, and the group was marked as a whole on the quality of the final product. The problem was that students would have preferred to do it on a tutorial basis so that they could meet on a set time and know that they could talk to each other.

I: Right.

S: But interestingly they weren't very happy with it. Because it was a group project and they didn't know if it would mark well or not. But as a teacher, when I looked that the quality of their submissions they were very good.

I: OK so you say the *students* weren't happy with it?

S: Yeah they thought “Oh why do we have to do this?” And then I read the reports and I thought “Gee, why wouldn't you do this? You've done so much more work than you would have otherwise!”

I: So they thought that it wasn't a good learning exercise or that it was too much work? Why were they negative?

S: I think because it was not tute based but because it was class based. In hindsight I think that was the main problem. But there were some students sending me messages saying they thought it was really good. But the majority when they were going through it, they hated it.

I: Now playing around with a wiki I guess you need some technical knowledge to do that. How did students react to that technology demand upon them?

S: That was OK in the undergrad students because the students came in...we had a training session, we did some training and Shane (name indistinct) from Multimedia, he's the manager there. He's very good so he came and told the students and he worked with us. And they monitored that and if there was a problem they helped us. Where it became a problem was where I used it for post grads in a Masters class. They were all in one class so they could work together. But even though they were smaller groups and they were given time to discuss their own wiki...something happened in their WikiSpace software so they'll put stuff up and suddenly it will change from font 12 to font 58 or something. There were times it drove them mad. It changed group time quite a lot and all of them together were spending more time trying to deal with technology than with the ideas themselves. Shane fixed it for them and it didn't make a difference to how I marked them, but I hope the WikiSpace problem has been taken out because I'm using it again this year.

I: Are you using it only with on-campus students?

S: Yes. Actually now that you remind me, at some stage we had got one, simulation but we had used off-campus people that were brought in and (indistinct). But that's the only time we had more than our university students.

I: So do you have any off-campus students that you are responsible for?

S: Not any more but now that the university is moving to a different system, we'll find all that out, but we don't know. There may be some off-campus students but they'd still be enrolled at UWA, but maybe in another campus.

I: That's great. It sounds like you really are an early adopter in terms of always trying to find things to really challenge your students and it's very encouraging because that's not what I found from most respondents to this research.

S: Yes. I think credit goes to my husband as well because he's a robot specialist and into computers and thinking about them. So we bounce things and discuss them and think about “That's possible,” or “That's not possible”.

Interviewee F

I: I'll start by asking you...if you only think about undergraduate stuff that you teach, what sort of subjects do you teach?

S: In the undergraduate area, an introduction to International Relations. So it's very basic introduction to the subject. That's in first trimester. In second trimester a unit on Australian foreign policy, and also at the same time, at undergraduate third year level, a unit on theories of International Relations.

I: So in those first year units how many students would you be looking at?

S: Well this year we've got a 30% increase in this trimester. I think we're up to 375 students at (campus name redacted) alone. And that doesn't include (campus name redacted) that has about 160 and off-campus about 80. I don't teach the off-campus and (campus name redacted) components of the unit. So I think the numbers are pretty high this year in that area. I think we'll see a corresponding increase of a similar nature and similar numbers for the foreign policy unit in trimester 2. And for theories of international relations about 120 across all modes. So there is about 120 all told on that.

I: So you have several hundred students to deal with every year by the sound of it.

S: Yep. Particularly the first year intake, which is getting to the point where we're busting at the seams in trying to fit them into the actual lecture theatre.

I: You obviously split up the responsibility for the different campuses and the off-campus mode between different staff, do you?

S: Except for Theories. I go down to (campus name redacted) and do all those classes on one day, as I do for the lectures in the foreign policy unit down there. But as far as this first particular first year International Relations unit, I divide that up. I do (campus name redacted) and (name redacted) does (campus name redacted) and off-campus. It's simply a case of workload distribution. The numbers in total when you add everything together must be over 500. So it's just about beyond any individual staff member's ability to chair a unit with that many students in it.

I: So with those undergrad units, what aspects of the teaching and the content do you put online?

S: I put slide shows in PDF form every week before, prior to the lecture. The idea there is that students are not required to write down what they see behind me on the screen because they can actually print it all off in advance. Then I record the audio of the lecture and that goes up after it's been mixed down (unclear), usually later, at night on the same day. So by the end of the week, students have a visual and audio record of what has been done that week. That's available to off and on campus students. As well as using the units' website for

supplementary study materials. So if there is a particular article that couldn't be included in the unit guide, then I either put a link up or a copy of the article onto the (*software name redacted*) site and they can access it there. The other thing I do with the website is simply to use it for announcements. To explain changes or explain assessment further. Given that...the (*software name redacted*) site is not now really regarded as being distinguished between on- and off-campus, it's a good, fair distribution point for information, I think.

I: Do you use any other tools within that LMS? Like discussion boards or wiki pages or anything?

S: I have used discussion boards for off-campus. Effectively I suppose trying to mimic tutorials for the off-campus students, rather than on-campus. It works reasonably well. Usually if it's live. If they're all logged on at the same time. That works. The popularity of that tends to centre around discussions of assessment tasks. So it gets more popular around those times just before submission dates appear. But it's not as popular as I expected it to be because students...even when they're encouraged to raise issues at those times, will still want to contact you on a one-to-one basis to get their problem resolved or their question answered. So they can either ring you or email you anyway rather than raise it in front of their peers. So the discussion groups have more potential theoretically than in the reality. But that may be that I'm simply not very good at conducting them in a way that maintains their concentration.

I: So you find that a lot of the discussion, as a generalisation, centres around those issues of assignments, assessments and things?

S: Yes. They try to raise, effectively the subject matter of the question they're attempting as the discussion topic in those groups. Which is understandable given that they don't want...at the time they are preparing a three and a half thousand word essay...they don't want to be talking about something completely tangential or irrelevant to what they're concentrating on. So you can understand that. It makes sense. But again providing that the topics vary and not everyone is doing the same thing we can get through a broader range of subjects. But it's just the timing of it I think. When people start to get into assessment mode they narrowly focus on what they've got to do for that component rather than see the whole unit in a broader context.

I: Do you feel there are any barriers to you as a teacher using the online environment more? In terms of time and workload and any other pressures?

S: I think there are dangers in having an unregulated workload in that area. Because unlike classes, where you've got someone coming into the room at the end of the tutorial, there is no such restriction when you're online. But if you don't impose restraints, you'll get people dropping in and dropping out...it's not very efficient because you spend so much time. So I tend to see the online teaching component that assists those who otherwise can't attend classes on campus....and who want to share their challenges, concerns, and get corporate answers to those questions.

I: Do you feel under any pressure from the university – and I guess the university's strategic ambitions about online learning?

S: My concern is about the distinction between the delivery mode and content. Now my concern is that the university has put a lot of time and money, resources and effort into promoting technology that will effectively converge across the university...if not already, then in a very short period of time. What I mean by that is that there is very little opportunity in the long term to have a comparative advantage in the delivery mode of your teaching unit. Because universities will just copy each other and presumably aim for the best of what's available. It's very easy, I guess, to just identify what works well somewhere else and just emulate it in your own university. So yes, for me the delivery mode is important, but advertising the delivery mode as the distinguishing feature of the course belies the much more important area, which is the content. And ultimately it is the content of the unit – that is the quality of the lectures, the tutorials, the readings, the variety of the subject matter, which is determined by the unit chairs, which will determine whether a unit is seen by students as rewarding and fulfilling. Rather than whether they received it on their iPad or their iPhone.

I: How would you say the strategic goals of the university align with the realities of what you have to do to deliver a unit?

S: I suspect they're almost irrelevant. Because the options of how you deliver your unit are not infinitely flexible. And if you're teaching on-campus then they haven't really changed very much, except to replace chalk boards with white boards and PowerPoint presentations. You're still effectively in front of a group of students...in a lecture speaking at them and in a tutorial speaking with them. So the strategic goals might vary from year to year, but I think some of that is related more to the public relations section of the university rather than anything that's changed teaching itself. What has changed obviously is online teaching and how that's developed. But again I see this as everything converging to the point where most universities will be doing pretty much the same thing. And the strategic goals that are published will reflect the fact that you've now got to offer...an online component of units, in addition to the established method of teaching.

I: So when you get presented with a new strategic plan, or "this is going to be our plan for the next two or three years", how do you react as a teacher?

S: How do I react? I'd say I react with indifference. Because in the sixteen or seventeen years that I've been doing some of the units, there hasn't been a huge revolution in the way in which it's been done. I adopted online technologies pretty early on, and I think it's very useful. Particularly in getting to people who can't get on campus, and also getting comparative justice across campuses. But as for waiting for the publication of a new strategic plan to see how that's going to impact on my methods of teaching...I'd say that's negligible.

I: So a lot of the online methods you talked about were kind of potting up lectures, putting up slides, putting up readings and so on. Do you have the opportunity to do anything that's more collaborative online...rather than just transmission of information?

S: Um....

I: You can say "no".

S: I'm trying to think...The suggestion has been made that all assignments are going to be marked online...submitted online and marked online to do away with hard copy. That's going to require a great deal more collaboration, I think, when you've got large enrolment units, because you have multiple markers accessing their allocation of essays. And there'll be a significant variety in the way they feed back to students...

I: What about collaboration between the students themselves? We talked about discussion boards. That's a bit collaborative.

S: It's interesting to see whether the students...I mean in my experience, the better collaborations between students take place outside of the direction and monitoring of the unit chair. So there's a lot of problems, easy problems, that are solved...style guide questions, methods of citation, where assignments are submitted, where they might get readings for each topic. A lot of those are solved by a small number of students raising those issues in online chat rooms....chat boards. And that's a very positive thing because it's a more efficient thing than having the unit chair effectively saying the same thing to individual students when you've got such large numbers. So I always encourage students to use those discussion boards to solve problems. But it does tend to be based around problem solving. So it seems to me these discussion boards are used primarily when students feel they have an issue they can't resolve themselves and they seek to crowd source the answer.

I: What are your experiences....anecdotally...what do you think students want? Do they want more technology? Are they happy with live lectures, live tutorials? Because you know there's a lot of talk about the lecture being dead and we won't have live lectures any more...What's your feedback from students on that?

S: Well I think universities, on the other hand, are pushing this because they are looking for efficiencies and cost savings....and maybe recording these lectures and uploading them will save them some costs. My feeling is...there are a majority of on-campus students who enjoy human contact and don't see it replicated in online modes of teaching. I think the students are like everyone else. There's a huge variety of confidence and skills with the online technology. There's some for example I know who simply download the lecture in both slideshow and audio form onto their device of one form or another and listen to it when they're walking the dog or exercising in a gym. For them, that's the perfect way to keep on top of the subject. But you can't generalise from that experience and say that's going to be the same for all. So you end up proliferating the different ways in which you can deliver the unit as each one person finds the different way that suits them to effectively undertake the course. But there will be a position where I think....there's got to be a point beyond which you can go in terms of providing a variety of ways in which the unit is taught. But having said that, in recent years I've added Twitter and I've added other discussion....that aren't unique to the university...to supplement materials that are used in the course. And even though, you know, you might only get a twenty percent uptake of students who follow you for that particular reason, for that twenty percent it's probably a very meaningful experience.

I: So what sort of stuff do you put on Twitter? How do you use Twitter?

S: I use Twitter effectively as a link-based information service. Articles that come up in the daily press, or media, or things that I become aware of that have been written immediately or have been written in response to events that have only just occurred....Twitter is a very efficient way of drawing attention to analytical coverage of those topics. So if a country's invaded, students are obviously going to have lots of information around. What they don't get of course is guidance as to what's an immediate reference point from which they can take the subject further.

I: The last thing I'm going to ask you is are you aware of what your university's graduate outcomes are? What their desired graduate attributes are?

S: Well I am because they have to go in the unit guide now. An un-generous soul might accuse them of being somewhat like motherhood statements. But that's probably politically incorrect these days. They're aspirational, and no-one would argue that they're desirable objectives for any institution involved in higher learning. But simply outing them there doesn't ensure that anyone's more likely to realise them.

I: So are you conscious of them when you're building your units? Do you try and adhere to them? Or do you think they're unrelated to what you're teaching? Or do they just occur naturally from what you're teaching?

S: I think they flow pretty well naturally from the broad perspectives that you....that you expect from your students in the sort of goals and aims and pursuit of the unit. I see them not as directing your teaching, but as a useful summary of what a student should have expected to have understood, achieved...the sort of skills they should have picked up after undertaking that unit of study. They're pretty general, and in some cases, intangible, so it's not possible to actually check whether they've been achieved. It would be strange if you were teaching something and then had graduate attributes that bore no relation to what you're actually trying to impart.

I: I have thought of one more question. Do you think there are any sort of challenges or difficulties in teaching something like International Relations...how you can most effectively help the students learn?

S: The biggest challenge is to actually encourage a culture of reading. I know from publishers, and I also know from authors, that the reading habits of students and of the general public, have changed considerably in the last fifteen to twenty years. So for example, a well-known author and friend of mine who was used to writing eighty thousand work monographs will find that the content reduced to a Q and A style book will out-sell the traditional monograph several times over. Because it's seen to be much more accessible or easier to digest. Now you might see that to be dumbing the subject down. It probably is up to a point. But there is no doubt...I don't think it's anything to do with eBooks or electronic books or different modalities of reading. It's just reading habits seem to have changed. And there's an expectation both from the university and the student body, I think, that the information should be much more pre-digested, and imparted without students themselves having to do a lot of

extra-curricular reading and research of their own. And that deteriorates the potential for research in the post-graduate area, of course.

(Interviewer thanks subject and concludes the interview.)

Appendix 2: Australian Universities Offering IR/Politics

This information is correct as of 18/02/2013 and was sourced from the websites of the respective universities, most usually those pages dealing with undergraduate student recruitment and/or handbooks. Links to the individual pages are not practical to provide since they will often be date sensitive, rendering them liable to appear as 'broken' as the calendar year moves forward.

Institution	IR/Politics offered as major or degree?	Example of degree or course offering Politics/IR
Australian Catholic University	YES (major)	BA B. Global Studies B. International Development Studies
Australian National University,	YES (degree and major)	B. Politics, Philosophy and Economics BA B. IR Various degrees and majors in regional studies
Central Queensland University	NO (But some individual Politics units within Australian Studies type strands)	
Charles Darwin University	YES (major)	BA
Charles Sturt University	YES (major)	BA
Curtin University	YES (major)	BA
Deakin University	YES (major)	BA

Edith Cowan University	YES (major)	BA B. Counter Terrorism Security and Intelligence
Federation University	YES/NO (Only a combined "History-Politics" major is possible in the BA.)	BA
Flinders University	YES (degree and major)	B. Government and Public Management BA B. Justice and Society B. Media
Griffith University	YES (degree and major)	B. Government and IR B. Journalism B. Asian Studies
James Cook University	YES (major)	BA
La Trobe University	YES (degree and major)	B. Politics, Philosophy and Economics BA B. IR
Macquarie University	YES (major)	BA B. Social Science
Monash University	YES (Major)	BA B. Journalism
Murdoch University	YES (Major)	BA
Queensland University of Technology	NO	
RMIT University	NO (But some individual Politics units offered as "Contextual Studies")	

Southern Cross University	NO	
Swinburne University of Technology	YES (major)	BA B. Social Science
University of Adelaide	YES (major)	BA B. International Studies B. Economics
University of Ballarat	NO	
University of Canberra	YES (degree and major)	B. Politics and International Relations B. Australian Politics and Public Policy
University of Melbourne	YES (Major)	BA
University of New England	YES (Major)	BA B. International Studies
University of New South Wales	YES	BA B. Social Research and Policy
University of Newcastle	YES (major)	BA
University of Queensland	YES (major)	BA
University of South Australia	Yes (degree and major)	B. IR BA
University of Southern Queensland	YES (major)	B. Social Science
University of Sydney	YES (major)	BA B. International and Global Studies
University of Tasmania	YES (major)	BA B. Social Science

University of Technology Sydney	NO	
University of the Sunshine Coast	YES (major)	BA B. International Studies
University of Western Australia	YES (major)	BA
University of Western Sydney	YES (major)	BA B. International Studies
University of Wollongong	YES (major)	BA
Victoria University	YES (major)	BA B. International Studies

Appendix 3: Sample Graduate Attributes Statements of Australian Universities

The following Graduate Attributes (or Graduate Capabilities) statements are taken from the websites of several Australian Universities. As can be seen, the aspirations of the universities for their graduates are broadly similar, though the level of detail they provide varies.

Curtin University¹¹⁰

Curtin graduates demonstrate evidence, as appropriate to their disciplines, that they can:

- 1) Apply discipline knowledge, principles and concepts;
- 2) Think critically, creatively and reflectively;
- 3) Access, evaluate and synthesise information;
- 4) Communicate effectively;
- 5) Use technologies appropriately;
- 6) Utilise lifelong learning skills;
- 7) Recognise and apply international perspectives;
- 8) Demonstrate intercultural awareness and understanding; and
- 9) Apply professional skills.

In addition, graduates of research degrees demonstrate the ability to create knowledge through research.

¹¹⁰ Available at http://otl.curtin.edu.au/learning_teaching/graduate_capabilities.cfm (Accessed 05/12/2012.)

All Deakin programs will encourage students to develop attitudes of intellectual curiosity and motivation for independent thinking, autonomous learning and reflective professional and personal practice, and a commitment to ethical and sustainable practices. Appropriate to its level of study and discipline composition, each program will be designed to ensure that students develop their knowledge and understanding as well as a range of generic skills. These are described below.

Knowledge and understanding

- understanding of, and the ability to work with, a systematic body of knowledge, appropriate to the focus and level of the qualification based on the highest standards of scholarship and research
- And where research is undertaken:
- ability to initiate and formulate viable and relevant research questions
- contribution to new knowledge, or an original interpretation and application of existing knowledge
- understanding of the social, economic and cultural impact and application of their research, and its academic relevance and value
- understanding of the professional, social, economic and cultural contexts of the discipline and related fields
- awareness of ethical issues, social responsibility and cultural diversity
- awareness of environmental sustainability issues and the contribution of the field of study to address such issues
- understanding and appreciation of international perspectives in a global environment.

¹¹¹ Available from <http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/handbooks/2012/introduction/attributes-deakin-graduate.php> (Accessed 22/08/2013.)

Skills

- critical analysis, problem solving, and creative thinking
- identifying, gathering, evaluating and using information
- communicating effectively and appropriately in a range of contexts
- developing, planning and managing independent work
- working effectively as part of a team
- effectively using information and communication technologies
- applying knowledge learned in the program to new situations.

Flinders University¹¹²

Flinders University's Bachelor degree programs aim to produce graduates:

- Who are knowledgeable

We expect our students to develop an extensive and well-founded knowledge in their field of study. This includes the ability to acquire and understand, using current technologies and effective learning strategies, information and ideas that underpin this knowledge.

- Who can apply their knowledge

We expect our students to develop the ability to use their knowledge to plan, to analyse, to think critically, logically and creatively, to reflect upon and evaluate ideas, options, and potential solutions to problems, and to make and implement decisions.

- Who can communicate effectively

¹¹² Available from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/graduate-qualities/descriptions.cfm> (Accessed 26/02/14.)

We expect our students to learn to convey clearly and fluently their knowledge, understanding, reasoning and decisions. We expect them to be able to do this in written and spoken form, as appropriate to the particular audience and setting. We also expect them to listen well and to respond constructively.

- Who can work independently

We expect our students to take responsibility for, and become self-reliant in, their learning and their work. This includes organising their activities, prioritising their tasks and managing their time productively. It also includes recognising that the world is dynamic and changing, and therefore being prepared to take responsibility in the years ahead to review, update and adapt their knowledge and skills.

- Who are collaborative

We expect our students to interact effectively and properly with others in a variety of settings. This includes, where appropriate, working cooperatively and productively within a group or team towards a common outcome. It also includes showing respect to others and to their ideas and perspectives, and learning to negotiate and resolve conflict or difficulties constructively.

- Who value ethical behaviour

We expect our students to act with integrity in all matters. We also expect them to become aware of the ethical complexities and implications of various issues that can arise within their field of study, and to appreciate the need for themselves and others to act ethically and to learn how to arrive at ethical solutions to problems.

- Who connect across boundaries

We expect our students to engage positively with people and ideas beyond the limits of their own geographical, disciplinary, social, cultural or other boundaries, and to span the boundary between the world of study and the world of work.

Monash University¹¹³

Monash University prepares its graduates to be:

1) responsible and effective global citizens who:

- a) engage in an internationalised world
- b) exhibit cross-cultural competence
- c) demonstrate ethical values

2) critical and creative scholars who:

- a) produce innovative solutions to problems
- b) apply research skills to a range of challenges
- c) communicate perceptively and effectively

University of New South Wales¹¹⁴

UNSW graduates will be -

Scholars who are:

- understanding of their discipline in its interdisciplinary context
- capable of independent and collaborative enquiry
- rigorous in their analysis, critique, and reflection
- able to apply their knowledge and skills to solving problems
- ethical practitioners
- capable of effective communication

¹¹³ Available from <http://www.policy.monash.edu/policy-bank/academic/education/management/monash-graduate-attributes-policy.html> (Accessed 05/12/2012.)

¹¹⁴ Available from <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/GraduateAttributes.html> (Accessed 05/12/2012.)

- information literate
- digitally literate

Leaders who are:

- enterprising, innovative and creative
- capable of initiating as well as embracing change
- collaborative team workers

Professionals who are:

- capable of independent, self-directed practice
- capable of lifelong learning
- capable of operating within an agreed Code of Practice

Global Citizens who are:

- capable of applying their discipline in local, national and international contexts
- culturally aware and capable of respecting diversity and acting in socially just/responsible ways
- capable of environmental responsibility

University of Sydney¹¹⁵

4.1 Graduates of the University of Sydney should have a stance towards knowledge, the world, and themselves that sets them apart from other graduates in their lives and work.

4.1.1 Scholarship: An attitude or stance towards knowledge: Graduates of the University will have a scholarly attitude to knowledge and understanding. As Scholars, the University's graduates will be leaders in the production of new knowledge and understanding through

¹¹⁵ Available from <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/graduateAttributes/unipolicy.pdf> (Accessed 05.12.2012.)

inquiry, critique and synthesis. They will be able to apply their knowledge to solve consequential problems and communicate their knowledge confidently and effectively.

4.1.2 Global Citizenship: An attitude or stance towards the world: Graduates of the University will be Global Citizens, who will aspire to contribute to society in a full and meaningful way through their roles as members of local, national and global communities.

4.1.3 Lifelong Learning: An attitude or stance towards themselves: Graduates of the University will be Lifelong Learners committed to and capable of continuous learning and reflection for the purpose of furthering their understanding of the world and their place in it.

4.2 Each of these overarching attributes can be understood as a combination of five overlapping clusters of skills and abilities developed in disciplinary contexts.

4.2.1 Research and Inquiry: Graduates of the University will be able to create new knowledge and understanding through the process of research and inquiry.

4.2.2 Information Literacy: Graduates of the University will be able to use information effectively in a range of contexts.

4.2.3 Personal and Intellectual Autonomy: Graduates of the University will be able to work independently and sustainably, in a way that is informed by openness, curiosity and a desire to meet new challenges.

4.2.4 Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding: Graduates of the University will hold personal values and beliefs consistent with their role as responsible members of local, national, international and professional communities.

4.2.5 Communication: Graduates of the University will use and value communication as a tool for negotiating and creating new understanding, interacting with others, and furthering their own learning.

4.3 The particular abilities and skills that comprise each of these five clusters of abilities might be interpreted differently in different disciplines or domains. Each faculty of the university is encouraged to develop a contextualised statement of the abilities that comprise these five clusters. An example of the way these attribute clusters might be interpreted by a discipline or faculty is provided below.

4.3.1 Research and Inquiry: Graduates of the University will be able to create new knowledge and understanding through the process of research and inquiry. This might be understood in terms of the following:

- be able to identify, define and analyse problems and identify or create processes to solve them
- be able to exercise critical judgement and critical thinking in creating new understanding
- be creative and imaginative thinkers
- have an informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values and boundaries of their discipline and the capacity to question these
- be able to critically evaluate existing understandings and recognise the limitations of their own knowledge

4.3.2 Information Literacy: Graduates of the University will be able to use information effectively in a range of contexts. This might be understood as:

- recognise the extent of information needed
- locate needed information efficiently and effectively
- evaluate information and its sources
- use information in critical thinking and problem solving contexts to construct knowledge
- understand economic, legal, social and cultural issues in the use of information
- use contemporary media and technology to access and manage information

4.3.3 Personal and Intellectual Autonomy: Graduates of the University will be able to work independently and sustainably, in a way that is informed by openness, curiosity and a desire to meet new challenges. This might be understood in terms of the following:

- be intellectually curious and able to sustain intellectual interest
- be capable of rigorous and independent thinking

- be open to new ideas, methods and ways of thinking
- be able to respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts
- be able to identify processes and strategies to learn and meet new challenges
- be independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning, and are committed to continuous reflection, self-evaluation and self improvement
- have a personal vision and goals and be able to work towards these in a sustainable way

4.3.4 Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding: Graduates of the University will hold personal values and beliefs consistent with their role as responsible members of local, national, international and professional communities. For example:

- strive for truth, honesty, integrity, open-mindedness, fairness and generosity
- acknowledge their personal responsibility for their own value judgements and behaviour
- understand and accept social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities
- be committed to social justice and principles of sustainability
- have an appreciation of and respect for diversity
- hold a perspective that acknowledges local, national and international concerns
- work with, manage, and lead others in ways that value their diversity and equality and that facilitate their contribution to the organisation and the wider community

4.3.5 Communication: Graduates of the University will use and value communication as a tool for negotiating and creating new understanding, interacting with others, and furthering their own learning. This might be understood in terms of the following:

- use oral, written, and visual communication to further their own learning
- make effective use of oral, written and visual means to critique, negotiate, create and communicate understanding

- use communication as a tool for interacting and relating to others

Appendix 4: Sample Discipline Standards for International Relations and Politics

Australian Political Studies Association

Available at

http://www.auspsa.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=112&Itemid=67

Accessed 06/12/0012

Political Science discipline standards statement

The Political Science discipline standards statement is structured as follows.

- Section One describes the nature and extent of the discipline.
- Section Two provides a brief summary of the career outcomes for which a Bachelor degree graduate with a major in Political Science would be equipped.
- Section Three sets out a detailed description of the threshold (core/minimum) skills, knowledge and capabilities of a Bachelor degree graduate with a major in Political Science.

1. Nature and extent of Political Science

Political Science is the study of political behaviour, governance and power and how these are shaped by institutional settings, and by the ideas, interests and resources of political actors. It is about the authoritative allocation of resources and values, and the negotiation of conflict and difference. Political phenomena happen at all levels: personal, local, sub-national, national, regional, and global. Politics is about who gets what, when, how and why.

As a sub-discipline of Political Science, International Relations shares similar concerns but its focus is on politics at the transnational or global level. Other important sub-disciplines of Political Science include comparative politics, public policy, political economy, and international political economy. Political science and its sub-disciplines are informed by political theory.

Reflecting the breadth of the discipline, Political Science in Australia may be taught in organisational units with a variety of names, including Government, Politics, Political Studies or Political Science. In some cases, Political Science is taught in organisational units of International Relations. Different names may reflect different emphases in programs.

The discipline of Political Science embraces a diversity of approaches and different theoretical and analytical traditions. It draws on a broad range of research methods and strategies to investigate, analyse and interpret political phenomena. The qualitative methodologies practised in the discipline include textual analysis, process tracing, historical

analysis, discourse analysis, structured and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, ethnographic techniques, action research, and case study strategies. The quantitative methodologies employed include surveys and opinion polls, statistical analysis, and various forms of modelling.

2. Graduate careers

An undergraduate major in political science develops the ability of students to understand, investigate, and analyse political phenomena. The study of Political Science equips students with transferable generic skills in:

- Political & Social Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Research Methods
- Communication (oral and written)
- Problem-Solving
- Critical Thinking
- The ability to work independently and in teams

The study of Political Science will equip students with the transferable skills for careers in areas such as:

- Foreign & international affairs
- Secondary and Tertiary education
- Intelligence and security
- Journalism & the media
- Government organisations (local, state, national & international)
- Civil society organisations
- Business
- Policy advocacy
- Policy research
- Policy design & analysis
- Political and social research
- Political advisors
- Politics
- Public communication
- Public relations & lobbying
- Public service
- Speech-writing

3. Threshold Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of a Bachelor degree with a major in Political Science, graduates will be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature and significance of politics and governance

- 2) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of differences in political systems and the contexts in which they operate
- 3) Apply concepts and theories used in the study of political science to the analysis of interests, ideas, institutions and political behaviour
- 4) Critically evaluate different interpretations of political phenomena
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of the different research methods used to investigate political phenomena
- 6) Demonstrate the capacity to use the different research methods used to investigate political phenomena
- 7) Demonstrate the capacity to develop evidence-based argument and evaluation
- 8) Gather, organise and use evidence from a variety of secondary and primary sources
- 9) Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems
- 10) Communicate effectively in oral and written work
- 11) Recognise the importance of ethical standards of conduct in the research and analysis of politics

Deakin University School of Humanities and Social Sciences

(From Faculty of Arts and Education, School of Humanities and Social Sciences Discipline Standards Statements, 2013)

International Relations Discipline Standards

International Relations (IR) is the study of international, regional, transnational and global political dynamics. IR is related to the discipline of Political Science and is concerned with the study of political behaviour, governance and power. It is concerned with the political interaction of interests, institutions and ideas in order to understand the practical negotiation of conflict, security and legitimacy in world politics. The discipline of IR encompasses the study of policy related dynamics such as diplomacy, foreign policy and global governance as well as theoretical dynamics relating to questions of order, justice and resistance in world politics. It also considers questions relating to the changing nature of world politics evident in emerging forms of regionalism and globalisation.

The IR discipline at Deakin University has developed undergraduate and post graduate programs that address a wide range of key problems, trends and developments in world politics. At an undergraduate level, we have first year units that introduce students to IR and examine Australia's position in the world. We also have units that examine the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions, foreign policy of the United States, China's position in the world, security, human rights, the contemporary politics of globalisation, global governance and IR theory. At a postgraduate level, we offer four specialisations within the Master of Arts

(International Relations) program: Asia-Pacific regional politics, conflict and security, human rights and international law, and International Political Economy and global governance. These topics and the wider academic skills taught within IR units, prepare students to think critically and act effectively as professionals and citizens in an increasingly complex and globalised world.

Deakin's programs in International Relations develop the ability of students to understand, investigate, and analyse global political phenomena. The study of International Relations will equip students with the transferable skills for careers in areas such as:

- Foreign affairs and diplomacy
- Higher education
- International affairs
- International organisations
- Journalism
- Local government
- Media
- Non-governmental & community organisations
- Policy advocacy
- Policy research
- Political and social research
- Politics
- Public communication
- Public policy design & analysis
- Public relations & lobbying
- Public service
- Social service
- Speech-writing
- Teaching

Threshold Learning Outcomes

Studying International Relations should enable students to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature and significance of international, regional, transnational and global political dynamics.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of differences in political systems and the contexts in which they operate.
3. Apply concepts and theories used in the study of IR to the analysis of interests, policy, ideas, identity, institutions and behaviour.
4. Evaluate different interpretations of political phenomena.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of the different research methods used to investigate political phenomena.
6. Demonstrate the capacity to use the different research methods used to investigate political phenomena.

7. Demonstrate the capacity to develop evidence-based argument and evaluation.
8. Gather, organise and use evidence from a variety of secondary and primary sources.
9. Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems.
10. Communicate effectively in oral and written work.
11. Recognise the importance of ethical standards of conduct in the research and analysis of politics.

Graduate Learning outcomes

1. Knowledge in the discipline

(Ensuring that students develop systematic knowledge and understanding of their discipline or chosen profession appropriate to their level of study)

All IR units develop students' ability to acquire knowledge of the history of world politics and the applicability of IR theory and related concepts to practical issues and problems in world politics. IR capstone units relate to key issues in international policymaking and IR theory.

2. Communication

(Using oral, written and interpersonal communication to inform, motivate and effect change)

IR units require students to submit essays reflecting a high level of development in written communication skills. Oral and interpersonal communication skills are encouraged through discussions held within tutorials.

3. Digital literacy

(Using technologies to find, use and disseminate information)

IR units require students to carry out independent research within the library and the internet, using these catalogues for books and online journals as well as diverse data-bases and other internet sources such as the websites of government departments, International Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations.

4. Critical thinking

(Evaluating information using critical and analytical thinking and judgment)

Assessment tasks in all units require students to develop coherent and logically structured arguments. IR students are required to substantiate their arguments by reference to appropriate research, evident in the use of theoretical paradigms, relevant concepts and various forms of evidence.

5. Problem solving

(Creating solutions to authentic (real world and ill-defined) problems)

The assessment regimes of IR units develop the capacity of students to apply IR paradigms to practical problems in world politics. Oral and interpersonal communication skills are also framed with respect to contemporary problems and issues in world politics.

6. Self-management

(Working and learning independently, and taking responsibility for personal actions)
By observing clear timeframes in the submission of essays and exams, students are made aware of the need to develop independence in thought and action.

7. Teamwork

(Working and learning with others from different disciplines and backgrounds)
Small group work in tutorial sessions allows students the opportunity to discuss ideas and to appreciate the diversity of worldviews and experiences of their peers.

8. Global citizenship (Engaging ethically and productively in the professional context and with diverse communities and cultures in a global context)

IR units develop the capacity of students to understand the nature of moral and political problems in world politics and the various ways individuals and IR related professions can influence the direction of world politics. This involves recognising the way that people from different cultures operate within an increasingly complex and globalised world.

Politics and Policy Studies Discipline Standards

This statement describes the nature and characteristics of Politics and Policy Studies as it is taught at Deakin University. It summarises the general expectations about standards for the award of a degree and the attributes and capabilities of degree holders.

The statement fulfils two purposes. First, it specifies the external benchmark against which our teaching can reasonably be judged by anyone. It specifies how Deakin University's standards in this discipline relate to the more general standards decreed by the Australian Political Studies Association, APSA, on 7th April 2012. Second, it provides both employers and prospective, current, and former students with information about the nature and standards of awards in Politics and Policy Studies at Deakin.

1. Nature and extent of Politics and Policy Studies at Deakin

“Political Science is the study of political behaviour, governance and power and how these are shaped by institutional settings, and by the ideas, interests and resources of political actors. It is about the authoritative allocation of resources and values, and the negotiation of conflict and difference. Political phenomena happen at all levels: personal, local, sub-national, national, regional, and global. Politics is about who gets what, when, how and why.” (APSA Statement 2011)

Where the APSA statement covers International Relations as a sub-discipline of Political Science, at Deakin International Relations is taught within a separate undergraduate major and a separate Masters programme. We do, however, collaborate over the teaching of a common Politics, Policy Studies, and International Relations Honours programme.

The teaching of Politics and Policy Studies at Deakin includes a clear emphasis upon the sub-disciplines of comparative politics and public policy. Political sociology and political economy are mentioned in some of our units but they are not prominent features of our

teaching at any level. Political theory plays a prominent part in units on ideology, democracy and citizenship, leadership, and governance. The name of our undergraduate major, Politics and Policy Studies, and the name of our Masters in Politics and Policy reflect these emphases in our teaching.

The discipline of Political Science does embrace a diverse range of approaches, theories, and analytical traditions, and it does also draw upon a wide range of research methods to investigate, analyse, and interpret political phenomena. At Deakin, our teaching focuses on qualitative methodologies including textual analysis, process tracing, historical analysis, discursive analysis, ethnographic techniques, action research, and case studies. Our teaching mentions quantitative methodologies but we make little use of them and offer no training in these methods.

2. Graduate Careers

An undergraduate major in political science develops the ability of students to understand, investigate, and analyse political phenomena. The study of Political Science equips students with transferable generic skills in:

- Political and social analysis
- Policy analysis
- Research methods
- Communication (oral and written)
- Problem-solving
- Critical thinking
- The ability to work in independently and in teams

The study of Political Science will equip students with the transferable skills for careers in areas such as:

- Foreign and international affairs
- Secondary and tertiary education
- Intelligence and security
- Journalism and the media
- Government organisations (local, state, national & international)
- Civil society organisations
- Business
- Policy advocacy
- Policy research
- Policy design and analysis
- Political and social research
- Political advisors
- Politics
- Public communication
- Public relations and lobbying

- Public service
- Speech-writing

3. Learning outcomes

3.1 Upon completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Politics and Policy Studies at Deakin University, graduates will be able to:

- 3.1.1 Describe and illustrate the nature and significance of politics and governance
- 3.1.2 Describe and illustrate differences in political systems and the contexts in which they operate
- 3.1.3 Recognise the way concepts and theories are used in the study of political science to the analysis of interests, ideas, institutions and political behaviour
- 3.1.4 Evaluate different interpretations of political phenomena
- 3.1.5 Describe and illustrate different research methods used to investigate political phenomena
- 3.1.6 Describe and illustrate different research methods used to investigate political phenomena
- 3.1.7 Recognise the ways evidence-based argument and evaluation are used within political institutions and by political actors
- 3.1.8 Describe and illustrate ways to gather, organise and use evidence from a variety of secondary and primary sources
- 3.1.9 Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems
- 3.1.10 Communicate effectively in oral and written work

3.2 Upon completion of a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree with a major in Politics and Policy Studies at Deakin University, graduates will be able to:

- 3.2.1 Demonstrate a familiarity and engage critically with the nature and significance of politics and governance
- 3.2.2 Demonstrate a familiarity and engage critically with differences in political systems and the contexts in which they operate
- 3.2.3 Apply concepts and theories used in the study of political science to the analysis of interests, ideas, institutions and political behaviour
- 3.2.4 Critically evaluate different interpretations of political phenomena
- 3.2.5 Demonstrate knowledge of the different research methods used to investigate political phenomena
- 3.2.6 Demonstrate the capacity to use the different research methods used to investigate political phenomena
- 3.2.7 Demonstrate the capacity to develop evidence-based argument and evaluation
- 3.2.8 Gather, organise and use evidence from a variety of secondary and primary sources
- 3.2.9 Identify, investigate, analyse, formulate and advocate solutions to problems
- 3.2.10 Communicate effectively in oral and written work

(Outcome standards pertaining to various post-graduate qualifications here redacted for sake of relevance to this thesis.)

Appendix 5: IR/Politics assignments at Australian universities

Institution	Name of unit	Assessment tasks and weight
Australian Catholic University	POLS201 Middle Eastern Politics	Assessments not given in handbook
Australian National University,	POLS2031 Politics in the Middle East	3,000 word (w) essay 50% Two-hour examination or 2,000w essay 40% Tutorial attendance and participation 10%.
Charles Darwin University	Comparative Politics Of South East Asia (POL221)	Assessments not given in handbook
Charles Sturt University	POL213 Australian Government And Politics	Assessments not given in handbook
Curtin University	312572 Conflict and Diplomacy in the Asia Pacific	Assessments not given in handbook
Deakin University	AIE255 - Middle East Politics	Tutorial presentation and active participation 20% Middle East Politics Simulation <u>or</u> Essay 3000w 50% Online examination 30%.
Edith Cowan University	International Relations in the South East Asian Region	Tutorial 20% Major Research Essay 5,000w 50% Examination 30%
Flinders University	INTR2008 Africa on a Global Stage	Assessments not given in handbook

Institution	Name of unit	Assessment tasks and weight
Griffith University	2012GIR - Comparative European Politics	Assessments not given in handbook
James Cook University	PL2007 - The European Union	Assessments not given in handbook
La Trobe University	POL2IME International Relations of the Middle East	2,000-word essay 50% Take-home exam (\approx 1500w) 35% 20 minute Tutorial presentation (\approx 500w) 15%
Macquarie University	Middle-East Politics - POL278	Assessments not given in handbook
Monash University	ATS2698 - Middle east politics: Continuity, change, conflict and co-operation	Research Essay 3000w 50% 2-hour exam 1500w 40% Participation 10%
Murdoch University	POL212 The Rise of Greater China	Assessments not given in handbook
Swinburne University of Technology	HAP277 Politics of the Pacific	Short Essay 30% Term Paper 40% Group work country profile exercise 20% Tutorial attendance and participation 10%

Institution	Name of unit	Assessment tasks and weight
University of Adelaide	POLI 2120 - Conflict and Crisis in the Middle East	1800-2400w research project 40% 900-1200w minor essay 20% Group exercise 20% Class test 10% Tutorial participation 10%
University of Canberra	No equivalent 2 nd year unit found	
University of Melbourne	ISLM20015 Crisis Zone: Middle Eastern Politics	2,500w essay 35% 2-hour written exam 55% Continuous tutorial participation 10%.
University of New England	PAIS380 Dragon in Chains? Contemporary Chinese Politics	Assessments not given in handbook. However, unit entry noted that there is no UNE invigilated exam.
University of New South Wales	ARTS2810 International Relations in East Asia -	Assessments not given in handbook.
University of Newcastle	HIST2210 Australian Foreign Relations: Australia and Asia	Class test 15 % One to three written assignments "Which might include minor or major essays, tutorial papers, book reviews, essay proposals, bibliographies or other similar exercises" totalling 1,000 - 3,000w 75%, Class participation demonstrating preparation and involvement 10%

Institution	Name of unit	Assessment tasks and weight
University of Queensland	POLS2201 Australian Foreign Policy	Tutorial Participation 10% Tutorial Exercise: Policy Recommendation 1000w 20% Major Essay 2500w 40% 2-hour Final Exam 30%
University of South Australia	POLI 2020 Globalisation and Asian Regionalism	Online reflection task 500w 15% Seminar topic presentation or Case study/simulation 1500w 40% Research Essay 2500w 45%
University of Southern Queensland	INR2002 Contemporary Issues in Asia	Assignment 1 1000w 20% Assignment 2 2000w 30% Participation in tutorials 10% 2-hour written exam 40%
University of Sydney	GOVT2445 American Politics and Foreign Policy	1x2000w essay 40% 10x30w tutorial quizzes 10% 2-hour exam 40% Tutorial participation 10%
University of Tasmania	HPP203 Australian Politics	500w paper 10% Tutorial participation 10% 2000w major paper 30% 2-hour final exam 50%

Institution	Name of unit	Assessment tasks and weight
University of the Sunshine Coast	INT245 Politics of the USA	Tutorial participation 10% Symposium paper 1000w 20% Tutorial paper and presentation 1000w + 10 mins 30% Major essay 1500w 40%
University of Western Australia	POLS2216 Politics in the USA	Formal debate 10% Reading and analytical assignments 20% Research essay 20% Final exam 50%
University of Western Sydney	100872 International Politics of North Asia	Assessments not given in handbook
University of Wollongong	POL216 Politics in the USA	Minor Essay 500w 10% Major Essay 2000w 40% Journal 1000w 20% Exam 30%
Victoria University	AAH2014 The Making of the Modern Middle East	Short essay 10% Class paper and essay 1000w 40% Research essay 2000w 50%.

Compiled from university handbooks accessed throughout June 2013.

