

# Active Learning Initiative: How to 'activate' your virtual classroom in BlackBoard Collaborate Ultra and support resources for teaching an Active Learning Course

## Situation

The Active Learning Initiative was established to address some of the challenges faced by academics in the use and adoption of active learning spaces available on UNSW's Kensington campus.

These include:

- Lack of awareness on latest trends in teaching and learning and exemplars from within UNSW on effective active learning techniques in the classroom
- Guides, examples, information, evidence, and academic evaluations on how these spaces are improving learning outcomes, student satisfaction and the Scientia Educational experience \

## Task

The Active Learning Initiative works with academics to support the adoption and practice of an active learning pedagogy by forming links and leveraging from other initiatives within the UNSW teaching community like summative peer review, educational-focused positions, and academic development.

The need for support and leveraging from each other within the UNSW's teaching cohort has become more prevalent as the University pivoted quickly and adeptly to teaching remotely in recent months. Now more than ever the student learning experience and support to those teaching online is vital.

## Action

A number of resources and tools have been developed under the Active Learning Initiative which support active learning to take place at any time and in any place. In addition, the '**Let's Meet: Active Learning**' series was launched, creating a platform for a 'virtual' meeting place where discussion on ideas, experiences, learnings, and exemplars are encouraged to be shared.

The workshop '**Active Learning Initiative: How to 'activate' your virtual classroom in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and support resources for teaching an Active Learning course**' provided an insight on the types of tools available within BlackBoard Collaborate Ultra and suggestions on how they can be used to 'activate' the virtual classroom and engage students during a lecture, tutorial, seminar etc...

For more information about this resources, contact Joanna Kartheritsas: [j.kartheritsas@unsw.edu.au](mailto:j.kartheritsas@unsw.edu.au).  
Joanna is a member of the Scaling Education Community of Practice (CoP). Click [here](#) to find out more about the CoP  
Or contact the EF Team at [ef@unsw.edu.au](mailto:ef@unsw.edu.au).

A 'simulated' activity was run in the presentation using the 'Breakout Groups' tool enabling attendees (mostly members of UNSW's teaching cohort) to experience first-hand what it would be like for students participating in an online group discussion and presentation to their peers.

The activity included a set of questions which attendees need to discuss responses with their fellow group members as well as guiding instructions on how these responses should be presented back to all attendees using BlackBoard Collaborate Ultra's whiteboard tool.

Information on Active Learning Tools and Resources as well as Support available was shared and discussed.

## Result

The workshop provided valuable insights for attendees who were preparing to teach remotely, in using BlackBoard Collaborate Ultra's tools as a way of engaging students in a virtual classroom and thereby enhancing their learning experience.

Attendees were able to share and collaborate on ideas, learnings, experiences and gain awareness of the Active Learning resources, tools, and support through the Active Learning Initiative.

The Active Learning Initiative continues to collaborate with and support UNSW's teaching community through innovation of the latest trends in teaching and learning and exemplars from within UNSW on innovative and effective active learning techniques.

## Further Information

For more on Active Learning Resources, Tools and Support, please visit

<https://www.learningenvironments.unsw.edu.au/resources/active-learning>

Or contact Joanna Kartheritsas [j.kartheritsas@unsw.edu.au](mailto:j.kartheritsas@unsw.edu.au).

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