

Synchronous teaching spaces, distributed learning places: Staff and student perspectives of immersive video-linked classes

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Massey University has invested significantly in the implementation of video-linked teaching (VLT) facilities over the last few years with the development of two purpose-built rooms at two of its three campuses. It is intended that these rooms are used to establish a strong presence and sense of connection between teachers and students located at each site, offering the ability to synchronously teach two (or more) physically distanced classes. The VLT pilot project represented the first phase of providing these innovative learning spaces for flexible, interactive, collaborative video-linked teaching. The experimental phase of the pilot took place in Semester One, 2012, while the rooms were still under development. During this period, several academic staff volunteered to teach their classes in the VLT rooms in conjunction with their colleague(s) teaching the same course at another campus. This paper shares the experiences of both staff and students involved and identifies a number of affordances and challenges associated with using the VLT rooms from technical, physical, pedagogical and ongoing professional development perspectives. Findings suggest there has been some initial success in bridging the physical space between groups of students and staff across campuses. To this end, the results of this research are helping to inform the next phase of VLT implementation at Massey University.