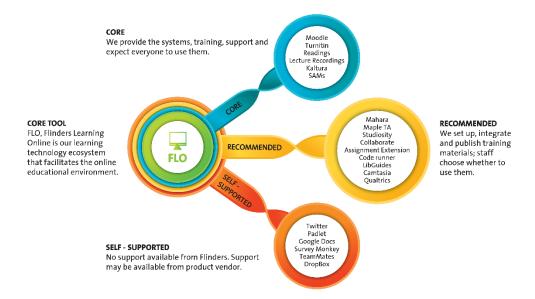# Tip sheet – Using technology in your teaching

Technology has become a ubiquitous part of teaching and in modern classrooms its application is achieved using different tools. A tool is either a full software application with a distinct purpose (e.g., MS Word), or parts of a software system that can be utilised for a specific purpose (e.g., a wiki within FLO). Common tools used within learning environments will range from something as large and complex as a learning management system (e.g., Moodle) to something freely available and installed on most up to date computers and phones to view PDF files (e.g., Adobe Acrobat). Other popular tools include software for editing video recordings (e.g., Camtasia) and for streaming videos so we are not hampered by their size (e.g., Kaltura).

Providing adequate support for such a vast array of tools serving a multitude of purposes is challenging and organisations such as Flinders therefore select and limit which tools, they can support, ensuring consistency and cost-effectiveness. Selecting different tools for specific purposes, allows everyone to be better supported and ensures the selected products meet the needs of staff and students. As such, Flinders University has identified a range of tools that are approved and supported.

Learning technologies approved and supported by Flinders

Flinders University uses Flinders Learning Online (FLO) as the central learning and teaching platform. FLO provides a range of tools which have been grouped into three categories: core, recommended and self-supported (FLO ecosystem, FLO Staff Support (FLOSS)). The figure below shows the current tools within each category (April 2021), but as technologies evolve and educational needs change, regular reviews and updates are made. This enables Flinders University to stay current and manage instances where alternatives may need to be utilised, for example offshore students during COVID. If you have any questions about the FLO environment and available tools please contact your local Learning Designer.

Core tools are fully integrated and supported within the FLO environment and every topic across the University is expected to use them, where required. The use of these core tools over other tools performing the same or a similar function will ensure accessibility and equity of access, security, consistency of the student experience and alignment with education strategy.

Recommended tools are also integrated within FLO and training materials are provided but teaching staff can choose whether to incorporate these. All other tools fall into the self-supported category; these are non-FLO tools, third-party software or publisher produced software. These are the tools we cannot fully control, many have not been fully tested and their security has not been checked within our environment.

Learning technologies not supported by Flinders

Some third-party tools have been approved and checked by the university. You may be aware of instances across the University where software from publishers is in use, for example, Pearson tools such as Mastering A&P or Learning Catalytics. These non-FLO tools are supported by the relevant publishers at a cost to the University. Prior to their use they are reviewed by Flinders to ensure they comply with all legal, security and risk checks and pose no harm to existing systems or personnel. Licensing costs for these types of resources are generally high, therefore caps are applied to meet budget constraints and their usage is monitored to ensure they are, and remain, the most effective solution for students.

Other non-FLO tools, which fall into the self-supported category, are things like Poll Everywhere, Padlet or Survey Monkey. Online Learning & Teaching (OLT) are unable to access settings and student submissions for tools in the self-supported category. When we have no access to student data or the interface you use, we are unable to troubleshoot, and problem solve arising issues. This can leave both you and your students vulnerable to viruses, accessible by external players or other compromising situations.

Many of these self-supported tools incur a cost, but their purchase must be purely voluntary for your students. This renders such items unsuitable for assessments, and possibly other activities too as it is often impossible to provide alternatives for students unwilling or unable to purchase the chosen tool.

How do I choose an appropriate tool?

When looking for a tool to meet your needs, we recommend starting with core tools and if necessary, the recommended tools. Assessment tasks should always use a core or recommended tool. This will ensure your topic is accessible and provides equity for all students. Using these tools also complies with organisational security requirements and provides a consistent and familiar environment for your students and teaching team. Last, but not least, these tools will allow your topic to align with education strategy.

To prepare your students for their assessment, it is strongly recommended they have a chance to practice a skill before they are assessed on it. This approach should also extend to the tools used for an assessment task. It is important to create activities using the same tools you have used for assessments so students can build familiarity and understand how the tool works before they complete an assessment. Pay attention when using less frequently used tools, for example the self and peer assessment tool. Familiarisation could take place in your topic or a previous topic. Depending on the course you may not know what previous study your students have completed, so check in with them to determine their level of familiarity with your tool of choice. Liaising with your colleagues to work together on tool selection can ensure you create variety and eliminate constant repetition across a course.

On occasion, core and recommended tools will not meet the needs of the topic. Some areas of study make it necessary for students to gain exposure to specialist software they will later be expected to use in industry. If your topic requires specialised software, it is vital you consider all factors that could impact your students – for example cost, security, privacy – and that they are aware of the requirement prior to enrolment (as per the Higher Education Standards).

If you are contemplating using a self-supported tool in your topic for any reason, there are some important questions you should answer before proceeding. The list of questions in Appendix 1 is not exhaustive but should allow you to make an informed decision. It is vital you comply with appropriate legislation, for example Higher Education Support Act 2003 and Higher Education Provider Guidelines 2012 and have a plan to address anything that is a potential issue if you decide to use self-supported tools before the tool is introduced to your topic.

Choosing the right tool for the job

If you are not familiar with the full functionality of the core tools on offer, there's information in the FLO Staff Support (FLOSS) pages that will help:
- Tool options – communicate with students
- Tool options – quiz and survey
- Tool options – resources

You may be pleasantly surprised by the possibilities available and the creativity and ingenuity many of your colleagues have shown using these core tools. It is also worth considering if your activity could be adapted slightly to utilise a supported tool and meet the same learning outcomes. When introducing a tool to your topic it's a great idea to use it yourself first, in the way you expect your students to use it, so that you can:
- Test to see that it does what you need it to do.
- Find out what (else) is possible using this tool.
- Write more concise and meaningful instructions for your students.
- Know how to appropriately support your students use of the tool, including how long it takes and what things to look out for.
- Provide your students with an example you have created.

When creating engaging content for your topic, use the tool selection matrix. The matrix introduces eight different ways to create engaging content and suggests a range of approved and supported tools you can use to create and/or display content.

As you can see, choosing an appropriate tool is not always as straightforward as it would first appear however, following the tips above and familiarising yourself with the guidelines for digital learning will help ensure the technology used within your topic is equitable and sustainable. If you would like to discuss the technology to use within your topic you can contact the Learning Designer from your college.

Adding tools to the approved and supported list

New tools are considered and added on a regular basis. This requires a rigorous testing and evaluation process, including legal and security and risk reviews. If you have a tool that you would like considered, please speak with the Learning Designer from your college.

Appendix 1

What will the tool be used for?

- Is it for an assignment or to practice a skill that is being taught within the topic? Only core and recommended tools should be used for assessment tasks.
- What if the tool becomes unavailable? Will your students still be able to meet the topic learning outcomes?
- Are your students working in groups and will the tool allow for this? If not, how will you manage this task with your students?
- Are you asking students to submit work created within the tool to FLO? Is this possible? Can their work be extracted from the tool?
- If it is for an assignment, how will you manage a change in circumstances? What happens if the tool is updated and functionality changes?
- If there are changes, how will you handle inequities across your student group? Some students may have completed the task, some may have invested a considerable amount of time but not be able to complete and some may have not started.

Who owns the tool and what about the licensing agreement?

- Do you and your students have to agree to a license before the tool can be used?
- What is covered in this license? Have you read and understood exactly what you will be expecting your students to agree to?
- Are these conditions appropriate for your students to sign up to?
- What happens if one or more of your students do not want to agree to these conditions? Will they be disadvantaged within your topic? How will you keep things equitable for all students?
- What if the licensing conditions change whilst your students are using the tool? Do you have a contingency plan?

What data will be entered into the tool?

- Is data stored in Australia or offshore?
- What laws, especially around privacy, govern the country where the data is stored?
- Do students need to enter any personal data? Do they have to create an account to access the tool or are they saving personal data within the tool?
- Have you considered GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)? Do you need to comply with this and does the tool comply with this?
- Will other organisations have access to the students' data? Are the students aware of this?
- Will other organisations have ownership of any data entered? Are there any agreements in place as to how they can use this data, either now or in the future? What if these agreements change after the data has been entered? Can you ensure adequate protection for your students?
- How secure is the storage of this data? What would the consequences be if this data were stolen?

Are there any costs to use the tool?

- Must you and/or your students pay to use the tool?
- Is there a free trial period? Is that then followed by an automated cost? If so, do you need to enter credit card details to gain the initial access? Are your students aware of this?
- What if any of your students do not want to pay for the tool, cannot afford to pay or do not have the required credit card? Will this disadvantage them within your topic? Can they still meet the learning outcomes?
- Is it appropriate to expect your students to pay for a tool to complete the topic requirements, given they have already paid to study the topic? Does this need to be authorised? Have you sought and gained that authorisation?

- Were students notified they would incur further costs before they enrolled into the topic? Did they have a choice to not enrol in this topic?
- Have you reviewed the [Charging of Incidental Fees Policy](#) to ensure your plans are acceptable?

How will the tool be accessed?

- Can you link to it within your topic, or does it need to be installed on their personal device?
- What happens if students do not want to install the software on their personal device, or it is not compatible with their device?
- Can you guarantee the download will be virus/error free? Is it clear where to access the file to be downloaded? What will happen if students download the wrong file by mistake?
- Can you guarantee its availability is consistent with your students access to their FLO topic? Students have access to topics for 12 months after teaching has finished.
- If students must create an account in the tool, are they using the same name, email address, or any other identifying information as they have used in FLO? If you need to transfer marks between both places you will need to ensure you can reliably match up all student accounts. How will you manage situations where students have the same legal name or non-identifying account names?

What support will you put in place should your students encounter problems?

- Are there any support materials available from the supplier of the tool? Are they easy to follow? Will your students be able to understand them?
- Do you have the time and resources to provide support to your students who encounter problems and need face-to-face support?
- Do all members of your teaching team know how to use the tool? Are they able to answer students' questions and provide a consistent level of support to their class?
- Are you an expert with the tool? Do you know the pitfalls students may encounter? Are you able to provide guidance to either prevent them experiencing these issues or get them out of situations without compromising their studies?