Alright. Morning everybody. How are you? Excellent. Okay, my name’s Mark and I’m from Business School. This is the context. I’ll go straight to it.

The Business School obviously is interested in a whole range of things as Laurel’s articulated but from my perspective the bigger issues there are the generic skills and the framework particularly in relation to our accreditation requirements, and the broad based issue around the precinct and teaching and learning performance outcomes have when one measures them.

My context within that is a first year course money, banking and finance, which is a core course is the Bachelor of Commerce, and is a requirement for three of the five majors in the B Com, so it’s quite an important subject in terms of the sequence of the program.

It also presents challenges because it’s a diverse subject. We teach it on three different campuses, in three different modes, intensive, semi intensive, and normal 13 weeks, if that is normal these days, with anything from 60 students to 350 students. Therefore that presents challenges in terms of cross campus consistency on how we handle that across the board.

My personal context with this is very simple. After a long time of service to the university in teaching and learning which took me away from a lot of face to face teaching I took over the subject and I wasn’t terribly happy with what I got. Basically in the context of this subject two pieces of assessment, 40% mid-semester exam and a 60% final exam, which when I put it bluntly, wasn’t really enthralling me let alone the students in terms of the experience that they had. And of course as we know assessment is about far more than just assessing the outcomes for the students. It’s a tool that we can use to give them and ourselves feedback early, it’s a tool that we can use to have a lot of fun in the class, to engage the students in the class, get them doing things within active learning and so forth.

So my challenge was to fix this up as I saw it. And we’ve done a number of things on the subject but today I wanted to quickly touch on the assessment piece in relation to this. And my challenge for myself and my teaching team was to create engagement using assessment and the design. Particularly when you look at first year first semester version of the subjects, we’re getting the green students in large cohorts.

It had to be scalable because of what I said before. Couldn’t be something that would just work in our intensive version of the course and not work on our large offerings on this campus and the Gold Coast, particularly in semester one. Had to be cost and time
neutral, as I’m sure we can all appreciate. And for me the other issue here, which Laurel touched on, is the issue of how we use technology to actually enhance what we’re doing in the space and how that then interacts with the issues of academic integrity versus the marks allocation. So you get that dynamic of “Well we can let them do quizzes by themselves at home online” but we don’t necessarily know that they’re doing it therefore the reaction tends to be that we’ll only give a small weighting. So we wanted to try and cut through some of that as well.

Okay. So let’s throw all this up in the air. What I do when I have these sorts of issues, I do a mind map. So I thought in the five minutes that I had I’d show you the original mind map that I came up when we were re-designing this and I’ll try and negotiate our way through it.

So one side we got student engagement, on the other side we’ve got the grade that the students are after. And we know that assessment drives student behaviour quite substantially, and particularly so in the first year. The student engagement in this course given it’s scale really comes out of the two teaching and learning activities. This is a non-online course if you want to put it that way. So we have the lectures and the tutorials. So the first point of call here with this framework is we run a [0:03:25.0] tute where we deliberately set out to engage the students from the start by setting expectations very clearly, but also and probably equally importantly, as you’ll see in the blue box just to the right there in the middle, the students do tutorial presentations, a formal presentation, in the course which is part of the AOL framework to do with the generic skill of oral presentation. But what we do here is we actually get the students in small groups to work out what they think is effective oral communication in a business setting, and then we wrap up that conversation, show them the [0:03:55.0] we use for oral communication, lo and behold they almost always match up. And of course that was in that framework of professional skills development so the students realise that we’re not doing this just because we want to put them under pressure and embarrass them but because they have to learn how to speak in a public setting, and they’d rather learn that in my view in a safe environment in a class rather than when they’re out there in the professional world.

Okay. So where am I on my little map? Here we are. Then basically in the tutorials, if we look at this orange, blue and reddish box together, we do three things we cover. And there are three forms of questions if you like, all of which are compiled into this purple box we call the central resource or a study guide. And the three forms of questions are: review questions which are peppered throughout the lecture, particularly if you got 300 students you can’t have lots of small group discussions going on. But we break after every A heading, every key heading in the section, give them a question to do, they do it in small groups and we chat in the lecture. Those questions are regurgitated in the tutorial and we go through them quite quickly. The students do their own presentations and this is done in a fun a way as possible, if I can put it that way. So that we enjoy it, the students enjoy it, and they get a lot out of it. And last of all discussion questions which takes up the second half of the tute. Probably second two thirds of the tute and when we look at the Logan campus where we have an hour and a half long tutorials. And
that’s’ of course designed to hand it off to them so they’re talking, they’re participating, they’re learning from each other as much as they are from the teaching team that happen to be overseeing it.

Now the other key thing to do with assessment is of course the speed of feedback and I know when I broached this with my colleagues, yes, we do the oral presentations with 300 students, they sort of almost had kittens let’s say. But what we’ve done with that is integrated the use of technology. So literally my, well I do it. I’m asking Laurel for some Ipads to get one of my tutors to do it as well. Set up a file in the dropbox, assess the students on the [0:05:51.2], on my Ipad, a mark is in, available for the students to see within an hour of them actually doing the tute, doing their presentation. So they’re getting instantaneous feedback which they appreciate as well. And of course gives them a [0:06:03.8] of time in terms of reflection on the work that they’re doing in the class versus the feedback they get.

The yellow box at the top relates to what we do with those quizzes I referred to before. And this is a very simple sort of assessment, continuous assessment regime, where we’re looking to assess the students on a regular basis so that they get feedback quickly and we get feedback quickly and of course we follow the amber alert system if you like, where we write to the students after that first quiz in the third week to find out, or to those that didn’t do as well as they might have liked to have anyway.

Then the purpose of all of this is all these questions feed into this study guide approach, this document, the central resource, which we guarantee to the students at the start if they do their job and complete that file, that document, as they go through the course all the various ways we attack these questions and the different forms of teaching we engage in, they will have a core central resource which they can then use to prepare themselves for their final exam.

So that’s’ I guess the approach to trying to get all these things working to get the continuous assessment, the active learning strategies in the lectures and in the tutes, and then tying it all together to the assessment mechanisms that we use overlaying technology to get quite extraordinarily quick feedback is certainly the views of the students, but in terms of what we’re doing.

The impact, well these are just some common things that we see in the student evaluations, using that form. Be it the quizzes, very clear that the students really enjoy these. And they actually, they’re quite forthcoming with their view that this sort of [0:07:39.3] assessment regime does actually force them to do their work and engage in the curriculum regularly. And we basically say we’re not shy about that. We will force you to do it but we will reward you for it if you do it as well. The other thing about the quizzes is they’re not just multiple choice quizzes. We give them short answer questions within them, which my teaching team doesn’t like because we have to mark them all. But the whole idea of that is it actually sets them up for the final exam. Because our first year, particularly the first year first semester students have not done an exam before in our setting, so this actually prepares them for that and they acknowledge that also.
The tute presentations, the students really enjoy this as well and you can read the quote there. But certainly leads back to some let me say fun experiences in the tutorial, which in the traditional mode we [0:08:27.2] getting, as well as the discussions. Particularly that first quote there we hear a lot, that the students like the opportunity to participate, and to be included rather than just someone saying “Question one, answer. Question two, answer” and so forth. And as I said, we have a lot more fun than we used to.

The study guide concept is certainly not a new one. In fact none of this is really new as I’ve said, it’s more just how it’s all put together and contextualised to the students. They really appreciate that as well, that central resource to help them prepare for their final assessment. The overall outcomes, and yes, the office is my sixth slide, is you can see there. And this is my perception of this and also talking to my teaching team, certainly the student evaluations, the scores and the comments show that this approach has improved student satisfaction. We believe it’s increased engagement in just simply the volume of students that we have attending the classes and the amount of discussion we have going on which you simply didn’t have without these approaches before. Improve the dynamics of the class, or the willingness of students to talk and participate and engage with the other and share ideas, and have fun basically. And we believe this leads to improved outcomes insofar as lower failure rates can indicate that.

[Applause]