VLE Surveys

A longitudinal perspective between March 2001 and March 2003 for Higher Education in the United Kingdom

By Tom Browne and Martin Jenkins

Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

This Report records the results from a survey conducted amongst Higher Education Universities and Colleges regarding their use of Virtual Learning Environments. It complements a similar survey that was conducted by UCISA two years earlier. The full results, broken down where relevant by type of HE institution (i.e. pre-91, post-91 and Colleges) is provided as Appendix-1. The main thrust of this Report, however, provides a comparison of the returns from the 2001 and this (2003) survey.

The Executive summary for the 2001 survey stated that: 'UCISA is aware that a number of issues relating to VLEs are having a significant impact on Computing/Information Services. They also represent cultural challenges for both academic staff and students in how they engage with their learning and teaching. Issues relate to choosing a VLE, its implementation, technical support and a whole range of support, training and pedagogic issues relating to its use. In order to gain an insight into how these questions are being addressed in Higher Education, with particular reference to their impact on the UCISA community, UCISA commissioned the Teaching and Learning sub-group of UCISA-TLIG to conduct a national survey.'

Two years on, the thrust of the text above is even more pertinent. The JISC took a similar view and accordingly UCISA and the JISC combined to conduct a joint survey. The timeliness of this Report is also confirmed by the call to respond to the Government's White Paper *Towards a Unified e-Learning Strategy* (see: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations2/16/)

The overall picture is one of evolutionary consolidation. Centralisation is increasing of matters considered strategic, devolvement is occurring for a range of support activities. There is a markedly greater use of VLEs, with central direction, discernable in post-91 universities compared to pre-91 universities. HE Colleges exhibit some of the centralising tendencies of post-91 universities though their targets are more akin to those for pre-91 universities. Where notable differences emerge between HE Colleges and the other sectors these will be noted in the report.

Table of Contents

Preface

This report draws upon two surveys that were conducted in March 2001 and March 2003. Their particular genesis are noted below but the primary purpose of this report is to note any trends and developments that have occurred over this two year period.

It is notable how often respondents remarked that they found the completing of the questionnaires a valuable developmental process. If the level of enthusiasm for individual insights and for a wider sharing of such information persists, then it is likely that a similar survey will be conducted in 2005, but whether we do so or not is really up to you!

1.0 Background

Within the UCISA community, issues surrounding the acquisition and deployment of VLEs began to be considered in some detail at the UCISA-TLIG conference at Lancaster, in April 2000. The introduction of a VLE was highlighted as a major investment for any institution and delegates both at the conference and subsequently indicated that there was considerable interest in continuing to share ideas and experiences in their introduction, implementation, management and support, including how to effectively link to management information systems (MIS). Also, the UCISA community were beginning to experience accelerated change in their roles, with increasing emphasis being placed upon support to achieve pedagogically effective integration of technology to support learning and teaching. VLEs were also beginning to present cultural challenges for both academic staff and students in how they engage with their learning and teaching. How is a VLE chosen and implemented, who provides, if at all, technical, administrative, pedagogic support etc? Who provides the training?

The origins of the first survey and the rationale for a second survey are outlined below.

1.1 UCISA Survey

In the Autumn of 2000, UCISA commissioned, using 'Pounds for Projects' funding, the Teaching and Learning sub-group of UCISA-TLIG to conduct a national survey . The completion date for returns was March 2001.

The questionnaires (one from an Institutional perspective, the other from the perspective of 'local users and those providing support for VLEs') and a Report summarising the findings, can be found at: http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/groups/tlig/vle/index_html

The broad headings employed were:

- Decision-making process for the selection of VLEs
- Strategy for the implementation of VLEs
- Technical support provided for VLEs

- Implementation of VLEs, including staff development, student training and dissemination

The overall conclusions, upon which a series of recommendations were made, are summarised below. They have been extracted from the original Report.

- VLEs are widely recognised as an important component of an institutional strategy, but this is yet poorly matched by delivery. Motivators range from efficiency to pedagogic reasons and increasing flexibility. Their potential in distance-learning is widely anticipated but accessibility issues are as yet poorly considered.
- There is currently little integration with MIS to deliver a comprehensive Managed Learning Environment (MLE) but this is identified as a strong objective.
- Central Services take primary responsibility for the choice, funding, installation and maintenance of VLEs and their technical support. Support for the administration of courses, though highly visible within central support, is increasingly likely to be found from units such as Learning Technology Support (LTSU) and Educational Development (EDU). Pedagogic support is strongly focused on LTSUs and EDUs.
- There are some identifiable differences between pre- and post-1991 Universities, most notably in the areas of strategy, technical and administrative support, which are more likely to be located centrally, and student support more locally in the post-91 Universities. Post-91 Universities have a somewhat longer history of engagement. There is a discernable trend throughout the sector towards greater centralisation, away from local, departmental support.
- VLEs are a new development for many institutions and, with a few exceptions, the level of staff and student engagement is correspondingly limited. Mature support mechanisms have therefore yet to be comprehensively developed across the sector. Time available for staff development is often very limited or unavailable and support for students is even more limited.

1.2 JISC/UCISA Survey

The feedback from the UCISA community was extremely positive and the Report has been widely cited, not least by the JISC in providing supportive evidence for some of their project planning. We were therefore encouraged to undertake a similar survey, appropriately phased from the initial one, in order to ascertain how the picture had changed in the intervening period. In addition the results of the 2001 survey along with observations of subsequent VLE developments had suggested additional questions that could add texture to the original set of questions. Planning for this began early in 2002. In the spring of 2002, the JISC, as part of their 'Supporting Study of MLE activity', also considered undertaking a survey. Rather than

have two questionnaires circulating around the community, with a significant overlap between them, the two organisations met to discuss the possibility of a joint survey. The outcome of this very fruitful dialogue was a joint invitation to agencies to tender for 'Managed Learning Environments (MLEs) for Life Long Learning (LLL): Building MLEs across FE and HE' see: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=funding_1_02. Note that this new study encompassed all aspects of an MLE, not just the VLE component and also included FE. The successful bidders were a consortium headed by Brighton University, see: http://www.mlestudy.ac.uk/ The Report from this JISC/UCISA study is available at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/project_mle_activity.html. Note that Section-4 of this Report merely provides a tabular summary of the 2003 VLE questions but no overall analysis is provided. It was agreed between UCISA and JISC that such an analysis would be subsumed into the UCISA longitudinal survey. But note – this is only for HE; JISC may ask an FE agency to provide a summary of the FE 2003 returns (but for which a longitudinal analysis is not possible because there was not a 2001 FE survey).

1.3 VLE Longitudinal Study

The data from the JISC/UCISA survey was made available to the UCISA Working party in July 2003. The longitudinal analysis could then begin. The primary comparison between the two surveys was between the 2001 UCISA questionnaire-1, i.e. the Institutional Perspective, and Section-4 of the 2003 JISC/UCISA questionnaire, which related explicitly to VLEs. Remember that only returns from Higher Education were used for the comparison.

A few 2001 questions were no longer thought appropriate and several additional questions were added for 2003 to add additional detail and understanding of VLE use but otherwise, most questions from 2001 were repeated in 2003. This Report therefore combines both a longitudinal study and analysis of the new questions – these could form the basis for any future longitudinal study. Where questions are directly comparable between 2001 and 2003 tables show both sets of data, where this is not possible the 2003 data is shown and any relevant 2001 data is referred to in the text.

1.4 Caution in drawing comparisons

Great care must be taken in drawing inferences or in interpreting the longitudinal statistics. It is very tempting, in this Report, to develop creative interpretations of the statistics, especially when they confirm scenarios raised in a multitude of published case studies. We have therefore decided to be somewhat circumspect in our comments but greatly welcome any insights you may have. Can you readily 'place' your own institution and would you therefore be able to offer a more substantial interpretation?

In doing so, the following should be borne in mind:

1.4.1 Institutions and persons responding.

Questionnaire-1 from the 2001 survey elicited a 51% response and the MLE survey from 2003 elicited a 54% response. Whilst these figures are clearly very similar, no assumption should be made regarding what cohort of institutions actually completed the survey on each occasion. Nor can any assumption be made regarding whether, if the same institution did complete both surveys, the same person at each time interval completed them.

1.4.2 VLE definitions

In 2001, an agreed understanding of what a VLE is, was not very mature. The definition of a VLE that was employed was *'learning management systems that synthesise the functionality of computer-mediated communications and on-line methods of delivering course materials'* (Britain & Liber, 1999). By 2003, the JISC definition of *'the component(s) within an MLE that provides the 'online' interactions of various kinds, which can take place between learners and tutors, including online learning.' (JISC, 2002)* was widely cited. Whilst it might be hoped that a unified thread unites both definitions, it may be unwise to assume this for all respondents.

1.4.3 MLEs and VLEs

In 2001, the concept of an MLE was barely discussed. By 2003, many institutions had begun to consider and develop this approach, and the appropriateness of focusing upon just one aspect of an MLE (i.e. the VLE) in isolation may have been regarded as somewhat artificial. So, in responding to some of the explicitly MLE-oriented questions, a learning and teaching perspective may have influenced the way some respondents replied. It is tempting to infer such possibilities to some questions throughout the questionnaire, but this must be done with great circumspection. However, recall that section 4 of the 2003 survey is explicitly involved with just VLEs.

1.4.4 Contradictory definitions for LTSU

For the 2003 survey, questions 4.9, 4.10, 4.17 and 4.19 have a category of support unit with the acronym LTSU. This was defined as Learning and Teaching Support Unit. This proved to be a drafting error. It should have been defined the same as for 2001, i.e. the Learning Technology Support Unit. Self-evidently, they cannot necessarily be viewed as the same type of support unit, which therefore invalidates any in-depth longitudinal analysis between them. This is very unfortunate. However, all is not lost. As will be highlighted when these questions 9, 10, 17 and 19 are examined in detail, it is noticeable how the percentages for Educational Development Unit (EDU) have in many cases reduced markedly between 2001 and 2003. It is not unreasonable to postulate that many respondents selected the Learning and Teaching Unit for 2003 rather than the EDU. Similarly, the percentages for the dedicated VLE Unit invariably have increased markedly between 2001 and 2003. Again, it is not

unreasonable to postulate that part of this increase is due to the lack of a Learning Technology Support Unit option. But clearly, care must be taken in pushing these deductions too far. An alternative strategy is to compare the change over time between IT support (central or distributed) and other types of support unit. This approach has been employed for several questions and it offers a fruitful way of interpreting the data.

1.4.5 HE Colleges

For 2003 Appendix-1 provides a breakdown of the statistics for pre-91, post-91 Universities and Colleges of HE. However, for 2001, such a breakdown is only available for pre- and post-91 Universities. Therefore it is not possible to provide any longitudinal analysis for HE colleges.

2.0 Overview of VLE use

This section explores how widespread is the use of VLEs, identifies the main ones used and whether more than one is used within an institution. The first VLE Survey in 2001 showed that VLE use was widespread with 81% of HEIs having a VLE. Two years on this percentage has risen to 86% of returns; this can be broken down into 84% of pre-91 universities; 97% of post 91 universities and 67% of HE colleges. Of interest in 2001 was the proportion of institutions using more than one VLE - this was considered to be a reflection of VLEs being still a relatively new development and localised implementation. In 2003 there are still a similar and significant number of institutions using more than one VLE, 50.1% compared to 52% in 2001 (see Table 1). Whilst the 2003 data shows that there are institutions using a range of different VLEs it does at the same time indicate some consolidation - in 2001 28% of institutions had three or more, in 2003 this has dropped to 17.7%. This rather 'mixed' message seems to indicate that with the increased maturity of VLE use most institutions are consolidating usage but at the same time some institutions are still developing how they will make use of VLEs.

Table 1: Number of VLEs per institution (Q4.1)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
No VLE	18.7	13.7
Using one VLE	29.3	36.3
Two VLEs	24.0	32.4
Three VLEs	25.3	9.8
Four VLEs	2.7	4.9
Five VLEs	-	1.0
Six VLEs	-	2.0

There may also be persisting reasons for the multiple use of VLEs, which could be explained by a number of factors including: devolved decision-making to faculties and departments; inertia from initial choices; preference for particular VLEs across different academics/disciplines; change in VLE developments introducing new systems. It should also be noted that in the 2003 survey we have asked about the use of Intranet based systems, particularly as this survey featured as part of a wider MLE survey; 26.1% of respondents indicated they had such a system and this may reflect the fact that MLEs and VLEs are viewed increasingly seamlessly.

In 2001 the most commonly used VLE was WebCT but in 2003 this has been overtaken by Blackboard as the single most commonly used VLE, though WebCT continues to be slightly

more widely used in pre-91 Universities and even more so in HE Colleges (see Appendix-1 Q4.2). The danger of presenting such statistics is that it can influence a 'follow my leader' approach to obtaining a VLE, but what is clear is that in terms of commercial systems Blackboard and WebCT dominate the market (Table 2). The increase in market share for Blackboard can be linked to its more active marketing strategy during 2001-3 with one option being promoted as an MLE, and developments such as the CHEST deal which helped raise its profile. But note also the high percentage for Intranet-based systems. Two trends are discernable here. First, many institutions are buying into the increasingly dominantly market-led solutions provided by Blackboard and WebCT. Conversely, or perhaps in addition, many sites are utilising pre-existing standalone functionality. This could be because a 'heavyweight' VLE solution can be seen as overkill, or individual components not regarded as functionally suitable as a best-of-breed alternative.

Table 2: What VLEs are used (Q4.2)
[NB totals are more than 100 as some inst have more than 1 VLE] Percentages are shown as a percentage of institutions with a VLE

	2001(%)	2003 (%)
Blackboard	33.8	43.2
WebCT	59.7	34.1
Intranet based	-	26.1
Developed in house	11.3	22.7
Firstclass	29.0	19.3
Granada Learnwise	6.5	6.8
Lotus Domino	8.1	6.8
Lotus Learning Space	16.1	4.5
Commercial Intranet based product	-	4.5
Bodington	-	3.4
Colloquia	-	1.1
Fretwell Downing	-	1.1
Merlin	-	1.1
Other	-	18.2

2.1 Localised or institutional development?

This section looks at the staff and student usage of VLEs in terms of numbers and subjects involved and also the extent to which they impact substantially on course delivery. The results of the 2001 survey suggested that VLE developments were very much localised

developments. The evidence in Table 1 still suggests that there is still some localised control of VLE use. Comparing the numbers of students using VLEs (Fig 1), academic staff using VLEs (Fig 2), and courses using VLEs (Fig 3) it can be seen that use of VLEs is now much greater within institutions than in 2001.

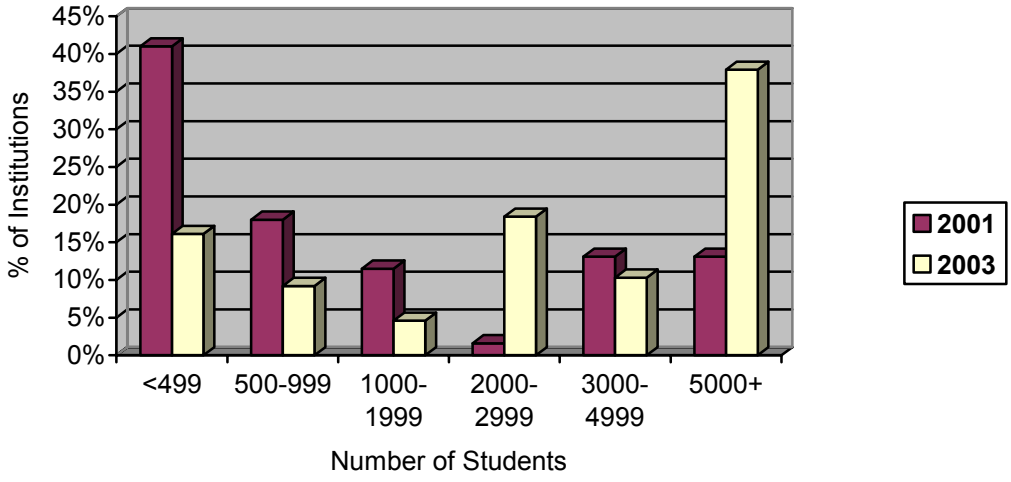

Fig 1: Number of students using VLEs (Q4.4)

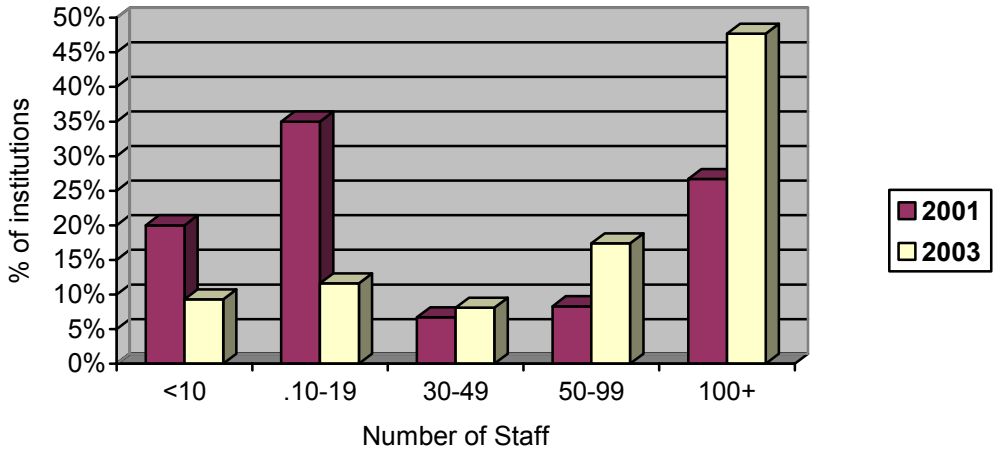

Fig 2: Number of academic staff using VLEs (Q4.5)

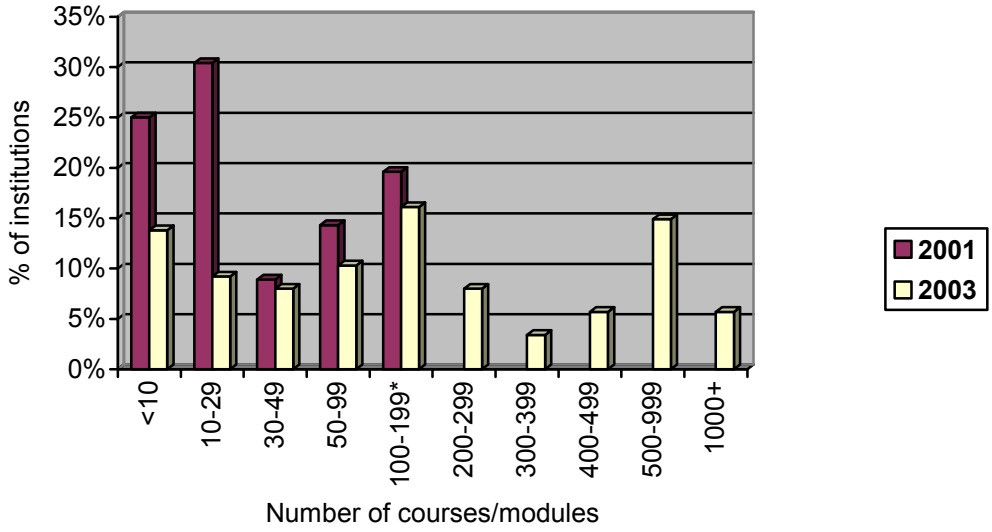

Fig 3: Number of courses/modules using VLEs (Q4.6)

**NB in Fig 3 for 2001 category 100-199 should be read as 100+*

A variety of cross-tabulations were calculated, comparing volume of usage, number of staff and number of students by *size* of institution and the institution *type;* no significant correlation is evident. Tables 3 and 4 compare expected and observed frequencies of use by numbers of staff and numbers of students. The expected frequencies are calculated probabilities and were obtained by using the SPSS analysis software. These indicate that post-91 universities are more likely to show greater observed use at the high use levels.

Table 3: Cross tabulation of numbers of staff using a VLE versus HE institution type
(N.B. numbers indicate number of institutions, numbers shown in brackets are expected frequencies, Percentages show observed frequencies as a percentage of expected)

	Pre 91	Post 91	HE College
9 or less	4 (3.4) (117.6%)	2 (3.5) (57%)	2 (1.1) (181%)
10-29	4 (4.3) (93%)	3 (4.4) (68%)	3 (1.4) (214%)
30-49	2 (3) (66%)	3 (3) (100%)	2 (1) (200%)
50-99	6 (6.5) (92%)	5 (5.4) (92%)	4 (2) (200%)
100-199	5 (5.2) (96%)	7 (5.2) (134%)	0 (1.6) (0%)
200+	12 (12.5) (96%)	17 (12.5) (136%)	0 (4) (0%)

Table 4: Cross tabulation of numbers of students using a VLE versus HE institution type
(N.B. numbers indicate number of institutions, numbers shown in brackets are expected frequencies, Percentages show observed frequencies as a percentage of expected)

	Pre 91	Post 91	HE College
Less than 500	5 (6.1) (82%)	5 (6.1) (82%)	4 (1.9) (210%)
500-999	6 (3.4) (176%)	0 (3.5) (0%)	2 (1.1) (182%)
1000-1999	4 (1.8) (222%)	0 (1.7) (0%)	0 (0.5) (0%)
2000-2999	5 (6.9) (72%)	8 (6.9) (116%)	3 (2.2) (136%)
3000-4999	4 (3.9) (102%)	4 (3.9) (102%)	1 (1.2) (83%)
5000-7499	4 (4.8) (83%)	6 (4.8) (125%)	1 (1.5) (67%)
7500-9999	5 (2.6) (192%)	1 (2.6) (79%)	0 (0.8) (0%)
10000+	2 (6.9) (29%)	14 (6.9) (203%)	0 (2.2) (0%)

The high percentage of institutions with over 10,000 students using VLEs for both pre- and post-91 Universities might indicate that some institutions have registered all their student cohort into the VLE, though this may not be a true reflection of actual usage. There could be a relationship here with Q4.13 where some institutions declared that their target strategy was to have 100% of courses registered within their VLE!

A new question to the 2003 survey sought to identify the range of subject areas that were using VLEs [Q4.3]. This identified that in 35.2% of those institutions with a VLE, use was across all academic departments or all subject areas. Figs 1-3 show a marked increase in VLE use since 2001, this breakdown by subject suggests that this increase is also widespread across disciplines. For 2003 HE Colleges record a noticeably lower range of subjects, student and staff involvement and number of modules – see Appendix-1 Q4.3 - 4.6.

Recent surveys by Bell et al (2002) and Collis and van der Wende (2002) have indicated that whilst the use of ICT in learning and teaching is widespread it has not yet made a significant impact in terms of changing the patterns of learning and teaching. This survey therefore sought to gather information on how VLEs were being used within UK universities and colleges. Q4.7 used the same categorisation for VLE use as that used by Bell et al (2002) in Australia. The question asked:

How do all the VLE courses or modules in use in your institution divide between the following categories? (Please enter a percentage figure in each of the categories below, using an estimate if needed)

- *Category A is web supplemented, online participation is optional for the student;*
- *Category Bi is web dependent, participation is required through interaction with content to complement face to face delivery;*
- *Category Bii is web dependent, participation is required through communication with staff/students to complement face to face delivery;*
- *Category Biii is web dependent, participation is required through interaction with content and communication, to complement face to face delivery;*
- *Category C is fully online courses.*

The mean percentage responses are shown in Fig 4 and they reinforce the pattern identified by Bell et al (2002) in Australia (see Fig 5) and in Collis and van der Wende's global survey that use is predominantly supplementary. Greater numbers of institutions have high levels of category A use (supplementary to face to face teaching) of VLEs and low levels of category B and C use (integrated or fully online use). The pattern is similar across the different categories of HE and is greatest for HE Colleges. (see Appendix-1 Q4.7). Whilst the breakdown of use is comparable between the UK and Australia it should be noted that the survey by Bell et al (2002) revealed that 56% of *all* Australian modules/units make use of the web.

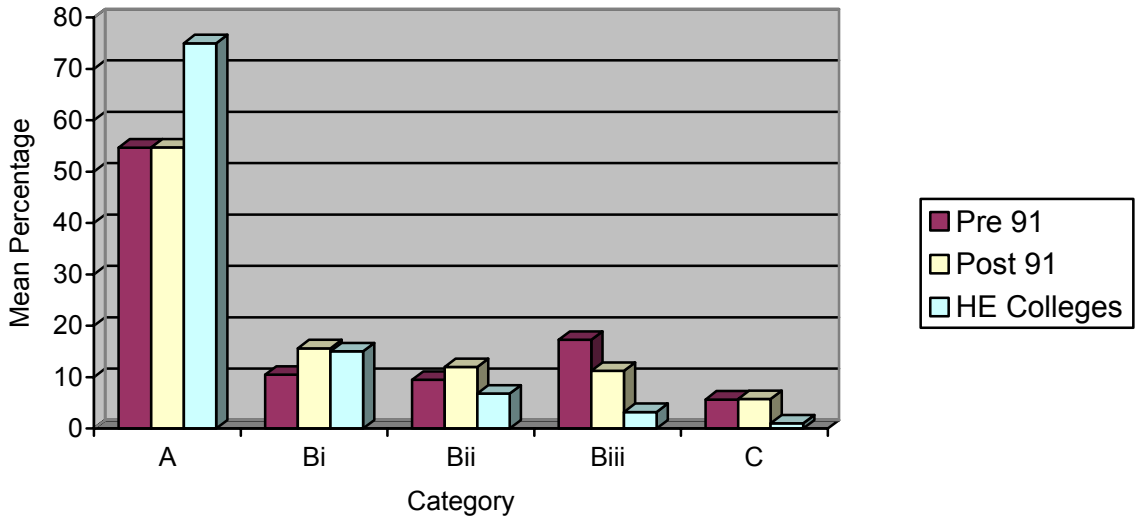

Fig 4: How VLEs are being used to support learning and teaching

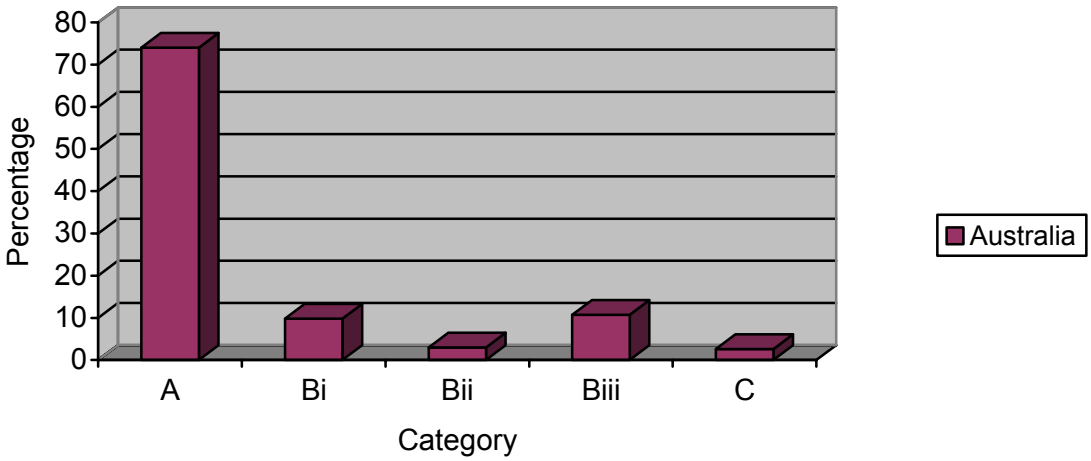

Fig 5: Web use in Australian HE units and modules (Bell et al 2002)

3.0 Technical Support

This section will look at what type and range of Units provide technical support, including integration with other Units. Three aspects were considered. Firstly, regarding the source of installation and maintenance of the VLE, the results from the 2003 survey are comparable to 2001 in terms of support primarily being provided by central and distributed IT units. However it is noticeable that there is more local activity (Curriculum staff) recorded in 2003 (see Table 5). It may be that this increase, together with that for 'other' is as a result of different interpretations of 'maintaining' a VLE, with some respondents associating this with system administration. Also this question provided only a limited number of alternatives for respondents to check but later tables (Tables 6, 7, 15-18) show that a wide range of units are involved in VLE support, and this may also account for the relatively high 'Other' percentage.

Table 5: Units responsible for installing and maintaining the VLE (Q4.8)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	90	85.2
Distributed IT	21	20.5
Curriculum staff	-	14.8
Other	9	19.3
Not answered	-	2.3

The second aspect of technical support considered by the survey was the *source* of technical support for the VLE. Tables 6-7 show an overall picture for technical support for VLEs with an increased role for Dedicated VLE support units and a reduced role for Educational Development Units. However as was noted in the Background section of this Report, there was a drafting error, which limits making a direct comparison of the data between 2001 and 2003[1]. It is though possible to make a comparison between the support provided by IT Services. This shows a comparable level of technical support between the two surveys. Tables 6 and 7 do though show that technical and administrative support is provided by a range of units within the HE sector as a whole.

[1] For the 2003 survey, questions 4.9, 4.10, 4.17 and 4.19 have a category of support unit with the acronym LTSU. This was defined as Learning and Teaching Support Unit. This proved to be a drafting error, because in 2001, LTSU was defined as Learning Technology Support Unit. Self-evidently, they cannot necessarily be viewed as the same type of support unit, which therefore invalidates any in-depth longitudinal analysis between them.

Table 6: Units providing technical support (Q4.9)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	90.3	86.4
Distributed IT	24.2	17.0
Learning Technology Support Unit	33.9	-
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	-	21.6
Educational Development Unit	25.8	9.1
Dedicated VLE Support Unit	6.5	26.1
Local	14.5	5.7
Outsourced	-	5.7
Other	-	5.7
Not answered	-	2.3

Table 6 records a slight reduction in support provided by IT Units, though Central IT still dominates as the main provider. But the support provided by the sum of the other Units has also fallen between 2001 and 2003. Assuming the possibility of multiple returns, it may be that support is now consolidated into less units than previously.

Table 7: System administration support (Q4.10)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	74.1	69.3
Distributed IT	22.4	19.3
Learning Technology Support Unit	31.0	-
Learning and Teaching Support unit	-	30.7
Educational Development Unit	20.7	10.2
Dedicated VLE Support Unit	5.2	22.7
Local	17.2	12.5
Outsourced		3.4
Other		8.0
Not answered		3.4

Table 7 shows that central IT dominates as the primary system administration support provider. The slight reduction in support provided by the two IT categories is absorbed by a slight increase in support provided by the sum of the other Units, though again we should allow for the possibility of a reduction in multiple returns.

3.1 Integration with MIS

The 2003 survey shows that there has been a significant increase in creating a student accounts file for transfer into the VLE (Table 8). The automated creation of student accounts and access show a small increase. Taken together these data suggest that institutions are moving toward automating these processes, though full automation is still limited. A breakdown of this data shows that automating these processes is greatest within the post 91 university sector and with pre-91 universities lagging behind HE Colleges (see Appendix-1 Q4.11).

Table 8: How are links provided between the VLEs and student records? (Q4.11)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Automated creation of student accounts in VLE from student records	22.6	29.5
Creation of student accounts file for data transfer into VLE	9.7	42.0
Automatic creation of student access to sp courses/modules	12.9	20.5
Assessment results	4.8	2.3
Other	-	4.5
No link	-	23.9
Not answered	-	3.4

A parallel observation can be made with respect to Libraries and VLE integration. This question was asked in Section 2 of the 2003 Survey (See Table 21b, 'Integration of Library Resources with VLE in HE) and this was the only question that was explicitly VLE related as opposed to MLEs as a whole. The responses are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Integration of Library recourses with VLE

	Pre-91 (%)	Post-91 (%)	HE colleges (%)
Institution has no VLE	24	5	22
No connection between online library resources and VLE	33	23	33
Some online library resources integrated into VLE	38	64	44
Online Library resources are fully integrated into a VLE	-	5	-

The figures for 'no VLE' match very approximately the figures deduced from Q4.1 (Appendix-1 Q4.1). The discrepancies might be because in many cases, different people within an institution completed different sections. They may not have worked together on survey and / or may have different perspectives on defining a VLE. There is a marked difference in integration between the pre and post-91 Universities, adding weight to this trend throughout this Report.

4.0 Strategy and Decision Making

This section focuses on they key drivers to adopting a VLE and who makes those strategic decisions. The survey sought to identify at what level decisions were made about VLE implementation. Table 10 shows that the decision-making process can operate at a number of levels with HEIs but with the institutional and senior management levels most prevalent, though a significant minority were also taken at Faculty and School/Departmental level. In 2001, a similar question was asked and this identified that in 88.2% of cases Central IT was involved in the decision making and academic faculties 14.7%, the latter a comparable figure to 2003.

Table 10: At what level in your institution are decisions made about VLE implementation? (Q4.12) *(Question not asked in this format in 2001)*

	2003 (%)
Institution	72.7
Faculty	13.6
School/Dept	30.7
Principal	6.8
Senior Management Team	46.6
Dept level	20.5
Section staff	12.5
Not answered	3.4

The increased in VLE use shown in Figs 1-3 indicates that VLEs are an increasingly important feature of the HEI landscape. Q4.13 asked if institutions had a stated target for their use of VLEs. The response of 30.6% is not greatly different to the 26% indicated for 2001 (see Table 11). However, the data shows this is much greater for post-91 institutions (52.7%), compared to pre-91 institutions (13.2%) and HE Colleges (16.7%) (see Appendix-1, Q4.13).

Table 11: Does your institution have a stated target for the use of VLEs (Q4.13)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Yes	26	30.6
No	74	65.9
Not answered	-	3.4

Where institutions did provide indications of targets these were often expressed as a percentage of courses. Figure 6 illustrates the range of targets provided, grouping responses in 10% bands. What is noticeable is that the most common target was 100% of courses; it is noted that setting such a target does not necessarily allow for appropriate use of VLEs and may reflect possible bulk registration of courses.

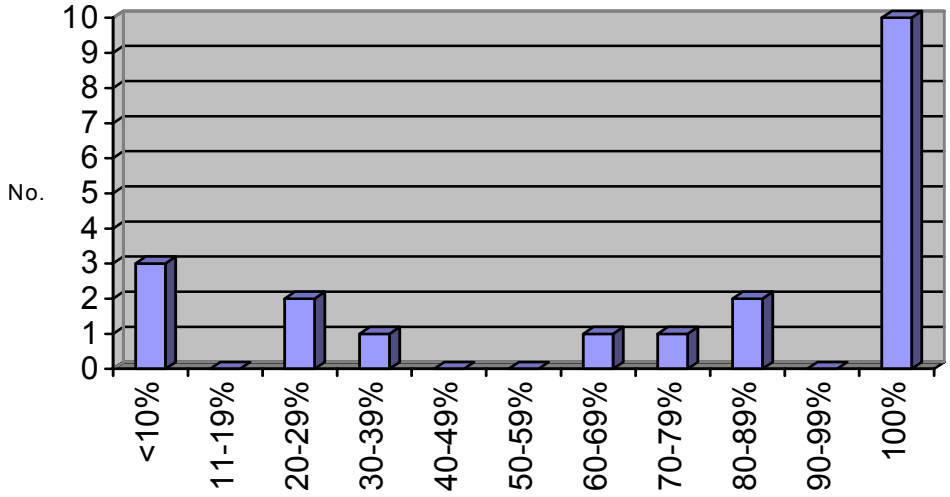

Fig 6: Frequency of stated targets for VLE use in terms of percentage of courses

The most commonly stated reasons for the consideration of using VLEs have changed since 2001. In 2003 65.9% of respondents stated enhanced learning and teaching, this compares with 43% in 2001. This was by far and away the most commonly stated reason in 2003 (see Table 12) particularly so for HE Colleges (see Appendix-1, Q4.14). It is also worth recording that this was the most important *MLE* driver as recorded in Question 1.4 of the full MLE survey. This may add weight to the view that VLEs are increasingly being regarded as an important component within an MLE rather than something detached from it, and is therefore influencing respondents' reasoning for wanting an MLE.

Table 12: Reasons for considering the use of VLEs (Q4.14)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Enhanced T&L	43	65.9
Efficiency	31	15.9
Flexibility	15	6.8
Access and Widening Participation		5.7
Competitive edge		4.5
Student demand		3.4
Funding/cost issues		2.3
Distance learning	25	
Stable/Advanced Technology		1.1
Not answered		18.2

In 2001 efficiency was the second most commonly stated factor at 31%, but only half that number gave this as a reason in 2003 and does not register as a reason for HE Colleges at all (see Appendix-1, Q4.14). This may reflect the increasing recognition that online learning is not a cost saver, which it was seen to be in the early stages of web-based developments. The 2003 survey may now reflect a more pragmatic view of VLE use. What is interesting to note is that Distance Learning does not figure as a reason in 2003, yet in 2001 it was given in 25% of cases.

5.0 Support provided

This section analyses what type of support and encouragement is given to staff to enable VLE development and also the support available to *academic* staff, training development for *support* staff and support available to *students*. The 2003 survey revealed an increase in the use of project funding - in 2001 project funding was used in 27% of institutions, this has now increased to 69.3% (Table 13). Project funding is often used to initiate new developments and develop good practice and may be a stage to institutional implementation. This increase may be partly indicative of how institutions have made use of Teaching Quality Enhancement Funding (TQEF) to help initiate new developments. Table 13 also shows a small increase in number of institutions allowing academic staff development time. In 2001 48.3% of institutions allowed *academic* staff development time, this has increased in total to 54.5%. The difference between the institution types, with more development time being allowed in a greater number of post-91 and HE Colleges as opposed to pre-91 universities is notable (Appendix-1, Q4.15). Whilst this small overall increase in the sector overall reflects a positive change, as does the indication that 43.2% of institutions allow *support staff* development time (this figure is much higher for HE Colleges (see Appendix-1, Q4.15) only 9.1% of institutions support VLE developments through career enhancement. This reflects a research led culture for career enhancement. Comparing institutional types it can be seen that pre-91 universities make greater use of project funding yet also are least likely to allow academic staff development time.

Table 13: How is VLE development supported or encouraged within your institution? (Q4.15) *(Question not asked in this format in 2001)*

	2003 (%)
Project funding	69.3
Allow academic staff development time	54.5
Allowing support staff development time	43.2
Career enhancement	9.1
Specialist appointment	1.1
Not supported or encouraged	2.3
Other	3.4
Not answered	4.5

Whilst Table 13 shows that few specialist appointments have been made to support VLE developments Table 14 indicates an increase in the use of dedicated staff to support VLEs, rising in total from 61.1% to 77.3% of institutions. This increase is likely to reflect the use of TQEF money that has gone into the creation of learning technology posts. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these posts are fixed term and it will be interesting to note if such posts are fully incorporated in the future. The ELTI Project (2003) (http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=project_elti) has shown that there is an increased recognition of learning technology staff but that they are often associated with projects and initiatives.

Table 14: Dedicated staff employed to support VLEs (Q4.16)

	2001%	2003%
Yes centrally	47.5	52.3
Yes locally	6.8	2.3
Yes both	6.8	22.7
No	-	17.0
Not answered	-	5.6

5.1 Units providing Staff support

Four questions (Q4.17a-Q4.17d) were asked regarding what Units provided support for: staff development of learning and teaching materials; creating new courses; adding content and maintaining courses; and creating web pages. Tables 15-18 show an overall picture for staff support with an increased role for Dedicated VLE support units and a reduced role for Educational Development Units. However as was noted in the Background section of this Report there was a drafting error, which limits making a direct comparison of the data between 2001 and 2003[2]. Nevertheless, it is noticeable how the percentages for Educational Development Unit (EDU) have in many cases reduced markedly between 2001 and 2003. It is not unreasonable to postulate that many respondents selected the Learning and Teaching Unit for 2003 rather than the EDU. Similarly, the percentages for the dedicated VLE Unit invariably have increased markedly between 2001 and 2003. Again, it is not unreasonable to postulate that part of this increase is due to the lack of a Learning Technology Support Unit option.

[2] For the 2003 survey, questions 4.9, 4.10, 4.17 and 4.19 have a category of support unit with the acronym LTSU. This was defined as Learning and Teaching Support Unit. This proved to be a drafting error, because in 2001, LTSU was defined as Learning Technology Support Unit. Self-evidently, they cannot necessarily be viewed as the same type of support unit, which therefore invalidates any in-depth longitudinal analysis between them.

It is though possible to make a more generic comparison between the support provided by IT Services (central and distributed) and other support units and this is given in Table 19.

Table 15: Which units provide … Staff development for learning and teaching use of VLEs (Pedagogic support) (Q4.17a)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	33.3	34.1
Distributed IT	0	6.8
Learning Technology Support Unit	50.0	-
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	-	34.1
Educational Development Unit	56.3	20.5
Dedicated VLE Support Unit	4.2	31.8
Local	8.3	15.9
Staff development unit	-	26.1
Other	-	6.8
Not answered		11.4

Table 16: Which units provide … Support for creating new courses (Q4.17b)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	44.7	35.2
Distributed IT	8.5	8.0
Learning Technology Support Unit	51.1	-
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	-	35.2
Educational Development Unit	44.7	14.8
Dedicated VLE Support Unit	8.5	26.1
Local	19.1	17.0
Staff development unit	-	10.2
Other	-	5.7
Not answered		17.0

Table 17: Which units provide … Support in adding content and maintaining courses (Q4.17c)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	53.3	36.4
Distributed IT	13.3	9.1
Learning Technology Support Unit	40	-
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	-	29.5
Educational Development Unit	37.8	10.2
Dedicated VLE Support Unit	6.7	28.4
Local	24.4	20.5
Staff development unit	-	8.0
Other	-	5.7
Not answered		17.0

Table 18: Which units provide … Creating Web pages (Q4.17d)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	72.3	58.0
Distributed IT	17	15.9
Learning Technology Support Unit	31.9	-
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	-	22.7
Educational Development Unit	25.5	8.0
Dedicated VLE Support Unit	4.3	10.2
Local	10.6	15.9
Staff development unit	-	9.1
Other	-	3.4
Not answered		14.8

Table 19 shows the combined percentages for IT units (Central and Distributed) compared against combined percentages for all other units, hence the latter may add up to more than 100%. This provides a relative weighting of involvement in the different types of staff support. The final row in Table 19 shows the differences between 2001 and 2003. This shows that in general the role of IT units is reducing with the other units becoming more involved. We have seen that in terms of technical support, IT units maintain a high involvement, as would be expected. But for staff development, pedagogic support etc other units are now increasingly involved. This is likely to reflect the increasing incorporation of VLE use into institutions.

Table 19: Combined percentage figures for units providing staff support, comparing Central and Distributed IT units with all other support units. (Q4.17)

	Staff development for learning and teaching uses of VLEs		Support for creating new courses		Support in adding content and maintaining courses		Support for creating web pages	
	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)
2001	33	118.8	53	123.4	66.6	108.9	89.3	72.3
2003	39.9	146.6	43.2	126	45.5	129.5	73.9	84.1
Difference	+6.9	+27.8	-10	+2.6	-21.1	+20.6	-15.4	+11.8

5.2 Training and development activities for support staff

In Q4.18 institutions were asked what training and development activities are offered to *support* staff i.e. those who help other staff in the use of VLEs. The results showed:

37.5% send staff on regular seminars and training events

17.0% offer training and development activities

13.6% have specialist full time staff appointed/trained available

12.5% use external or vendor supplied training courses

3.4% have training and development activities under development

4.5% offer no training and development

This indicates that institutions are providing some investment in staff development for their support staff.

5.3 Units providing Student Support

Five questions (Q419-Q4.19e) were asked regarding what Units provided support for: face to face training as part of course delivery; face to face training as part of an IT skills induction; producing printed guides; providing information on Intranet/Internet; providing online training and support through the VLE. Tables 20-24 show an overall picture for student support and show the wide range of sources for supporting student use of VLEs. The same drafting error that limits the interpretation of staff support also applies here. But again, it is possible to make a more generic comparison between the support provided by IT Services (central and distributed) and other support units and this is given in Table 25.

Tables 20 to 24 provide a more detailed breakdown to the question '*Which units across the institution provide student support and training in the use of VLEs'* and identified five activities. Whilst noting the drafting error it is possible to see that student support is provided by a range of units. It is also interesting to note the proportion of institutions not responding Whilst care is needed in drawing conclusions from this non-response it does suggest that while the proportion has dropped since 2001 it still implies a significant minority of institutions do not provide student support for VLE use.

Table 20: Student support – Face to face training as part of course delivery (Q4.19a)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	21	15.9
Distributed IT	3	2.3
Learning Technology Support Unit	16	-
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	-	12.5
EDU	11	4.5
Dedicated VLE	3	9.1
Local	27	14.8
Academic	-	62.5
Other	-	6.8
Not answered	39	17.0

Table 21: Student support – Face to face training as part of an IT Skills induction (Q4.19b)
(Question not asked in 2001)

	2003 (%)
Central IT	35.2
Distributed IT	6.8
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	9.1
EDU	2.3
Dedicated VLE	6.8
Local	13.6
Staff development unit	29.5
Other	3.4
Not answered	28.4

Table 22: Student support – Printed guides (Q4.19c)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	31	37.5
Distributed IT	5	4.5
Learning Technology Support Unit	24	-
Learning and Teaching Support unit	-	20.5
EDU	10	4.5
Dedicated VLE	2	13.6
Local	8	4.5
Academic	-	15.9
Other	-	10.2
Not answered	42	21.6

Table 23: Student support – Information on Intranet/Internet (Q4.19d)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	26	45.5
Distributed IT	3	6.8
Learning Technology Support Unit	16	-
Learning and Teaching Support unit	-	20.5
EDU	8	6.8
Dedicated VLE	3	18.2
Local	5	8.0
Academic	-	19.3
Other	-	6.8
Not answered	45	18.2

Table 24: Student support – Online training and support through the VLE (Q4.19e)

	2001 (%)	2003 (%)
Central IT	26	22.7
Distributed IT	3	2.3
Learning Technology Support Unit	16	-
Learning and Teaching Support unit	-	12.5
EDU	8	4.5
Dedicated VLE	3	13.6
Local	5	6.8
Academic	-	15.9
Other	-	8.0
Not answered	55	38.6

Table 25 shows the combined percentages for IT units (Central and Distributed) compared against combined percentages for all other units, hence the latter may add up to more than 100%. This provides a relative weighting of involvement in the different types of student support. The final row in table 25 shows the differences between 2001 and 2003.

Table 25: Combined percentage figures for units providing student support, comparing Central and Distributed IT units with all other support units (Q4.19)

	Face to face course		Face to face induction		Printed guides		Intranet/ Internet		Online training	
	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)	Central and Distributed IT units (%)	All other units (%)
2001	24	57	-	-	36	44	29	32	29	32
2003	17.9	28.4	42	93.1	42	43.1	52.3	97.8	25	61.3
diff	-6.1	-8.6	-	-	+6	-0.9	+23.3	+65.8	-4	+29.3

Both categories have a reduced involvement from 2001 to 2003 for face-to face and an increase usage for both categories for intranet/internet support confirms a similar trend. Nevertheless, the new question for 2003 concerning face-to-face induction suggests that a new relationship should at least start with human contact! Online training is increasingly being undertaken by other Units.

5.3.1 Specialist Student Support

Table 26 indicates that specialist student support, in terms of for students with special needs or distance/off-campus learners has not increased since 2001; indeed in the case of distance learning has dropped. It is interesting to note this alongside the fact that distance learning is no longer considered a driver for VLE use (Table 12). Since 2001 the Disability Discrimination Act has come into force for educational establishments and this may mean that such support is now 'integrated' rather than seen as specialist support. The data available does not allow us to fully confirm this interpretation.

Table 26: Do any of the following groups of students receive more focused or specialised support and training in the use of VLEs (Q4.20)

	2001	2003
Students with special needs	25%	25.0%
Distance/off-campus learners	45%	37.5%
Not answered	-	54.5%

6.0 Conclusions

The overall picture is one of evolutionary consolidation. Centralisation is increasing of matters considered strategic, devolvement is occurring for a range of support activities. There is a markedly greater use of VLEs, with central direction, discernable in post-91 universities compared to pre-91 universities. Selected examples of this differentiation are given in Table 27. These statistics have been abstracted from other tables and brought together merely to illustrate this point. HE colleges do not offer such clearly discernable patterns.

Table 27 : Selected differences between pre-91 and post-91 HE

Summary of Question	Question No	Pre-91(%)	Post-91(%)
All subjects	4.3	5.3	23.7
All Departments	4.3	18.4	31.6
No, students >10,000	4.4	5.3	36.8
No. staff >200	4.5	31.6	44.7
No. modules 500-999	4.6	10.5	23.7
No modules > 1000	4.6	-	13.2
VLE–student records automatic linkage	4.11	15.8	44.7
Stated targets	4.13	13.2	52.7
Driver = efficiency	4.14	13.2	23.7
Project Funding	4.15	78.9	57.9

Taking the HEI sector as a whole, the following conclusions can be summarised:

1. The number of institutions using a VLE has slightly increased.
2. There is a discernable increase in VLE usage as measured by number of staff, students and course modules.
3. The average number of VLEs used within an institution has not discernibly decreased
4. The range of VLEs being selected is narrowing.
5. VLEs are being used across all subjects.
6. Usage in HE colleges is markedly lowest of any of the HE sector.
7. Usage is primarily supplementary within a course.
8. Technical support remains heavily concentrated in central IT units, as is systems support, though with more being devolved to distributed IT.
9. Integration with MIS has increased, though full integration remains limited. A similar pattern in identified for integration with Libraries.
10. Strategic decisions and targets are increasingly taking place centrally.

11. Enhancement to learning and teaching has significantly increased as the primary driver, with efficiency remaining the second most important motivator. Distance-learning has markedly decreased in importance.
12. Project-funding is the largest single manner in which VLE activity is encouraged.
13. The career implications for academic staff spending time exploring the use of a VLE in their learning and teaching are not perceived to be very positive.
14. Most dedicated support staff are still located centrally, though there has been an increased devolvement to non-IT units.
15. For support for students, the balance between IT units and other support units has remained relatively stable between the two surveys. Both categories show a marked increase in Intranet/Internet support.
16. Regarding specialist support, that for distance learning has decreased, that for special needs has remained constant.

Postscript

During the planning, delivery and analysis phases of the second survey, it was remarkable how many other agencies and individuals were either considering conducting related surveys or were keen to know of any such work being conducted. This might, of course, imply that awareness of the second survey was not as broad as might have been hoped. But in order to prevent questionnaire fatigue and duplication of effort, the community, (however we care to define ourselves), must endeavour to communicate our common interests with each other more effectively.

References:

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ELTI Project (2003) <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=project_elti>

JISC, December 2002 http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=mle_overview

Appendix 1 – Detailed breakdown of results from the 2003 Survey

This Appendix records the results of Section 4 of the 2003 Survey conducted by UCISA and JISC in 2003. Note that a similar suite of results is also contained within the Report 'Managed Learning Environment in Further and Higher Education in the UK http://www.jisc.ac.uk/project_mle_activity.html which was prepared by The Social Informatics Research Unit and submitted to and subsequently accepted by JISC. The questions relating to the VLE were contained within Section 4 of that survey. Where relevant, the analysis has been broken down into pre-91, post-91 Universities and Colleges of Higher Education. However, unlike the JISC report, this Appendix does not record the analysis for Further Education.

The statistics in the tables below have been calculated independently by both a team within UCISA and by a statistician within the Consortium. It was therefore possible to cross-check our analyses and identify any errors. We are confident, therefore, that the statistics below are accurate.

Note that the Social Informatics Research Unit were not contractually required to comment on the VLE analysis. We have not done so either within this Appendix – commentary pertaining to any questions in the 2003 Survey have been analysed in the body of the Report and interpretation weaved into the narrative for the longitudinal survey.

Question 4.1: Does your institution currently use any virtual learning environments (VLEs)?

Table 1: Incidence of HEIs using VLEs

	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Yes	84.4%	97.4%	66.7%	86.3%
No	15.6%	2.6%	33.3%	13.7%

***Question 4.2**: What VLEs, commercial or in-house, are used in your institution?*

Table 2: VLEs used by HE institution type

	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Blackboard	39.5%	55.2%	16.7%	43.2%
Bodington	5.3%	-	8.3%	33.4%
Colloquia	2.6%	-	-	1.1%
COSE	-	-	-	-
FirstClass	26.3%	13.2%	16.7%	19.3%
Fretwell Downing	2.6%	-	-	1.1%
Granada Learnwise	2.6%	7.9%	16.7%	6.8%
Lotus Domino	10.5%	5.3%	-	6.8%
Lotus Learning Space	7.9%	2.6%	-	4.5%
Merlin	2.6%	-	-	1.1%
Top Class	-	-	-	-
TekniCal Virtual Cam	-	-	-	-
WebCT	47.4%	21.1%	33.3%	34.1%
Other VLE - developed in-house	21.1%	26.3%	16.7%	22.7%
Commercial intranet-based product	5.3%	5.3%	-	4.5%
Intranet based - developed in-house	28.9%	23.7%	25.0%	26.1%
Other	26.3%	4.5%	5.3%	18.2%

Question 4.3: What subject areas or departments are using VLEs in your institution?

Table 3: Subjects/departments etc using VLE

Subjects	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
All subjects	5.3%	23.7%	-	12.5%
1-5 subjects listed	2.6%	5.3%	16.7%	5.7%
6-10 subjects listed	10.5%	5.3%	-	6.8%
11-15 subjects listed	2.6%	10.5%	-	5.7%
16-25 subjects listed	7.9%	-	-	3.4%
26-35 subjects listed	5.3%	5.3%	-	4.5%
36 or more subjects listed	5.3%	-	-	2.3%
All departments/faculties/ Schools	18.4%	31.6%	8.3%	22.7%
1 or 2 faculties or schools	5.3%	2.6%	16.7%	5.7%
3-5 faculties or schools	10.5%	-	25.0%	8.0%
6-10 faculties or schools	5.3%	5.3%	25.0%	8.0%
Pilots only, 1-5 listed	-	-	-	0.0%
Pilots only, more than 5 listed	2.6%	-	8.3%	2.3%
Pilots only, unspecified number	-	-	-	0.0%
Most subjects/departments	7.9%	2.6%	-	4.5%

***Question 4.4**: How many students currently use VLEs in your institution?*

Table 4: Number of students using VLE in HE

No. of students	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
0	-	-	-	-
499 or less	13.2%	13.2%	33.3%	15.9%
500 - 999	15.8%	-	16.7%	9.1%
1000 - 1999	10.5%	-	-	4.5%
2000 - 2999	13.2%	21.1%	25.0%	18.2%
3000 - 4999	10.5%	10.5%	8.3%	10.2%
5000 - 7499	10.5%	15.8%	8.3%	12.5%
7500 - 9999	13.2%	2.6%	-	6.8%
10000 or more	5.3%	36.8%	-	18.2%
Information not collected	5.3%	-	8.3%	3.4%
Not answered	2.6%	-	-	1.1%

***Question 4.5**: And, how many **teaching staff** currently use VLEs in your institution?*

Table 5: Numbers of staff using VLE in HE

No. of staff	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
None	-	-	-	-
9 or less	10.5%	5.3%	16.7%	9.1%
10 - 29	10.5%	7.9%	25.0%	11.4%
30 - 49	5.3%	7.9%	16.7%	8.0%
50 - 99	15.8%	13.2%	33.3%	17.0%
100 - 199	13.2%	18.4%	-	13.6%
200 or more	31.6%	44.7%	-	33.0%
Information not collected	10.5%	-	8.3%	5.7%
Not answered	2.6%	2.6%	-	2.3%

***Question 4.6**: How many courses or modules currently **actively** use VLEs in your institution?*

Table 6: Number of modules using VLE in HE

No. of modules	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
None	-	-	-	-
9 or less	15.8%	5.3%	33.3%	13.6%
10 - 29	7.9%	7.9%	16.7%	9.1%
30 - 49	5.3%	13.2%	-	8.0%
50 - 99	13.2%	5.3%	16.7%	10.2%
100 - 199	13.2%	15.8%	25.0%	15.9%
200 -299	13.2%	5.3%	-	8.0%
300 - 399	-	7.9%	-	3.4%
400 - 499	13.2%	-	-	5.7%
500 - 999	10.5%	23.7%	-	14.8%
1000 or more	-	13.2%	-	5.7%
Information not collected	5.3%	2.6%	8.3%	4.5%
Not answered	2.6%	-	-	1.1%

***Question 4.7**: How do all the VLE courses or modules in use in your institution divide between the following categories?*

Table 7: Mean percentage of course or modules in each category in HE

Categories	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Web supplemented, online participation is optional for the student	54.67%	54.69%	75%	57.28%
Web dependent, participation required through interaction with content	10.45%	15.6%	15%	13.35%
Web dependent, participation required through communication with staff/students	9.48%	11.94%	6.8%	10.24%
Web dependent, participation required through interaction with content and communication	17.27%	11.2%	3.2%	12.74%
Fully online course	5.64%	5.71%	1%	5.08%

***Question 4.8**: What units are responsible for installing and maintaining the VLEs in your institution?*

Table 8: Responsible units in HE

Units	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Central Information Technology support	84.2%	81.6%	100%	85.2%
Distributed Information Technology support	26.3%	13.2%	25.0%	20.5%
Curriculum staff	15.8%	13.2%	16.7%	14.8%
Other	18.4%	23.7%	8.3%	19.3%

***Question 4.9**: What units provide VLE technical support in your institution?*

Table 9: Technical support units in HE

Units	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Central Information Technology support	89.5%	81.6%	91.7%	86.4%
Distributed Information Technology support	18.4%	13.2%	25.0%	17.0%
Learning and Teaching Support Unit (LTSU)	28.9%	18.4%	8.3%	21.6%
Educational Development Unit (EDU)	5.3%	15.7%	-	9.1%
Dedicated VLE support	18.4%	36.8%	16.7%	26.1%
Local	10.5%	2.6%	-	5.7%
Outsourced supplier or specialist	7.9%	2.6%	8.3%	5.7%
Other	2.6%	10.5%	-	5.7%

***Question 4.10**: And, what units provide VLE system administration support in your institution?*

Table 10: System administration support in HE

Units / suppliers	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Central Information Technology support	73.7%	63.2%	75.0%	69.3%
Distributed Information Technology support	23.6%	13.2%	25.0%	19.3%
Learning and Teaching Support Unit (LTSU)	34.2%	31.6%	16.7%	30.7%
Educational Development Unit (EDU)	10.5%	13.2%	-	10.2%
Dedicated VLE support	10.5%	34.2%	25.0%	22.7%
Local	18.4%	5.3%	16.7%	12.5%
Outsourced supplier or specialist	5.3%	2.6%	-	3.4%
Other	7.9%	10.5%	-	8.0%

***Question 4.11*: How are links provided between the VLEs and student records?**

Table 11: Linking methods in HE

Method	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Automated creation of student accounts in VLE from student records	15.8%	44.7%	25.0%	29.5%
Creation of student accounts file for data transfer into VLE	39.5%	39.5%	58.3%	42.0%
Automatic creation of student access to specific courses/modules	10.5%	28.9%	25.0%	20.5%
Automatic transfer of assessment results between VLE and MIS	2.6%	2.6%	-	2.3%
Other – please write in	5.3%	2.6%	7.9%	4.5%
No links provided	36.8%	13.2%	16.7%	23.9%

***Question 4.12*: At what level in your institution are decisions made about VLE implementation?**

Table 12: Decision-making level in HE

Level	**Pre-1991 universities**	**Post-1991 universities**	**HE colleges**	**All HE respondents**
Institution	68.4%	78.9%	66.7%	72.7%
Faculty	10.5%	18.4%	7.9%	13.6%
School/Department	36.8%	23.6%	33.3%	30.7%
Principal	2.6%	10.5%	8.3%	6.8%
Senior Management Team	34.2%	57.9%	50.0%	46.6%
Department level	21.1%	18.4%	25.0%	20.5%
Section staff	10.5%	13.2%	16.7%	12.5%

***Question 4.13*: Does your institution have a stated target for the use of VLEs (e.g. 10% of courses)?**

Table 13: Targets for VLE use

Target	**Pre-1991 universities**	**Post-1991 universities**	**HE colleges**	**All HE respondents**
Yes	13.2%	52.7%	16.7%	30.6%
No	81.6%	44.7%	83.3%	65.9%
Not answered	5.3%	2.6%	-	3.4%

***Question 4.14**: What are the main reasons for moving to or considering the use of VLEs in your institution?*

Table 14: Main reasons for moving to or considering a VLE in HEIs

Reasons	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Enhanced teaching/learning	65.8%	60.5%	83.3%	65.9%
Efficiency/management/ coordination/centralisation	13.2%	23.7%	-	15.9%
Flexibility	5.3%	7.9%	8.3%	6.8%
Funding/cost issues	-	5.3%	-	2.3%
Student demand/expectations	-	7.9%	-	3.4%
Widening access/ opportunities/choice	2.6%	5.3%	16.7%	5.7%
Competitive edge/increased market share	2.6%	7.9%	-	4.5%
Stable/advanced technology	2.6%	-	-	1.1%

***Question 4.15**: How is VLE development supported or encouraged within your institution?*

Table 15: Development methods in HE

Method	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Project funding	78.9%	57.9%	75.0%	69.3%
Allowing academic staff development time	42.1%	63.2%	66.7%	54.5%
Allowing support staff development time	39.5%	39.5%	66.7%	43.2%
Career enhancement	10.5%	7.9%	8.3%	9.1%
VLE development not supported or encouraged	2.6%	5.3%	-	2.3%
Specialist appointment	2.6%	-	-	1.1%
Not supported or encouraged	2.6%	2.6%	-	2.3%
Other	2.6%	2.6%	-	3.4%
Not answered				4.5%

***Question 4.16**: Are dedicated staff employed to support VLEs?*

Table 16: Staff support in HE

Support	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Yes centrally	50.0%	50.0%	66.7%	52.3%
Yes locally	-	2.6%	8.3%	2.3%
Yes both	26.3%	26.3%	-	22.7%
No dedicated VLE support staff	15.8%	15.8%	25.0%	17.0%
Not answered	7.9%	5.3%	-	5.7%

***Question 4.17**: Moving on to consider the support offered to staff, which units across the institution provide staff development and support for use of VLEs?*

Table 17: Support offered to staff in HE

Support Units	Staff development of learning and teaching use of VLEs			Support in creating new courses			Support in adding content and maintaining courses			Creating web pages		
	Pre-1991	Post-1991	HE coll	Pre-1991	Post-1991	HE coll	Pre-1991	Post-1991	HE coll	Pre-1991	Post-1991	HE coll
Central IT/LIS	42%	29%	25%	42%	29%	25%	34%	29%	67%	63%	45%	83%
Distributed IT	13%	3%	-	13%	3%	-	13%	-	25%	18%	8%	33%
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	37%	34%	25%	37%	34%	25%	32%	32%	17%	21%	24%	25%
Educational Development Unit	26%	18%	8%	26%	18%	8%	13%	11%	-	8%	11%	-
Staff Development Unit	24%	24%	42%	24%	24%	42%	8%	8%	8%	11%	8%	8%
Dedicated VLE support	18%	45%	33%	18%	45%	33%	16%	34%	50%	3%	13%	25%
Local	16%	16%	17%	16%	16%	17%	18%	21%	25%	18%	16%	8%
Other	5%	8%	8%	5%	8%	8%	5%	8%	-	5%	3%	-

***Question 4.18**: What training and development activities are offered to support staff who help other staff in the use of VLEs?*

Table 18: Training and development offered to support staff in HE

Training and Development	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Regular seminars/ training sessions/ workshops run	47.4%	44.7%	33.3%	37.5%
Training & development activities offered, little or no detail	13.2%	21.1%	16.7%	17.0%
Specialist full-time staff appointed/trained available	13.2%	15.8%	8.3%	13.6%
External/vendor/ supplier training courses	13.2%	21.1%	25.0%	12.5%
Training & development activities under development	5.3%	2.6%	0.0%	3.4%
None	2.6%	2.6%	16.7%	4.5%
Not answered	13.2%	10.5%	8.3%	11.4%

***Question 4.19**: And which units across the institution provide student support and training in the use of VLEs?*

Table 19: Student support in HE

Support Units	Face to face training as part of course delivery			Face to face training as part of an IT skills induction			Printed guides			Information on Intranet/ Internet			Online training and support through the VLE		
	Pre-'91	Post '91	HE coll	Pre '91	Post '91	HE coll	Pre '91	Post '91	HE coll	Pre '91	Post '91	HE coll	Pre '91	Post '91	HE coll
Central IT/LIS	16%	11%	33%	32%	37%	42%	37%	32%	58%	53%	37%	50%	24%	16%	42%
Distributed IT	3%	-	8%	8%	8%	-	3%	3%	17%	13%	-	8%	3%	-	8%
Learning and Teaching Support Unit	18%	8%	8%	8%	11%	8%	21%	24%	8%	26%	21%	-	18%	11%	-
Educational Development Unit	5%	5%	-	3%	3%	-	5%	5%	-	8%	8%	-	3%	8%	-
Dedicated VLE support	8%	8%	17%	8%	5%	8%	11%	16%	17%	13%	18%	33%	8%	18%	17%
Local	18%	11%	17%	11%	16%	17%	5%	5%	-	11%	5%	8%	5%	11%	-
Academic staff	53%	68%	75%	16%	37%	50%	18%	16%	8%	26%	13%	17%	8%	26%	8%
Other	8%	5%	-	5%	3%	-	8%	13%	8%	5%	11%	-	5%	13%	-

Question 4.20: Do any of the following groups of students receive more focussed or specialised support and training in the use of VLEs?

Table 20: Specialised support in HE

Student group	Pre-1991 universities	Post-1991 universities	HE colleges	All HE respondents
Students with special needs	28.9%	23.7%	16.7%	25.0%
Distance/off-campus learners	31.6%	47.4%	25.0%	37.5%
Not answered	57.9%	50.0%	58.3%	54.5%