

# Australian Flexible Learning Framework

supporting e-learning opportunities

Case study > Working effectively with other – Virtually anywhere > SA > 2009

## Work effectively with others - Virtually anywhere

TAFESA North Adelaide

### Background

*Certificates II, III and IV in Women's Education* are nationally accredited courses aimed at enabling increased confidence and employability for women attempting to enter/re-enter the work force after years of absence, or otherwise in need of support. Delivered traditionally through face-to-face based classes, women's education assures a safe and nurturing environment and a high level of support from facilitators.

Rarely offered as an external option, there is a need to reach women who may otherwise not be able to attend class in person and gain valuable skills. The aim of this pilot project was to develop and embed resources and learning opportunities online to enable women constrained by distance and circumstance to achieve accreditation in the women's education certificates, and the confidence and skills to enter/re-enter the work force or further education. The long term aim was to reach a greater demographic of women by increasing access and choice with e-learning.

Without Framework funding for the project, many women would not have access to learning and skills development, and facilitators' would not have access to innovative and up-to-date resources and delivery tools, enabling them to deliver learning effectively.



Meetings in Second Life

### What was done

The online course used the virtual world of Second Life (SL), Moodle, Facebook and Skype. The unit delivered was:

*Work effectively with others*

Element 1: Develop effective workplace relationships

Element 2: Contribute to workgroup activities

Delivery of parallel units in both e-learning and face-to-face classes was conducted to provide a point of reference for research into the impact, experience, and differences between online-based learning and traditional approaches to facilitation. Both classes used journal reflections, had fixed class times, discussions and a major assignment. Students in the online course used Facebook, email, and Moodle to hand in assessments and reflections. The content and delivery of both courses was similar with group discussion, exercises, and role-play.

Eight team members from TAFESA Adelaide North worked on the program and held meetings to check progress, share knowledge, and test the development of resources. This included five members of the Vocational Preparation and Equity program, two from Library Services and a *Graduate of Women's Education Certificate IV*. SL veterans from the Business Services program in TAFESA Adelaide South, Ruth Frazer and Jacinta Ryan, were invited to act as consultants.



Some of the project team at our first practise session

### **Project team work**

The first meeting was to determine the requirements of the pilot and develop a plan. This included determining modes of communication and the target participant demographics.

After brainstorming and gathering of information and advice, the project then went on to map out a timetable, project plan, and put together some instructions and an orientation into SL. At this meeting, it was decided a Facebook group for the project team members was required to communicate and keep up-to-date. This worked well, with forums for feedback, a weekly blog, photos, and shared links. The Moodle was registered and set up.

It was decided that the project would enrol nine students from across the state spanning four different TAFE campuses, and that SL, Moodle, Sloodle, Skype and Facebook would be used as tools for delivery. The first task was to ensure that SL was accessible and functional, and that 'voice' could be accessed. The project struck its first hurdle when it discovered that although voice worked fine at Tea Tree Gully TAFE campus, it didn't work at all at the Elizabeth campus. The project's IT manager was very supportive.

Once voice was up and running in the classroom however, it was discovered that the lecturers could not use it on their machines, and IT was called once again.

### **Environment**

At the initial meeting, it was decided that a request to allocate a portion of land on TAFE Island for the project. Class environments for women's education needed to be safe, secure, and welcoming, and it was important that the online classroom retained these characteristics. Women's education is a 'women only' environment, and as such, TAFESA Island did not fulfil the requirement of being a safe haven for women that may have faced difficulty in their lives.

Due time constraints, an increased interest in TAFESA Island by other teams, and in an effort to simulate the nurturing environment of women's education, a space on a private homestead, (Laguna Island), was provided by one of the team members and her partner, Richard Harris. Richard built or lent the project any tools needed 'in-world', and decorated and maintained the classroom environment and security orbs for the projected.



Our Laguna Island Classroom (at Halloween)

### Benefits to having your own virtual space:

- Having control over your own space and full management rights means you can control who comes, goes, and overhears, similar to any ordinary class.
- Learners can set 'home' enabling ease of access.
- Surroundings can be altered and customised/decorated at will, and learners can contribute, unlike real classrooms that have budget and occupational health, and safety considerations.
- Sharing physical space in a face-to-face class can sometimes be a problem. One learner reported frustration at air-conditioner usage when she felt cold and another student felt hot.
- A feeling of belonging and ownership can enhance the sensation of 'being there' and goes a long way towards helping the learners participate fully.

*"Oh, to be in Laguna Island now in r/l, wouldn't it be nice?" - Learner (Facebook)*

*"Another wonderful day at Laguna!!!! Nice to see you all again!!! XX" - Learner (Facebook)*

*"Hi ... have a great day today!!! Just like being at Laguna!!!" - Learner (Facebook)*

- Drawbacks to customising a SL classroom are lack of imagination and the possibility of surroundings becoming too distracting.
- There are no limits or physical boundaries, enabling you to have floating chairs, fly, conduct classes in outer space (or any other place you want).
- Exercises otherwise impossible in real life can be undertaken, like excursions to 'Paris' and 'teleporting'.



Example of a facebook conversation about experiences in Second Life (names blanked for privacy)

## Reference guides

In the following months, the project concentrated on developing systematic instructions as a basic 'how to get around in SL' guide. These are now on 'classroom' walls. (SL has the means to use power point presentations on screen).



Power point reference guides on a cliff wall by the classroom

The project started developing a even more basic quick reference guide as a permanent resource. Power point instructions showing how to download and register in Skype, Facebook and SL were uploaded to Moodle, along with a welcome video of Helaine's avatar 'Evie Emerald' and an overview of the course/equipment requirements. The welcome message was also posted on YouTube at: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=tLZn8kxLKEU>



## Pratice sessions

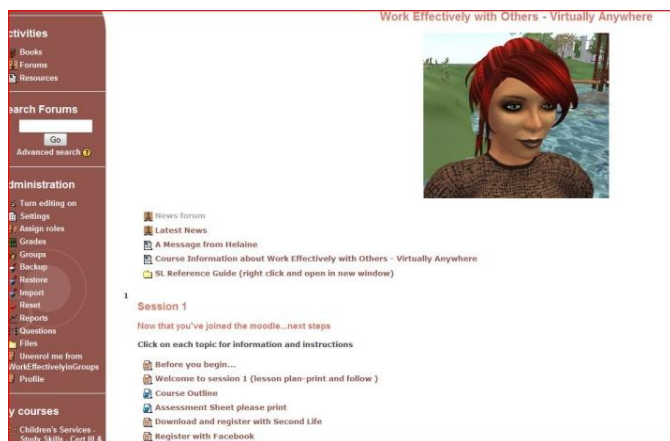
The project team conducted a trial run to see how the instructions and resources measured up. This trial session proved invaluable in weeding out potential problems, determining what worked and what did not, and allowed the project the opportunity to deal with and anticipate any problems that could, and did, crop up:

- Settings on individual computers vary, stopping to check everyone had full functionality was irksome, and another instruction tool emerged as a result.
- Instructions needed to be simplified further and enable print outs for those that preferred them.
- Not being able to use voice, Skype was used instead, however there was difficulty getting the program running.
- Skype continued to time-out on the learners computers, although it has proved immensely useful as a communication tool between staff.



- Registration in SL at this point became a huge problem and it was discovered that Linden Lab (the developers of SL) would only allow five registrations from a single IP address.
- The project gained a premium SL account and contacted Live Aid support who assured the project that once the external IP address was provided then there would be no six month restriction.

With the results of the practise and brainstorming session, the project started to plan and develop classes. Resources were refined further and uploaded in the first session plan onto Moodle.



Front page of our Moodle module

IT support added Sloodle to the Moodle for us, there was a few issues accessing the Moodle development site. By this stage, considering the learning curve the project expected from people totally unfamiliar with the virtual world element, it would be a too much to cope with along with everything else, and so the idea was dropped and focus shifted to Moodle and Facebook.

### More practise:

Another trial was scheduled and the facilitators tried to work from a different room to simulate the distance-based aspect of the exercise.

- Participants managed to register an avatar this time.
- Voice continued to be a problem.
- Annoying glitches like feedback and echo made listening and talking to more than one person confusing.
- The project abandoned the headsets to concentrate on the orientation. It was decided at this stage that it would be better if learners typed and just the lecturers spoke. This worked well.
- The orientation course proved a little difficult for some and although it was fun, it decided that there should be a more basic set up with ample time to experiment in the first session.

*“I had times where I was a bit overwhelmed by talking, listening, reading chat and note-cards as well as working out how to move and fly. It is a lot to do all at once”*  
 – Project team member

- The project continued to develop a quick reference guide and posted it on Moodle so that sections to be accessed, and revisited, as needed.

This session also pointed out a need to ensure that everyone has followed instructions about downloading from Moodle prior to the class, and coming prepared to lessons (something the practise class neglected to do). As a result, once class started, lecturers backed up this process by sending the class an email a day or so prior to the weekly lesson.

A final practise before class commenced produced better results,:

- The project provided time at the beginning of the session to acclimatise.
- Time scheduled to sit down and iron out kinks.
- The session ran smoothly and everyone felt more confident.
- SL was accessed from various locations: Elizabeth campus and Port Adelaide campus.
- One team member accessed SL from home.
- Without the distraction of their peers in the same room, this worked very well.



Team members 'in-world'

## Classes

The blueprint for the sessions was finalised, there was a course plan to follow, and later in the year, course delivery started.

- 10 learners enrolled in women's education were recruited from across four campuses.
- Access to TAFE campus computer suites was available to learners if they could not attend from home, or didn't feel confident to do so.
- To simulate distance-based learning the lecturers worked from a downstairs office in Elizabeth while learners from that campus accessed the learner's computers on the floor above.

## Delivery:

Session plans and instructions were emailed each week to learners a few days prior to a lesson.

- Resources were uploaded to Moodle.
- Homework assignments and all expectations were included in powerpoint, PDF files and word documents, ensuring that all preferred learning needs were accommodated, and that if one method failed another avenue was open.
- The project found it useful to follow a similar timetable each week, the routine helped the learners acclimatise, and as they grew more confident, they used the extra time effectively communicating and gaining SL skills.

## Week one

- Students from Millicent and Noarlunga could not access SL. It was assumed that because there was access at TAFE North, and because of a previous program

involving SL at TAFE South, it meant that learners would also have access. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

- The multiple address issue cropped up again with learners from Port Adelaide unable to register an avatar of their own. One of the lecturers lent them her avatar so two were able to attend class sharing an avatar between them.

### Week two

- The project found that TAFE South was still blocked; this is where we really needed a contingency plan. Learners were set to studying the reference guide on Moodle, logged a job with IT services, arranged a catch up session before the next week's class, and continued the session.
- Fortunately, that week, the learners from Port Adelaide had managed to register their own avatars, although they reported some issues with accessing Moodle.
- Learners that were present the previous week went to TAFE SA Island to explore while new learners were helped.
- Learners were then shown various means of communication within SL and performed teleporting and exercises designed to encourage aiding and working with others to achieve a goal.
- Facebook was used as a social medium between learners, and they were asked to post their homework and encouraged them to keep in touch.



Students visiting Anangu Inworld (another Innovations project in SL) on TafeSA Island

### Week three:

- Learners from Noarlunga were still unable to access SL at the catch-up session, and this once again reiterated the need to check things and re-check before class.
- With the help of IT Services access to SL by the time was available and the class gathered the next morning.
- Communication continued to be a problem and the team realised that it needed to have a regimented question and answer methodology during class discussion, so that it knew who had heard and understood and who had not.
- Asking each learner to type a response was time consuming at first, but it worked well and things progressed smoothly.
- Learners were taught how to teleport and fly over the island on a trick or treat treasure hunt, combining small group exercises for *Working with Others* with learning SL skills.

### Week four:

- Learners were more confident in their ability to function and communicate.

- The team delivered occupational health and safety online and in SL session with success.
- Discussed class norms.
- The project also conducted an excursion to the Women's Studies Resource Hub, which was an annex of the University of Ohio located in SL.
- Two students dropped out, one because of over commitment and the other because an inability to attend had caused her to fall too far behind to continue.



Discussion in week four

#### **Week five:**

Learners were allocated week five to research for their major assignment, while the project team delivered a presentation at the *Edayz09* conference.

- Some learners joined in the presentation from SL to answer questions, demonstrating how SL worked in real time.

#### **Week six:**

In week six, the learners took lecturers on excursions they had planned in groups as their major assignment.

- This involved working together to successfully arrange an excursion, send out invitations, teleport the class to and from locations, and act as hosts.
- The traditional class had a similar assignment - working together to host a Christmas party, issuing invitations, setting up a location etc.

The project was finished with a face-to-face meeting at the Botanical Gardens in Adelaide, and this served as both a break up party and a feedback session.

### **Benefits experienced by TAFESA Women's Education**

Working on the project was beneficial in many ways. Facilitators developed new skills, including alternate methods of communicating online, and the use of computer programs to deliver and design online learning tools.

- The team developed a quick reference guide of instructions as an aid to getting started in SL.
- Customisable exercises/activities well suited to adaptation for many different units.
- Resources were made and uploaded to Moodle. They were developed in many different formats to cater for individual learning styles.



- This course would make an excellent unit providing training to lecturers and/or learners wanting to get started in SL.
- The Women's Education group on Facebook has 99 members (and growing).
- SL is enabled at TAFE campuses all over the state.
- Voice is now functional in SL across campuses.
- Accessed free resources like Debut Video Capture for screen shots and movie making.
- Extra skills were gained both facilitators and learners during the project including:
  - Greater confidence using technology.
  - Proficiency in media such as PowerPoint and Word.
  - Scripting and building skills in SL.
  - Typing and general computing techniques.
- A better understanding of online delivery was gained, and how to adapt it to suit learners' needs.
- A successful and popular Women's Education course *Work Effectively with Others – Virtually Anywhere* is now offered as an elective to women across the state.
- Presentations of the pilot program to share information with others online in e-Gems and at the *Edayz09* conference. The resources are accessible online at: <http://networksevents.flexiblelearning.net.au/webx?13@427.IRsdaGTibuU.12@.1aec4d7f>
- *Edayz09* - <http://box.net/tanseconlife>
- Record of events as they occurred: <http://e-ffectivecommunication.blogspot.com>
- Connections to overseas universities were made and a wealth of online and in-world resources are readily accessible - (University of Ohio and SUNY NY)



The Women's Studies Resource Hub at Ohio University in Second Life

## Lessons learnt

When dealing with technology anything can and will go wrong. One of the most lasting impressions from this project was the need to anticipate, test and double check everything prior to setting up and delivering sessions. Double-checking everything is paramount. Assuming that something will work just because it worked before, or worked somewhere else can lead to frustrating delays.

## Developing resources

There was a need to acknowledge the actual time spent in planning and developing resources for online learning. Testing, re-testing, and devising exercises that embed orientation skills as well as

assessing competency consume a large amount of time. In both online learning and classroom-based facilitation, the initial set up and development of resources can be time intensive.

- In a classroom based environment, learning objects can be heavily text-based.
- There is more opportunity to use developed resources in a face-to-face class.
- In our project, facilitators needed time to learn and orientate themselves to the medium.
- In an online-based platform more support is needed, you cannot just deposit resources and leave learners to their own devices, without the same level of engagement a face-to-face classroom brings.

*“You can’t put text intensive resources online and expect them to work.”* - Helaine Costello (team member)

- In a virtual environment, delivery of instructions need to be embedded into an online learning management system, and a lot of time is involved in creating and setting up such resources.
- Simple, step-by step instructions, with screen captures and diagrams, combined with a more traditional classroom session were the best methods to guide and facilitate the class.
- Team members had to anticipate any questions that may arise, and be prepared for any technical hiccups that could occur.
- Practice sessions are important before offering the course to ensure that the methods and exercises chosen will work and are viable.
- In contrast, in face-to-face facilitation, if there is a glitch in plans then it is an easy matter to move along to something else and adapt.

*“Tech issues in real life might be a pain in the neck but it doesn’t stop you from being there and delivering the lesson.”*- Helen Dootson (teacher)

- Online, however, if something does not work, for instance if the classroom is inaccessible or the internet server is down, then it is more difficult to keep delivering the lesson.
- It is an advantage in an online class to have an assistant to take care of phone calls and technical problems that may arise, enabling the facilitator to keep to the session plan and keep the class running without making everyone else wait.
- In both methods of delivery, online and face-to-face, once resources are developed and implemented preparation time is less.

## Visual clues

Face-to-face learning normally has visual clues to enable facilitators to judge learners’ attention and comprehension. Without those clues other methods of determining a learner’s focus need to be implemented. A learner also needs visual clues during class to help keep on track and retain interest, and to let them know they are on track, (or not), this is often lacking in online delivery.

Body language was considered important, because:

*“...it was less open to misinterpretation”*- Learner

For the project text-based chat was used and a hands-up, hands-down animation.



Hands up indicated students had heard and understood

- Different methods of communication give students in SL a broad range to choose from, and often there may be private messages passing back and forth, this equates to the old 'pass the note in the back of the class' conduct with the added benefit (for the learner) of nobody knowing what is going on.
- Benefits of private IMs during class could include a method to catch up and ask quick questions.
- Disadvantages are private conversations that have nothing to do with the class and can be distracting. Teachers have no way of knowing and so cannot moderate this function.

Visual clues work both ways, Helen Dootson, who conducted the face-to-face sessions said that:

*“A learner’s expression or body language isn’t always a true indication of what a student is necessarily feeling at the time, and a confident manner may be a well-built wall hiding insecurities that can be overlooked when gauging a student’s ability to complete tasks. Therefore, the facilitator can get the erroneous impression that less support is needed for that particular student.”*

## Activities

- A number of interesting and fun exercises are necessary for online learning. The class teleported each other in a leapfrog style, danced the salsa, and scooted down a mountain via a curvy ramp.
- Listening, and concentrating hard on a disembodied voice can be tiring. Constant breaks are needed to keep the learners attention. Due to this, it is not possible to sit a class down and conduct a lecture in the old-fashioned traditional manner for long periods.
- Activities keep learners alert and less likely to drift away from the 'classroom'.



During an orientation exercise

## The results

Facebook status updates and posts, emailed reflections, discussion and observation during activities enabled us to assess the online learner's progress. The traditional classes used discussion, reflection in the form of a weekly journal handed up to the lecturer, and the observation of activities. Most sessions were heavily text-based and involved a lot of reading and writing. Learners who completed the online class successfully gained competency.

### Surveys

Ian Phillips of I & J Management Services conducted a pre and post course national benchmarking survey. Among the results submitted it shows that women participating in the pilot project reported an increase in confidence in meeting people, their ability to communicate and technology skills.

Unfortunately collecting survey results from the face-to-face class proved problematic due to non-attendance, and conflicting time schedules, and as a result the survey doesn't provide an accurate overview. The online based learners filled in the survey at their own convenience.

### Group feedback

Focus group discussions were held in both online and the face-to-face classes to determine the influence upon learners by the different modes of delivery. At the end of the course, students' discussed feelings about their experience:

#### **At the face-to-face group meeting, only three students were present.**

- 2 were absent because of an accident
- 1 had a bereavement
- 1 was sick
- 1 had withdrawn.

Of the three that participated in the focus group, all were there for self-improvement, to become more confident, and gain work skills.

- All stated that being part of a group was important to them and that part of the reason they came to class was to associate with other like-minded women.
- All felt safe in the face-to-face classroom environment and with the other people in their group.
- A class member from our face-to-face group said that she felt the need to be amongst people again in order to be able around strangers, and the company of women in the women's education face-to-face classes was helping her to gain trust and confidence in her dealings with others.
- One participant saw the idea of working in groups online was 'absurd' and could not comprehend how a group project could work without personal contact between group members:  
*"It is a ridiculous concept because it would not be possible to form a group and effectively work together."*
- All said leaving the house to be among other people was a strong motivation in attending classes though - *"sometimes I felt I needed to push myself to attend."*
- All attended class regularly although they said it was hard sometimes because children became sick or childcare was unavailable.
- One said the idea of studying at night when the children were asleep was appealing.
- Three of the women said that they had experienced a variety of learning methods, including video and activities.

- They had enjoyed a high level of support from their lecturer.
- One mentioned physical restraints to online study saying - *"I can't sit for long periods."*
- All had taken on some form of online learning in the past (mainly read and answer the quiz style) and found it - *"dull, unstimulating and boring."* As a result, they were disinclined to try again.

A learner later approached the project team expressing an interest in SL classes. She said that she had never experienced learning in a virtual world environment, so could not really make a comparison and had nothing to base her comments on. She has expressed an interest in enrolling in the next e-learning session. Learners from the e-learning class met face-to-face to discuss their learning experience and all attended.

The outcome of this discussion provided information about how the learners felt, the personal experience of face-to-face learning was not lacking in SL, although they eventually felt the need to meet and said they still needed face-to-face contact. Many learners spoke of increased confidence in their real life and stated that they developed additional skills because of their involvement. Mentioning a fellow learner, they remarked on how much more 'open' she was than usual, and how she involved herself more from behind her avatar.

All agreed that a barrier to online learning was the need for self-discipline but that the class like structure of the SL lessons, the timetable, and the set session times helped them keep focused.

#### **Comments included:**

*"Wish they had something like this when I was in High school."* - Learner

*"They don't see you go red in the face when you get something wrong."*- Learner

*"You can fix everything by the click of a mouse"*- Learner

Learners were enthusiastic and keen to enrol in another course. All were impressed with their experience and delighted to meet each other. Although initially learners struggled a bit with adapting at first they said that after they had the hang of it, the class environment and the experience of meeting others enriched their learning experience.

*"I can work from class or home with others from around the state. WOW! Technology is awesome."*  
– Learner

*"I didn't expect the graphics ...so much better than a real classroom, casual setting, fun, stimulating and I met new people"* – Learner

Both classes were asked to reflect on their learning outcomes and experiences.



E-learning group	Non e-learning group
The way your learning was delivered, what you liked and didn't like:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It was great. I really enjoyed it</li> <li>▪ Didn't like the difficulties without having a lecturer to discuss issues with.</li> <li>▪ Very helpful and informative, I liked everything.</li> <li>▪ It was good once I was able to get into Second Life and became confident.</li> <li>▪ The delivery of what we were learning was delivered very well and understood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I loved being taught in an open, respectful way. It was always delivered in an informative, clear and personal way.</li> <li>▪ I liked it all.</li> <li>▪ Some of the classes were too large and some were too small for effective progress.</li> </ul>
The importance of personal and/or face-to-face communication in your learning:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only when I found difficulties, but it was pretty good and I found things were explained enough without face-to-face.</li> <li>▪ Like to see who I'm talking to.</li> <li>▪ More of an understanding and good to interact.</li> <li>▪ I liked the concept, but disliked not meeting the people face to face first.</li> <li>▪ We did that in Second Life. It is still important if there are any problems and for interaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extremely important to me to be able to picture and visualise people and the situation.</li> <li>▪ Emotions, genuineness, social contact, instant help, visuals.</li> <li>▪ The ability to ask questions and elaborate on questions. I find face to face learning extremely important for self esteem, socialisation and general communication.</li> </ul>
The importance of personal and/or face-to-face interaction in your learning:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can be somewhat important.</li> <li>▪ A more personal approach is good, but left to work alone is challenging and I like that</li> <li>▪ To be shown things that you are unsure of</li> <li>▪ Would have a better rapport with the other classmates if had met face to face.</li> <li>▪ The interaction in and out of Second Life was very important to get our assignments completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very important to be able to interact with classmates.</li> <li>▪ It makes it fun and social and can do physical stuff, and verbal stuff.</li> <li>▪ High.</li> <li>▪ Very. I believe it helps develop inter and intra personal skills and communication.</li> </ul>
The flexibility of your learning experience:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Love it.</li> <li>▪ Great for time management, work around your lifestyle.</li> <li>▪ I was able to learn other facets of using the internet and social networking.</li> <li>▪ The flexibility was the most pleasurable thing to have.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very flexible.</li> <li>▪ Good. The teachers/lecturers have been flexible as long as I have communication with them.</li> </ul>
Your satisfaction with your learning experience:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It was great.</li> <li>▪ Was satisfied with how I learned techniques in dealing with situations.</li> <li>▪ Very satisfied with my learning experience</li> <li>▪ It was very different and I probably would not have done Facebook and Second Life without doing this course.</li> <li>▪ I have picked up quite a lot of new things in communications and that is always good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extremely satisfied.</li> <li>▪ Very satisfied.</li> <li>▪ Excellent.</li> <li>▪ Highly satisfied.</li> </ul>
Your main learning outcomes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How to communicate with patience and helping out in situations that are unavoidable.</li> <li>▪ To really listen to instruction, to manage your time in lesson, learn to never give up</li> <li>▪ Being exposed to Second Life and Facebook and the various possibilities.</li> <li>▪ How to use Second Life, Facebook and even Skype.</li> <li>▪ How to work in a group and help others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developed more confidence and an understanding of several topics. Passing my chosen subjects.</li> <li>▪ Future guidance and direction.</li> <li>▪ Improvement.</li> <li>▪ I have learnt a lot.</li> </ul>
Your experience of technology used in your learning:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It's good.</li> <li>▪ I've learnt more.</li> <li>▪ Sometimes were difficulties but everything was overcome.</li> <li>▪ Confidence with technology and so convenient, so much more to learn.</li> <li>▪ It has broadened my horizons in the technological area.</li> <li>▪ I have always tried to keep up with technology and this really brought a lot more out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use the internet, which is slow.</li> <li>▪ Some in homework.</li> <li>▪ I prefer not to learn on computer.</li> </ul>

Your enjoyment of the TAFESA Island\*\*/your classroom environment (\*\*please note that in this instance TafeSa Island = Laguna Island)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loved it!</li> <li>▪ Loved the second life experience.</li> <li>▪ This was great, I really liked the whole experience of TAFE SA Island!!!</li> <li>▪ Yes I enjoyed my time in TAFE Island and I really enjoyed participating in the excursions with the help of the class.</li> <li>▪ Wonderful, friendly and supportive.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Love it.</li> <li>▪ High.</li> <li>▪ Very highly enjoyable.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Reflections and suggestions

The project found that the best method of delivery involved using Moodle as our base for reference and guides, and as a pick up point for session plans, SL to hold lectures, conduct classes and activities, and Facebook to socialise and receive feedback. While some would argue that the personal touch in an online classroom is missing, friendships are developed, and horizons broadened. In addition the women in our class continue to connect to, and support each other via Facebook messages and games.

It was interesting to note personal strengths and talents emerging. One learner became our nominated photographer when it was noticed that her real life talent in photography had transferred online. In terms of delivery both methods of learning have benefits, although nothing will take the place of visual clues and personal attendance. There were advantages to learning in SL in the way of increased typing competency, more proficient computing skills and a global community with a wealth of resources.

- Practise sessions and constant testing were very important in ensuring a successful outcome to the project and adaptability was crucial.
- Ample time needs to be provided to prepare resources and carry out tests.
- It was useful to have an assistant to deal with any issues that occur, enabling the facilitator to continue with the lesson.
- Skype was an excellent tool in terms of communication while designing course content, speaking directly to each other on headphones meant hands were free to access files and paperwork, and resources could be shared via Skype's file share function.
- Trying to learn everything in SL in a week or two is impossible. The project ignored the clothes and buildings and focused on communication. Clear instructions were provided to learners to access in their own time. By the end of the course, they were mentoring each other.
- Ownership of an avatar is very important. Having complete control over your own 'skin' in SL connects the learner with in-world events and enhances the experience, giving a more personal feel.
- Control over land rights and ownership of a parcel of land is important in terms of tailoring the environment to suit learning needs and styles and to give learners a sense of safety and belonging.
- Meeting new people was a key factor in both face-to-face and online classes. In a virtual environment the horizons are vast and its possible to communicate with people from many different countries and cultures, adding to the learning outcomes and experiences
- Obtaining the results of surveys was easier through online means like email. It was awkward and time consuming waiting for, and chasing up face-to-face results

- By the end of the six weeks, learners previously unsure and unconfident were accessing SL confidently and independently from the library or from home unaided.

*“I feel like I can do anything electronically now - I'm not scared of going down that path” – Learner*

Online learning does not have to mean isolation and rigid self-discipline. Classes can be conducted in a traditional way, using set class times and session plans. Students can still feel connected to each other, and to their facilitator, and learning outcomes achieved successfully.

In discussion with facilitators and students, it was agreed that face-to-face learning was preferable, but that online delivery filled a gap, reaching women otherwise unable to benefit.

*“(if) this type of schooling was around yrs. ago I would have learnt a lot more” - Learner*

*“I felt really great about being involved in this group as I believe this is the way to go for persons who are unable to study in a classroom situation”- Learner*

## Framework connection

The national training system’s e-learning strategy, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework<sup>1</sup>) funds and supports E-learning Innovations projects which aim to embed e-learning into the national training system by supporting and enabling innovation in training design and delivery, at the state and territory level.

- The *Working effectively with others – Virtually anywhere* project aims to deliver Women’s Education courses to women otherwise unable or disinclined to attend regular classes.

## Acknowledgement

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<sup>1</sup> <http://flexiblelearning.net.au>