



# 20 quick wins

VLE4VET



**20 straightforward ways to  
start using a VLE to enhance  
your teaching and learning**



# Introduction

This publication is designed for teachers who are just starting out using the power of a VLE with their students.

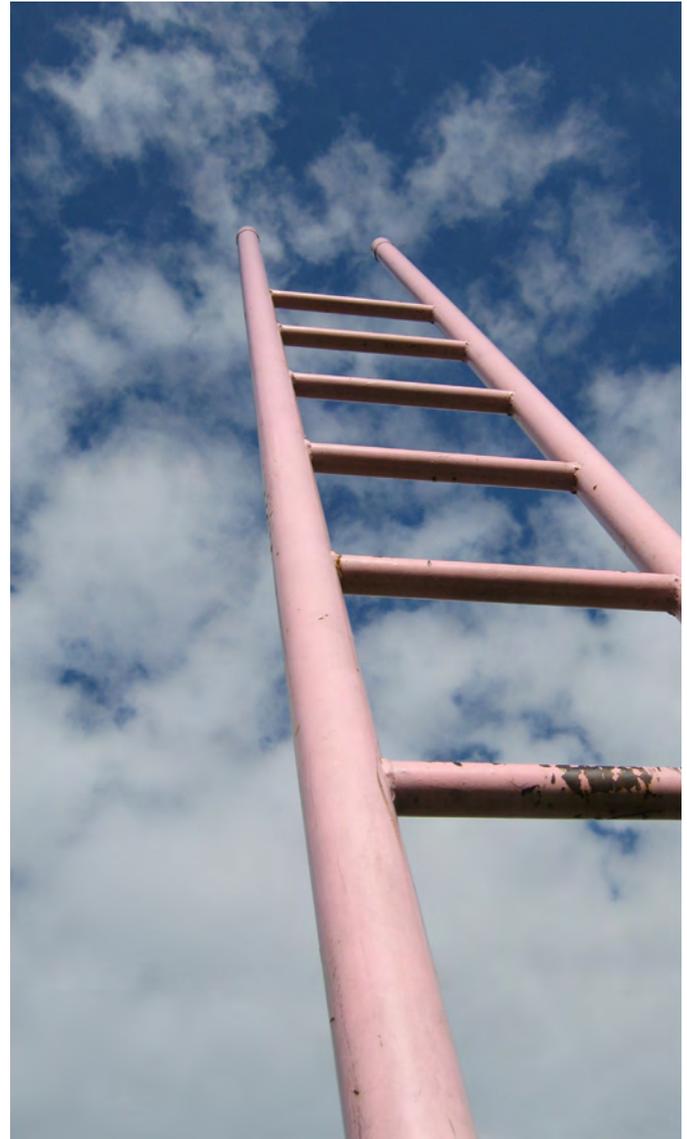
The short, simple tasks given here are designed to introduce you to the VLE system and look at some of the more common tasks associated with its usage.

This document makes certain assumptions about teachers' level of technical competence and their understanding of certain terminology. If there's something that is not understood it's worth taking a look at the accompanying documents in this series:

- What is a VLE?
- Benefits of a VLE
- xxxx xxxx
- xxxxx xxxxx

Alongside each task there is a space for notes: use this to keep track of questions, insights or particular steps for your VLE.

If you wish, you can work through the exercises from 1-20 in order. But equally, you can use this document to dip in and out of, picking quick wins that will be of most use to you in your direct teaching practice or with a particular subject course in mind.





photograph by Alessandro Valli

# Quick wins 1-20

**1** Add a welcome message to your course page, giving your email address, staffroom contact times and other useful details.

Most VLEs will give you a page to add course leader contact details in. If you have the facility, upload a picture of yourself. This will serve two purposes - it will let new students identify and feel comfortable with you before you meet ... and it will ease you into the process of uploading pictures to the VLE.



Teacher notes:

## 2 Add your course handbook, scheme of learning and reading list to your course.

You'll need to think about what structure you want your VLE course to take at this point. Are you going to have a single section for all documentation? Are you going to have multiple sections arranged in a single-tier or will you go for a tree structure arranged in a hierarchical layout? What will work best for you and your students?

Think also about when and where your students may access this information. What's the best format to upload in ... doc, pdf, plain text?

Teacher notes:



# 3 Add a first resource to your course - how about an introductory PowerPoint show?

VLEs make great repositories for your class/course resources. They can hold any kind of electronic document or file and, again, they can reflect any structure that suits your course organisation system. The previous quick win should have had you thinking about this structure, now you'll start to create and populate it.

*Note: some teachers will create the entire course structure at the start of the course with empty folders, others will allow it to grow organically to reflect requirements and/or timelines.*



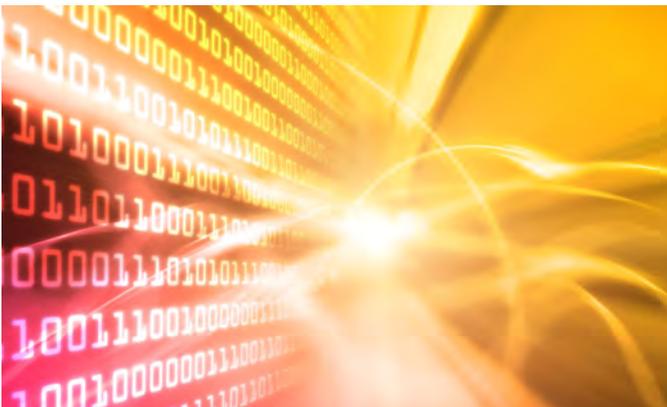
Teacher notes:

## 4 Add a set of induction materials to your online course.

One of the major benefits of a VLE is the ability to add resources for students to access outside of normal classroom time. So, while an induction is probably part of your course anyway it can often be rushed due to teaching time constraints. Uploading materials to the VLE allows you to pass on much more information that students can access in their own time.

An added benefit is that, as most students will be able to access these resources from home, they can also be shared with parents.

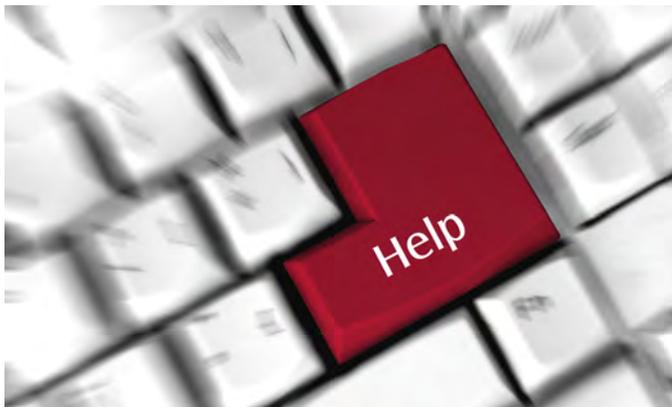
Teacher notes:



# 5 Set up your first discussion board/forum, an icebreaker for new students.

Discussion boards (or Forums) can be one of the most powerful tools in the VLE toolbox. They encourage community, independent learning, peer support and confident question asking.

In the same way as you thought about your course folder structure in the previous quick wins, think about the structure that you want your discussion board(s) to have. Will you have separate boards for separate parts of the course or will you have one board and multiple topic areas within it? Will you have a “social” board or will it be purely academic?



Teacher notes:

# 6 Put up links to the three most important websites you want your students to look at.

The ability to add a resource of web links into your VLE course can be very powerful. Most VLEs will either have a function that exists to “add a web link” or will automatically add the code to convert text into web links so that if you just add the URL (e.g. [www.ccn.ac.uk](http://www.ccn.ac.uk)) it will automatically convert this to a working web link. Again, think about where web links would be best located - all on one page or in context throughout your course.

Teacher notes:



# 7 Start a class or teachers blog.

Blogs are great for reflective learning, peer support, extended discussion and individual course or project recording. They can also help to build community cohesiveness as they encourage discussion and reveal something of the personality of the author. Finally, they're a great practice tool for students to extend their writing, spelling, grammar and various related skills and abilities.

As a teacher, recording your own blog - whether private or public, can be great for reflecting on your own teaching practice and/or sharing your ideas with peers, students and parents.



Teacher notes:

## 8 Start a class or course wiki on a particular theme or related topic.

Wikis are the ultimate in democratic group work tools. Allowing anybody to create, add to and edit web page resources on any subject with trackable, changes recorded by time and individual editor. As a stimulus to anytime, anywhere group work the wiki is an ideal medium.

Again, plan your structure before you start, although you will find that, if used a lot, wikis tend to develop their own structure organically as students add to them.



**Teacher notes:**

# 9 Ask your students a question... but do it via the VLE.

Ok, you have options here. Knowing what you do now about VLEs and the tools within them and considering the structures you've built around your course, what's going to be best way to ask a question and to get replies from students? Consider also, how are you going to let your students know that a question has been asked? Does your VLE have an "announcements" feature that will alert, or email, all students on the course or do you have to do it another way?

Teacher notes:



# 10 Upload, or embed, a video or audio file.

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Again, plan your structure before you start, although you will find that, if used a lot, wikis tend to develop their own structure organically as students add to them.

**Teacher notes:**



# 11 Construct a simple five question, multiple-choice quiz for students.

Getting to grips with the assessment tools that are packaged into your VLE is an important task. Multiple-choice quizzes can be set up which will automatically mark students and send those marks through to the teacher, as well as adding them to a live grade book. Feedback can be automated and attached directly to each question, this can aid students' learning and confidence directly at the time they are engaging with learning.



Teacher notes:

# 12 Recruit a student volunteer to moderate the discussion board conversations.

The reality of VLE usage for all institutions is that some students will need some encouragement to get fully involved - in the same way that getting them to do homework will be challenging for some. One great strategy to build usage is to give some ownership and responsibility to the students over the way the VLE is used and run. Having a group of student moderators and/or mentors will encourage other students to get involved - as well as taking some of the workload of the teacher's shoulders, which we can all appreciate!

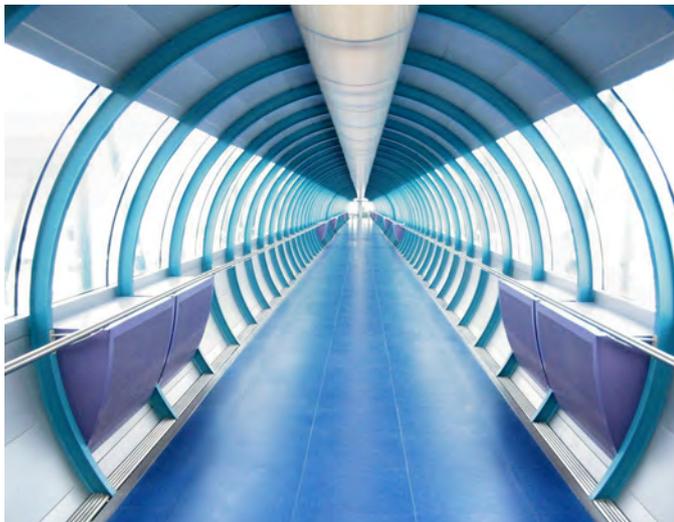


Teacher notes:

# 13 Set up an assignment that students must submit a response to online.

Electronic assignment submission can be a real benefit for both student and teacher. For students it means that they can send in their assignments at anytime from anywhere. For teachers it means that the submission process is automated and each submission will be timestamped and available to the teacher - at anytime from anywhere.

The process is simple, give it a go.



Teacher notes:

# 14 Take a photo of a piece of work/ experiment, and post it onto the course.

This quick win makes the assumption that you have the means available to take a photograph and upload it to your computer. If you don't, take a screen shot of something interesting and upload that instead.

Adding photographs from real, student-related work gives the students a real sense of familiarity and understanding - and a picture can paint a thousand words.



Teacher notes:

# 15 Ask your students to take a photo and post it to their course on the VLE.

Again, we're making the assumption that students have the facility to capture and upload photographs (with the advent of camera-phones this is quite likely). Get them to photograph something they are doing at school or outside school - stick to a single theme. This will encourage VLE usage and help to build community. Why not get them to add their photos to a wiki or blog and add an explanation of why they chose it?

Teacher notes:



# 16 Contact all students to congratulate/support them in a piece of work they have submitted.

All VLEs will have the facility built in to communicate, en masse, with all constituents of a course in a single go. This could be via an announcements system, integrated email or some other system. The VLE will take care of all the details of who to contact, as all students will be linked to the course. Give the students a means of contacting you back to encourage discourse wherever possible.

Teacher notes:



# 17 Set a small assignment that will be marked by peers.

This one could initially be daunting for both teacher and students if they have never experienced it before - but persevere, it's worth it!

Any piece of peer assessed work, like any other piece of assessed work, needs a detailed briefing, time to discuss, both face to face and online, and guidelines and rules need to be in place. Once more the VLE is an idea vehicle to provide the online space for the briefing, online discussions, guidelines and rules.



Teacher notes:

# 18 Request feedback from the students on a recent class.

The feedback can be on how the learners felt about the lesson or what they learnt. This can then be used by the practitioner to improve future lessons or to change activities and assessments.

A VLE can be used quite easily to host a feedback survey. Many feedback tools can be replicated so that they can be copied (or refreshed) for each lesson. This means it can not only be easy to setup, but quick and easy to copy for each lesson.

**Teacher notes:**



# 19 Schedule and conduct an online chat session.

Live discussion using a chat facility on the VLE is one option that facilitates discussion in a way which allows quieter learners to contribute, discussions to be recorded, and direct contact between teacher and student (and student with student) conducted in a relaxed environment outside of the classroom.

Chat sessions are simple to set up and facilitate using the built in tools of the VLE, Post a notice to the VLE that you will be hosting a live chat stating time and date and take it from there.



Teacher notes:

# 20 Ok, this last one's all yours ... share something of your own.

VLEs are all about collaboration, cooperation and creativity. So here's your chance to demonstrate all three. Think about all you've learned about VLEs from these booklets and come up with your own "quick win", or think about a quick win you've had during your practice.

Now share that quick win with your colleagues, via your VLE.

Communities of good practice shared via a VLE are great resources for professional development, don't stop at 20.

Teacher notes:









