Student engagement online: an agenda for research (Showcase)
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This showcase will describe an institutional research project aimed at investigating students' online engagement and its measurement.

The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) was developed to measure the engagement of higher education students in Australia and New Zealand. It is administered by the Australian Centre for Educational Research (ACER) which is also responsible for the design and psychometric testing of the AUSSE instrument. It comprises a questionnaire that is administered to students at participating universities and is based on a very similar, well-studied instrument used in North America annually since 2000, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Both the AUSSE and its parent, the NSSE, survey students about their involvement in activities for their studies and the conditions they experience (Kuh, 2001). However, the AUSSE/NSSE measures are based largely on research related, primarily, to traditional, campus-attending, undergraduates in North America (Chen, Gonyea, and Kuh, 2008). A question therefore arises about how well the AUSSE captures the engagement for off-campus and online students. Thus the first research aim is to:

- investigate the extent to which the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) effectively incorporates important aspects of the experience of online and off-campus undergraduates, identify any associated gaps and, if necessary, develop additional items to capture their experiences.

A second focus of the research is to establish the face validity of items developed to measure online engagement. Face validity is a measure of validity whereby the questionnaire "looks right" to a person who is not necessarily an expert in the content. We are especially concerned to create items that are considered relevant and important to academic staff. If items are not seen to be relevant and important by this group then they will be less willing to accept results from any survey and less inclined to make changes to their practice. Consequently, the second of our research aims is to:

- identify the criteria that academics use to
evaluate the relevance and importance of items that purport to measure aspects of student online engagement.

We expect the outcome of our research to be a (hopefully small) set of online actions, similar in style to the AUSSE and NSSE items, which signify online engagement. We intend these to complement the existing AUSSE items, in a similar way to other sets of engagement items such as those developed to measure first year engagement in Krause and Coates (2008). We hope the set of items will be useful for all universities - online learning is now mainstream for all students regardless of their mode of enrolment at all universities.

In this showcase we will outline the methods we are employing to investigate both these research questions and seek feedback from our colleagues about the issue of online engagement, the methodology we have employed and our findings to date.