ELICIA FORD: Hello, my name is Elicia Ford. My role is National Disability Coordination Officer and I'm collaborating with ADCET on this event. I want to welcome you to this session, Enacting UDL at University, Enabling Equitable and Inclusively Engaged Learning, and our presenters, Associate Professor Stuart Woodcock and Elizabeth Hitches. Please note that information about captioning and etiquette for this session to run smoothly are in the chat and on the ADCET UDL Symposium page.

This session is being recorded. Please turn off your camera and mic for the session. Please use the Q&A function to pose questions to the speaker, and don't forget to tag us on your socials with #UDLSymposium2023.

This session is being live captioned. To enable captioning click on the CC button on the bottom of your screen. We also have captions available via a browser, which will now be added to the chat box. Over to you, Stuart and Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH HITCHES: Thank you so much. Welcome to everybody who is joining us live and anyone who is watching the recording. This is Enacting UDL at University Enabling Equitable and Inclusively Engaged Learning. I'm Elizabeth Hitches. My pronouns are she/her. On this spring day in New South Wales Australia I'm wearing a green shirt and have shoulder length brown hair.

I teach in inclusive education at Griffith University, and I'm very honoured to be joined by my colleague and convenor on that unit, Associate Professor Stuart Woodcock.

STUART WOODCOCK: Hi everybody. My name is Stuart Woodcock. I'm an Associate Professor at Griffith University, and my pronouns he/his. I won't explain my look as well as Elizabeth because I've got grey hair, short, and a black shirt. But as Elizabeth mentioned, I convene a course Inclusivity at Griffith University for the last few years which Elizabeth has been co‑designing and teaching with me over the few years.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much. So as Elicia mentioned, this session is being recorded. If you don't wish to appear on camera, please feel free to turn your camera off, particularly during that Q&A session. And know that this session is being captioned. In terms of etiquette, feel free to use that chat for discussion throughout this presentation. I think it's really excellent we can engage in those multiple means and those different ways. And know that at the end of this session we are going to have that Q&A time available, so please, throughout the session, feel free to put your questions into the Q&A function and when we get to discussion time you can always raise your hand using that emoji feature.

As far as is possible, ensure your surrounding environment is quiet, I am fingers crossing mine will be too, and turn your mic off when not speaking.

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which we join from today and recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society. We pay our respects to their elders, ancestors and their descendants who continue cultural and spiritual connections to country. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this event. Stuart and I would also like to acknowledge where we are joining from today, which is the lands of the Dharug, Turrbal and Yuggera people.

For this particular section we are going to begin by contextualising the approach we are taking and thinking through why would a proactive approach be needed over more reactionary measures. We will then be looking at how UDL has been implemented within a higher education course to provide options and to reduce barriers, and then listen to students' voices on what the benefits of these particular options are. We will then talk through our reflection and how we are going through these cycles to increase the inclusivity of these particular courses and think where to next based on what we've learnt from this latest cycle. We will then share our biggest takeaways from this session which hopefully you will find interesting too.

So to begin with, we know that the higher education space, particularly in University settings, is becoming increasingly diverse, and that's something to really value and celebrate. We have students who have a diverse range of personal circumstances joining our institutions and students who have a variety of different ways of learning. So different ways of receiving, processing and expressing information. And what this means is that we need to be thinking about how we cater to this broad range of diversity so that every single student who enters into our institutions can achieve their full potential.

Now, why would we want to do this in a proactive way? Well, we know there are limits to reactive approaches. So one of those limitations is that we are not going to know what all of our students are experiencing, whether that's personal circumstances, or whether that's accessibility barriers that they are encountering. So we can't just rely on reactionary measures. We also know there are limits to the formal support that's available, so not all of the learning needs and circumstances are going to be eligible for some of those formal supports that we have. So people may be caring for children, they may be working around their financial circumstances and their work commitments, they might even be experiencing certain symptoms and have an undiagnosed medical health condition, and this won't be eligible for ongoing support so we need to find ways to ensure that all students have that equitable access to learning and that they can thrive in this environment.

So the solution is that we want to be reducing those potential barriers before students are encountering them. So we want to be sure that we have those multiple ways or multiple means of students being able to perceive, participate and engage in that learning. We also want to be sure that this is a fair and equitable process and a fair and equitable approach, so that universal approach with options available to all is the way to go.

STUART: Thanks, Elizabeth. So the course we teach is Inclusive Ed that cuts across three different campuses. What we've been wanting to do over the years is develop a more universal approach to the course. So what we have been offering are sort of the more traditional weekly face‑to‑face classes, the weekly online classes, intensive days where students will do kind of one module which will lead towards the first assessment in a whole day at the beginning and then one towards the end of the semester as well across the various campuses, and as well as recording the online tutorials. So that's where we've sort of been up to, to this point.

And looking at it from options for them in regard to their learning for perception, action, expression, engagement, as well as their personal circumstances. It can be to do with their background, whether it's financial, carer responsibilities. So kind of looking at the two to cater for options for them to bring the best out of them to reach their potential.

So what we wanted to do, looking from that, is look at the ‑ hear the students' voices. And I know in some previous presentations, like Jacqui Tinkler's just now, was very much taking into account student voices. We make the call on how we cover courses, teach and those things, but hearing from the students as to the reasons why they have chosen specific classes. So what we took the students' voices who chose the on‑campus intensive, so the two full days at the beginning and the end of the trimester, and we looked, well, for them the reason they chose it was very much benefits for learning. So kind of for a lot of them it was the uninterrupted content topics that were clearly linked. So rather than have one session each week, for a lot of them they had it all in one day where one session led into the next that led into the next. For a lot of them it was deeper learning focusing on the one subject, no other distractions, no other kind of learning in other courses that were kind of interrupting it.

The social as well, a lot of them felt they were very much getting to know their peers in the same class because they were with them all day. So there was a lot of opportunity for engagement and mixing with the groups and interactions and those kind of things. And for a lot of them they were saying it's easier to commit to one day at the beginning and one day at the end as opposed to weekly kind of attendance to Universities.

The benefits for the personal circumstances, for a lot of them it was financial because they had ‑ you know, they could work during the week as normal. They only also had to come to University once or twice through the semester instead of 7 or 8 times. Also time as well, so less time travelling and those kind of things, as well as the social, having that face‑to‑face engaging interaction all day with the same group of peers.

So as well in hearing the voices for the intensives, we also looked at those who chose the online weekly classes. Again, looking at the benefits for learning for them, the pace they decided because it was ‑ you know, they were more able to go at their own pace, they were in their comfortable environment, whether that was at home or those kind of things; also it was more accessible to gain access to the classes, and, again, online can be convenient for them and leads into the personal circumstances. So, again, the access for them, for a lot of them that may have busy lives and those kind of things, it can be when they finish straight after work they can get on to the computer. If they take their children to after‑school clubs or those kind of things, while they are playing, they can be in the car and engaging in the online tutorial, as well as in their home environment so it's kind of more comfortable for them.

Then flexibility. So that whole work from anywhere kind of thing. Again, the financial and the time is something that benefits them on the personal circumstances.

One interesting ‑ and we are still collecting some voices from the students who still choose the more traditional face‑to‑face weekly classes as well ‑ but one of the really interesting kind of takeaways that we got from this is looking at those ‑ there are a number of students who only access the recorded online tutorials. So they don't actually attend any of the face‑to‑face, the intensives, the onlines; they just purely base all their learning on the online ones. While the assumption can often be its accessibility, they can access middle of the night if they want or any time that works around them, but it also ‑ you know, one of the key things we found is the benefits for learning. So for a lot of those who only listen to the recorded learning, they do it at their own pace because they find that often the live classes go too fast for them to be able to process the information. And so for those watching the recordings only, they can pause, they can engage with it in their own way and then press play again and it can go at a pace that is much more convenient for them with the actual benefits for their learning. And they find the depth of understanding, so revision to build understanding as well because they can watch it numerous times. They are not just relying on it as a revision tool but they're actually relying on it as their primary source of learning from that. So the benefits for learning for the recorded classes.

So we are going to talk now into sort of where we've come from and where we are going to go as well. I believe Elizabeth, that's ‑ ‑ ‑

ELIZABETH: Okay. So looking at students' voices around the improvements, we not only asked about the benefits of those particular modes but we asked them, you know, "What modes would you like to see offered? What would you like to see available?" And we heard a number of suggestions. One of those was to have an intensive online class. So currently the intensive class runs face‑to‑face but students suggest an intensive online class might be useful. They suggested a weekday class. They suggested the online classes be held ‑ or there be an option that there is one held after 5 pm. And an example of that were students who were currently working in school environments and would be reaching that 4 pm class a little bit late and they would like to see that class shifted backwards.

They also suggested things like perhaps building those classes into professional development in their environments, and even taking that intensive option that's available here across other courses across the University.

So when we have a look at what we've got available in 2023, based on students' voices we know that having those four various options is providing students a number of benefits in the way that they can engage and the way that it can fit around their personal circumstances and their learning needs.

Looking forward to our next cycle next year, we are also going to take into account what students have suggested and offer that intensive online mode as well and have a look at converting one of those day‑time classes into an evening class option that students can join online.

Student suggestions have also prompted us to consider the current lecture style, which is delivered in a purely recorded fashion, and think about how we can actually build multiple means of engagement and multiple means of accessing that lecture in as well. So having it online, building in UDL and also having the recording available.

So some of our key takeaways from this has been the importance of providing options. What students have told us is that, you know, some students have been joining from their hospital bed and have wanted to continue with their education, needed a bit of distraction in their learning, and have been able to join online classes with their camera off and engage via the chat. We've had other students who have had a very unexpected vet trip and been able to still access learning and manage what's happening in their personal life at the same time. Having those options provided right from the start means that we haven't had to go and retrofit options or try and find ways to get students access to the learning. Students have been able to opt into those different means as and when they needed and according to their particular needs.

So it really shows the importance of those multiple ways and that we can cater not just to personal circumstances but to learning needs as well and provide students that sense of agency, being able to select that mode that's working best for them.

What this has also shown is the importance of student voice. So suggestions like that evening class or creating that intensive online option have all come about from listening to students' voices and listening to what's working for them. We also might think that some particular methods or modes have particular benefits from what we are observing, but to be able to hear that from students' voices means we are going to be sure that those multiple means continue into the future so that all students can access learning in a way that suits them best. Stuart.

STUART: And just to finish up on, I think, furthering on from the importance of the student voice, there have been some really important bits of information that have come about from hearing their voices. And I think one of the big things that we, as a University, need to consider is not just using, say, the recorded online tutorials as more of a back‑up kind of thing. So still kind of enforcing that compulsory attendance or 80% attendance to classes, and if they don't, then they are not attending and they are not engaging. Whereas for many who have been ‑ who have informed us and told us they have been engaging through the recorded classes. So one of the things when we look at changing for next year is how can we make those recorded sessions actually (a) record all the time, not put them into breakout rooms where it stops, but actually keep it going and actually turn it into an engaging online class that students who rely on that recording, for not just personal circumstances but learning needs, we can really make it far more interactive and engaging for them as well. And that's something between now and next year when we do the course that we will actually consider actually focusing on those students when we do the recorded live on class tutorial.

ELIZABETH: Okay. If you would like to follow up on any of the references you have seen in this presentation, there is a slide of those available. And please know that even beyond this presentation today you can reach out to Stuart and I at any time. Our information will be on the slides, but we will hopefully be able to drop that into the chat for you as well.

ELICIA: Thank you, Stuart and Elizabeth. We have about 6 or 7 minutes for questions and we have quite a few questions coming through. So we will do our best to get through those. If we don't, if we run out of time, are you both happy for us to send you a copy of the outstanding questions and get some responses back from you post the symposium?

STUART: Please.

ELIZABETH: Absolutely.

ELICIA: Lovely. Okay. So the first question that we have here is do students ‑ this is from James ‑ do students who use the recorded classes have the ability to ask questions asynchronously?

STUART: We haven't necessarily ‑ because it hasn't necessarily been considered about the recording use as their primary source of learning. It's seen more as a backup. So we do allow students to send emails for responses, but we are looking between now and next year of actually making that a much more engaging kind of reliance. So it can be used as a primary source for learning. Again, a lot of what we've been presenting is where we are up to but also where we are heading to as well, and that recorded session is very much something we want to engage in a lot more with students so that they feel that by doing that they are (a) not disadvantaged, but there is no stigma to them not actually engaging in the course and the tutorials and those kind of things. So that is something we are working on this year, but particularly next year when we redesign it to take that accordance.

ELIZABETH: And that is something we've definitely been thinking about when reflecting on how students get that equitable opportunity to participate. And a few of the hurdles we have already solved is that we were thinking when students actually interact with that recording, how do they know that they are equally valued participants and equally valued members, and how do they get those options to engage in activities, particularly when they are set around group work.

So just a small couple of things we do at the beginning of those recordings is that we make sure that we recognise and welcome everyone who is joining live and those who are watching the recordings. And whenever we get to a group work activity, as soon as students in the live class have been put into breakout rooms, I then turn to what is just myself on the recording but I know it's going to a wider audience, I will say, "Okay, so now students are in breakout groups. What we can do, for those of you watching the recording, is engage in this particular way." So converting that group work option into that individualised activity, but it is a really great point you have made and it is something Stuart and I have identified is how can we get that asynchronous engagement happening, and how can we provide opportunities for social connection, particularly for students who might be, for health reasons or personal circumstances reasons, having to take that option of the recording and maybe missing out on some of those really great social aspects at University. So how can we build those in and give that kind of really rich, rounded experience for them too.

ELICIA: Thank you. Our next question is from Lucy. Lucy would like to know how do you handle providing the different modes of learning ‑ face‑to‑face, online and intensive days, et cetera ‑ with an already busy workload? Also, is this just done in your courses or have other faculties picked this up?

STUART: From our feedback from students mainly not just within our faculty but it doesn't seem to be such a common approach. My previous institution we used to do it mainly over the summer sessions, but for this it's something that, you know, we trialled a few years ago and we've kind of been taking feedback, redoing it, redoing it. This is about the third now iteration of doing this course. And I think this year we've really taken ‑ we've been proactive in gaining the students' voices to really make some major changes to feel that we've got some traction with this now so we can move with it next year.

As far as workload goes for teaching, what we've done for workload is that for one intensive group that does the intensive on the first day ‑ or at the beginning of the trimester and one at the end of the trimester, it equates to the same number of hours that they would otherwise be getting in the two‑hour tutes throughout the trimester. So same sort of thing for accountability. A staff member, it would count as the equivalent of one tutorial. By having a couple of tutes at each campus, so we've got our two main campuses, we run them and there is one group on a Saturday, one group at a Sunday at each. So that's four tutorial groups and that's what it equates to, four groups you would otherwise teach on a weekly basis but it's done over 8 days basically, two days for each groups. The online ones count the same as if it was face‑to‑face. So the accountability is fairly straightforward as far as workload goes, whether you are a permanent academic, a sessional academic or contracted academic. That's quite easy in that sort of sense. Anything you want to add to that Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH: In terms of workload, I know there can be concerns around as a teacher switching between various modes. And I think one of the brilliant things Stuart has done as convenor is almost give each of the tutors almost a specialisation in that area. So I teach the online classes, and obviously that becomes the recorded classes. So my mind can be solely on focusing how do I give the richest experience for students engaging solely online. And for Stuart, you know, Stuart takes those intensive classes, so his mindset can be on how do you make this manageable for students across the course of one day. So we get to bring these conversations together but we each get that intensive look at our particular area. For me personally as a tutor, that's been really helpful.

STUART: And I think ‑ sorry, Elizabeth ‑ in addition to that I think by us specialising in one, we are looking at a more meso course‑wide UDL approach and thinking about how do we apply that within online teaching on a weekly basis or face‑to‑face on a weekly basis, or intensive all day kind of thing. Again, there's different approaches depending on whether it's a weekly or an all day intensive, whether it's online or face‑to‑face. And each of us focus on one aspect and look at applying it within that, and sort of as a team we get together and sort of like, you know, debrief each time moving forward, so how we do each content we can then adapt accordingly.

ELICIA: Thank you both. I think if we can have one more quick question ‑ there are so many wonderful questions in here ‑ but I'm going to ask our next one, which is from Helda. Helda says: the description of online classes has focused a lot on content delivery. Have you programmed online activities that develop skills, not just knowledge? If so, how did you make them more inclusive?

STUART: Elizabeth, I might hand that to you as you do the online tutes.

ELIZABETH: Of course. We've had a lot of fun exploring things like creating those synchronous shared spaces and things like a Word document shared online or a different activity document shared online can really make what would usually happen in that face‑to‑face classroom happen online. And I think one of the things we really noticed is that in having that online option, some of that skill development can actually happen for some students in ways that would happen in a more inclusive way than it would otherwise.

So having that online document means that people who are using assistive technology can use that assistive technology with that online resource. Whereas, if we have physical handouts in the classroom and didn't have that option available, there could be some barriers to their participation. So sometimes that skill development can be even better supported when we've got those digital means available. I think we've also seen that there are some students who might have high levels of social anxiety or who may not typically feel comfortable being able to put their hand up and respond in certain ways, and that online mode has allowed things like anonymous whiteboards to be put in place. We could be running a Zoom class very much like we have today and we might have some students who are using the chat and testing out their skill development through the chat, or testing out anonymously on the whiteboard, or unmuting and giving their responses verbally. So that online world is really providing those multiple means and those very different ways that people can engage.

ELICIA: Elizabeth, I am going to have to wrap you up there. Thank you to both of you, Stuart and Elizabeth, for a fantastic engaging presentation. We do have more questions which we will send to you for some answers for us. I would now invite everybody to head back to the lobby for your next session. Thank you.

ELIZABETH: Thank you so much.