

Australian Flexible Learning Framework

Supporting Flexible Learning Opportunities

Setting up Collaborative Learning Environments with Peer-to-Peer Technology

Before you start

Peer-to-peer (P2P) collaborative systems provide opportunities for enhanced teaching and learning as well as for decreasing the barriers of technical set up and content development. However, using new technology without considering why you are using it and dismissing the principles of online pedagogy (blended learning, online facilitation, instructional design) will greatly compromise the results. Your skills as a teacher, guide, coach and facilitator are critical success factors no matter what technology is being employed. There have been many online learning resources developed by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework (AFLF). If you're inexperienced with online learning or want to learn more, it would be wise to visit the AFLF site (<http://flexiblelearning.net.au/>) and review the material presented.

Starting point

It is assumed that that you have chosen online learning as an appropriate medium for your course as either a blended or wholly online strategy. You will probably already have some content material (files), learning resources and/or reference material that you would normally distribute to your learners. You should also have a lesson/session plan and/or curriculum as a guide and be using a range of instructional/teaching strategies to interact with your learners when assisting them to access learning resources and engage in learning activities.

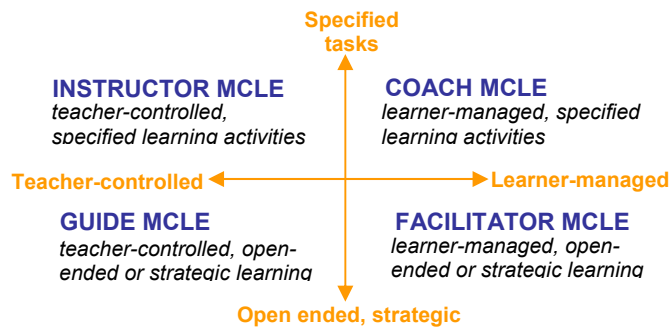
Model Collaborative Learning Environments (MCLEs)

To assist you to get started as quickly as possible, the *ANTA New Practices Project Team* has developed a number of software templates (like a fully equipped 'virtual classroom') that you can download from the web and install on your computer. These templates are called Model Collaborative Learning Environments or MCLEs. There are four MCLEs you can choose from:

Instructor MCLE, Coach MCLE, Facilitator MCLE and Guide MCLE. The MCLEs have been based on research by Coomey and Stephenson¹ (2001), who identified four major features of online learning as essential for good practice (dialogue, involvement, support and control).

¹ Coomey, M. & Stephenson, J., 2001, *Online learning: it is all about dialogue, involvement, support and control – according to the research*, in *Teaching & Learning Online – Pedagogies for New Technologies*, 2001, Kogan Page, London.

Coomey and Stephenson created an online paradigm grid (see below), which formed the basis for the MCLE design.



To select the MCLE that is best suited to your situation, review the following table and choose the MCLE that best meets the learning style you intend to use in your course.

Note that the MCLEs provided here are only intended as a starting point. It is up to you and your learners to add the specific teaching and learning activities that will comprise the course.

	INSTRUCTOR MCLE	COACH MCLE	GUIDE MCLE	FACILITATOR MCLE
Role: How would you describe your role in the course?	I am in an 'Instructor' role.	I am in a 'Coach' role	I am in a 'Guide' role	I am in a 'Facilitator' role
Dialogue: Email, bulletin boards, instant messaging, chat, group discussion and debate	I have specific tasks or topics I want the learners to discuss or collaborate on with some degree of problem solving. I will need to direct them in this activity and would like to include synchronous events like lectures or chats.	I'll encourage learners to use the 'online communication' facilities, but there is no need for set topics or specific events in my course.	I would like the learners to engage in dialogue. I prefer to take a facilitator role and monitor their conversations. I could set out some set topics for learners to discuss	I'll encourage learners to use the 'online communication' facilities and to create their own topics and groups. I'll prompt and motivate them with my presence, comments and some specific events like chat sessions.
Involvement: Responses to structured tasks, active engagement with content, learner collaboration.	My content is well structured to engage the learner online. I also have a clearly defined path for the learners to follow to assist their learning. Group work is particularly warranted.	I have content but it is more resource and reference material. I would prefer the learners to create their own meaning or context from the material. They may work in groups.	I have resource and reference material and I would like my learners to create their own material eg learner portfolio. I will encourage them to work in groups.	Learners need to learn in their own particular context. I could provide some core content material, but I expect learners to work alone or in groups to satisfy their own vocational, personal or academic needs.
Support: Online supervision, administrative	I'll be the main provider of feedback to learners on their	I'll provide feedback to learners on their progress and	I'll need to be actively involved in both feedback on learner activities	I'll try to be very much in the background and respond to learner

	INSTRUCTOR MCLE	COACH MCLE	GUIDE MCLE	FACILITATOR MCLE
support, regular feedback and periodic face-to-face contact (if feasible)	progress and outcomes. I don't expect my learners to be self supported or peer-supported.	outcomes. Learners could also receive feedback within groups or through peer dialogue.	but also provide strategic direction and advice.	requests.
Control: The extent to which learners have control of key learning activities and the extent to which the learner is encouraged to exercise that control.	I'd prefer to control sequencing and want my learners to concentrate on responding to the tasks/content I have set.	Although I have set the content, I'd encourage learners to work at their own pace and sequence. They may elect to use external resources if they wish.	Learners have a fair degree of control over their rate and sequence of learning. I'd like my learners to set their own specific learning goals within the general goals I have established.	This is quite an 'open ended' course. The learner should be able to determine their own goals and outcomes and monitor their progress.

Illustrative Case Study: A teacher delivers a unit in database programming. The teacher has developed a twelve week program to step the students through the design, development, testing and documentation stages of a database project. There are a number of weekly exercises the students must complete and assessment involves submission of a student project (a database program). The teacher elects to use the Instructor MCLE because the Dialogue, Involvement and Support elements described in the table above seem to suit her situation. The teacher downloads the 'Instructor' MCLE and renames it 'DBP1567 Database Programming'. The teacher loads the MCLE with her timetables, learning resource files and assessments and then invites her students into the course.

As illustrated in the case study, the MCLE is able to be renamed and its contents modified when you have installed it into your computer.

How to download an MCLE

The MCLEs are supported on the P2P software platform called Groove. You will need to have Groove installed on your computer to use an MCLE. There is a cost associated with the Groove software. Groove software is available from www.groove.net (preview versions of Groove are available from the website). Students will also need to install Groove. If you wish to install a campus facility for your students then check with your IT department for the best setup configuration.

Go to the Australian Flexible Learning Framework website at www.flexiblelearning.net.au/projects/toolsuite.htm and select the MCLE that you wish to use. It will be automatically loaded onto your computer, ready for use.

MCLE Descriptions

The following descriptions provide an overview of the features relevant to each particular MCLE type. Review the appropriate section for the MCLE type you have chosen to use for your course.

Instructor MCLE

Instructor MCLE

Created by Steve Fisher on 13/08/03 21:48:26

How to use the Instructor MCLE

Have specific tasks or topics for learners to discuss or collaborate on with some degree of problem solving. Direct them in this activity and include synchronous events like lectures or chats.

Structure the content to engage the learner online.

Have a clearly defined path for the learners to follow to assist their learning. Group work is particularly warranted.

Notes:

Please read these instructions first

1. This MCLE "space" is a template. You are able to modify, delete or add tools to this space as you wish.
2. Browse through the **Tool Tabs** below -- [Course Details](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Eac](#) --- and become familiar with the whole space.
3. Some content/activities have been placed in each Tool to provide an example of how the space could be used for e-learning. Delete or amend the example material to suit your specific teaching style and student needs.
4. Rename the Tool below **INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHER (1)** by right-mouse-clicking on the tool tab and selecting 'Rename Tool'. This is usually called the Welcome Page and is a good tool to retain for your course. You can delete these instructions and add your own for your students.
5. Finally, You can rename this space to your preferred name by using the option on the top pull-down menu: "File -> Rename --> Shared Space".

Toolbar: **INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHER (1)** | [Course Details](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Each Weeks Tasks](#) | [Course Resources](#) | [Lecture Room](#) | [Weekly Discussions](#) | [Course Assessment](#) | [STUDENT LOUNGE](#) | [Add Tool](#)

General space permissions: Learners are unable to invite or uninvite other participants and cannot add or delete tools.

A. Instructions for Space Manager (Groove Welcome Tool)

The lecturer should first review the instructions in this tool. It is recommended to then change the name to 'Welcome'. This can be the starting point of the course (ie the course homepage).

B. User manual (Groove Text tool)

This is a general 'how to' for students to explain how the tools work. It is not meant to contain any information about the course or course administration. Permissions: Only the Instructor can edit text in this tool.

C. Calendar (Groove Calendar tool)

The entries made here are quite directive ie week one = date↔date with specific instructor-led events (eg synchronous lecture). Permissions: Only the Instructor can add, edit or delete entries.

D. Each weeks tasks (Groove Notepad tool)

This is to provide controlled sequencing of tasks.

Permissions: Only the Instructor can create, edit and delete notes.

E. Course resources → Course files + Web links (Groove Custom tool) (Groove Files tool) (Groove Web Links tool)

The Course files tool contains folders set out in a sequential manner to reflect the sequential nature of the course.

Permissions: Only the Instructor is able to add, modify or delete files in this tool.

Note: the download settings can be changed for each folder by right clicking on a folder and selecting 'Properties → Download'. There are three options:

- (a) automatically download all new files and modifications,
- (b) download new and modified files only if they are less than a certain size, and
- (c) manually download when the learner chooses.

This setting will depend on the number and size of your files, the degree to which they will be modified, the anticipated creation of new files by participants and the bandwidth restrictions of your learners. Given that the course file space is a controlled environment where the files should remain fairly constant, the default setting has been set to (a) 'Automatic'.

The 'Web Links' tool has been used as an additional content resource. There are no permissions on the web links tool.

F. Lecture room → Lecture notice board + Lecture room + Slide presentation area (Groove Custom tool) (Groove PinBoard tool) (Groove Sketchpad tool) (Groove Files tool)

The lecture room was established to cater for synchronous events. The custom toolset comprises a small suite of three tools to simulate a lecture hall. The lecture notice board should display messages relevant only to the synchronous events. The lecture room uses the sketchpad tool so that the instructor can create a series of pre-prepared whiteboards or simply interact with the one blank screen. This facility may be useful for showing specific images (diagrams/photos) to which the Instructor wishes to address or to display special symbols (eg mathematical equations or electrical diagrams).

The slide presentation area is where PowerPoint files can be stored. Using the 'start presentation' feature of the software, specific presentations can be made from here.

Permissions: Only the Instructor can add, modify and delete notice board notices, whiteboard content and presentation files.

G. Weekly discussions (Groove Discussions tool)

This was named as 'Weekly discussions' to emphasise the controlled nature of the threads. The example in this tool shows how the Instructor has added specific topics for the learners to respond to.

Permissions: Learners are able to add and respond to topics (like contemporary online systems), but the ability for them to edit or delete others' topics has been removed. The Instructor has the permission to create, edit and delete all topics.

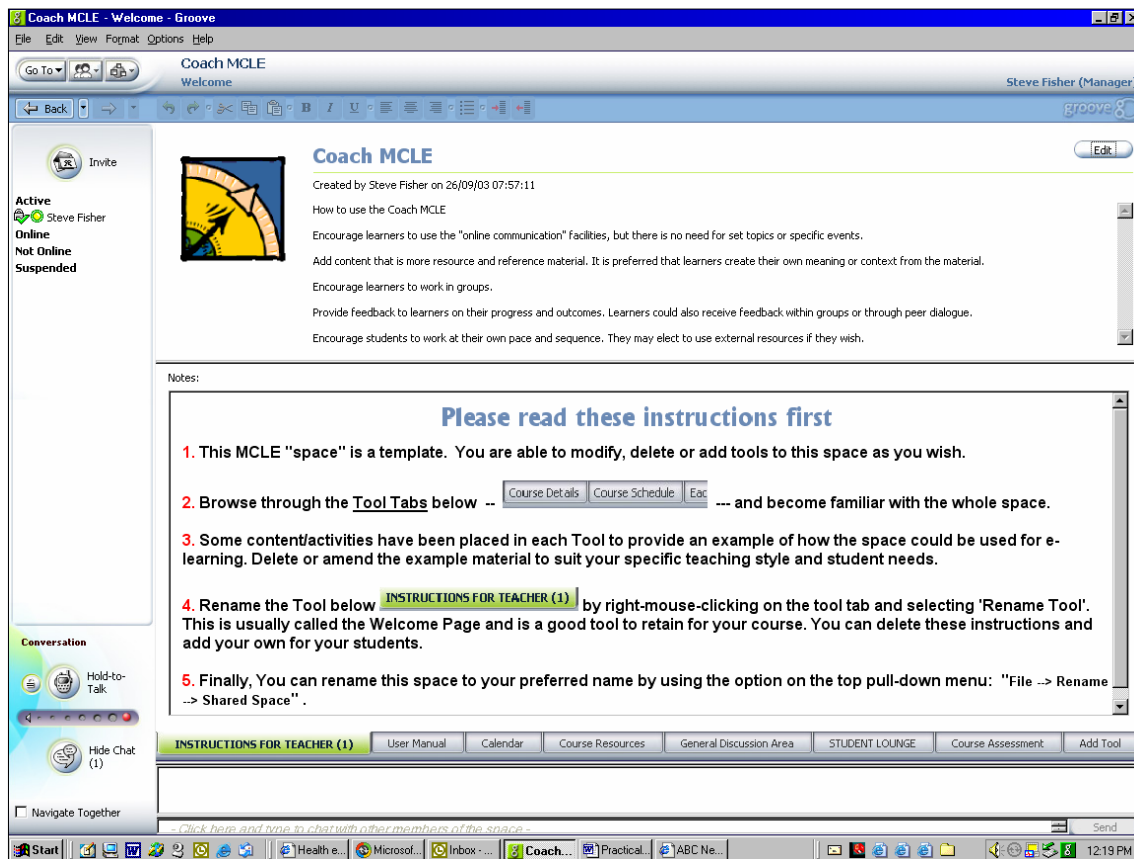
H. Student lounge → student notice board → online chess game → course cam

This is a 'free' learner area to introduce a social element into the online environment. The Instructor can determine whether this is warranted with the particular learner group. Maybe it could be introduced as the course progresses and learners become more familiar with the environment.

I. Add tool

The 'Add' tool is always displayed as the last tool in any space. This enables the Instructor in this space to add additional tools

Coach MCLE



General space permissions: Learners are unable to invite or uninvite other participants and cannot add or delete tools.

A. Instructions for Space Manager (Groove Welcome tool)

The lecturer should first review the instructions in this tool. It is recommended to then change the name to 'Welcome'. This can be the starting point of the course (ie the course homepage).

B. User manual (Groove Text tool)

This is a general 'how to' for students, explaining how the tools work. It is not meant to contain any information about the course or course administration. Permissions: Only the Instructor can edit text in this tool.

C. Calendar (Groove Calendar tool)

This is an open calendar so that the Coach and the Learners can add entries. Permissions: The Instructor and Learner can add, edit or delete entries.

D. Set tasks (Groove Notepad tool)

This shows a set menu of tasks to be undertaken. Permissions: Only the Coach can create, edit and delete notes.

E. Course Resources (Groove Custom Tool) → our course files (Groove Files Tool) + web links (Groove Web Links tool)

The 'Our Course Files' is meant to be a area where the Coach can put their shared files as well as a folder for learners to put their own files. The folders are arranged by topic area and also by individual learner names.

Permissions: Participants are able to add, modify or delete the files in the learner folders, but only the coach can add and delete from the topics folders.

Note: the download settings can be changed for each folder by right mouse clicking on a folder, selecting 'Properties → Download'. There are three options:

- (a) automatically download all new files and modifications,
- (b) download new and modified files only if they are less than a certain size, and
- (c) manually download when the learner chooses.

This setting will depend on the number and size of your files, the degree to which they will be modified, the anticipated creation of new files by participants and the bandwidth restrictions of your learners.

The 'Web Links' tool has been used as an additional content resource. There are no permissions on the web links tool.

F. General discussion area (Groove Discussions tool)

The Coach should encourage learners to use this area but there is no need for set topics or specific events.

Permissions: Learners are able to add and respond to topics (like contemporary online systems), but the ability for them to edit or delete others' topics has been removed. The Coach has the permission to create, edit and delete all topics.

G. Student lounge → student notice board → online chess game → course cam

This is an 'open' learner area to introduce a social element into the online environment. The Instructor can determine whether this is warranted with the particular learner group. Maybe it could be introduced as the course progresses and learners become more familiar with the environment.

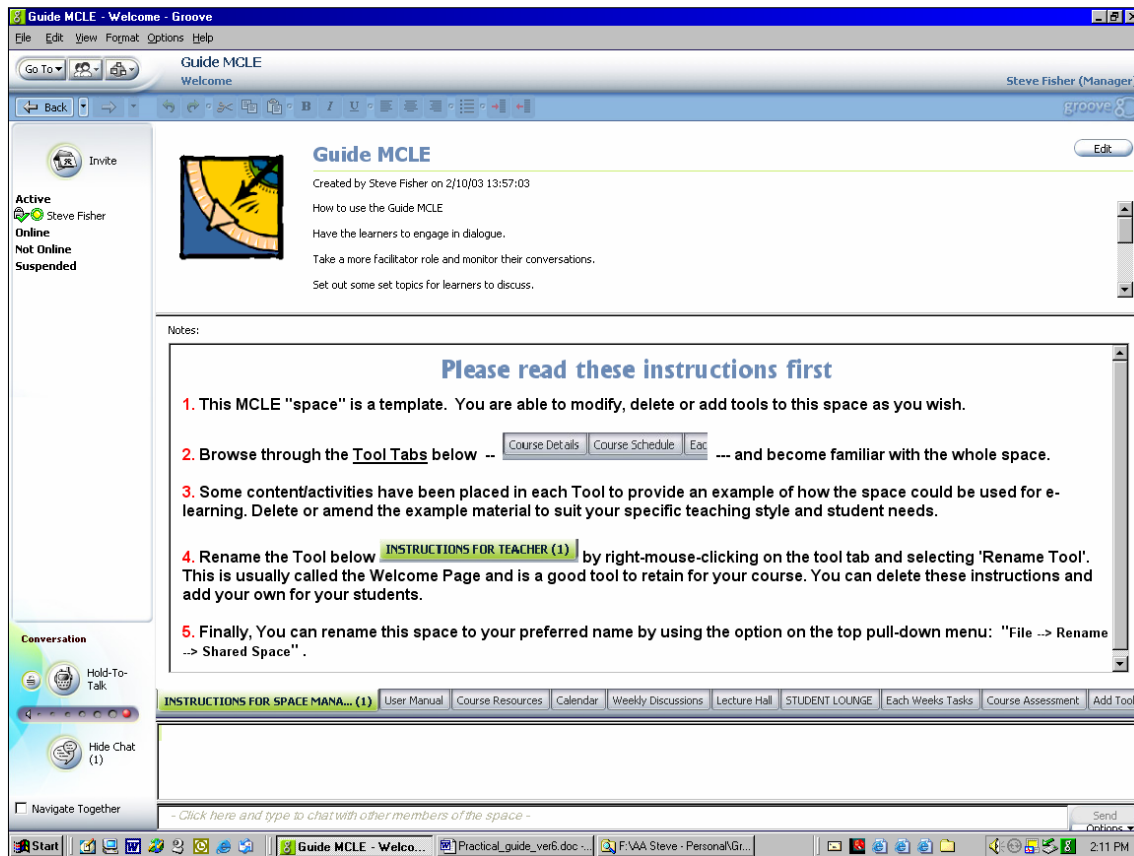
H. Course assessment (Groove Notepad tool)

Because it originated as a business collaboration environment, there are no specific assessment tools available for Groove. However, there are many options for student assessment. This is just one example of using the 'Notepad' tool to list details of assignments for this particular course.

I. Add tool

The 'Add' tool is always displayed as the last tool in any space. This enables the Instructor in this space to add additional tools.

Guide MCLE



General space permissions: Learners are unable to invite or uninvite other participants and cannot add or delete tools.

A. Instructions for Space Manager (Groove Welcome Tool)

The lecturer should first review the instructions in this tool. It is recommended to then change the name to 'Welcome'. This can be the starting point of the course (ie the course homepage).

B. User manual (Groove Text tool)

This is a general 'how to' for students, explaining how the tools work. It is not meant to contain any information about the course or course administration. Permissions: Only the Instructor can edit text in this tool.

C. Calendar (Groove Calendar tool)

This is an open calendar so that the Guide and the Learners can add entries. Permissions: The Guide can add, edit or delete any entries. The Learner can only add, edit and delete their own entries

D. Course Resources (Groove Custom Tool) → our course files (Groove Files Tool) + web links (Groove Web Links tool)

‘Our Course Files’ is meant to be an area where the Guide can put their shared files, as well as a folder for learners to put their own files. The folders are arranged by topic area and also by individual learner names.

Permissions: Participants are able to add, modify or delete the files in the learner folders, but only the guide can add and delete from the topic folders.

Note: the download settings can be changed for each folder by right mouse clicking on a folder and selecting ‘Properties → Download’. There are three options:

- (a) automatically download all new files and modifications
- (b) download new and modified files only if they are less than a certain size, and
- (c) manually download when the learner chooses.

This setting will depend on the number and size of your files, the degree to which they will be modified, the anticipated creation of new files by participants and the bandwidth restrictions of your learners.

The ‘Web Links’ tool has been used as an additional content resource. There are no permissions on the web links tool.

E. General discussion area (Groove Discussions tool)

The Guide should encourage learners to use this area but there is no need for set topics or specific events.

Permissions: Learners are able to add and respond to topics (like contemporary online systems), but the ability for them to edit or delete others’ topics has been removed. The Guide has the permission to create, edit and delete all topics.

F. Tute room (Groove Custom Tool) → tute notice board (Groove PinBoard Tool) + slide presentation area (Groove Files tool) + white board (Groove Sketchpad tool)

The ‘Tute Room’ was established to cater for synchronous events. The custom toolset comprises a small suite of three tools to simulate a tutorial room. The tute notice board should display messages relevant only to the synchronous events. The ‘Tute room’ uses the sketchpad tool so that the Guide can create a series of pre-prepared whiteboards or simply interact with the one blank screen. This facility may be useful for showing specific images (diagrams/photos) to which the Guide wishes to address or display special symbols (eg mathematical equations or electrical diagrams).

The slide presentation area is where PowerPoint files can be stored. Using the ‘start presentation’ feature of the software, specific presentations can be made from here.

Permissions: Only the Guide can add, modify and delete notice board notices, whiteboard content and presentation files.

G. Student lounge → student notice board → online chess game → course cam

This is a 'free' learner area to introduce a social element into the online environment. The Instructor can determine whether this is warranted with the particular learner group. Maybe it could be introduced as the course progresses and learners become more familiar with the environment.

H. Course assessment (Groove Notepad tool)

Because it originated as a business collaboration environment, there are no specific assessment tools available for Groove. However, there are many options for student assessment. This is just one example of using the notepad tool to list details of assignments for this particular course.

I. Add tool

The 'Add' tool is always displayed as the last tool in any space. This enables the Instructor in this space to add additional tools

Facilitator MCLE

Facilitator MCLE

Created by Steve Fisher on 25/09/03 22:09:47

How to use the Facilitator MCLE

Encourage learners to use the "online communication" facilities and to create their own topics and groups.

Prompt and motivate them with your presence, comments and some specific events like chat sessions.

Learners need to learn in their own particular context. Provide some core content material, but expect learners to work alone or in groups to satisfy their own vocational, personal or academic needs.

Try to be very much in the background and respond to learner requests.

Notes:

Please read these instructions first

1. This MCLE "space" is a template. You are able to modify, delete or add tools to this space as you wish.
2. Browse through the **Tool Tabs** below -- [Course Details](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Eac](#) --- and become familiar with the whole space.
3. Some content/activities have been placed in each Tool to provide an example of how the space could be used for e-learning. Delete or amend the example material to suit your specific teaching style and student needs.
4. Rename the Tool below **INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHER (1)** by right-mouse-clicking on the tool tab and selecting 'Rename Tool'. This is usually called the Welcome Page and is a good tool to retain for your course. You can delete these instructions and add your own for your students.
5. Finally, You can rename this space to your preferred name by using the option on the top pull-down menu: "File -> Rename -> Shared Space".

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SPACE MANAGER (1) [User Manual](#) [Calendar](#) [Course Resources](#) [Student Discussion Area](#) [GROUPS](#) [Add Tool](#)

General space permissions: Learners are unable to invite or uninvite other participants but can add and delete tools. They need this tool function so that they can construct their own group material.

A. Instructions for space manager (Groove Welcome tool)

The lecturer should first review the instructions in this tool. It is recommended to then change the name to 'Welcome'. This can be the starting point of the course (ie the course homepage).

B. User manual (Groove Text tool)

This is a general 'how to' for students to explain how the tools work. It is not meant to contain any information about the course or course administration. Permissions: Only the Instructor can edit text in this tool.

C. Calendar (Groove Calendar tool)

This is an open calendar so that the Facilitator and the Learners can add entries.

Permissions: The Instructor and Learner can add, edit or delete entries.

D. Resource pool (Groove Custom Tool) → files to share (Groove Files Tool) + web links (Groove Web Links tool)

'Files to Share' is meant to be a area where everybody can put their files for sharing. The folders are arranged by topic area and also by group names.

Permissions: All participants are able to add, modify or delete the files in this tool.

Note: the download settings can be changed for each folder by right mouse clicking on a folder, selecting 'Properties → Download'. There are three options:

- (a) automatically download all new files and modifications,
- (b) download new and modified files only if they are less than a certain size and
- (c) manually download when the learner chooses.

This setting will depend on the number and size of your files, the degree to which they will be modified, the anticipated creation of new files by participants and the bandwidth restrictions of your learners. Given that the 'files to share' space is an open environment where files will be added by all participants, the default setting has been set at (c) manual.

The 'Web Links' tool has been used as an additional content resource. There are no permissions on the web links tool.

E. Open discussion area (Groove Discussions tool)

This was named 'Open Discussion Area' to emphasise the controlled nature of the threads.

Permissions: Learners are able to add and respond to topics (like contemporary online systems), as well as the edit or delete others' topics. The Instructor has the permission to create, edit and delete all topics.

F. Groups (Groove Custom Tool) → blue/red/yellow group skills (Groove Mind Manager Tool) + web links (Groove Web Links tool)

The 'Groups' tab leads to individual team areas. The example groups in the template are blue, red and yellow groups. Team members can add and delete tools in their area to reflect their group collaborative work. Some example tools have been displayed to illustrate the types of activity that may be initiated by a group.

Permissions: All participants can add and delete tools

G. Add tool

The 'Add' tool is always displayed as the last tool in any space. This enables the Instructor in this space to add additional tools

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