

# Vista templates - overview for Course designers

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To create and build templates, the user needs a **Designer** role at **Course** or **Group** level.

A template in Vista is defined as a **collection of course tools and files** that allow for sharing material across a learning context, but do not contain student data. Templates are not learning contexts, but reside within a learning context such as a Group or Course. Templates can be created and edited by designers who have been given appropriate permissions.

A template is used for teaching once it is assigned to a Module, where instructors and students can interact. Once a template has been assigned, any changes to the template will NOT be reflected in the Module, unless the changes are to a linked file.

## Why use templates?

It is of great benefit to users of Vista - both teachers and students - if there is consistency in the way courses are designed, structured and implemented. The system is flexible enough to allow individual teachers to edit and customise their course, while working with a basic design that provides:

- Consistency of school/program branding
- Standard set of technical support links for teachers and students
- Course terminology and navigational structure.
- Access to shared teaching resources.

Working in this way can greatly reduce the time that a teacher needs to spend in setting up a course, while enhancing usability for students.

In much the same way as a WebCT CE course could be based on an existing course, a Vista Module can be based on a Course template. The differences are that:

- A Vista template contains no student data, only the course files and structure, so that old data does not need to be deleted.
- The template can contain shared resources such as School branding, policy documents or learning resources.
- Files residing in the template will be copied as links to your Module, so that if several Modules are based on one template, the files need only be updated in the template.

While this can make course building and file management much more efficient, it is still possible for a designer to edit a course in any way they wish - template elements and file links are not locked in any way.

## UNSW Institutional templates

EDTeC has created four basic templates which can be used by Faculties or Schools as the basis for their own templates. They are similar in design but vary in the structure of learning activities.

### What the templates contain

Each template contains a basic structure of course introduction, resources and learning activities. The resources include links to useful support sites for students and teachers. For learning activities the use of Learning modules is

recommended - these provide a structured pathway where students can access learning material, activities such as evaluations (quizzes), discussions and assignments, and links to resources. Over the page is an overview of the institutional templates.

## **UNSW Institutional templates - overview**

Many UNSW staff members report that students are not sufficiently engaged with their courses. Some students may perform poorly due to a lack of interest in learning course topics. The UNSW institutional templates are based on course designs that encourage student engagement and active learning. They are designed to make it easier to build learning activities into a course, using approaches that have been successfully applied at UNSW in a range of disciplines. Templates have a range of tools and resources that can be adapted to the needs of your course and used to support active student learning. They include branding banners, technical support links and links to institutional resources such as the Course Outline Template.

The use of templates can provide a greater degree of consistency between courses which can minimise confusion at the start of a new course. The templates also include support and guidance for teachers in the best ways of using the template.

As there is no single online course format, a range of templates have been created reflecting different approaches that have been developed to meet different needs. Some templates use a recognised course design approach, such as problem-based learning. Other templates are designed to encourage active learning in a more general way. They all provide access to support resources for students and staff.

### ***Institutional template basic***

This template provides access to institutional resources and tools. It can be used as a starting point for a course structure based on learning activities.

### ***Institutional template plus***

This template has a range of design elements and tools to support active learning, with access to institutional tools and resources.

### ***Institutional problem-based learning template***

The problem-based learning approach (PBL) encourages learning by engagement with complex tasks through investigation and developing solutions. Students can develop high-level capabilities, including many of those listed in the UNSW Graduate Attributes, from this mode of learning. The template is designed with a course structure and tools to support problem or project-based approaches.

### ***Institutional collaborative learning template***

This template enables students to learn actively and collaboratively using online discussions. These discussions, in writing, have been found to be deeper and more reflective than most classroom discussions as they give all students time to make a contribution, and require students to both post their response to the materials and issues, and to reflect on those of other students. This template provides a course design structure and access to tools and resources to enable a collaborative approach. It is particularly useful for off-campus students.

For more information on UNSW Institutional Templates, see the EDTeC Website at:  
[http://www.edtec.unsw.edu.au/template\\_guide.htm](http://www.edtec.unsw.edu.au/template_guide.htm)

If you need any assistance in adapting the UNSW institutional templates, please contact Iain McAlpine, [i.mcalpine@unsw.edu.au](mailto:i.mcalpine@unsw.edu.au), or Belinda Allen, [belinda@unsw.edu.au](mailto:belinda@unsw.edu.au).