Standard Operation Procedures for the VLE Structure

Contents

Standard Operation Procedures for the VLE Structure 1
1. Rationale 2
2. VLE Management and Support Structure 2
3. Decision-making workflow 3
4. VLE Governance Feedback Protocol 6
4.1. Information sharing 7
4.2. Feedback collection 7
4.3. Review and decision 7
4.4. Closing the loop 7
Appendix 9
TOR Technical Operations WG 9
TOR Functional Changes Consultation Group 10
TOR Training and Communications Working Group 12

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1. Rationale

The VLE structure is intended to provide a basis to enable governance, coordination, and support of the ongoing work and decision-making process around the digital education infrastructure at UL. As part of this, there is a need to clearly outline how decisions are reached (and aligned with relevant UL strategic priorities as drivers) and what processes/procedures are in place to collect feedback from the campus community to further inform decision making and strengthen consultation. In turn, this is intended to serve to strengthen the structures and lines of communication between FLTACs, working groups, VLE MB and onward.

Therefore, the progress of the VLE structure will be supported by these standard operating procedures (SOPs) for decision-making in close liaison with the FLTACs. These are to be reviewed on an ongoing basis and adjusted accordingly by the VLE Management Board.

2. VLE Management and Support Structure

The VLE Management and Support Structure was approved by Executive Committee on May 15th 2025, reporting to the University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (ULTAC) to advise on strategic matters relating to the ongoing management of the VLE and maintain alignment with the goals of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

This is based on the following governance mechanism:

- **VLE Management Board (VLEMB)** oversees the implementation of strategic decisions, planning and processes concerning the VLE, including high-impact changes, and escalated risks and issues ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach across UL, approving decisions on functionality and communications, and seeking continuous improvement. It coordinates efforts across working groups and ensures alignment with institutional goals. The VLEMB meets on a monthly basis if members' availability allows. The Chair of VLEMB to provide a regular reporting line to ULTAC.

- **Faculty Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committees (FLTACs)** provide forums for discussion and feedback on proposals related to quality and innovation in relation to the VLE and provide support to the decisions of the VLEMB on these issues. The Chair of each FLTAC shall become a member of the VLEMB, representing their faculties in collaboration with its members[1], and bring issues of academic and strategic impact for discussion and approval at VLEMB as appropriate. FLTACs serve as the main point of contact and coordination and communication between their Faculties and the VLEMB and to regularly include VLE-related issues on their agenda.

[1] FLTACs are comprised by: Dean or nominee (Chair), Head of School or nominee (per School/Department), ADAA, Faculty Learning Technologist/s, Head of CTL or nominee, Faculty Librarian, Faculty ITD Business Partner, Student Life Academic (sabbatical officer), PSU President or nominee (sabbatical officer), Course Director representative from UG and PG programmes, and additional members to be co-opted by committee, as appropriate.

- **VLE Working Groups**, mainly comprised by central ITD/CTL staff and with optional representation from support staff across the campus community, to centrally coordinate the implementation and support of the VLE and integrated tools through the following functions (see appendix for TORs of each group):
    - Technical Operations WG (TOWG): Responsible for implementing approved changes and maintaining the technical integrity of Brightspace. Works closely with other areas of ITD and other stakeholders.
    - Functional Changes Consultation Group: to inform decisions on proposed functional changes, oversee implications for staff and students with representation from main stakeholders including ITD, CTL and learning technologists across the institution, progress digital enhancement processes and guarantee communication workflow within the VLE Management and Support Structure.
    - Training and Communications WG: supports the UL community in effectively using Brightspace and its integrated tools. It delivers training, maintains the Brightspace knowledge base, and communicates updates through multiple channels, including email updates and UL Connect, regular Brightspace Newsletters, Announcements in the Brightspace 101 course, Brightspace Knowledge Base and FAQs, and training sessions and documentation updates.

Technical and functional recommendations are expected to emerge from the working groups within the VLE structure. These groups provide a forum for early discussion and consultation with learning technology experts across the institution, fostering collaboration based on a shared interest in optimising the use of the VLE and its associated tools for the benefit of staff and students. Through direct membership in the working groups, members can request agenda items (direct communication with its Chair at least 48 hours prior to the meeting) and inform and influence the recommendations made to the VLEMB. The chair of each working group is a member of the VLEMB, partaking in the VLE coordination and management work.

Thus, it is envisaged that yearly calls for participation in these working groups are to be issued from FLTACs for support staff with an invested interest in being informed of and influencing VLE decisions. In the case of the Functional Changes Consultation Group, collaboration is expected to be at the consultative level and with a minimum time commitment (estimated 45mins twice a month), with no work packages assumed by support staff beyond central ITD/CTL staff.

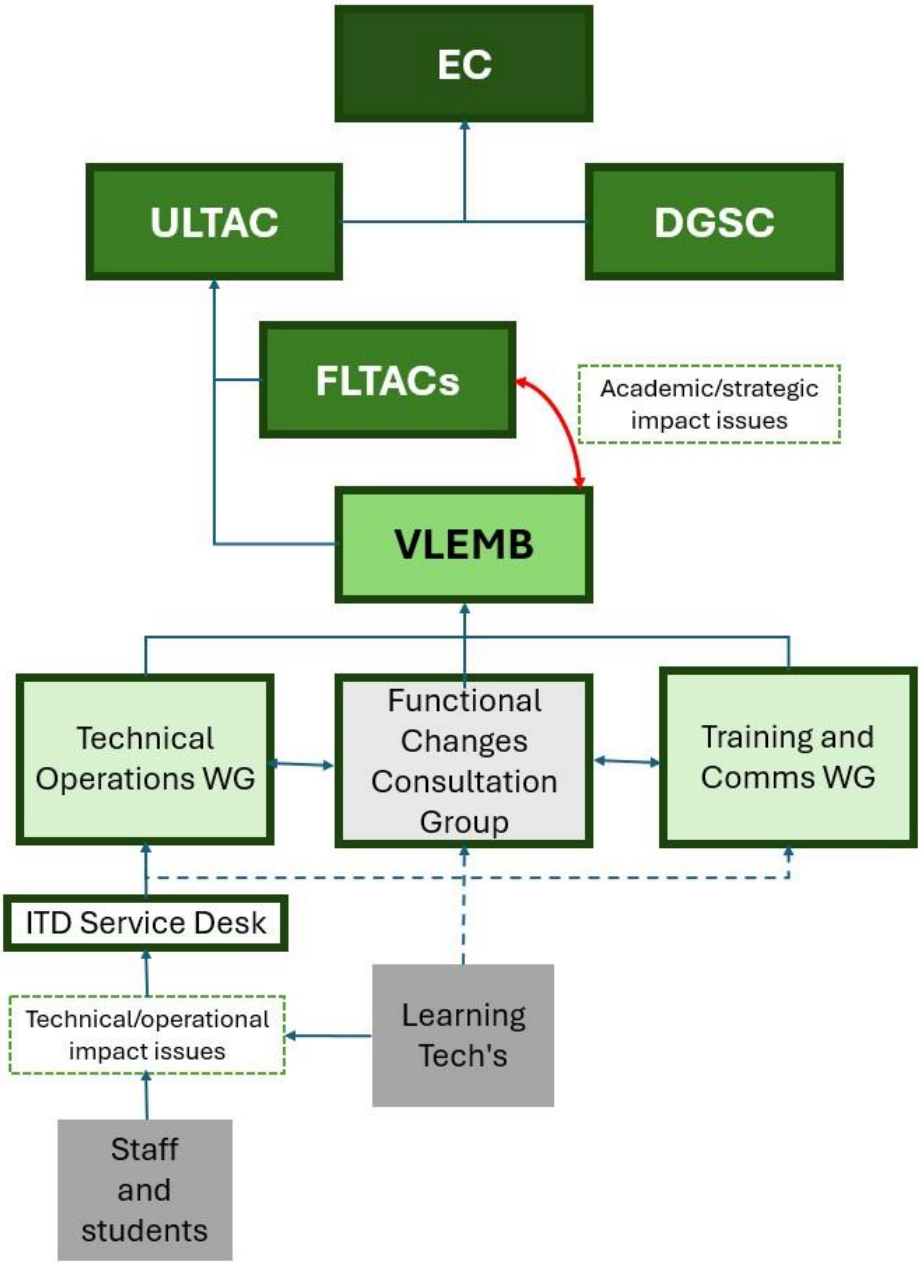
However, reporting lines across the faculties do not align with VLEMB, meaning that the potential lack of participation and representation of each of the faculties is beyond its scope and area of influence.

3. Decision-making workflow

The decision-making process enabled through the VLE Structure (summarised in Figure 1) serves to address technical and operational issues at the level of the working groups, with

decisions that have wider academic and strategic impact escalated for/brought by consultation and approval at the level of VLEMB.

Figure 1. Decision-making workflow for VLE Structure



The workflow for decision-making is described next:

1. Any member of staff and students can log a call with ITD Service Desk to request support with a technical issue related to the use of the VLE and its third-party tools, to raise technical and operational issues that are impacting faculty or students.
2. The issues logged through ITD Service Desk will initially be reviewed by an Ed Tech Team member and if it can be resolved, the call will follow the ITD protocol of prioritisation and response to calls[2]. Issues that need further discussion or decision will be brought to the Technical Operations Working Group (TOWG) to guarantee a joined-up approach, efficient prioritisation of work packages and communication workflow across the VLE structure. As a result, the issue will be progressed through one of these courses of action:
    a. Technical issues which can be solved at the level of Technical Operations Working Group (TOWG) will be approved and shared with VLEMB (via monthly updates and Change Control document) and with the Training and

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[2] ITD uses the TOPdesk ticketing system to manage Brightspace-related incidents and requests. Calls are prioritized using ITIL-based categories to ensure timely resolution.

Priority Levels

Issues are assigned a priority level based on severity and impact. This helps ITD respond effectively to the most urgent problems.

Priority Levels:

1. **Critical:** System or service is completely down. Major impact on university operations, no workaround available. Requires immediate attention.
2. **High:** Severe degradation of service or functionality. Significant impact on teaching, research, or administration, but a temporary workaround may exist. Needs urgent resolution.
3. **Medium:** Partial loss of functionality or performance issues. Moderate impact, workaround is available but not ideal. Resolution needed within a reasonable timeframe.
4. **Low:** Minor issue with limited impact. Non-critical function is affected, easy workaround available. Resolution can be scheduled.
5. **Minor:** Cosmetic issue, question, or request for information. No operational impact. Resolution at convenience or in a future update.

Response & Resolution Times

Each priority level has associated response and resolution targets. These are managed under ITD's ISO9001:2015-certified Quality Management System.

- P1 – 30 mins to 4hrs
- P2 – 1 hour to 8hours
- P3 – 4 hours to 2 days
- P4 – 1 day to 5 days
- P5 – 5 days to 10 days

Comms Working Group (TCWG) for dissemination to the campus community if appropriate.

   b. Functional issues that require further consultation will be progressed to the Functional Changes Consultation Group (FCCG)(step 3 below).
   c. Academic/strategic issues which cannot be solved at the level of TOWG or FCCG will be progressed to the VLEMB for further consultation (point 4 below).
3. Functional Changes Consultation Group (FCCG) will further investigate the issue to inform its recommendation based on expected implications for staff and students, using the information that it has access to (this may include, but not exclusively, statistics of use, surveys to the community, expert reports, evaluation rubrics, etc.). As a result, the issue will follow one of these courses of action:
   a. Approved and progressed to VLEMB for information through monthly update and progressed to Training and Comms Working Group (TCWG) for dissemination to the campus community if appropriate.
   b. If the issue is likely to have an academic or strategic impact, progress to VLEMB for consultation and approval (step 4).
4. Issues progressed to VLEMB are intended to be of academic and strategic importance. The Chair of the respective WG will raise the issue and support documentation and may provide a recommended solution which is backed by previous investigation. As a result, the VLEMB may:
   a. Decide on the issue and recommend communication to the FLTACs or campus community as appropriate, OR
   b. Decide on the need for consultation through the FLTACs, OR
   c. Decide on the need for escalation to ULTAC for decisions with a wider academic and strategic impact, OR
   d. Decide on the need for escalation to DGSC for decisions on digital investment.

4. VLE Governance Feedback Protocol

This protocol is designed to ensure an efficient, agile, transparent and professional feedback workflow between all the members of the VLE Structure, the FLTACs reps, and the campus community at large, with the aim to progress solutions that support the broader goals of teaching and learning.

This protocol will be reviewed in an ongoing basis through VLE Management Board to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Feedback on the process is always welcome from members of the VLE structure who effectively engage in the Management Board and its working groups through frequent and positive attendance and participation.

The agreed protocol is based around the following steps:

4.1. Information sharing

The following documentation is available to members of staff who are not part of the VLE Structure through the folder VLEMB Campus Engagement, which includes:

- Standard Operation Procedures for the VLE Structure
- Ratified VLEMB minutes (uploaded within a week of VLEMB meetings)
- ITD Change control document
- Monthly updates by working groups
- Link to feedback protocol (see below VLE Governance Feedback Protocol).
- Joint communications on decisions

Access to this folder can be requested by any member of UL staff by emailing ctl@ul.ie.

4.2. Feedback collection

Any member of staff may provide feedback or share a concern about a decision made or reported at the VLEMB (as communicated through approved minutes and monthly updates shared in VLE Campus Engagement).

Submissions must be completed through a short MS Form to be made available in the same folder, to which the chairs of the working groups will have access to. Interactions directly raised through an FLTAC representative or other member of the VLE Structure through email threads or informal conversations will be referred to this official way of communication.

4.3. Review and decision

A small group comprised of the working groups' chairs will review the submissions received. Submissions referring to issues approved over the period of one month, or issues repeatedly raised be discarded. It is expected that most concerns will be resolved at this stage.

Where appropriate, the chairs of the working groups can invite the person raising the concern to a short, informal meeting to better understand the issue and explore possible solutions.

If further discussion or investigation of the issue is required, this will be referred to the appropriate working group or the VLE Management Board.

If it is deemed that the issue is beyond the scope of the VLE Management and Support Structure, it may be escalated to ULTAC, the Vice President Academic, and/or the Provost.

4.4. Closing the loop

The outcome of the process—whether a change in decision, clarifications, or recommendations to the campus community—will be documented and shared

appropriately by the working group chairs through a collaborative document in the Communications on Decisions folder, within the VLE Campus Engagement open folder.

5. References and links

ITD Quality Management System: https://www.ul.ie/itd/itd-quality-management-system

Brightspace Knowledge Base: https://www.ul.ie/brightspace/brightspace-knowledge-base

Brightspace 101 course: Homepage - Introduction to Brightspace for Instructors

Contact ITD: https://ul.topdesk.net/

Appendix

TOR Technical Operations WG

Technical Operations Working Group

The Group will align the operational and continuous improvement change processes with existing ITD service delivery, end user support and Change Management Processes. The group will work to support technical and change tasks and related communications by liaising closely with VLE management board, Faculty learning, teaching & assessment committees (FLTAC), other working groups, Brightspace, ITD and other stakeholders.

The Remit

- Engage with Faculty learning and teaching, assessment committees to understand use cases and requirements concerning VLE usage and improvements.
- Analyse trends and respond to stakeholder feedback and requests and systematically evaluate the impact of changes on the ability of the users to perform their functions effectively.
- Confirm and document processes regarding operational and continuous improvement change processes that are aligned with existing ITD processes.
- Develop communications and guidelines for different stakeholders (including members of the VLE Project Team), informing them of the likely impact of change requests.
- Pro-actively engage with FLTACs, Brightspace / ITD and other working groups to facilitate continuous improvement.

Governance

- The TO WG will report to the VLE Management Board through its Chair.
- The TO WG will regularly liaise with Training & Communications Working Group, Functional Changes Working Group to ensure consistency of service and inter group alignment.

Operations

- The TO WG will meet on a regular basis. Meetings may take place more or less frequently, however a minimum of one meeting per month is required.
- Some of the TO WG meetings will be focused on internal, UL' matters while some will incorporate discussions with D2L partners.
- The documentation of the Group will be made available electronically to ensure that members are kept informed and can collaborate effectively.

Composition and Membership

The TO WG comprises:

Head, Educational Technology, ITD (Chair)	Ex officio
ITD Educational Technology Team: Deputy Chair Senior Education Technologists Education Technologist	Ex officio
Representative of Functional Changes Working Group	WG Nomination
Faculty Learning Technologist or Learning Technologist	As per expression of interest

Membership can be amended as required to reflect the stages of the project, business needs, and the skills and experience necessary to deliver the WG's remit.

Responsibilities and Expectations of Committee Members

Members of the TO WG should attend regularly and participate fully in the work of the WG.

TOR Functional Changes Consultation Group

Terms of Reference

The VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group provides a forum for consultation of decisions pertaining functional changes to the VLE and its integrated tools with a focus on enhancing the end-user experience for both staff and students, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and pedagogical best practices.

The Remit

- Review, discuss and make recommendations on the processing of functional change requests that affect the VLE and liaise with relevant stakeholders to ensure all requests enhance the end-user experience.

- Review functional change updates made by the vendor to the VLE platform, discuss their implementation in UL, and recommend optimal approach.

- Coordinate the ongoing review of the current Brightspace navigation and master course/ module template, producing guidelines for revisions where necessary.

- Ensure that the accessibility principles enabling staff to embed inclusive principles within their modules are considered when reviewing changes and external tools.

- Review current LTIs usage and identify new LTIs and other add-ons that may be needed to enhance the end-user experience.

- Offer input to the Training and Communications Working Group in the development of documentation.

Governance

- The VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group will report to VLE Management Board through its Chair.

- The VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group will regularly liaise with the Training & Communications Working Group, Technical Operations Working Group, and the Chair of the VLE Management Board through their respective Chairs.

Operations

- The FCCG will comprise the Chair of the Functional Changes Consultation Group and members of the UL community representing a range of stakeholder groups.

- The Chair of the Functional Changes Consultation Group may invite other members of the VLE team, or the wider university, to join discussions of some items, where those members could provide important insight or contributions.

- Membership can be amended as required according to business needs, and the skills and experience necessary to deliver the Group's remit.

- The VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group will meet as required before the scheduled change windows in June and January to review the proposed functional

changes, and as and when required for remaining business (estimated: 45 minutes online meeting every 2-3 weeks).

- The documentation of the Group will be made available electronically to ensure that members are kept informed and can collaborate on development.

- Any member of the VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group may bring issues of relevance for consideration by the working groups of the VLE Structure.

- On request, minutes of the VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group will be made available to other UL staff who wishes to be kept informed of items discussed and recommendations made on an ongoing basis.

Composition and Membership

The Functional Changes Consultation Group comprises:

Functional Changes Consultation Group (Chair)	CTL
Representative of Training & Communications WG	WG Nomination
Representative(s) of Technical Operations WG	WG Nomination
FLT rep(s) SEN	FLTAC nomination
FLT rep(s) AHSS	FLTAC nomination
FLT rep(s) EHS	FLTAC nomination
FLT rep(s) KBS	FLTAC nomination
Library rep	Library nomination
Digital skills rep	CTL nomination
Educational Assistive Technology Centre (EATC) rep	EATC nomination

A yearly call for participation will be issued at the end of each academic year through the Chairs of the Faculty Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committees and other stakeholders with representation in the VLE Management Board.

Responsibilities and Expectations of Committee Members

- VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group members will be expected to be collegial and constructive in their approach.

- Members of the VLE Functional Changes Consultation Group should attend regularly and participate fully and positively in the Group. Failure to do so will result in membership being removed.

TOR Training and Communications Working Group

The VLE Training and Communications Working Group (TCWG) coordinates the delivery of training activities and communications across the UL community.

The Remit

- Coordinate, develop and communicate the delivery of training, supported by appropriate documentation, to the campus community, including training on associated tools.
- Maintain and update the Brightspace knowledge base as the central repository of information and documentation on the VLE and its integrated third-party teaching, learning and assessment tools.
- Determine any training gaps that emerge from the integration of new functionality in the VLE and update training resources and communications accordingly.
- Support the deployment of third-party teaching, learning and assessment tools integrated in the VLE from a training perspective.
- Support the integration of accessibility principles to enable staff to embed inclusive principles within their teaching practice.
- Collate examples of best practice in using the VLE and communicate these to the campus community.
- Communicate training opportunities, resource updates and functional changes to the campus community in coherence with the Communications Strategy approved by the VLE Management Board.
- Provide proactive advice and recommendations to the VLE Management Board in the area of VLE training and communication.

Governance

- The TCWG reports to the VLE Management Board through its Chair.
- The TCWG will liaise closely with the Functional Changes WG and Technical Operations WG, through their respective Chairs.

Operations

- The VLE Training Working Group will meet on a monthly basis.
- The documentation of the Group will be made available electronically. Minutes of meetings will be archived in the VLE Structure SharePoint space.

Composition and Membership

- The TCWG will comprise the Chair of the Working Group and members of the UL community representing a range of stakeholder groups. A yearly call for participation will be issued at the end of each academic year through the Chairs of

the Faculty Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committees and other stakeholders with representation in the VLE Management Board.

- The Chair of the VLE Training Working Group may invite other members of the VLE team, or the wider university, to join the discussions of some items, where those members could provide important insight or contributions.
- Membership can be amended as required according to business needs, and the skills and experience necessary to deliver the Group's remit.

Responsibilities and Expectations of Committee Members

- TCWG members will be expected to be collegial and constructive in their approach.
- Members of the TCWG should attend regularly and participate fully in the work of the Group.