UNIVERSITY OF
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Information management in the Virtual Learning Environment

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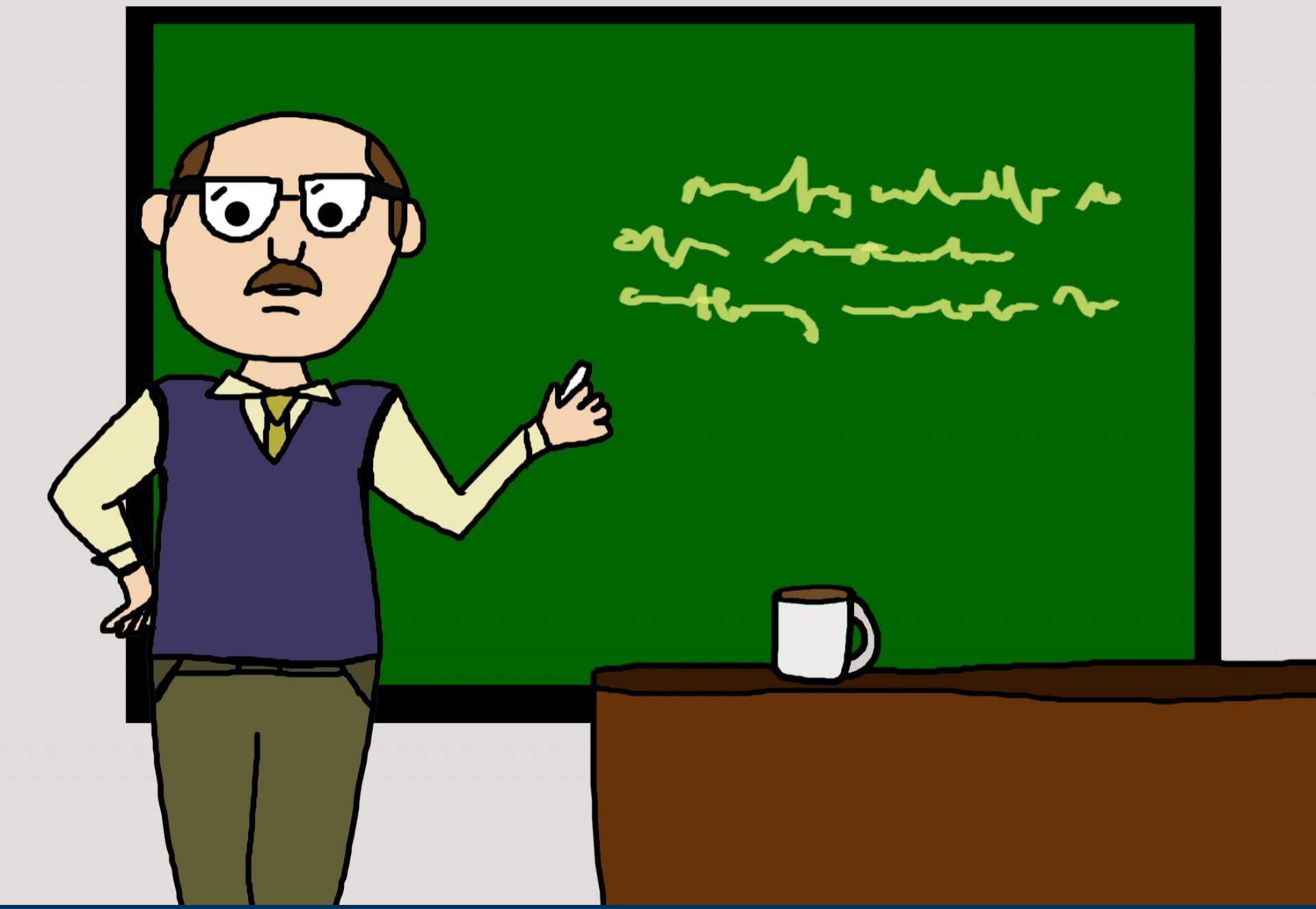
Virtual Learning Environments

Desire2Learn

What's the problem

- Student complaints about "Inconsistency"
- Unrealistic expectations of technology
- Increasing demand for "minimum standards". (Reed & Whatmough, 2015)
- Talk of "Gold", "Silver" and "Bronze" sites.
- Very difficult to agree on a "gold standard"



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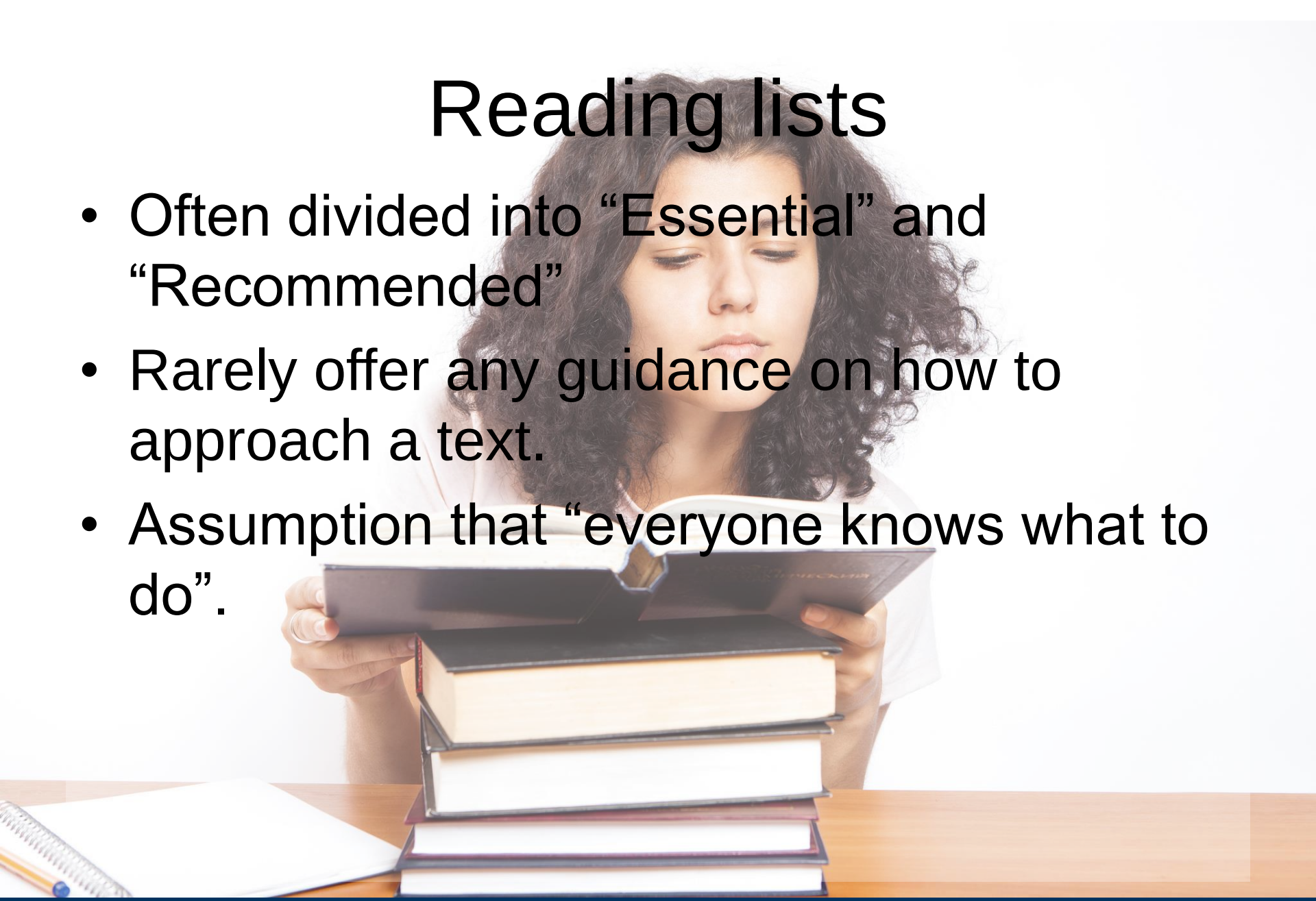
Reading lists

- Often divided into “Essential” and “Recommended”
- Rarely offer any guidance on how to approach a text.
- Assumption that “everyone knows what to do”.



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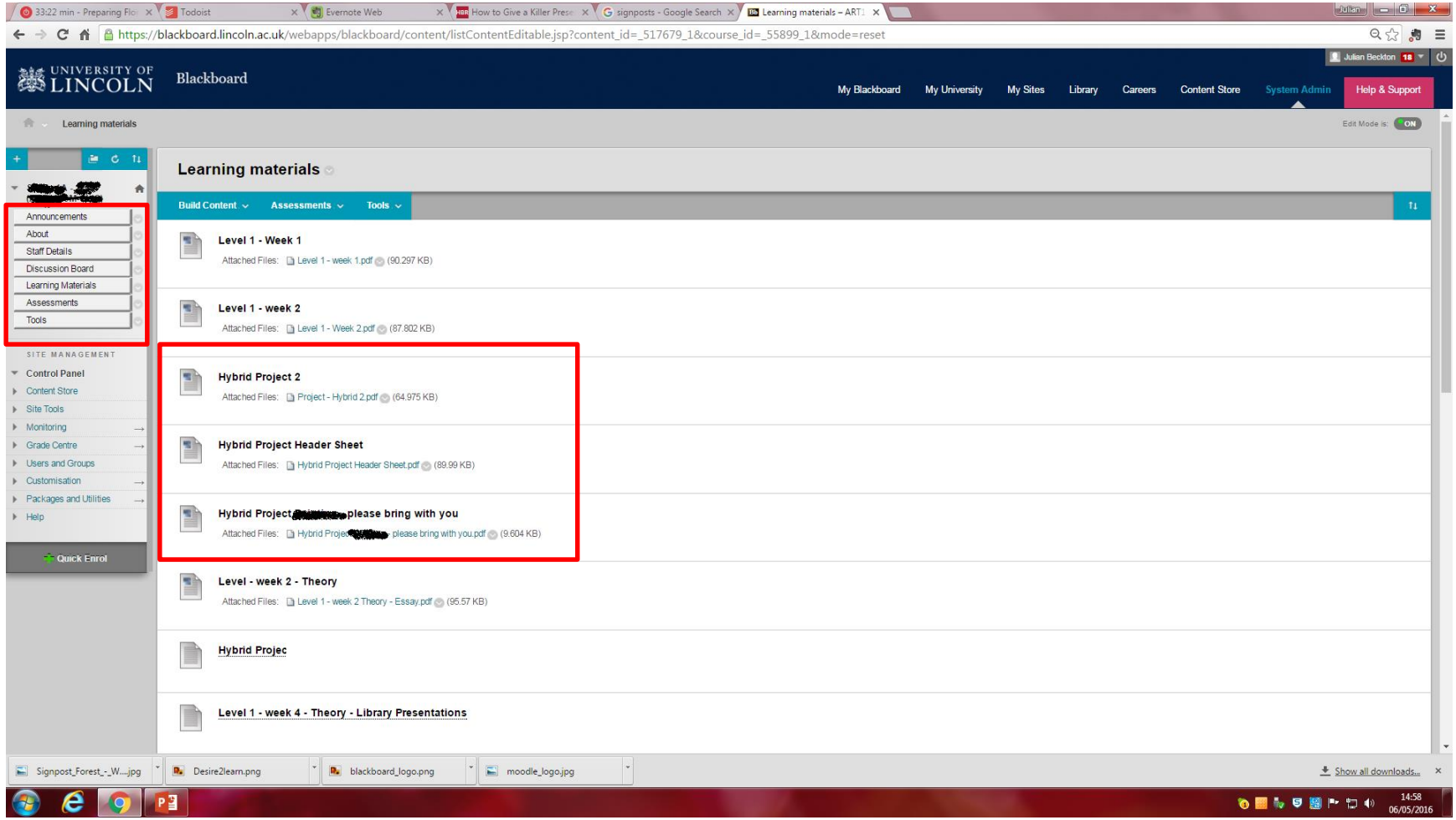
A fairly typical VLE site



Strategy

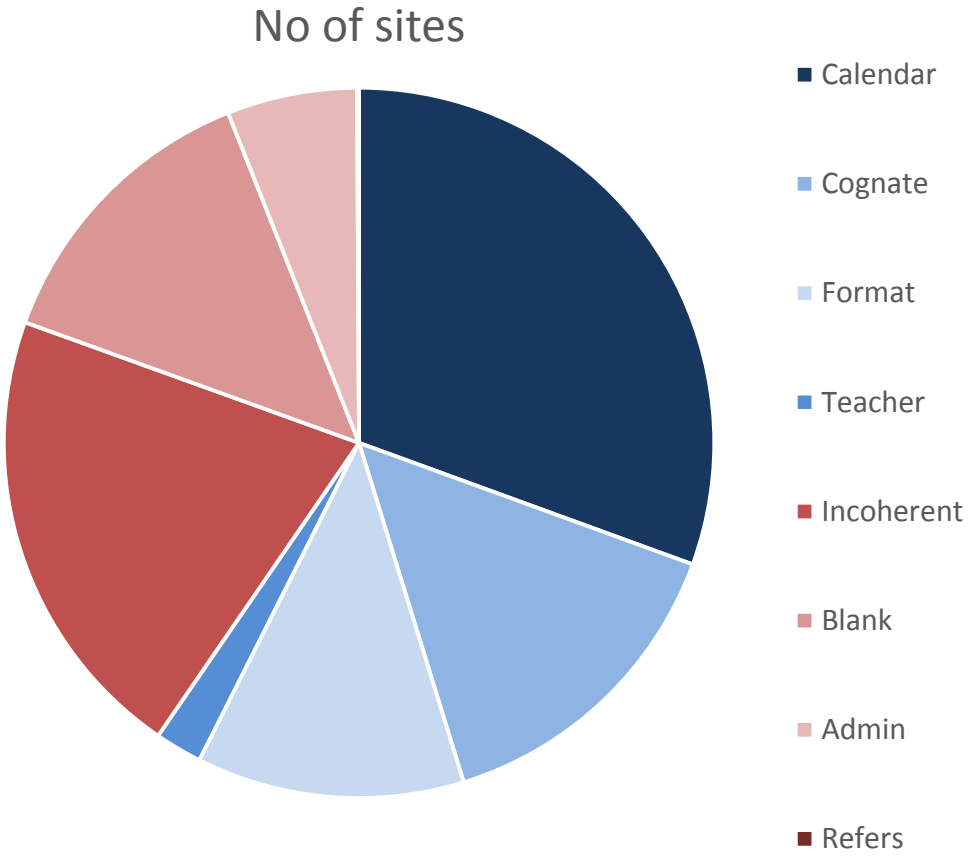
- Examine one years worth of sites in my own institution *(2013-14 n=1197*) (*done*)
  - Highly varied practices, but four identifiable models emerged
- Interview a range of staff in different institutions (*incomplete, ongoing*)
  - Strong desire to meet need of students.
  - Frustration about practicalities (e.g. copyright)
- Survey students (*to be done*)

Models

- Calendar – simply tries to follow teaching. (week 1, 2, etc.).
- Cognate – attempts to organise the subject into topics
- Format – attempts to organise by pedagogical model (lectures, seminars, etc.)
- Teacher – organised by individual academic folders

Model distribution

Model	Number
Calendar	356
Incoherent	244
Cognate	171
Blank	157
Format	142
Admin	69
Teacher	25
Refers	1



Interview data

- **Strong desire to work with students**
  - we might have to change learning activities depending on the actual student group and how they're engaging (Respondent B)
  - I'd ask them in class "If you like I can take a picture of this, and put this up and they're like "yeah, that's great, that's really helpful" (Respondent H)
  - the director of teaching and learning has invested money in getting Blackboard analytics. But we can't make it work and so we can't really access all the data with regard to that. (Respondent F)

- **But practical problems. Especially around IPR**
  - the whole issue of copyright, which you can only digitise one chapter blah blah, so in terms of International students having access, you know that's an issue" (Respondent C)
  - "you know, if this really is going to be a problem then that makes a lot of VLEs not fit for purpose" (Respondent E)

Thank you

Image credit: University of Lincoln

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