

# Back to Block: Re-imagining student learning in a hyper-connected world through an international academic conference

Elizabeth Goode<sup>a</sup>, Alasdair Blair<sup>b</sup>

Corresponding author: Elizabeth Goode (Liz.Goode@scu.edu.au)

<sup>a</sup>Academic Portfolio Office, Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Trinity House, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH, UK

## Abstract

This article reflects on the International Block and Intensive Teaching Association (IBILTA) conference held in Melbourne, Australia, in July 2024. Perspectives are offered from two delegates who joined the conference from differing institutional and national contexts. One is a Teaching Scholar from Southern Cross University, Australia, and the other an Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor from De Montfort University, UK. We reflect on the value of attending the conference in person, some of the challenges, and offer thoughts on 'where to next'.

**Keywords:** block model; academic conference; community of practice; curriculum innovation; immersive learning

## Introduction

It is now over 50 years since the block model was first pioneered in higher education (HE) at Colorado College in the United States (Hayward, 2020; Konjarski et al., 2023). This bold and innovative experiment in teaching and learning was subsequently adopted at other North American institutions, such as Cornell College, University of Montana Western, and Quest University (Solomonides et al., 2024). While various forms of the block model – also known as immersive, intensive, and accelerated learning – have since filtered into HE in contexts such as Australia and the United Kingdom (UK), for many years these approaches have remained at the margins, particularly in undergraduate education (Harvey et al., 2017).

Recently, however, block and immersive models have attracted interest from a range of universities across the UK, Australia, and even in Asia (McKie, 2022). Victoria University (McCluskey et al., 2020) and Southern Cross University (Roche et al., 2024a) have led the charge in Australia, implementing four-week, one-unit-at-a-time and six-week, two-unit-at-a-time models respectively across their institutions. In the UK, block variants have been introduced at an institutional scale at Suffolk University (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022) and De Montfort University (Allman, 2024), with several other universities also trialling or implementing block models (Nerantzi & Chatzidamianos, 2020; Turner et al., 2021). Data emerging from these contexts indicate that the more focused study experience of fewer subjects over shorter periods of time can bolster the academic success of students from a variety of backgrounds, including those who are underrecognised in HE contexts (Goode et al., 2024c; Roche et al., 2024b; Samarawickrema & Cleary, 2021), international students (Goode et al., 2024b), first-year students (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Goode et al., 2023; Loton et al., 2022), and students from multiple disciplines and year levels (Wilson et al., 2024b).

Given the spike in interest in immersive block learning that has occurred during and since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is timely that the International Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching Association (IBILTA) held its first in-person conference in Melbourne, Australia, in July of 2024. There appears to now be a ‘critical mass’ of institutions and educators who have dived headlong – or at least dipped their toe – into immersive and block teaching, and a growing body of scholarly work on these approaches. In short, there is the makings of a vibrant and growing international community of immersive block educator-scholars.

Academic conferences have long been recognised as valuable “sites of social, emotional and intellectual activity” (Henderson, 2015, p. 915) that can provide attendees with an array of professional benefits, from demonstrating research productivity and enhancing one’s reputation, to social networking and finding a “tribe” for dialogue, collaboration, inspiration, and even friendship (Reinhard et al., 2021). However, in-person conferences are not without their shortcomings, particularly in relation to inclusivity and the associated environmental and financial costs (Etzion et al., 2022).

The purpose of this article is to reflect on the value, and some of the challenges, of coming together as block-focused educators at the IBILTA conference, from the perspectives of two delegates from different institutions (and continents). We introduce our contexts, before offering some reflections on what we took away from the 2024 conference, and what we think this means for the growing community of block, immersive, and intensive learning and teaching across the globe.

## Vantage points: Southern Cross and De Montfort

### Southern Cross University

I (Liz) am a Teaching Scholar from Southern Cross University, a regional, public university with three main campuses in sub-tropical and coastal locations in eastern Australia (the Northern Rivers, Gold Coast, and Coffs Harbour). These campuses sit on the Lands of the Traditional Owners of these regions, the Bundjalung, Yugambah, and Gumbaynggirr peoples. Southern Cross also has branch campuses in Australian major cities and international partnerships with universities in China and Papua New Guinea. The university is relatively young, having been founded in 1994, and is an institution driven by its purpose of “changing lives through revolutionary learning and research with real impact” (Southern Cross University, 2022). Southern Cross has four faculties (Business, Law and Arts; Education; Health; and Science and Engineering) and two colleges (SCU College, delivering domestic and international pathways; and Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples). The university has around 18,000 students from a diverse range of backgrounds that are often underrecognised in HE: up to 60% are first in family to attend university, 40% live in regional or remote Australia, 40% learn online, 18% are international students, and nearly 5% identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Southern Cross University, n.d.).

Southern Cross is in fourth year of what we call the Southern Cross Model (SCM), an ‘immersive block’ delivery model. The SCM differs from the more common one-subject-at-a-time block model approach, engaging students in up to two concurrent subjects (which we call units) in six-week terms. The SCM was developed in response to persistently low student retention and known issues with student engagement in the traditional 13-week semester model (see Roche et al., 2024a; Wilson & Roche, 2022). In 2020, an Academic Design Team was convened, led by two Pro Vice-Chancellors Academic (Wilson & Roche, 2022), and with membership from across the university’s faculties, colleges, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and professional work units. After much reflection and consideration of potential approaches, the decision was made to transform the university’s entire academic delivery model through the immersive block SCM, built upon the principles of focused, active, and guided learning (Roche et al., 2022, 2024a). The SCM was first piloted in pathways, business, and civil engineering in 2021 (Goode et al., 2023, 2024a, 2024c), before being rolled out across science, engineering, education, humanities, and Indigenous knowledges in 2022 (Wilson et al., 2024b), and finally to health and law in 2023 (Smidt et al., 2024).

In the initial year of the model’s rollout I redeveloped curricula in the university’s pathways (also known as enabling, access or foundation) program, as well as an undergraduate academic literacies unit. I also contributed to professional learning for academic staff around the SCM’s key principles of focused, guided, and active learning (Roche et al., 2022), and the assessment principles enacted for the model (Wilson et al., 2024a). However, my focus is primarily on the scholarship of learning and teaching, working with the university’s Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality and Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Innovation – who led the institution’s transformation to immersive block delivery – to disseminate evidence and insights on the model’s implementation and impact (Roche et al., 2022). Attending the 2024 IBILTA conference was therefore an opportunity that I was very enthusiastic about. What could I learn from the approaches and experiences of other immersive block educators? Would the

conference have a positive impact on my identity as an educator in this non-traditional form of HE? I embarked on the conference with these questions in mind.

### **De Montfort University**

I (Alasdair) am Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor Education at De Montfort University (DMU) which is based in Leicester, UK. DMU is a forward-looking university which has its roots in providing vocational education in the City of Leicester and the wider region, with its origins tracing back to its foundation in 1869 as a technical and art school. Today DMU is a truly global university that has expanded to over 25,000 students and has 12 academic partnerships in the UK and works abroad with 11 transnational education partners as well as having overseas campuses in Dubai, Kazakhstan, and Cambodia. DMU's global outlook is reflected in the fact that it is the only UK university to be an Academic Impact Hub for a United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), namely SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

DMU has a strong commitment to widening participation and this is reflected in our Empowering University strategy which aims to 'empower students, staff and our partners to create a fairer society' (De Montfort University, n.d.). At the heart of the university is the vision of 'creating a community of participation, fairness and collective responsibility; transforming lives and championing a fair and sustainable society'. DMU's student body is ethnically diverse, with some of the largest populations of Asian and Black students in the UK. The university is a sector leader in decolonising the curriculum and in 2023 became the first UK university to obtain a Silver Race Equality Charter award in recognition of for our approaches in tackling inequality in higher education and improving the representation, progression, and success of Black, Asian and ethnically minoritised students, academics and professional staff (Advance HE, 2023).

DMU is in its third year of what we refer to as our Education 2030 block delivery approach in which students' study one element of their degree programme at a time (De Montfort University, 2024). Our shift towards block delivery initially started as a conversation about what our future curriculum should look like in 2030. The use of 'Education 2030' in the framing of our discussions was therefore based on thinking about what education should be in the next decades ahead and how we can deliver this today. Our Education 2030 curriculum was developed in response to a decline in student satisfaction as reflected in National Student Survey (NSS) metrics, which is a national survey that is completed by final year students across the UK. In 2021 the university had particularly disappointing NSS results, where we experienced a greater decline in student satisfaction than the sector average. And whilst some of the decline was certainly influenced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (the City of Leicester suffered the longest lockdown of any UK towns and cities during the pandemic), we also recognised that there was a need to address some wider challenges (Drury, 2021). This included improving the proportion of students who continue with and complete their studies. Other issues included a desire to simplify academic timetables where student feedback indicated concerns with irregular timetable patterns and the need to tackle assessment bunching and clashing deadlines (Jones, 2022). These points were also triangulated in discussions and surveys with our students.

It was against this backdrop that the university set out to overhaul its curriculum, which after a multitude of consultation events that included workshops, town hall meetings, email

communications and focus group work around the likes of the academic curriculum and calendar, that a recommendation to adopt a block curriculum was approved by Academic Board in the Autumn of 2021. Our approach to block teaching was to create a structure where students would be taught over 7-week blocks that would be structured into two 15-week semesters, with an enhancement week break between the finish of one block and the start of the next. In recommending this approach, we particularly benefited from conversations with colleagues at Victoria University in Australia as well as Suffolk University in the UK (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; McCluskey et al., 2020). Our decision to implement a block curriculum approach was significantly influenced by the consideration of the benefits that students obtained from studying one module at a time in terms of building a stronger cohort identity which we considered was particularly important in improving the overall welfare of our students and in so doing improving student success measures such as retention (Allman, 2024; Koenig, 2023). The evidence that we gained from our students has so far confirmed positive benefits, including improvements in students' sense of belonging (Williams, 2024).

In taking the decision to move to a block curriculum, we recognised that one of the most challenging aspects was redesigning our academic programmes. We adopted a sprint approach where academic teams worked intensively over three days to produce the necessary documentation to validate their degree programmes (Allman & de Main, 2024; de Main & Jones, 2022). My area of focus was on leading the academic transition, ensuring the integrity of the move to block teaching as a vehicle for delivering teaching and learning outcomes for our students as well as representing the academic support required to deliver the programme of work and ensuring that student voices and interests were represented. Attending the IBILTA Conference therefore provided me with an opportunity to meet colleagues that had been helpful in providing support and guidance in our transition to block teaching and to learn from practitioners who were teaching block education in a different educational environment. I was keen to develop new teaching and research collaborations and consider the way in which the lessons that we were gaining from our change to block education were similar or different to others. I was intrigued by the design of the new Victoria University tower and the way in which the teaching environment impacted on the pedagogical approach (Ross, 2022). I wanted to know in more detail about the balance between research and teaching time from block educators and the way in which the student journey at other providers progressed through a block curriculum, such as in terms of assessments and curriculum choices.

## **Conference insights**

### **Strengthening community and identity**

One of the foremost benefits of the conference, from my (Liz's) perspective, was the opportunity to strengthen my understanding of what it means to be an educator-scholar working within an immersive block context. In my teaching discipline of pathways education, there has been increasing recognition of a common pedagogy embraced by pathways educators across the sector – often referred to as 'enabling pedagogies' (Bennett et al., 2016; Davis, 2023; Stokes, 2014; Syme, 2021). However, with immersive block teaching being a relatively recent innovation for many institutions, a consistent sense of what characterises 'immersive block pedagogy' is still emerging.

A key highlight of the IBILTA conference was therefore mixing in person with others who have trialled, implemented, evaluated and refined versions of a block model. Working at a multi-campus institution with many meetings conducted online, I have grown used to hearing: “it is nice to put a real face to the name”. At IBILTA, it indeed was. Meeting the “names” whose work I have read, cited and learned from was an uplifting experience. The conference provided an untapped opportunity to broaden and deepen a community of practice.

It began with the pre-conference workshops. The scene was set within a small group environment, and by facilitators who infused the workshops with the active learning approaches they applied in classrooms. This was an international community – albeit small – and one characterised by the drive to *enhance pedagogy* and further *teaching excellence* across institutions.

These commitments became increasingly apparent over the course of the conference. In seeing colleagues describe, demonstrate and reflect on pedagogical approaches applied in media studies (C-Scott & Corcoran, 2024), speech pathology (Millar et al., 2024), teacher education (Jobson et al., 2024), writing (Blankenship, 2024), and many other disciplines and contexts, the care, enthusiasm, and innovation of immersive block educators stood out. Research increasingly bears out that immersive block model success is mediated by pedagogical practice (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Goode et al., 2023). The conference made clear that these forms of learning are built upon boldness, care and teaching excellence; they are “a catalyst for ongoing innovation” (Konjarski et al., 2023).

The 2024 IBILTA conference enabled community-building – and resonance – to an extent that would have been difficult to emulate in a purely online environment. Exemplifying this, in the closing keynote (Muscat, 2024), we mingled and moved about the room, experiencing the kind of dynamic, interactive learning that we hope to facilitate with students.

Leaving the conference, I felt more connected to a community that embodies *commitment to student success*, *excellence in active learning pedagogies*, and a willingness to *boldly embrace innovation*. Although our approaches to block scheduling and institutional pedagogies vary (Buck & Tyrrell, 2022; Konjarski et al., 2023; Roche et al., 2024a), these core values seem strong and unifying.

Teaching in block can be effective and rewarding, but also brings complexities and challenges (Thomas et al., 2024). Existing at the pointy end of educational innovation can be disorienting, prompting reflections about academic identity (Nisbet et al., in press). Spending four vibrant days in Melbourne with other block model leaders, innovators and scholars from around the world has left a lasting impact on my own educational philosophy and identity, which now feels more deeply rooted in this emerging, values-driven community. Meeting fellow block educator-scholars in person has also precipitated several scholarly projects and collaborations (such as this article). This reflects a research-informed approach to teaching and learning that infused the conference and appeared embedded in daily practice across our diverse, yet also resonant, contexts.

### **Rethinking strategies for active learning**

From my (Alasdair’s) perspective, one of the most stimulating aspects of the conference was the richness of the academic discussions with everyone that I had the privilege of either having

a conversation with or listening to. I found this both a liberating and challenging experience as in contrast to other conferences which I have become accustomed to attend over the years, this was a conference where I was meeting people for the first time. This is because for those of us who have the privilege of being able to attend conferences in our own discipline on a regular basis, we often develop networks and friendships which mean that we look forward to catching up with our friends. Yet, as a colleague once told me at the start of my career, this can mean that we risk not challenging ourselves to meet new colleagues as we revert to the relative comfort of conversations in our own networks. The 2024 IBILTA conference was therefore not just a conference about block learning, but a conference which provided me with an opportunity to stretch myself through meeting new colleagues and being inspired to think differently about teaching and learning practices.

Across all the discussions at the conference was the focus on change, which was reflected in the conference theme of 'University built better'. This focus on building better was not just about building a better curriculum as it also related to how staff were developed and supported to create an active and engaging student learning. This theme came out strongly in the pre-conference workshops that I attended, where the staff who led the sessions created a learning environment that actively engaged those of who were attending the sessions. And whilst these workshops benefited from the learning environment of the Victoria University City Tower with classrooms that were deliberately designed to facilitate active engagement strategies, the workshops clarified to me the importance of ensuring that all staff can teach effectively in such environments.

This is because in a block learning environment where students are taking one module at a time, it is the case that the learning which a student gets in the module they are taking is of utmost importance because they are less able to cross reference this against other modules that they would otherwise be simultaneously taking in a non-block curriculum. To the casual observer, such a point might be viewed as being blindingly obvious. Yet, from an academic delivery perspective, the likelihood is that staff are often going to be purely thinking about their own teaching delivery. Such an approach goes back to more traditional views of academic delivery that sit around expertise, disciplines, and knowledge structures.

However, in a block environment, it is important that we are not only rethinking academic delivery in terms of the curriculum but also rethinking how academics deliver their teaching and how they view their relationships with the university and the students that they are teaching. This is because in a block curriculum of one module at a time the reality is that a student's primary contact with the university is through the individual module they are taking and as such that specific module both becomes a point of success and a single point of failure. A key takeaway that I took from the conference was the importance of rethinking how we support and develop our academic staff.

For me, one of the most important aspects of the conference was the honesty of the discussions around the reasons why different universities and colleges had either decided to adopt a block curriculum approach or were actively considering implementing block. I found these 'warts and all' discussions particularly refreshing as they emphasised both the real challenges of shifting a whole campus curriculum to a new form of pedagogy and the benefits. For some, the shift to block was influenced by the reality that the existing curricular approach was just not

working, whether that be for the students or for the staff. In some cases, the adoption of block was therefore part of the building of a ‘coalition of the willing’. But across all the discussions, there was a real honesty about the way in which a decision to adopt block was more than just the case of presenting a burning platform and the necessity of change but was instead about the importance of facing up to the need to do better for our students. These discussions brought to the fore the importance of remembering the ecological make-up of a college or university in the sense that they are so much more than the lone scholar turning up to deliver their ‘expert’ lecture and for students to show their learning in an exam.

### **Challenges and future directions**

Alongside these benefits, an in-person event brings challenges that, while not unique to IBILTA, are worth reflecting on. Chief among these is the time and financial cost of attending, which posed a noticeable barrier to a more diverse gathering. We are cognisant that many other colleagues at our respective institutions, as well as at other institutions where shorter models are offered, could have contributed meaningfully to the dialogue, sharing of practice, and strengthening of community that took place. Immersive block teaching is a truly international innovation. However, the cost of international and interstate travel hinders broader participation and the benefits that flow from physical togetherness.

A hybrid event could be a promising future direction, building on the online IBILTA conference in 2023 and the in-person conference in 2024. Reflections on hybrid academic conferences post-COVID reveal mixed results. Advantages include enhanced accessibility, flexibility and inclusivity alongside a reduced carbon footprint, and disadvantages include less meaningful social engagement and networking, and added complexities for organising committees (Puccinelli et al., 2022; Rodriguez Medina & Shrum, 2022). In an international community, time differences pose a substantial challenge. Perhaps most notably though, it remains particularly challenging in an online environment to replicate the informal yet valuable interactions between sessions – the “non-academic conviviality of coffee, dinners and receptions that reinforce trust and build spaces for socialization” (Rodriguez Medina & Shrum, 2022, Conclusions).

Yet, given the reality of the financial challenges that higher education institutions face as well as the need to consider the sustainability of conferences, it is important that we rise to the challenge of building networks in a hyper-connected world in ways that do not always involve in-person attendance. It is also important that for those of us who can attend, we not only bring back the experience of attending and gain at an individual level the benefits of new networks, but that we extend these networks to wider audiences. There is therefore a duty at hybrid events to ensure that those colleagues who join in online are not just viewed as passive listeners or one-dimensional transmitters of knowledge.

For this to happen, we also need to ensure that online and hybrid events are user led in terms of ensuring an interactive experience where feedback loops are enabled for online and in person attendees. And this is not just a case of having a relative passive chat function running in MS Teams or Zoom. In real life, dialogue is constantly flowing and is captured not just in the spoken dialogue but in the reaction through body language and the interaction with the audience in a conference room. Hybrid events therefore require time built in for networking

events that also enable random conversations to happen, because it is through these random interactions that collaboration, creativity and innovation is often seeded.

## Conclusion

Our experiences reinforce the unique value of in-person IBILTA gatherings. We also recognise that the sheer costs of attending international conferences mean that there are inevitable financial and logistic challenges which limit participation. This is an important challenge that we collectively need to work towards addressing in the hyper-connected world that we live in. This is because the opportunities to connect beyond our own institutions help to strengthen community, identity, our own teaching practice, and ultimately outcomes for students. It is particularly critical to ensure that inclusivity and diversity are core to our practices, and we support IBILTA in continuing to offer opportunities to share, discuss, collaborate, and even socialise in multiple ways. With some well-designed opportunities for small-group virtual networking, and the continued promotion of regular events throughout the year, it will be possible to further expand and enrich the international immersive block community, building on the solid foundation of the 2024 IBILTA conference.

## References

- Advance HE. (2023, April 20). *De Montfort University is the first higher education institution recognised with a Race Equality Charter Silver Award*. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/de-montfort-university-first-higher-education-institution-recognised-race-equality>
- Allman Z. (2024). Ensuring student mental wellbeing whilst introducing block mode intensive learning and teaching. *Journal of Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching*, 2(1), 3-21. <https://doi.org/10.15209/jbilt.1304>
- Allman, Z., & de Main, L. (2024, January 31). Sprinting in hindsight: What we have learned from validating university programmes at pace. *The Campus, Times Higher Education*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/sprinting-hindsight-what-we-learned-validating-university-programmes-pace>
- Blankenship, B. (2024, July 24-26). *Left to our own devices: First years on the Block* [Keynote address]. 2024 IBILTA Conference: University Built Better – the Block and the Future of Higher Education. Melbourne, Australia.
- Bennett, A., Motta, S. C., Hamilton, E., Burgess, C., Relf, B., Gray, K., Leroy-Dyer, S., & Albright, J. (2016). *Enabling pedagogies: A participatory conceptual mapping of practices at the University of Newcastle, Australia*. University of Newcastle and Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education. <https://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1389907>
- Buck, E., & Tyrrell, K. (2022). Block and blend: A mixed method investigation into the impact of a pilot block teaching and blended learning approach upon student outcomes and experience. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(8), 1078–1091. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2022.2050686>
- C-Scott, M., & Corcoran, J. (2024). Lights, camera, action, block: Optimising media pedagogy for the block. *Journal of Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching*, 2(2), 5. <https://doi.org/10.15209/jbilt.1316>
- Davis, C. (2023). Enabling education in Australia: Emerging themes and shared understandings. In F. F. Padró, J. H. Green, & D. Bull (Ed.s), *Participation in Higher Education* (pp. 1–22). Springer International Publishing.
- de Main, L., & Jones, S. (2022, November 11) Sprint to the finish: Redesigning university programme validation, *The Campus, Times Higher Education*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/sprint-finish-redesigning-university-programme-validation>
- De Montfort University. (2024). *Block teaching: Teaching designed around you*. <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/empowering-university/block-teaching/index.aspx>

- De Montfort University. (n.d.). *The Empowering University Strategy*. <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/empowering-university/index.aspx>
- Drury, C. (2021, April 3). ‘Light at the end of the tunnel’: Joy as Leicester’s long lockdown begins to ease – one year and six days on. *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/leicester-lockdown-coronavirus-restrictions-b1825544.html>
- Etzion, D., Gehman, J., & Davis, G. F. (2022). Reimagining academic conferences: Toward a federated model of conferencing. *Management Learning*, 53(2), 350-362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076211019529>
- Goode, E., Roche, T., Wilson, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2023). Implications of immersive scheduling for student achievement and feedback. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(7), 1123–1136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2184472>
- Goode, E., Roche, T., Wilson, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2024a). Student perceptions of immersive block learning: An exploratory study of student satisfaction in the Southern Cross Model. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 48(2), 153-167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2023.2277419>
- Goode, E., Roche, T., Wilson, E., Zhang, J., & McKenzie, J. W. (2024b). The success, satisfaction and experiences of international students in an immersive block model. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.21.2.08>
- Goode, E., Syme, S., & Nieuwoudt, J. E. (2024c). The impact of immersive scheduling on student learning and success in an Australian pathways program. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61(2), 263-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2022.2157304>
- Harvey, M., Power, M., & Wilson, M. (2017). A review of intensive mode of delivery and science subjects in Australian universities. *Journal of Biological Education*, 51(3), 315–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00219266.2016.1217912>
- Hayward, S. (2020). *The Block Plan: Celebrating 50 years of innovative, immersive learning*. Colorado College. <https://vimeo.com/511210445>
- Henderson, E. F. (2015). Academic conferences: Representative and resistant sites for higher education research. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(5), 914–925. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2015.1011093>
- Jobson, S., Stirling, S., Bourke, N., & Showers, L. (2024). Supports to increase participation and success in block model in today’s economic climate in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching. *Journal of Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching*, 2(2), 16. <https://doi.org/10.15209/jbilt.1327>
- Jones, S. (2022) Blocks for Building a stronger student community. *The Campus, Times Higher Education*, 16 September. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/blocks-building-stronger-student-community>
- Koenig, B. (2023, September 15). A year on the Block: What have we learned from a shift in delivery. *Wonkhe*. <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-year-on-the-block-what-have-we-learned-from-a-shift-in-delivery/>
- Konjarski, L., Weldon, J., Ashley, S., Freeman, T., Shanata, J., Yamanishi, M., Lotz, E., Gilde, C., & Ganzel, A. (2023). The Block: A catalyst for ongoing innovation. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 20(4). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.4.13>
- Loton, D., Stein, C., Parker, P., & Weaven, M. (2022). Introducing block mode to first-year university students: A natural experiment on satisfaction and performance. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(6), 1097–1120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1843150>
- McCluskey, T., Smallridge, A., Weldon, J., Loton, D., Samarawickrema, G., & Cleary, K. (2020). Building on the VU Block foundations: Results from the inaugural first year cohort. In E. Heinrich & R. Bourke (Eds.), *Research and Development in Higher Education: Next generation, Higher Education: Challenges, Changes and Opportunities*, 42, 61–72. <https://www.herdsa.org.au/publications/conference-proceedings/research-and-development-higher-education-next-generation-6>
- McKie, A. (2022, January 6). Is block teaching the future of university pedagogy? *Times Higher Education*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/block-teaching-future-university-pedagogy>
- Millar, C., Dell-Oro, H., Chahda, L., & Alamawi, S. (2024). From reflective practice to critical reflective practice on the block. *Journal of Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching*, 2(2), 24. <https://doi.org/10.15209/jbilt.1335>
- Muscat, A. (2024, July 24-26). *The building blocks of active learning: Pedagogical innovation at a micro level* [Keynote address]. 2024 IBILTA Conference: University Built Better – the Block and the Future of Higher Education. Melbourne, Australia.

- Nerantzi, C., & Chatzidamianos, G. (2020). Moving to block teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Management and Applied Research*, 7(4), 482–495. <https://doi.org/10.18646/2056.74.20-034>
- Nisbet, S., Goode, E., Russ, E., Haw, J., Rollin, R., & Nieuwoudt, J. (in press). Supporting academic development during curriculum change: A co-operative inquiry of identity and engagement. *International Journal for Academic Development*.
- Puccinelli, E., Zeppilli, D., Stefanoudis, P. V., Wittische-Helou, A., Kermorgant, M., Fuchs, S., Menot, L., Easton, E. E., & Weber, A. A-T. (2022) Hybrid conferences: Opportunities, challenges and ways forward. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 9, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2022.902772>
- Reinhard, D., Stafford, M. C., & Payne, T. C. (2021). COVID-19 and academia: Considering the future of academic conferencing. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 32(2), 171–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2020.1871047>
- Roche, T., Wilson, E., & Goode, E. (2022). Why the Southern Cross Model? How one university’s curriculum was transformed. *Southern Cross University Scholarship of Learning and Teaching Paper No. 3*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4029237>
- Roche, T., Wilson, E., & Goode, E. (2024a). Immersive learning in a block teaching model: A case study of academic reform through principles, policies and practice. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.21.2.12>
- Roche, T., Wilson, E., Goode, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2024b). Supporting the academic success of underrecognised higher education students through an immersive block model. *Higher Education Research & Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2024.2424157>
- Rodriguez Medina, L., & Shrum, W. (2022). Going virtual: Academic conferences in the age of COVID-19. *First Monday*, 27(4). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v27i4.12571>
- Ross, J. (2022, February 21). Tower block perfect for block teaching, says Australian V-C. *Times Higher Education*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/tower-block-perfect-block-teaching-says-australian-v-c>
- Samarawickrema, G., & Cleary, K. (2021). Block mode study: Opportunities and challenges for a new generation of learners in an Australian university. *Student Success*, 12(1), 13–23. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.1579>
- Smidt, A., Glanville, B., Cribb, C., Vuong, G., Wallace, H. E., Carey, L., & Munro, N. (2024). Ready to practice in hospitals? Insights into developing a co-designed intensive model for student learning. *Journal of Clinical Practice in Speech-Language Pathology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22000259.2024.2377560>
- Solomonides, I., Samarawickrema, G., Cleary, K., & Male, S. (2024). Editorial: Intensive modes of teaching, past, present, and future. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.21.2.01>
- Southern Cross University. (2022). *Southern Cross University, Strategy 2030*. <https://www.scu.edu.au/about/purpose-and-values/>
- Southern Cross University. (n.d.). *Southern Cross University at a glance*. <https://www.scu.edu.au/staff/business-intelligence-and-quality-biq/statistics/>
- Stokes, J. (2014). New students and enabling pedagogies: Supporting students from diverse backgrounds through a university enabling program. *The International Journal of Diversity in Education*, 13, 115–124. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-0020/CGP/v13i02/40096>
- Syme, S., Davis, C., & Cook, C. (2021). Benchmarking Australian enabling programmes: Assuring quality, comparability and transparency. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46(4), 572-585. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1804825>
- Thomas, M., Muscat, A., Zuccolo, A., Luguetti, C. N., & Watt, A. (2024). Academic voices delivering intensive teaching in higher education: ‘What is really key’ for block model delivery? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2024.2366407>
- Turner, R., Webb, O. J., & Cotton, D. R. E. (2021). Introducing immersive scheduling in a UK university: Potential implications for student attainment. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(10), 1371–1384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1873252>

- Williams, T. (2024, April 17). Students embrace block teaching but some staff still unconvinced. *Times Higher Education*. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/students-embrace-block-teaching-some-staff-still-unconvinced>
- Wilson, E., Goode, E., & Roche, T. (2024a). Transforming assessment policy: Improving student outcomes through an immersive block model. . *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2024.2434724>
- Wilson, E., Roche, T., Goode, E., & McKenzie, J. W. (2024b). Creating the conditions for student success through curriculum reform: The impact of an active learning, immersive block model. *Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01283-1>