Research Plan

“Using digital to improve online collaboration at Torrens University”



Course
User Research

TORRENS UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

Presented By:
Yianni (Ioannis) Canatselis

Agenda

Here’s what we’ll cover today

1. Purpose
2. What is an online collaborative learning space?
3. Research Objectives
4. Research Questions
5. Research Types and Methods
6. Desk Research
7. Interviews
8. Survey
9. Participants
10. Recruitment
11. Participant Questions
12. Roadmap
13. Next Steps

Purpose

- **Fast growth - flexible delivery**

Torrens is Australia’s fastest-growing university, allowing students to study where they want, when they want, and how they want

- **Remote-learning pain points**

Research has found online students reporting declining academic support, peer interaction, and sense of belonging over a term (Peterson, 2023)

- **Collaboration = career skill**

Post-COVID, online teamwork is a core employability requirement across many industries (Billing, 2021).

Opportunity **=** **“Investigate how Torrens can use digital to improve online collaborative learning spaces so students can focus on their studies and prepare for work”**

What is an online collaborative learning space?

It is a digital platform where students connect, share ideas, and work together on learning activities or projects.

Connect

Share Ideas

Work together

Research Objectives and Questions

We want to focus our research on the following 3 key objectives and questions:

Objective 1

Investigate best practices in online and hybrid collaborative learning spaces

- **1.1** What platforms have been identified as effective in other online or hybrid settings?
- **1.2** What specific features or design patterns contribute to improved collaboration and engagements?
- **1.3** What lessons can be drawn from failed or less effective collaborative learning implementations

Objective 2

Explore the current Torrens online collaborative learning spaces

- **2.1** Who is using these platforms?
- **2.2** What online collaborative learning spaces does Torrens currently utilise?
- **2.3** What type of learning activities (e.g group projects, online classes, peer feedback) are supported by these tools?
- **2.4** Are there any common third party tools that students or educators use instead of Torrens' official and supported platforms.
- **2.5** What type of activities do Torrens' students and educators use these tools for?

Objective 3

Identify strengths, friction points, and opportunities to enhance Torrens' online collaborative learning spaces

- **3.1** Are students and educators satisfied with the collaborative learning tools supplied by Torrens?
- **3.2** Where do students and educators see Torrens' collaborative ecosystem succeeding?
- **3.3** What pain points do students and educators face with Torrens' collaborative learning tools?
- **3.4** How do pain points affect students' ability to collaborate effectively?
- **3.5** What standards do students and educators expect in an ideal online collaborative ecosystem?

Research Types and Methods

We’re using a mixed-methods approach that combines both primary and secondary research. This will capture broad patterns and deep individual insights from people , all while grounding the research in existing literature. This ensures a comprenhensive understanding of current practices, user experiences, and potential improvements.



Desk Research

Synthesise existing academic and industry evidence to ground our research



Interviews

1-to-1 interviews in a semi-structured format to uncover deep insights around needs and pain points



Survey

Quantifies patterns across a larger cohort of people to gain a broader range of insights



Desk Research

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Why conduct desk research?

Desk research reviews **academic sources**, **case studies**, and **industry reports** to define **“what good looks like”** in online collaboration. It uncovers effective strategies and **common pitfalls** to guide Torrens specific insights.

Objectives addressed

Objective 1
Investigate best practices in online and hybrid collaborative learning environments

Tools to be used

ChatGPT

Quick scan tools

Google Scholar

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Evidence based sources

Research Capture

FigJam

Semi-structured Interviews

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Why conduct interviews?

Interviews will provide **qualitative, first-hand accounts** from students and educators that use the Torrens tools. We'll gain **deep insights** into how students and educators use the tools, their experiences, and where **pain points** arise.

Objectives addressed



Tools to be used

Microsoft Teams

marvin

Recorded & auto-transcribed in Microsoft Teams → analysed in Marvin

Participants



2 educators + 3 students
30-40 mins each

Research Capture

FigJam

Affinity mapping and theming in Figjam

Survey

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Why conduct a survey?

A survey will gather **quantitative data** from a larger group of students, which will help to: validate **interview themes**, measure **tool adoption**, assess **satisfaction**, and prioritise **areas for improvement**.

Objectives addressed



Tools to be used

Google Forms

marvin

Created and conducted via Google Forms
→ analysed in Marvin

Participants



Approximately 25 students

Research Capture

FigJam

Marvin insights to be mapped out in Figjam and compared to interview insights

Participants



Students

- Is currently enrolled at Torrens University Australia
- Has taken or is taking an online or hybrid course
- Is familiar with the collaboration tools provided by Torrens University



Educators

- Is currently employed by Torrens University Australia
- Is teaching a course in a hybrid or online delivery mode
- Is familiar with the collaboration tools provided by Torrens University



Why these groups?

They appear to form the basis of the core stakeholder experience:

- **Students** = Those who use the tools to **learn**
- **Educators** = Those who use the tools to **teach**

Recruitment

To recruit participants, we will:



Interviews

- Contact classmates on Microsoft Teams
- Reach out to educators on Microsoft Teams
- Post invitations to interviews in class Microsoft Teams chats
- Discuss with educators the possibility of referring students from their cohort



Survey

- Distribute to classmates individually or in class Microsoft Teams chats
- Post to LinkedIn to potentially reach other students at Torrens University
- Discuss with educators the possibility of distributing the link amongst their students

Ethical Considerations

All research activities will follow Torrens University's ethical guidelines. This includes:

- Ensuring all **participation is voluntary**
- Collecting **informed consent** before interviews or surveys
- Collecting **no personally identifiable information**
- Maintaining **participant anonymity** in all reporting and analysis

Participant Questions

Question Type	Demographics Questions	Objective 2 Questions	Objective 3 Questions
Research Question	**2.5** Who is using these platforms?	**2.3** What type of learning activities (e.g group projects, online classes, peer feedback) are supported by these tools?	**3.3** What pain points do students and educators face with Torrens' collaborative learning tools?
Interview Question	Can you tell me a bit about yourself? How long have you been at Torrens - what are you studying?	Are there any learning activities that these tools help you with? If so, can you tell me about them?	Tell me about any challenges or frustrations you have faced when using the collaboration tools Torrens has provided you with.
Survey Question	How old are you? What are you studying at Torrens? Are you an undergraduate or postgraduate student?	Which learning activities do the collaboration tools provided by Torrens help you with? (Select all that apply)	Please indicate how often you experience each of the following issues when using Torrens' collaboration tools. (1 = Never · 5 = Always)

Roadmap

Here is a roadmap outlining the key stages of our research process.

⭐ Weekly 30-min check-in (day/time to be confirmed with client)

Week 8
21 July - 27 July

- Conduct desk research
- Explore Torrens' current tools
- Begin participant outreach
- Finalise survey

Week 9
28 July - 3 August

- Launch survey
- Begin interviews
- Start thematic analysis via Marvin

Week 10
4 August - 10 August

- Complete all interviews
- Finalise interview analysis
- Collect and analyse survey results
- Begin Identify key insights and themes

Week 11
4 August - 10 August

- Report drafting to start
- Synthesis of findings and recommendations

Week 12
August 18 - August 20

- Final edit of research report
- Report submission to client in a PDF format

Next Steps

Your next steps

1. Review the research plan and let us know when we have your go ahead
2. Confirm a convenient day & time for the 30-minute weekly check-in

Our next steps

1. Open the shared FigJam board and add you as a collaborator
2. Send a Teams invite for the weekly check-in to confirm a day/time

Thank you

References

- Peterson, A. T. (2023). Asynchrony and promotive interaction in online cooperative learning. International Journal of Educational Research Open, 5, 100300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2023.100300

- Billing, F., De Smet, A., Reich, A., & Schaninger, B. (2021, April 30). Building workforce skills at scale to thrive during—and after—the COVID-19 crisis. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/building-workforce-skills-at-scale-to-thrive-during-and-after-the-covid-19-crisis

Appendices

Appendix 1

Student Questions

This table outlines the interview questions designed for student participants. Each question is aligned to its corresponding research question and objective to ensure traceability and purpsoe

Research Questions	**2.1** **Who is using these platforms?**	**2.2** **What online collaborative learning spaces does Torrens currently utilise?**	**2.3** **What type of learning activities (e.g group projects, online classes, peer feedback) are supported by these tools?**	**2.4** **Are there any common third party tools that students or educators use instead of Torrens' official and supported platforms.**	**2.5** **What type of activities do Torrens' students and educators use these tools for?**
Interview Questions	1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? How long have you been at Torrens - what are you studying?	2. What kind of online collaborative learning tools does Torrens provide you with?	3. Can you tell me a bit about the learning activities that are supported by these tools?	4. Do you ever use any non-Torrens tools for collaboration? What made you choose those	5. Have you used these tools for any purpose? If yes, how and what for?
Research Questions	**3.1** **Are students and educators satisfied with the collaborative learning tools supplied by Torrens?**	**3.2** **Where do students and educators see Torrens' collaborative ecosystem succeeding?**	**3.3** **What pain points do students and educators face with Torrens' collaborative learning tools?**	**3.4** **How do pain points affect students' ability to collaborate effectively?**	**3.5** **What standards do students and educators expect in an ideal online collaborative ecosystem?**
Interview Questions	5. How satisfied are you with the collaboration tools that Torrens provides you with? What makes you feel that way?	6. Can you tell me about the aspects of Torrens' collaborative learning tools that you feel work particularly well for group work or collaboration?" 7. Can you recall a time where you found the tools really helped you get group work done smoothly? Tell me about that.	8. Tell me about any challenges or frustrations you have faced when using the collaboration tools Torrens has provided you with. 9. Can you think of one time that really stands out when you experienced a frustration or challenge? Walk me through that experience.	10. Based on the issues and challenges you have faced with these tools, tell me a bit about how they have affected your ability to collaborate effectively with others.	11. If you could design the ideal online collaborative learning space for Torrens, what would it look like? Tell me about things like the features it would have, and its capabilities.

Appendix 2

Educator Questions

This table outlines the interview questions designed for educator participants. Each question is aligned to its corresponding research question and objective to ensure traceability and purpose.

Research Questions	**2.1** **Who is using these platforms?**	**2.2** **What online collaborative learning spaces does Torrens currently utilise?**	**2.3** **What type of learning activities (e.g group projects, online classes, peer feedback) are supported by these tools?**	**2.4** **Are there any common third party tools that students or educators use instead of Torrens' official and supported platforms.**	**2.5** **What type of activities do Torrens' students and educators use these tools for?**
Interview Questions	1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? How long have you been working at Torrens - what do you teach?	2. Are students provided with any collaboration tools through Torrens? If so, do you interact with or use these in your own teaching?	3. Can you tell me a bit about the type of learning activities that are supported by these tools?	4. Have you come across students using tools not provided by Torrens for collaboration? What kinds of tools and why?	5. Do you find that students use the tools supplied by Torrens University to collaborate? Why or why not?
Research Questions	**3.1** **Are students and educators satisfied with the collaborative learning tools supplied by Torrens?**	**3.2** **Where do students and educators see Torrens' collaborative ecosystem succeeding?**	**3.3** **What pain points do students and educators face with Torrens' collaborative learning tools?**	**3.4** **How do pain points affect students' ability to collaborate effectively?**	**3.5** **What standards do students and educators expect in an ideal online collaborative ecosystem?**
Interview Questions	5. From your experience with these collaboration tools, are you satisfied with them? 6. Can you think of a time when the collaboration tools had a noticeable effect, positive or negative, on group work?	7. From your experience, what elements of Torrens' collaborative learning ecosystem do you think support student collaboration most effectively?	8. Have students shared or shown any challenges using these tools? Can you walk me through one such example?	9. Thinking about your experience with collaboration tools, have they influenced how students work together? Have these experiences impacted how you teach or support collaboration?	10. If you could design the ideal online collaborative learning space for Torrens, what would it look like? Tell me about things like the features it would have, and its capabilities.