Blogs (short for web logs) are websites in which single or multiple authors make journal entries on a topic (called posts) that can be viewable to either the public or only invited viewers. Readers can make comments on the posts. The educational benefits of blogging include knowledge construction, knowledge sharing and publishing. Blogs are a flexible and dynamic learning technology that can improve learner engagement.

**Blogs are characterised by:**

- frequent updates with the most recent entries listed first
- short posts that can include pictures, videos and links to supplementary information
- headings that contain the date and time of posting
- opportunities for reader comments and contributions
- categorisation (tagging) of entries to assist searching and association with other posts
- generation of a 'news feed' so that readers can subscribe to receive the content without visiting the blog
- facility to archive posts

This example of a blog is from the journal Nature.
Blogging supports student learning through:

- Communication, collaboration, participation and engagement
- Knowledge building, knowledge sharing and social networking
- Reflection, self and peer assessment and evaluation processes
- Peer and lecturer feedback and dialogue
- Presentation of a digital portfolio to showcase ideas and achievements
- Digital literacy practices including scholarly expression of opinions

Blogging can support teaching practices such as:

- Management of assessment and feedback processes
- Monitoring and tracking of students' progress
- Opportunities for authentic learning (e.g., networking with experts and wider audiences)
- Integration of diverse perspectives

How to introduce blogs to your students:

**Start simply.** If you accustom your students to look at a blog for unit information and additional ideas and readings then you become confident with the technology and your students become used to exploring the blog environment.

**Create examples.** Before you ask your students to start creating blog posts provide them with some sample posts that exemplify the standard of writing and referencing that you expect as well as embedded links and media that can increase interest and participation. Staff modelling good practice is always effective with students - so make sure you're active in the blog as well.

**Recommend other blogs.** Introduce students to subject specific blogs that can develop their critical thinking and reading skills. Teaching students how to respond to blog posts is as important as creating blog posts. Examples are the Royal Institute of British Architects Blog, the ABC Arts Blog or Leon Gettler's Management Line.

**Provide a purpose.** Students need something to write about and the questions that you pose should require higher level cognitive skills. Examples could be "What assumptions are made in this journal article?" or "Predict the outcome of this situation". Blogging can easily be aligned with Bloom's higher order thinking skills to strengthen learner engagement.

**Encourage comments.** Blogging should be interactive and students need to be encouraged to read each other's posts and to comment on them. Your participation in the process could be to model appropriate comments or to stimulate further responses.

**Recognise ownership.** Students will be more inclined to participate in a blog when they are can use their own voice. So, within certain boundaries, encourage students to express themselves freely and present their own opinions.

**Assessment guidelines.** If the blog is an assessable learning activity provide clear criteria as to how the blog will be marked. Rubrics can make the learning outcomes more explicit. Rubric examples are available from ANU.
Tip - How to start a blog

In just a few minutes you can activate and develop your own blog or journal within Blackboard.

1. Go to a content page and click on Edit View.

2. Select Campus Pack Blog from the drop down menu and click GO.

3. Give your Blog a relevant name. It’s best to include the name of your unit in the title e.g. 'Unit101 Group Blog' and enter a description. Your students can start contributing to the Blog immediately by clicking on Add New Entry.

For further steps see the CeL website or visit the Learning Objects Community.

The Centre for eLearning is currently conducting short workshops on using blogs in your teaching in March/April. Sign up for a CeL workshop.