

What is *InterLearn*?

InterLearn provides students and teachers with a personal, engaging, collaborative online learning environment. The guiding principle behind the development of *InterLearn*, named for “interactive learning on the internet” (Murphy & Webster)¹, was to “maximise student interaction on the Internet” (Murphy & Webster)². *InterLearn* enables students participating in an online learning environment to experience the interaction and collaboration with peers and teachers that is often attributed to a face-to-face, small group or tutorial environment.

InterLearn can be used to present an entire unit of study, or it can be integrated with face-to-face interactions, print based materials, and/or other online environments. A single module within a unit may lend itself to the flexible, collaborative and reflective nature of the *InterLearn*. For example, while education students are on teaching rounds they may be directed to a shared *InterLearn* activity requiring them to reflect on their teaching experiences and how they feel they might improve upon their performance. In the next activity students would be asked to review their colleague’s responses and report on what they believe to be the essential elements of a good teaching experience.

As mentioned above, *InterLearn* can be used alone or to supplement other online teaching tools, such as newsgroups, course management software, library catalogues, or multi-media collections. For example, students may be asked to read key articles presented within WebCT and to maintain their reactions to and thoughts about the readings within an *InterLearn* activity. Students can be encouraged to view other’s thoughts and to form a shared understanding of the key issues arising from the articles. The forum can then be used to discuss or debate some of these issues. Similarly, multiple-choice quizzes can be provided using an array of other online tools, including WebCT, all of which can be linked to from within a related *InterLearn* section. Links from *InterLearn* materials can be provided to any web site, chat room, PowerPoint presentation, video or audio clip that may enhance the teaching/learning experience for students.

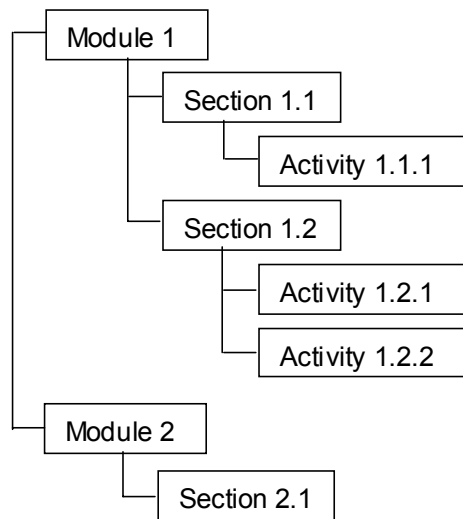
The structure of *InterLearn*

InterLearn is integrated with the my.monash portal. *InterLearn* is built on a database, in which the content and student responses to activities are stored. Each unit has its own *InterLearn* environment, and content is separated into three hierarchical components – modules, sections and activities. *InterLearn* materials for a unit must be comprised of one or more modules, which in turn must comprise one or more sections, which in turn may comprise one or more activities. An example structure for a unit’s *InterLearn* environment is presented below.

¹ check what year the paper is and where it was presented

² check what year the paper is and where it was presented

Example Unit *InterLearn* Structure



A **module** is the broadest grouping of information within the curriculum covered by a unit's *InterLearn* materials. Together the modules should form a framework for understanding the unit, which enables the student to identify the "bigger picture". The module will contain sections that are related ideas within the concept covered by the module. There must be at least one module in order to use *InterLearn*. Modules act as "parents" to the sections contained within them.

Sections are logical groupings of information within the larger module, and contain the individual activities which students are required to complete. In addition to the activities, each section has provision for an introductory statement that can be used to provide the context for the section within the module, objectives and references to reading material. There must be at least one section within each module, which will be the "parent" of the activities contained within it.

Activities are the smallest units within the *InterLearn* structure and represent the individual items of work that the students must complete. There is no minimum number of activities within a section, and the maximum should be determined by the amount of time you expect students to devote to a given concept within the curriculum. Activities should be designed, either alone or in conjunction with one another, to encourage students to reflect on their own learning and that of their peers, such that they benefit from sharing understandings with each other but ultimately develop their own individual understanding.

There are three types of activities within *InterLearn*. The first is a direction to perform a task outside *InterLearn* and requires no interaction, e.g. "read an article in the newspaper". The second is a textbox only activity, and requires students to type and save a response into a textbox within *InterLearn*, e.g. "read an article in the newspaper and type your thoughts on the key issues in the textbox". The third is called a feedback box type activity, which builds on the textbox only type with the student being required to also submit their response to a newsgroup. For example, "read an article in the newspaper and type your thoughts on the key issues in the textbox and then submit them to the newsgroup".