



## Tshwane University of Technology

Delivering continuous learning experiences on and off campus

Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) is the largest residential university in South Africa, attracting around 65,000 students a year. Widely known as a people's university, TUT offers a rich multicultural student life, makes higher education accessible to students from all walks of life and helps create employability among the youth population of South Africa. In 2020/21 TUT succeeded in putting the D2L Brightspace learning platform at the heart of its university's learning experience for tens of thousands of students.



Tshwane University  
of Technology  
*We empower people*

### AT A GLANCE

**Client:** Tshwane University of Technology  
**Industry:** Higher Education  
**Website:** [www.tut.ac.za](http://www.tut.ac.za)

### Platform/Features:

- D2L Brightspace platform
- Synchronous and asynchronous tuition
- Assessments and quizzes
- Learning analytics

### Interviewees:

- **Dr Dhaya Naidoo**, Chief Information Officer
- **Dr Annette Sadie**, Department Head, Directorate Teaching & Learning with Technology

### Highlights:

- A technology bridge between online and in-person teaching and learning
- Consistent online experiences across all modules
- Mobile online learning to reach rural communities

# Challenge

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## Consistent learning experiences online and inside the classroom

TUT's previous learning management system (LMS) had been in place for 24 years, supporting a blended approach of in-classroom and online learning, with technology also used extensively in lectures. As a proficient user of learning platform technology, TUT wanted to build on its experience and extend its technology integration to support learning in all its forms, both on and off campus.

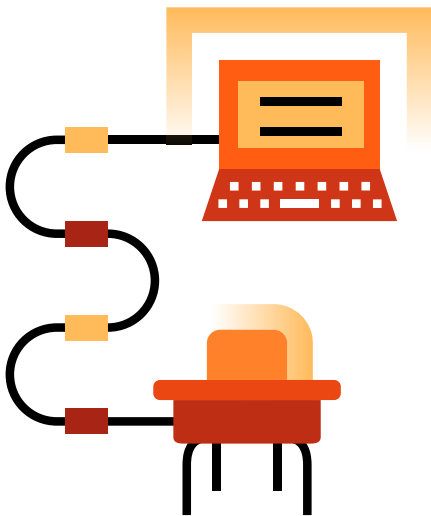
"The LMS needs to go to the classroom," explains Dr Annette Sadie, TUT's Department Head, Directorate Teaching & Learning with Technology. "We were looking for a platform to achieve the balance of being online, but also facilitating teaching, learning and assessment in the classroom."

The learning platform would act as a bridge between online learning and face-to-face tuition. In this way, TUT would enable continuous and collaborative personalised learning, with online resources also used in class.

"Our online content already supplemented classroom teaching and learning but you were still either on or off campus," adds Dr Dhaya Naidoo, Chief Information Officer at TUT. "Our vision was for students to access learning and media, and engage and network, whether they were in or out of the classroom."

A large proportion of TUT's students come from rural backgrounds and have limited network access. In fact, over half the student population relies on their mobile phones for online services. Therefore, it was a priority that students should be able to access the chosen learning platform from a range of devices.

Additionally, TUT recognised the opportunity that learning platform data provides for teaching and learning analytics. This would give the University insight into student progress, learning behaviours and students at risk of missing their learning goals.



**“Students want the flexibility of a digital learning environment. This is the future.”**

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**Dr Dhaya Naidoo**  
Chief Information Officer, Tshwane University of Technology

# Solution

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## Feature-rich online learning

After a rigorous tender process, TUT chose D2L Brightspace as it satisfied the comprehensive academic, governance and technical criteria that pinpointed user requirements for students, academic and support staff.

“Ease of use was one of the biggest considerations,” says Annette. “Also, that the look and feel, across modules, is exactly the same so that students have the same TUT learning experience when they move from one module to another.”

**“D2L was extremely well prepared. The team’s interpretation of the **criteria** demonstrated that they totally **understood** what we required.”**

**Dr Annette Sadie**  
TUT’s Department Head, Directorate  
Teaching & Learning with Technology

Implementation began in 2020 and the first modules went live in January 2021. By September, 80 percent of TUT’s modules were available within D2L Brightspace, growing to 5,000 modules by year end.

Extensive training, delivered virtually, smoothed the take-up with over 300 sessions held for students. Staff training was also delivered, existing content was adapted, and new content was developed. “With any technology deployment, a lot depends on change management and the implementation,” says Dhaya.

Annette explains that the D2L Brightspace platform has enabled the University to deploy standards for digital content development through a consistent navigation as well as look and feel across all modules.

Students access recorded lectures and other sessions through the platform and, for synchronous online tuition, TUT has integrated a collaborative tool. The modules make use of in-platform assessments, quizzes and assignment grading, while some incorporate simulations to bring topics to life.

During COVID restrictions, students were able to stay in touch with each other using discussion and chat tools on the platform. This enabled peer learning and the creation of a social community online.

“Our aim was for an inclusive, personalised learning experience with students able to learn anywhere, anytime at their own pace. It is disruptive and shakes up the way universities are organised.” Says Dr Dhaya Naidoo.

# Result

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## Paving the way for next generation classrooms

Through the learning platform, TUT has enhanced student learning experiences and accelerated the integration of technology within its blended teaching model.

“D2L Brightspace is an intuitive LMS designed for an enhanced user experience,” says Annette. “It changed the way TUT engages with students and digital content.”

A user survey revealed that over 71.20 per cent of students found logging in to the platform easy, and 78 per cent agreed that module announcements contain useful information. One student said: “It makes my life easy. I can access information/announcements and notes from my lectures.”

“There are no ‘hidden agendas’,” says Annette. “Students don’t have to search for content, it’s there and they know where to go. They also find access to their grades so much easier than with our previous platform.”

Staff have also responded positively with 79.15 per cent saying it is easy to access modules. Mobile access through the D2L Brightspace Pulse app keeps students informed and up to date and lecturers also use it for module specific updates. “I love using Pulse myself,” adds Annette. “It’s so easy to communicate with students and they love that communication is real-time.”

On the working partnership with D2L and its partner Visions Consulting, a business management consultancy, Annette adds: “The project has been an overwhelming success and working with Visions Consulting and D2L on the implementation has been like having an extension of our own team.”



Analytics has enabled the University to measure student performance and spot students at risk so that it can instigate measures to support and retain that student. “We now have a window into the classroom and into an individual’s learning experience that we’ve never had before,” adds Dhaya. “The ethical use of analytics enables us to work with students directly.” Over time, TUT expects to use analytics more strategically for comparative studies, trends identification and predictive analysis.

Through its comprehensive assessment of technology use in the University and a carefully managed implementation, TUT has succeeded in putting the learning platform at the heart of the learning experience for tens of thousands of students. Throughout, user needs—academic, student and administrative—have shaped the programme. As TUT considers teaching and learning post-pandemic, it is redesigning ‘next generation’ classrooms to further incorporate technology for a fully collaborative environment.



“Students want a **digital** learning environment and the experience of being on campus and the **classroom**. D2L Brightspace sits at the point of intersection of these three components.”

**Dr Dhaya Naidoo**  
Chief Information Officer, Tshwane University of Technology