

# ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING TOOLS IN THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM — A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON THEIR EFFECT

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## ABSTRACT

*Asynchronous learning (ASL) tools are being used at colleges and universities in many countries around the world, but the majority of implementations are to enhance or support the traditional classroom environment rather than to provide asynchronous on-line classes. This paper presents a succinct review of some major issues that have caused this situation. It then looks at four ways that a particular ASL tool, Blackboard, is used at one school to support traditional lecture courses. The paper looks at several quantitative measures that can be used to determine if the use of the ASL tool has any significant effect on learning and the learning environment. The results of a study that analyzed forty-three Blackboard supported courses are presented. It describes a logical methodology to evaluate changes in student performance in a quantitative manner. The study notes that high use of the ASL tool in supporting the class consistently results in an improvement in the learning environment based on significant changes in two or more quantitative measures. The study also presents a brief review of qualitative comments that highlight student concerns about the use of ASL tools in traditional classes. The paper ends with a discussion of some important issues for those planning to use ASL tools to augment or support traditional courses and areas for further research and study.*