

# Development of a Strategy and Framework for a Digital Learner Support Hub (DLSH)

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# What is DLSH?

- A project funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
- Began in late 2019
- A collaboration between the 5 Learning Centres (LCs) in UL

# How the framework developed

The aim was to act as a one-stop shop for all 5 LCs to deploy online support material

We examined frameworks and key messages suggested by prominent researchers such as Gilly Salmon and Liz Thomas

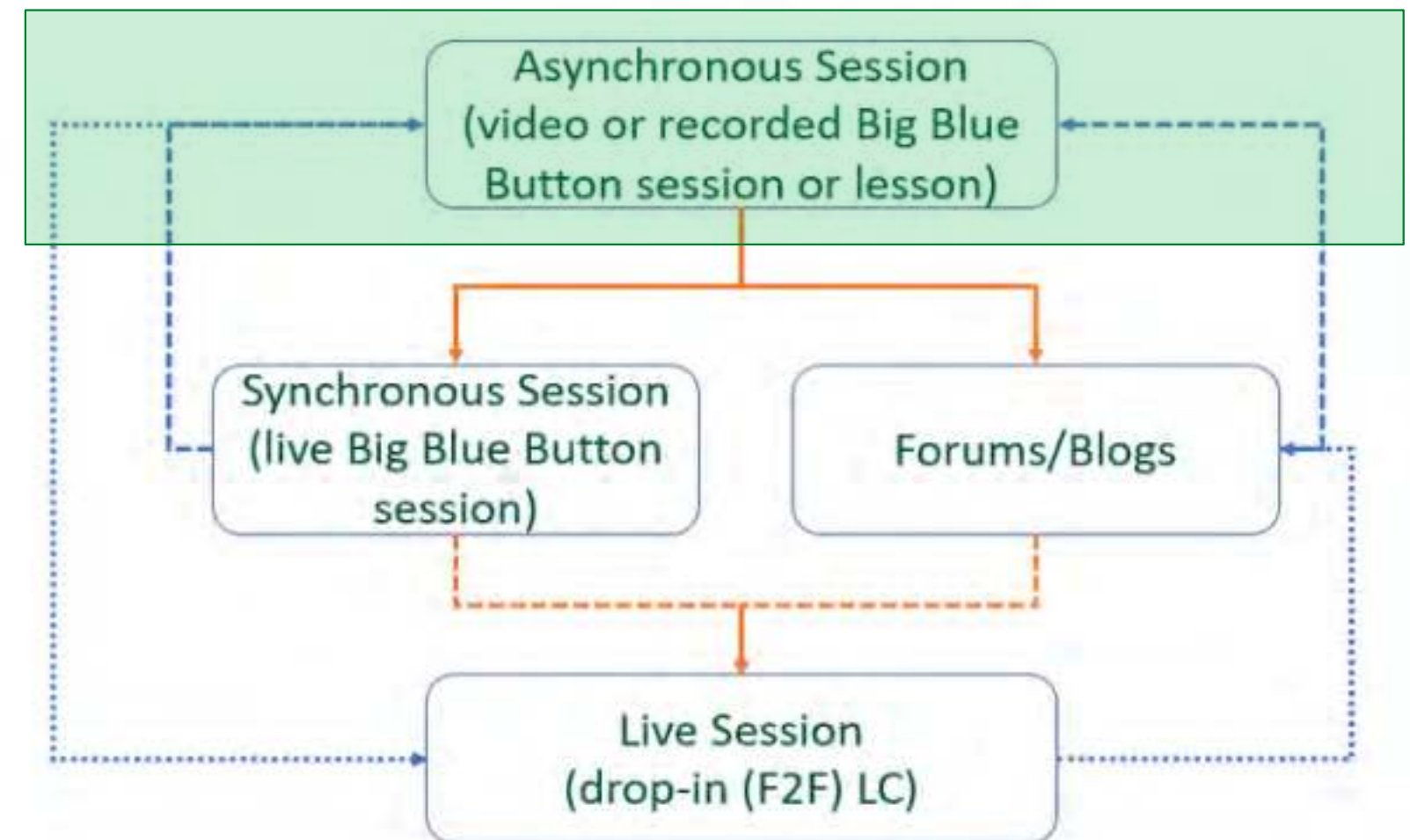
Finally fixed on a three-tier multi-modal model which would allow us to maximise support in terms of numbers and nature

(Salmon 2013, Thomas 2012)

# The Three Tiers

## Tier 1 – the Asynchronous Tier

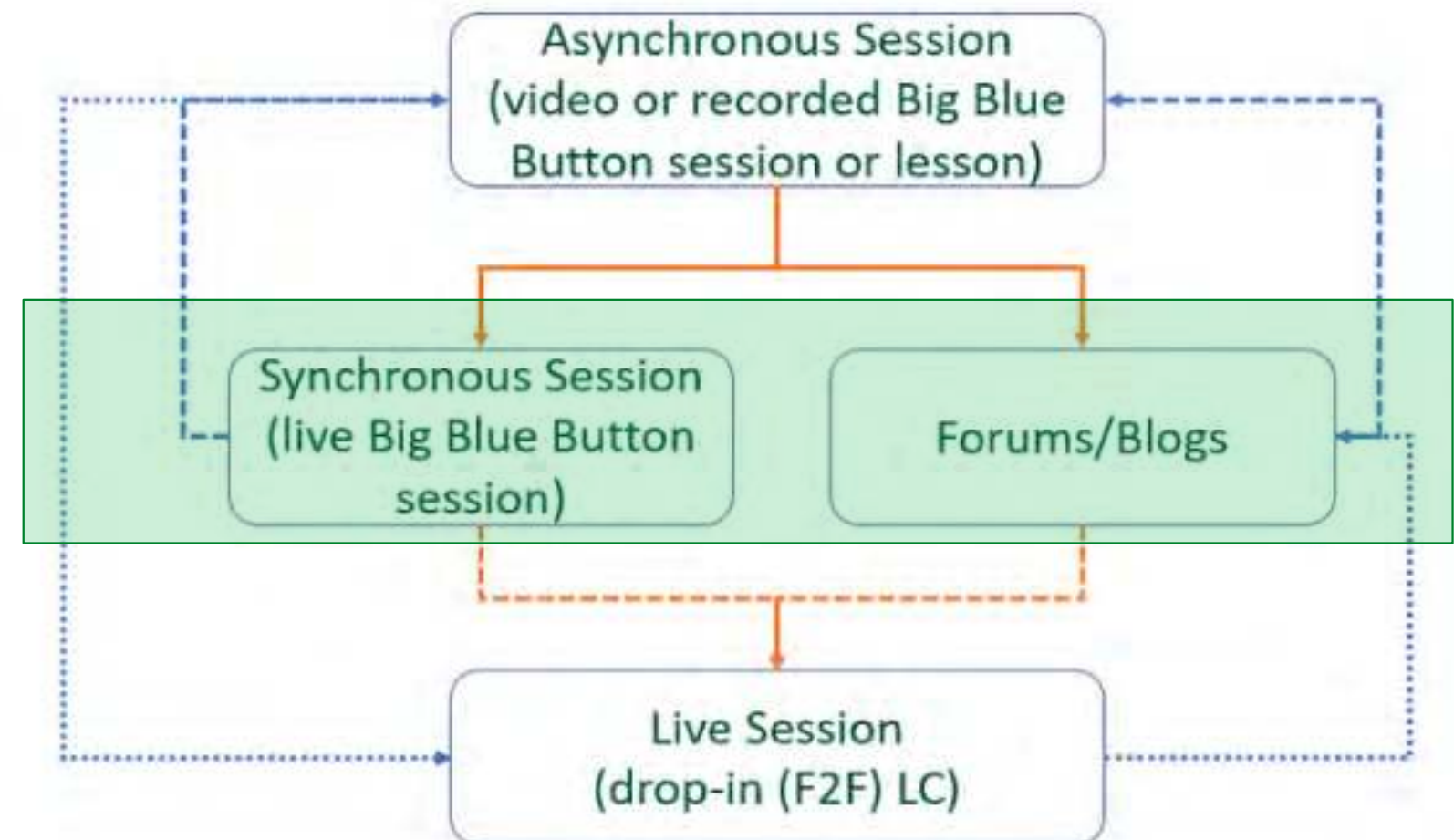
- Asynchronous support offered 24/7
  - Primarily video, text and interactive quizzes
  - Offers a good starting point for students
  - Addresses commonly asked questions and issues



# The Three Tiers

## Tier 2 – the Synchronous Tier

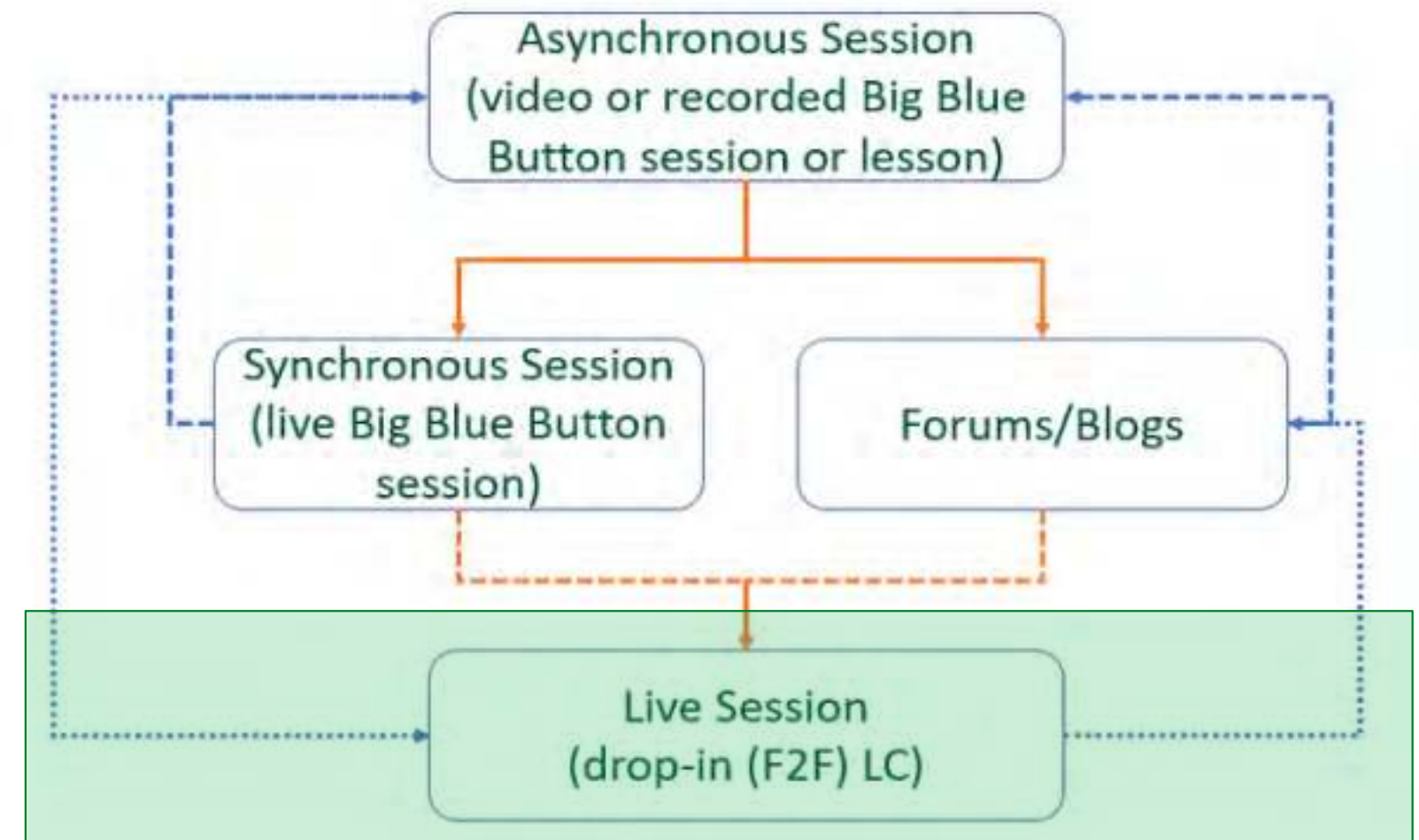
- Primarily synchronous scheduled support with some 24/7 access
  - Primarily forum, chat, and group-based online meetings
  - Allows discussing, sharing and assisting
  - Feedback informs Tier 1 content



# The Three Tiers

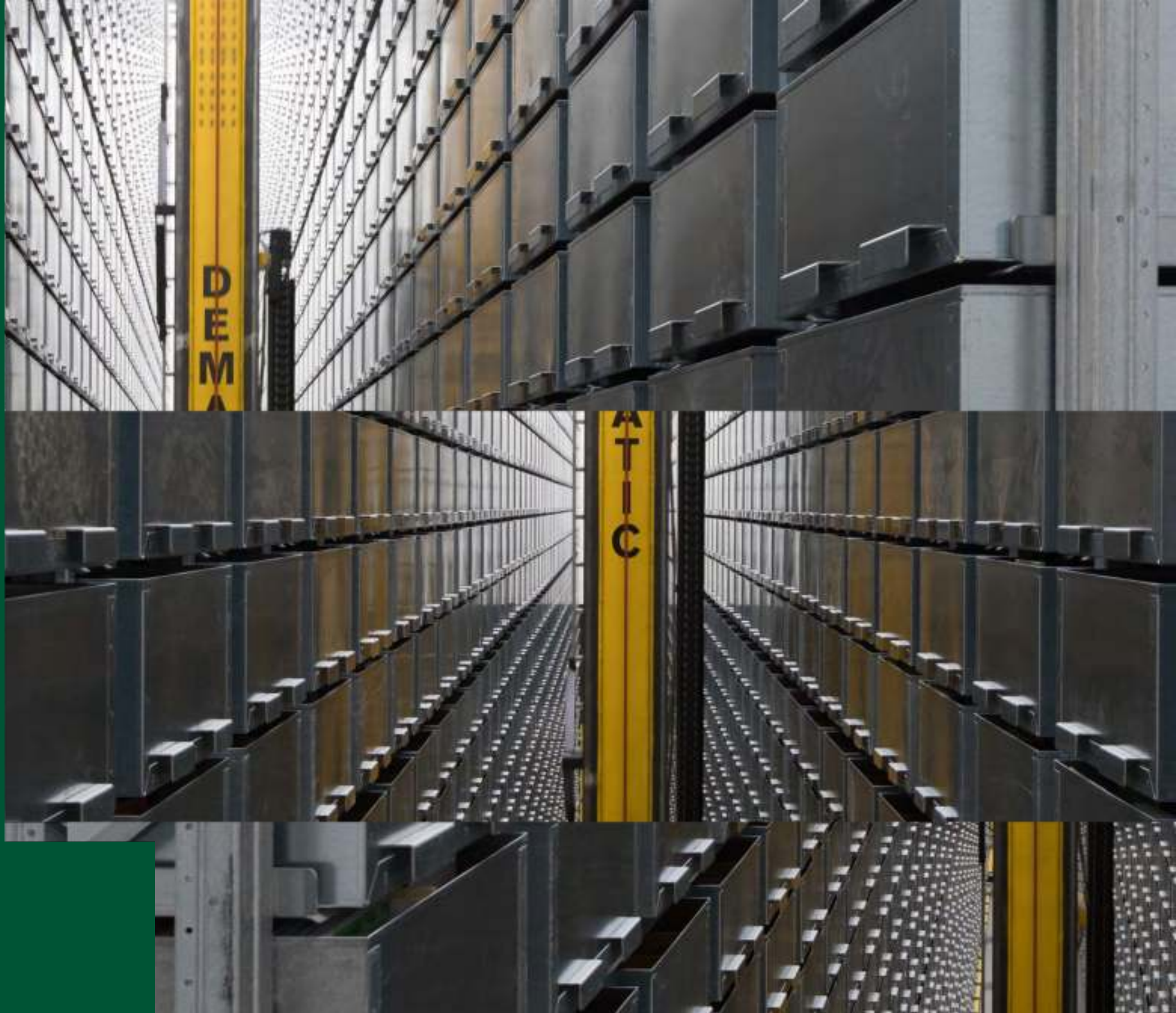
## Tier 3 – the Live Tier

- Traditional live in-person support
  - Primarily one-to-one with some small group sessions
  - In-person and located at fixed locations
  - Most resource intensive
  - Feedback informs Tier 1 and Tier 2 content



# Deployment

- Used UL's VLE – Sulis to deploy the new model
- Site created and deployed in early March 2020
- And then ...





**#Covid19**





# Not all bad news..

- **Already well placed in part due to DLSH the 5 LCs moved their support fully online**
- **Able to keep helping students during initial lockdown**
- **Able to test out the framework and adapt**
- **Tier 3 became scheduled synchronous one-to-one online meetings**



# Since lockdown ..

- During lockdown and since the return to campus DLSH has continued as a support medium for the LCs
- Feedback indicated the students loved the flexibility of DLSH support
- We've been able to expand the number of modules and topics supported







# Development of a Strategy & Framework for a Digital Learner Support Hub (DLSH)



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The Digital Learner Support Hub (DLSH) is a framework that allows content to be deployed easily and sustainably, acting as a 'one-stop-shop' for the LCs academic support services to UL's students.

Conceived to address the increasing need to provide a more flexible, responsive learner support, it ensures UL's commitment to a HE accessible to all types of learners, including part-time, mature, study-abroad, and those students with disabilities.

It aligns with UL's academic transformation strategy by being student-centred, personalised, supplying active & connected learning through technology-enhanced, flexible, multi-modal learning.

While supporting students more flexibly, the project addresses some of the constraints on accessibility, reachability, and sustainability of current F2F services offered by the LCs such as scheduling in a manner that suits both tutors and tutees, and resourcing in terms of tutors, physical space, and associated costs.

What developed was a delivery framework deployed on UL's VLE, Sullis, based around blended learning with both passive and active learning elements to ensure a good mix of student-to-content, student-to-tutor, and student-to-student interaction.

As the diverse nature of the students involved across the disciplines showed us that just as students within and across the disciplines may have different learning styles, they can also have preferences in terms of providing feedback.

Having various mechanisms allowed us to capture a more complete picture of the students' perceptions of the project and where changes needed to be made.

The use of a video as the presentation output for the initiative resulted in team members learning how to present the overall project aims and impact through this medium.

Involvement in this SATLE initiative and the development of the DLSH portal has allowed the LCs to change some staff-led synchronous online supports to be peer-

led synchronous and asynchronous supports instead. The use of these peer-led supports was received positively by early-stage students (as evidenced in the focus group discussions) and we believe is highly sustainable into the future.

**For more information on what DLSH, how we implemented it, and what we learnt please visit our website (<https://pslc.ul.ie/dlsh>), view our promo video, email us at [dlsh@ul.ie](mailto:dlsh@ul.ie)**



**DLSH is built around a 3-tier model that allows different opportunities to help students while maintaining their self-learning**

*"I used them as the DLSH supports ultimately enhanced my overall learning experience. The live sessions and burst videos reinforced my understanding of content covered in the lectures and certainly improved my overall programming confidence."*

*"They initially taught the method in a clear and concise way, using one or two examples rather than using a million examples and me getting confused."*

*"I needed help with Maths as my lecture notes were too in depth, the DLSH provided me with accessible content."*

*"Using DLSH supports I was able to focus on more specific aspects I did not understand and they kept me motivated and learning and reduced my stress quite a bit."*

## References

Salmon, G. (2013) E-tivities: The key to active online learning, Routledge

Thomas, L. (2012) 'Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change', Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 100, 1-99

**Thank you for your attention  
and time.**

**Any questions?**



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