Learning Management Systems

An LMS is a web based software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of e-learning education courses or training programs. *(Wikipedia)*

Offering a single secure point of entry to course materials for trainees, *and including all the features of a website*, an LMS also offers powerful tracking, assessing, and reporting tools. A good LMS will also include visual editing tools which allow for the creation and customisation of learning and assessment materials without the need for web development skills.

Key LMS features include:

- Progression tracking;
- Customisable reporting;
- Secure login for staff and trainees;
- Gradable assessment tasks and quizzes;
- Communication and collaboration tools;
- Built in course and assessment authoring;
- Mobile compatibility and WCAG2 compliance.

Lecture Capture
Compliments an LMS but is often not as fully featured as a VC or an LMS.

Virtual Classrooms

Just like in a real-world classroom, a student in a virtual classroom participates in synchronous instruction, which means that the teacher and students are logged into the virtual learning environment at the same time. *(Techtarget.com)*
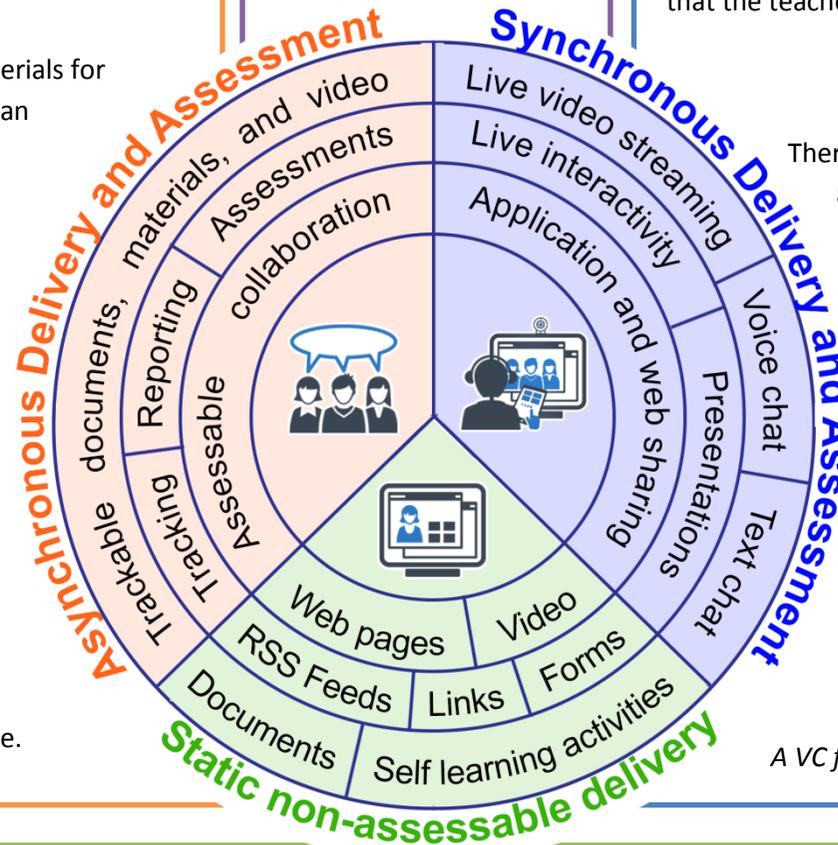
There are many similarities between Virtual Classroom and Virtual Meeting applications. This makes them interchangeable depending on your requirements.

Key VC features include:

- Live 2 way video streaming;
- VoIP 2 way audio and text chat;
- Application/desktop sharing;
- Interactive Whiteboard area;
- Slide show presentation tools;
- File sharing;
- Mobile compatibility;
- Recording features; and
- Accessibility and closed captioning.

A VC feature comparison can be found on the next page.

Circular diagram — Asynchronous Delivery and Assessment: documents, materials, and video; Assessments; collaboration; Reporting; Tracking; Assessable; Trackable. Synchronous Delivery and Assessment: Live video streaming; Live interactivity; Application and web sharing; Voice chat; Presentations; Text chat. Static non-assessable delivery: Web pages; Video; RSS Feeds; Links; Forms; Documents; Self learning activities.

Internet or Intranet website

Many organisations will already have a publically accessible internet website and a secure intranet site. If your training materials are intended for self-paced consumption, with no need to track progress or grade assessment tasks, using these existing technologies could be a solution.

Intranet platforms such as SharePoint do offer secure login options for staff with access to your network. If the material is intended for a wider audience, granting access to external participants while protecting other corporate information may be an issue.

Consider your training and reporting requirements and check to see if the features of your intranet system will fulfil them.

Learning Management System Products

Most of the popular Learning Management Systems are almost identical in terms of features. Key differences exist in price, support structure, and ease of use for both staff and students. Where possible, seek a product demonstration or trial version for evaluation.

Learning Management Systems available include but are not limited to: Blackboard Learn, Moodle, Fronter, Joomla, and Canvas.

Virtual Classroom / Meeting Applications – Feature Comparison

	Blackboard Collaborate	Microsoft Lync	Go to Meeting	Adobe Connect
Room Capacity	1500	250	25	25
Desktop OS	Windows, MacOS, Unix/Linux	Windows, MacOS, Unix/Linux	Windows, MacOS, Unix/Linux	Windows, MacOS, Unix/Linux
Mobile OS	iOS, Android	iOS, Android, Win Mobile	iOS, Android	iOS, Android
Always-On Conferencing	✓	✓	✗	✗
Annotation and Drawing Tools	✓	✓	✓	✓
Application Sharing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Audio	✓	✓	✓	✓
Break-Out Sessions	✓	✓	✓	✗
Co-Browsing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Desktop Sharing	✓	✓	✓	✓
File Transfer	✓	✓	✓	✓
File Transfer via Virtual Storage Room	✓	✗	✗	✗
Full Screen/ Partial Screen Mode	✓	✓	✗	✗
Instant Messaging	✓	✓	✗	✓
Remove Attendee from Meeting	✓	✓	✗	✗
Whiteboards	✓	✓	✓	✓
Slide Show	✓	✓	✗	✓
Video/Webcam	✓	✓	✓	✓
Web Tours	✓	✓	✗	✗
Inactivity Time-outs	✓	✓	✓	✗
Meeting Recording/ Playback	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participant Reporting	✓	✗	✓	✓
Surveys and Polls	✓	✗	✓	✓
Ad-Hoc/Instant Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schedule Meetings	✓	✗	✓	✓
Schedule Recurring Meetings	✓	✗	✓	✓

Please note that the information provided in this features comparison was sourced from http://web-conferencing.findthebest.com/#main . As features change, the above should be used as a general guide only.

For all e-learning systems we would recommend that you carry out your own investigations on these and other products and compare the *features* of each product against your own *operational requirements*.