

Enhancing learning experiences through authentic and engaging means

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Definitions

Authentic Learning – when real world activities can be replicated, the “kind of activities people do in the real world” (Herrington & Kervin, 2007, p. 5).

Engagement – Student engagement measured from three perspectives; affective, behavioural and cognitive as outlined by Jimerson, Campos and Greif (2003).

- **Affective:** Asking how student's felt (questioning/survey)
- **Behavioural:** Observing students (through their actions whilst answering questions, contributing to discussions, participation and monitoring whether they stayed on task)
- **Cognitive:** Discovering student's attitudes, perceptions and beliefs (discussions/questions/surveys)

Background

Our journeys -

- Each set out on a journey to engage students with authentic learning by the use of virtual worlds
- Ended up at different destinations

Sue



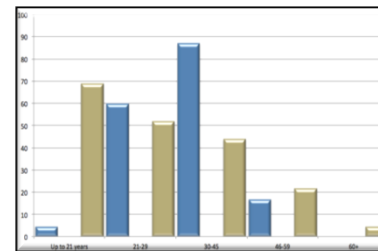
virtual world



Brent



standard accounting tool



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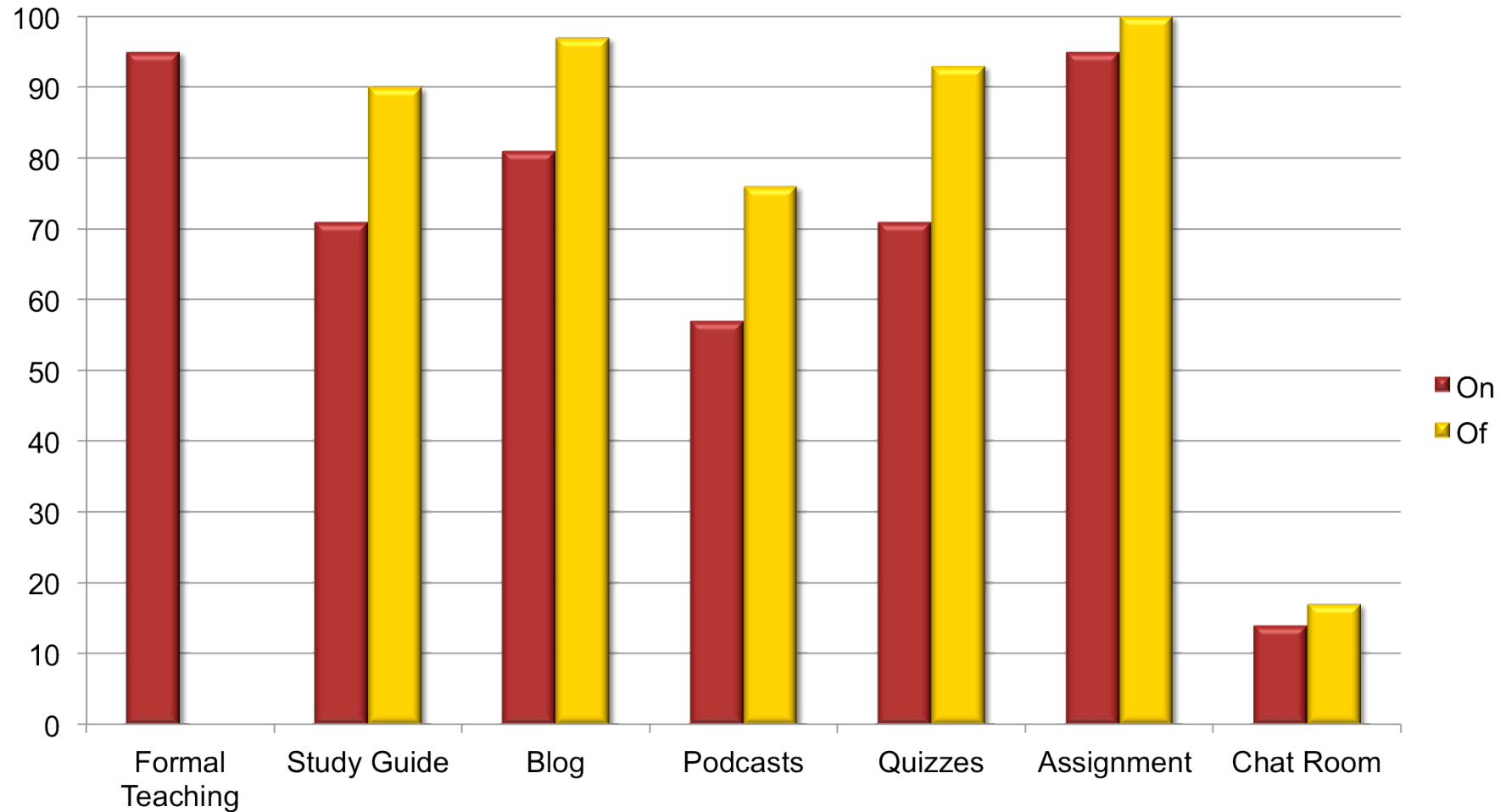
How it started



Such a magic vehicle for people to develop skills

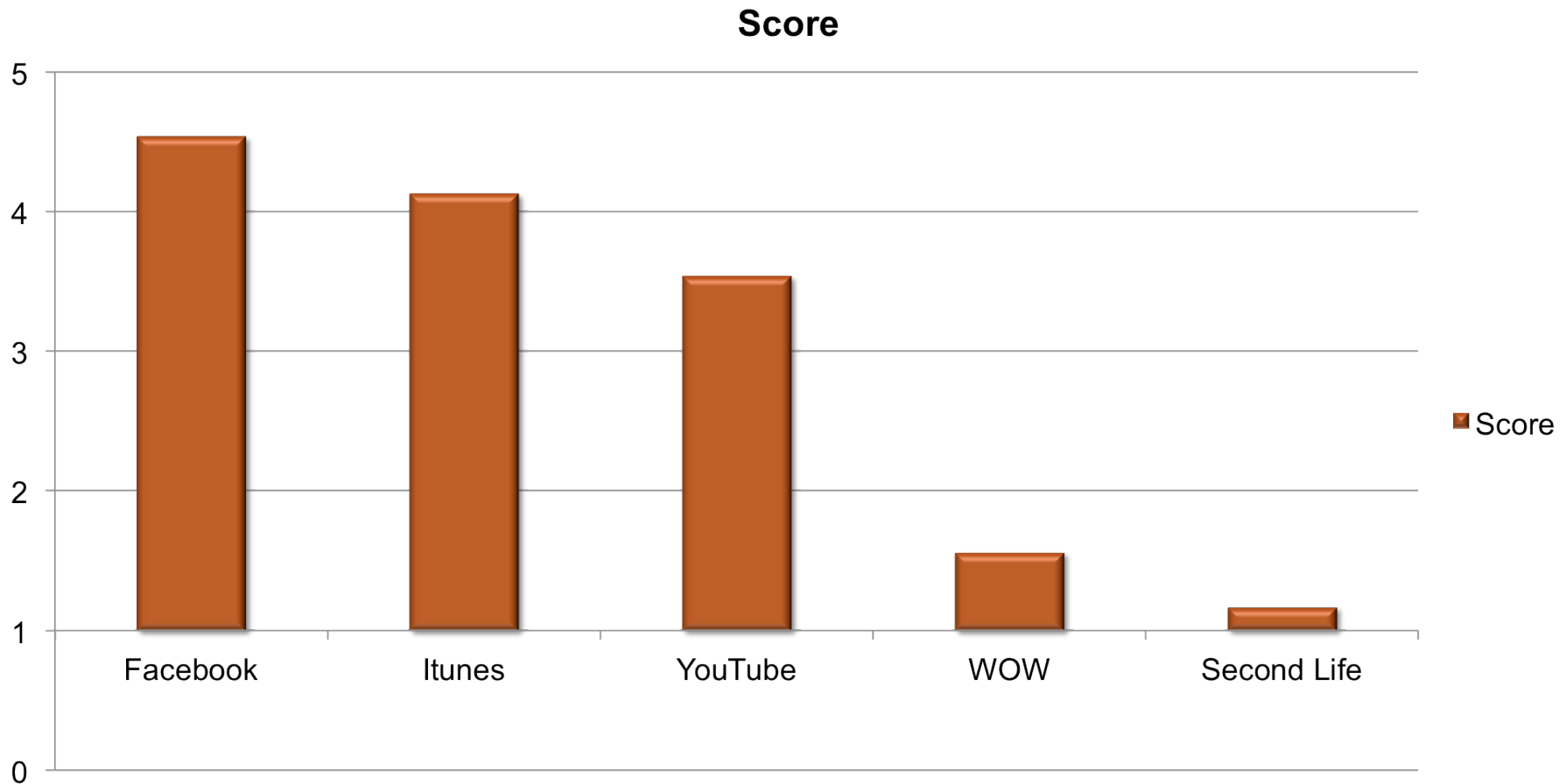
Key Turning Points in the Journey

2010 was Resource Useful

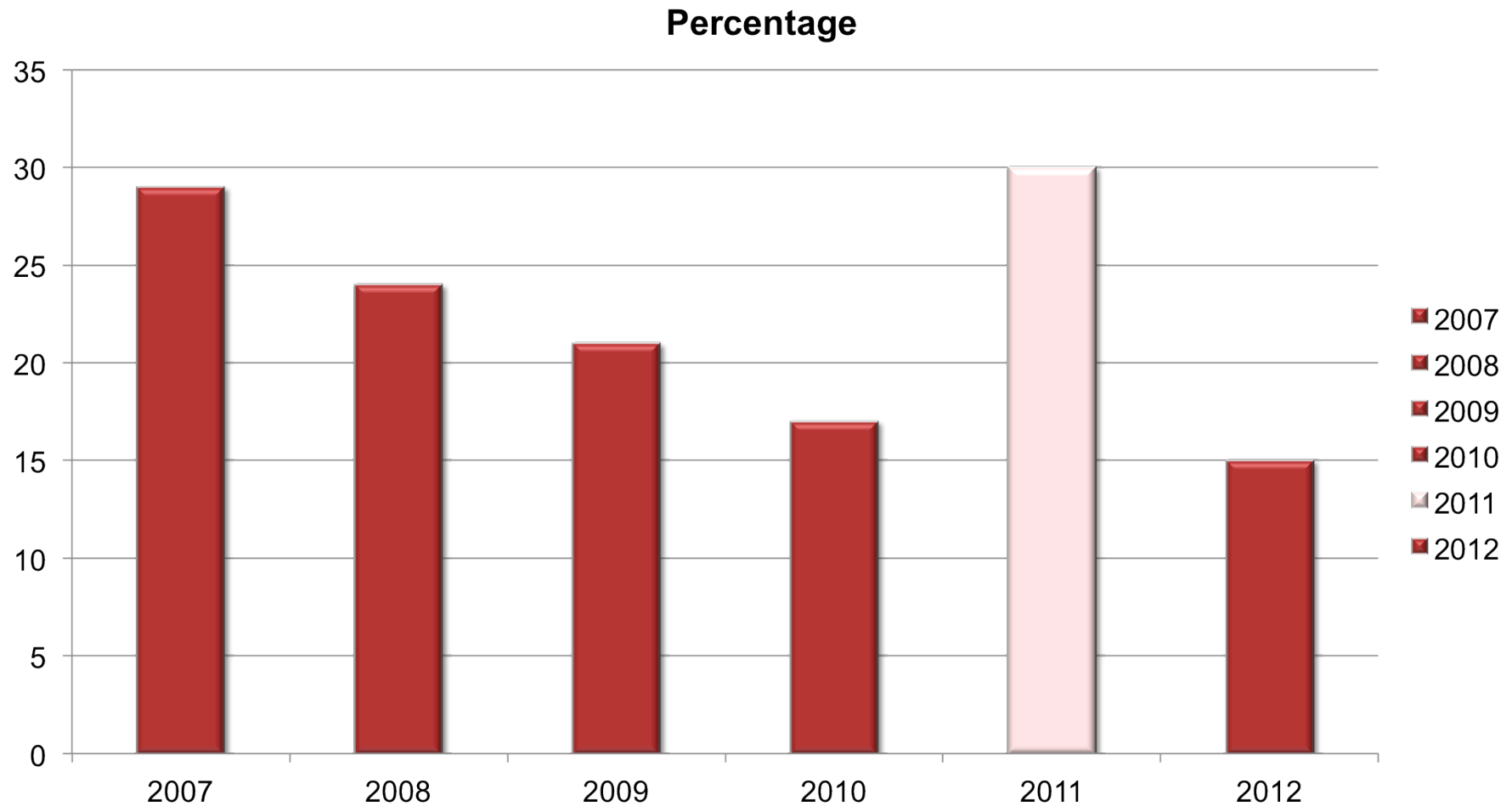


Social Networking and Games

5 Currently Active Users
1 Not Aware of



Post Census Leakage



Revisited Goal

Key points:

- I have got most of the low hanging fruit
- How could I develop an authentic learning experience that would overcome barriers I had?
 - Institutional issues
 - Student acceptance
 - Resource investment
 - Resource intensive

Play to Your Strengths

- Best received resource – Assignment (Practice Set)
- A practice set is a pretend business designed for students to take source documents and undertake all accounting actions needed to prepare the Financial Statements
- Practice set is engaging judging by spike in videos accessed at key assignment milestones
- Low resource demand after set up

Practice Set

- Still Authentic Learning – simulating real life
- No institutional barriers
- Easy to control and modify
- Minor additional learning curve for some students

AND

- Still is a step toward virtual world

Major Problem

Plagiarism

- develops poor habits in students
- Involves significant paper work
- Robs students of learning opportunity

Result

- Practice set no longer an assessment task (but there are assessment tasks based only on it)
- Build unit and resources around practice set
- Enables relevant, timely and action oriented feedback

Research – 2008 to 2011

Number of Students Who Attended Second Life Learning Activities – 2008-2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Attended voluntary virtual world learning activities	n=12	n=18	n=99	n=110	n=239
	2.6%	4.2%	5.7%	11.5%	6.7%
Attended compulsory virtual world learning activities	n=0	n=80	n=91	n=113	n=284
	0.0%	18.6%	5.3%	11.8%	7.9%
Total attended virtual world learning activities	n=12	n=98	n=190	n=223	n=523

Note: The percentages represent the number of students participating in the activities compared to the total number of students enrolled in the units.

Authentic Learning in a Virtual World

- Virtual excursions



- Guest lecturers



- Role-play activities



- Web quests



- Learning basic building and scripting skills



Examples of Authentic and Engaging Learning

Opportunities for using Virtual Worlds



presented by
Sue Gregory
aka Jass Easterman



Authentic Learning in a Virtual World

- Role-play activity - <http://youtu.be/ipFvT0jAkL0>



The image is a promotional graphic for VirtualPREX. It features a black background with various logos and text. At the top, the text 'VirtualPREX' is written in large, bold, yellow letters, with 'une' in green below it. To the right of 'une' is the logo for the Australian Learning & Teaching Council, which includes the text 'AUSTRALIAN LEARNING & TEACHING COUNCIL' and 'Promoting excellence in higher education'. Below the main title, the text 'Virtual Professional Experience' and 'Role-Play in a virtual world' is displayed in white. At the bottom, there are several logos for partner institutions: ACU (Australian Catholic University), RMIT University, Charles Sturt University, and Curtin University. To the right of these logos is a 3D rendering of a virtual environment with a large yellow sphere labeled 'VirtualPREX' and a table with chairs. At the bottom left, the logo for DEHub.edu.au is visible, with the text 'Provider in Distance Education'. At the bottom right, there is a small logo for the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

VirtualPREX
une
University of
New England

AUSTRALIAN
LEARNING
& TEACHING
COUNCIL
Promoting excellence in higher education

Virtual Professional Experience
Role-Play in a virtual world

ACU
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

RMIT
UNIVERSITY

Charles Sturt
University

Curtin University

DEHub.edu.au
Provider in Distance Education

Funded by the
Australian Government
Department of Education,
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VirtualPREX

Engagement in a Virtual World

Affective – Feelings

“It has been one of the *highlights* of my entire uni life! This is my 7th year of uni.... and only performing in operas has been better. This has been a *life-changing experience*.”

Cognitive - Perceptions and beliefs

I had a *defining experience* last week when we sat down in that open air lecture space and I sat on one side and the rest of you sat on the other side. Suddenly I felt *lonely* and without thinking got up and moved to where you were all sitting. And then I thought that felt so *real*!

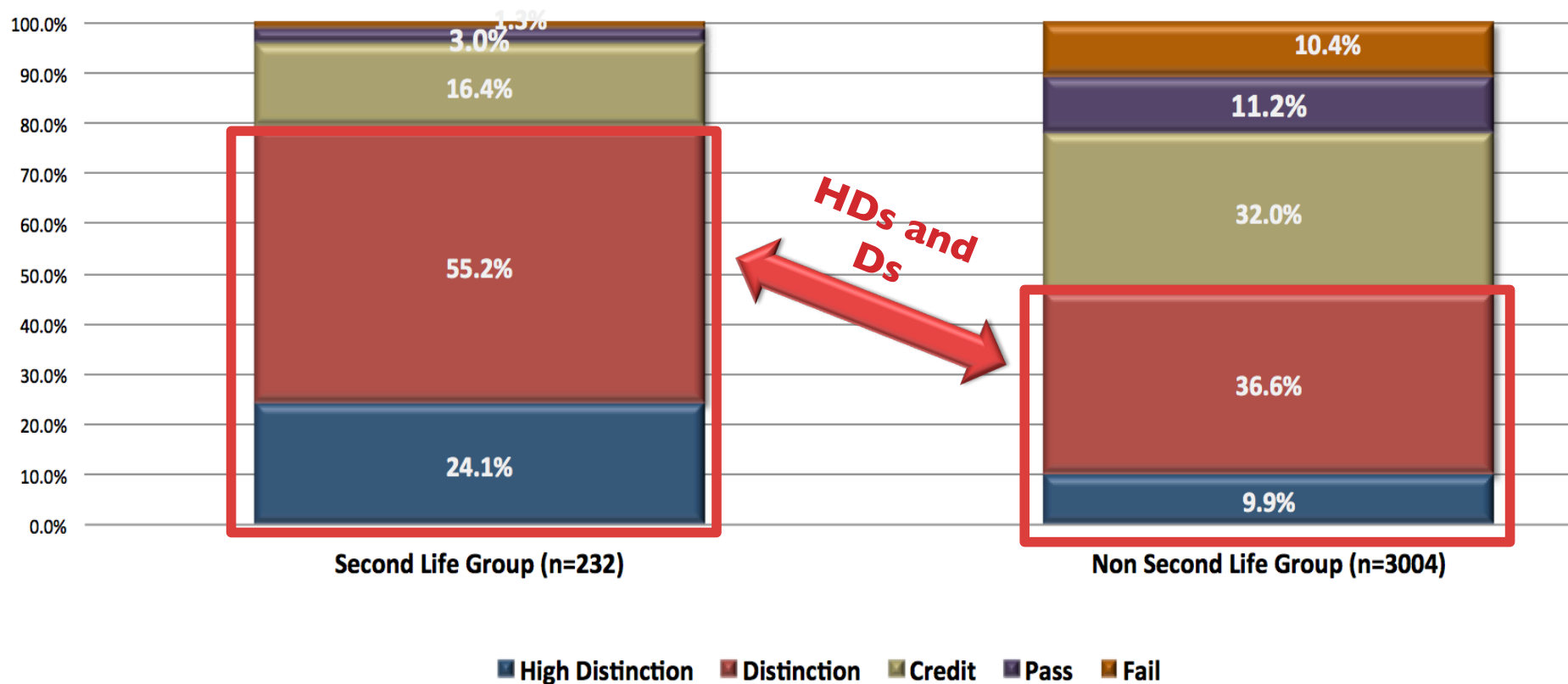
Behavioural - Observable actions or performance

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Students signed up to attend	12	18	99	110
Average number of students in attendance	6.5	9.2	19.4	20.1
Average time spent inworld each session	2 hours 51 minutes (advertised two hour long sessions)	3 hours 20 minutes (advertised two hour long sessions)	2 hours 27 minutes (advertised one hour long sessions)	2 hours 34 minutes (advertised one hour long sessions)
Number of A4 pages recorded of inworld conversations	190	306	194	174

Impact of Learning in a Virtual World

3,576 students

Grade comparison between students that attended sessions in Second Life and those that did not



References

Herrington, J., & Kervin, L. (2007). Authentic learning supported by technology: 10 suggestions and cases of integration in classrooms. *Educational Media International*, 44(3), 219–236.

Jimerson, S., R., Campos, E., & Greif, J., L. (2003). Toward an Understanding of Definitions and Measures of School Engagement and Related Terms. *The California School Psychologist*, 8, 7–27.

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