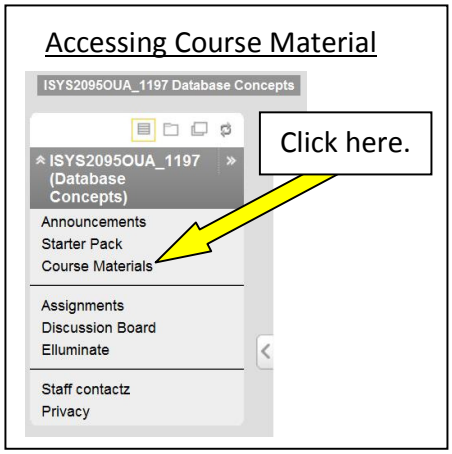
OUA Database Concepts.

How the Course is run.

This document details how course material is presented and the activities students should undertake to complete the course successfully.

Getting Access to Course Material

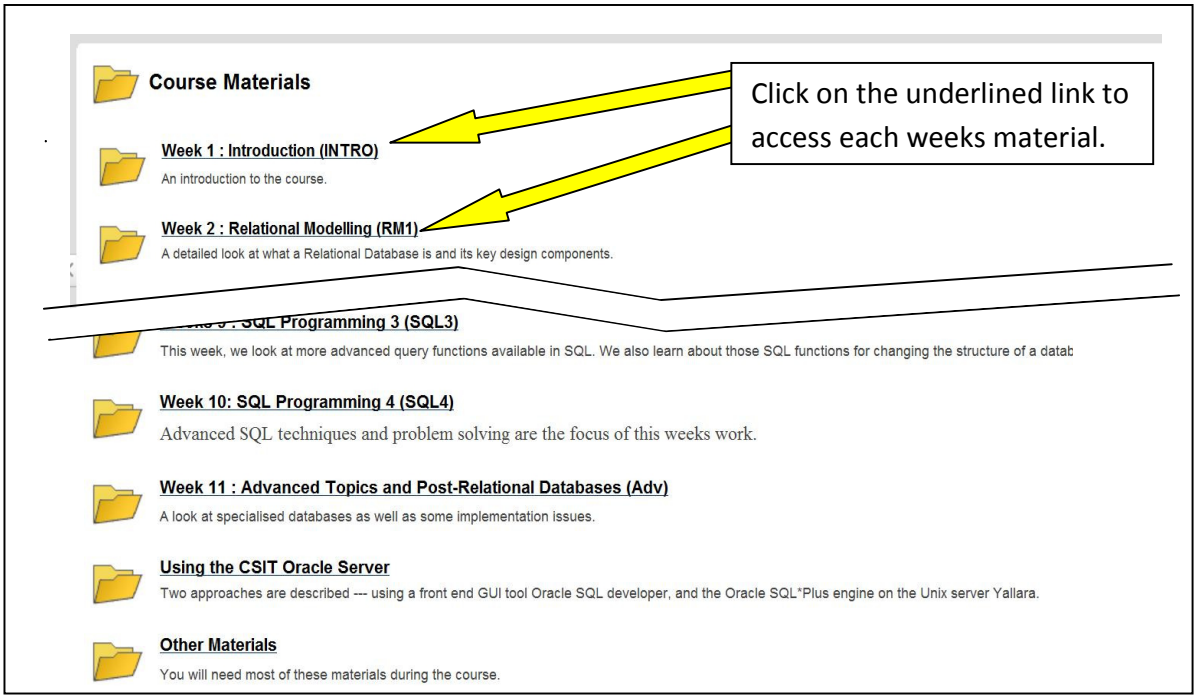


The main course materials are accessed from the opening Blackboard menu. Click on the "Course Materials" link.

The Course Materials area is set out as 11 weekly lessons. There is a title for each week as well as a brief description. The title is also a link into the material for that week.

Note the bottom two folders are not weekly materials. One is devoted to SQL Developer which a tool for accessing RMITs training databases. Another option for accessing the training databases is to use the putty terminal server software. This is also covered.

The other folder contains a number of miscellaneous files, materials, vidoes and other information which you will need during the course. In particular, it has the usernames and passwords for the trainign databases as well certain script you will need later in the course.

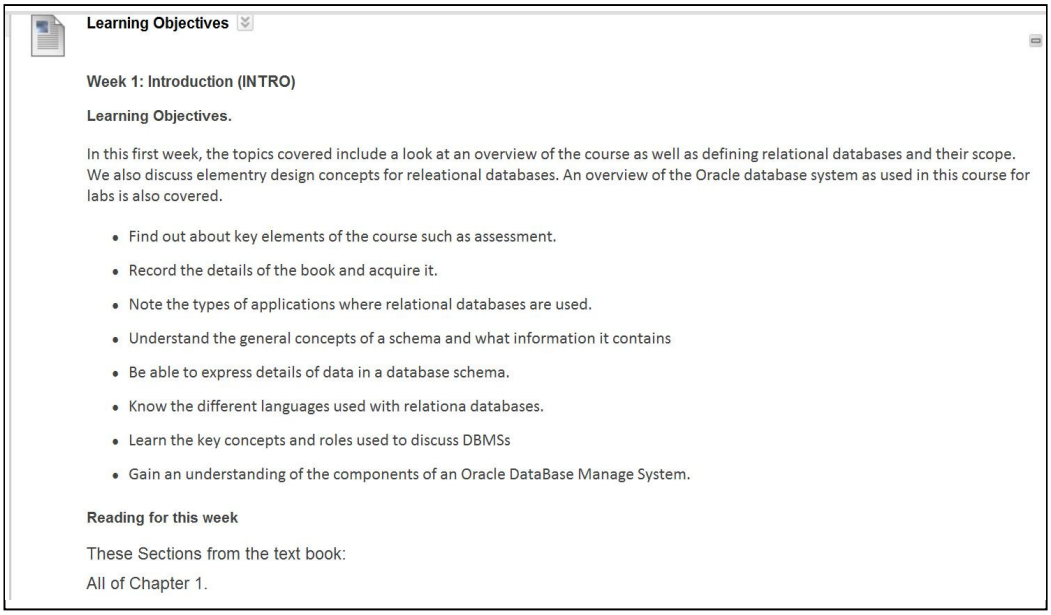


The Content for each Week

Now lets taking a look at how the material for each week is laid out. There are four sections for each week: Introduction, Learning Objectives, *This Weeks Videos* and Zip Files.

Inrtoduction is a breif overview of the topics covered by this weeks material. It is the same as the description given in the Course Materials page.

Learning Objectives are a synopsis of the material for that week. It is a list of concepts you should understand when you have finished studying the material. With the Learning Objectives is the reading list for this week.



Next you will find *This Weeks Videos* section which has the material for this week. The material for this course is delivered as edited videos of the on-campus lectures. When you click on the link, you are taken to a page with a video player where you are able to select part of the lecture and play it in your browser.

Buttons for Video Selection and Part of the Viewing Screen

There is also a Find-It table which explained later but from the name, you might have guessed that it helps you to find partiular topics in the videos

The next item is the *Zip Packs*. In this section you will find two zip files. One contains all the videos for this week. They are the same one used in the *This Weeks Videos* section we just discussed.

The other contains a number of documents in pdf format which are part of the material for this week. Lets breifly go over what documents you'll find in the zip file. They are;

- The Learning Objectives mentioned earlier.
- The reading list for the text book for that week.
- The slide set used by the lecturer when delivering the lecture so you can follow along.
- The tutorial sheet for this week.
- The video Find-It sheet (explained later)

Putting it all in one zip file makes it easier to download rather than downloading many individual files. By downloading the pdf zip file and the video zip file, students have all the base material they need for each weeks study.

More Detail about the videos.

Each week, there are around 2 hours of lectures. These have been edited into 5 or 6 smaller videos . Each video can cover a number of points or topics. This is fine for the first viewing of the material where most people simply view them sequentially. However, when people want to review the material while attempting an assignment question or revising for the exam, it can be difficult to find the right video and where in the video the topic is covered.

Find-It table to the rescue! Each week the videos are presented with a Find-It table designed to help students locate what they are looking for. Below is an example of a Find-It table.

SQL Programming 3 (SQL3)

#	Sub-topics	Slides	Start	Len	Video Name
1	Sets and Set Operations	Slides SQL3 1 to 4	0	18:52	W9_1_SetS
2	Union	Slides SQL3 5 to 6	0	3:39	W9_2_Set Operations
3	Intersection	Slides SQL3 9 to 8	3:39	7:25	W9_2_Set Operations
4	Minus	Slides SQL3 7 to 13	11:04	11:10	W9_2_Set Operations
5	Creating a Database with SQL	Slides SQL3 14 to 16	0	7:00	W9_3_Database Creation and Insertion
6	INSERT	Slides SQL3 17 to 18	7:00	14:15	W9_3_Database Creation and Insertion
7	UPDATE	Slides SQL3 17 to 20	0	4:04	W9_4_Updates Deletes and Views
8	DELETE , DROP & VIEW	Slides SQL3 20 to 28	4:04	18:07	W9_4_Updates Deletes and Views
9	Nulls and Aggregations	Slides SQL3 20 to 29	0	12:44	W9_5_Nulls

Let see how it works. Looking at the contents of the table, the topic for this week is SQL Programming 3 and the sub-topics covered in the videos are listed in column 2.

As the lecturer presents the material, he uses a set of Power Point slides. The relevant slides for each sub-topic are listed in column 3 (the slides are supplied in the pdf zip pack, in pdf format).

You can tell these are Week 9 videos by the "W9_" start to their names (in the last column). The next number is which videos they are in the sequence. The last part is a name indicating generally what is on that video. So the video named "W9_4_Updates Deletes and Views" would be the fourth video for Week 9 and you would expect it to cover material about updating and deleting data as well as views.

The Start and Length fields give information on how to find a particular topic within a long video file. For instances, if you wanted to view the lecture material on INSERT command, you would look down the list of sub-topic and find it at Item 6. Looking across the table, you would note that it will be in "W9_3_Database Creation and Insertion" video. But when you open that video, its more than 21 minutes long. Is there an easy way to find the start of this topic in the video rather than viewing the whole thing?

Yes ! there is! Looking at the Start column for Item 6 and you see that it starts 7 minutes and 00 seconds into the video and the Length column tells you that topic goes for about 14 minutes and 15 seconds. Some videos are quite long and being able to find the relevant section within a video makes studying easier.

Tutorials

Another item in the pdf pack for each week is a tutorial sheet for that week. Tutorials are generally in the form of a set of questions relating to the material presented in that week. The idea is to study the material first and then attempt the tutorial questions.

The answers/solutions to the tutorial questions are made available at the end of each week in the Tutorial Solutions section of the Course Content. But it doesn't end there. The tutorial questions are the basis of the Elluminate session of the *following* week.

Some of the tutorial questions are very hard to do and attending the Elluminate session (or viewing the recording) is often the best way to find out how to go about solving them.

Assignments

There are two assignments for this subject. The details of when they are released and when submissions are due is in the Weekly Study Timetable.

The questions in the assignments are a mixture of questions similar to the tutorial questions, questions based on lecture material.

They are quite long so its best to start on them early. Typically, you will have 2 weeks to do each assignment. Some of the questions will address material that is covered in the course

during that two weeks. In other words you when you first get the assignment there will be questions which you will not (yet) be able to answer but will be covered shortly.

You should note the following with regards to extensions to submission dates;

- I am not allowed to issue extensions (unless a technical issues that affects everyone arises).
- All requests for extensions start with an email to ouacsit@rmit.edu.au requesting an extension. Don't forget your student number and name. You **must** use your RMIT student email account to send this email or it will be ignored.
- All requests must have either accompanying paper work submitted with the request or within a short period (specified by ouacsit) after the initial request.
- The grounds for applying for an extension are very limited and you should check these before making your application. "Busy at work" or "ran out of time" are not grounds for applying for an extension.
- Once you start the process of applying for an extension, you should comply with all requests from ouacsit for documentation within the timeframes they specify. Typically, when documentation is required by a certain date, it must arrive here and be in the hands of ouacsit by that date, not in transit, and not the date you post it. You have to make allowances for the time required for delivery.
- Only ever use your RMIT student email account when communicating with ouacsit. Email from any other source will not be actioned.

There is a penalty for submitting an assignment late. Its based on how late your submission is. The Penalty is 10% of the total marks for the assignment per day late or part there of. This means that if an assignment is due by 11.59PM Sunday and you submit it 10AM the next day, 10% of the assignment marks will be deducted from your score. If you submit it 11PM on Wednesday, 30% deduction and so on. Assignments are not accepts after 5 days late.

If you submit on time, you can expect to get your assignment marks back in 2 weeks. Late submissions are marked as soon as possible after that.

Discussion Board

The discussion board is a key place for students. It's a place to post questions and get answers. The thread (or topics) are laid out with one per week as well as some special threads for assignments and exam prep (and a couple of others).

Assignment discussion threads are laid out with a thread per question. This is to get some seperation of posts so you do not have to wade through the posts for all questions when you are only interested in one question. I would ask two things of you when posting;

- Since threads have been created to group relevant posts together, could you post into the appropriate thread. That will help everyone.
- Before posting, could you read the posts already there. It's entirely possible that your question has been posted and answered. Doing this may save you time waiting around for an answer and save me having to answer the same question many times over.

I'm fine with students who *know* the answer to a question posting an answer. This **does not** apply to questions about assignments. Please let me answer these questions. When it comes to questions about assignments questions, I will typically not give the answer directly but instead offer guidance as to how you might attempt the question or find a useful reference.

Answering questions in the discussion board is my preferred way to communicate as each answer is made available to large number of students. Typically, I aim to respond to all posts within 48 hours, often it is less, occassionally it takes a little longer.

It should not come as a surprise that I reserve the right to delete any inappropriate post. In the past, I have also delete entire sub-threads if I think they are more confusing to the average student than they are helpful.

Elluminate

This is an important tool in Blackboard. It is essentially a conferencing tool that allows me as an Instructor to hold tutorial sessions with those students who are able to attend. It is live and interactive.

Typically, I do all the talking and students follow the material/presentation as I do it in Elluminate. As we go along, student ask questions by typing them in to a common posting area that everyone can read, and I can answer them there and then.

Elluminate sessions are recorded and are available for review by all students in Blackboard.

It is clear from student feedback that Elluminate is a powerful tool that helps students connect with the subject and achieve a better understanding of the material. It is often the case that students get more out of the lecture videos after they have attended (or reviewed the recording of) the corresponding Elluminate session.

To use Elluminate, you need to have java 6 installed.

For this Study Period, Elluminate sessions will be on Thursday 8PM and typically go for 2 hours.

The first Elluminate session is in **Week 2**.

Student Support

The primary means of assistance available to students regarding the technical content of the course is the discussion forums and the Elluminate sessions. The other path is emailing the Instructor (me). I'm happy to receive emails from you but responding to emails generally takes longer.

Regarding emails, I will not "review" peoples assignment submission before the submission date. Also, if it's an assigment question you are asking about, please include your attempt so far or pinpoint the cause of your problem. This allows me to write a better reply which will be shorter and more focused on your issue.

Despite the best laid plans, problems in life can come out of nowhere. These situations can affect a students ability to work on their course or complete assessment tasks. When this happens, you should consider applying for Special Consideration. For instance, suddenly finding yourself homeless or unemployeed or a death in the direct immediate family are situations that warant applying for Special Consideration. An example of the outcome of an application for Special Consideration might be additional time for completing an assignment. Please refer to the earlier section on Assignment extensions for more details on how to apply.

RMIT recognises all people should have access to educational courses. It also recognises that some people need assistance due to conditions that outside their control. The Disablility Learning Unit (DLU) has a role helping people with disabilities have fair access to courses and fair assessment tasks. For example, some people may need material presented in a different format (large font) that is easier to read. Others in chronic pain may need frequent breaks during the course of an exam. It is DLUs role to ensure people who need help get the assisance they need. If you have a disability, then you should contact DLU.

Course information

The bulk of the information you need to know for this course is contained in the Starter Pack. There is ;

- A Overview of the course content.
- An Assessment guide.
- The Weekly Study timetable
- And the document you are reading now about how the course is run.
- A set of question frequently asked by students starting Database Concepts.

If you have questions or require more assistance, please post into the discussion forum or email me.

A week in the life of the Database Concepts student.

So what is a week in the life of a Data Comms student like? Well, it start by checking the date in the Weekly Study guide to see what the topic was for this week and what week of the course it is. From there, they would go to the Course Materials and download the pdf pack and the zip file with all the videos in them. Later on, they might load the videos on a personal device for viewing while on the way to work but for now, they would go on to review the Learning Objectives. This gives them a general idea of what lays ahead and key terms to look out for. She may not understand them all at this stage but they act as sign posts for the rest of the material.

Unpacking the pdfs to get out the slide pack, they can follow along as they watch the videos directly from Blackboard, pausing the video to take notes as they go and rewinding some sections for a second look at the material.

The reading list for the week was also in the pdf pack so she uses some mini PostIt notes to label the text book. While reading the text, she continues to add to the notes made during the video. Don't forget to ask questions on the discussion forums to clarify any confusion.

Having completed the videos and reading, its now time to attempt the tutorial questions. The student might use the Find-It table to find a specific topic on the videos to help with a question. He will not be too concerned if they cannot do the problems as the solutions will be available at the end of the week.

While planning the week ahead, time is booked into the calender to attending (or viewing the recording of) the Elluminate session. Work on assignments also needs to be factored into the weekly activities. It's prudent to check just exactly when the next assignment task is due incase more time needs to be devoted to it.

Another important activity is keeping tabs on postings to the discussion forums. This is where a lot of helpful hints and explanations appear that can make it easier to get your head around the material. Three or four times a week should do it but more often during assignment times.

Finally, at the end of the week, its time to return to the Learning Objectives and see how you are travelling. Do you understand all the key concepts mentioned? Can you explain/demonstrate/solve for the various topics? Have you practiced any specific skills discussed during this week? This process identifies areas that may need more study.

Conclusion

The aim of this document is to inform you about how to find things in this course and what help is available when you need it. Database Concepts is a very interesting course and with this information, I hope you find it an engaging one. This is the first release of this document. Feedback for improvements is welcome.

Regards
Ian Baker
Instructor.