Quick guide to teaching in Moodle

How to get started with your course area

1. Login to Moodle and your course areas

Log in to Moodle at http://moodle.helsinki.fi. You find all login alternatives in the right hand side block Login. Select With University of Helsinki account. Use this alternative also with lightweight IDs.

After login you enter the My home page with a list of My courses. In the list, the blue text illustrates course areas that are open to students, and course areas with gray text are closed from students. The list includes all courses you are on as teacher or as student. Click on the course area name to enter the course area.

You can also add course area addresses as Bookmarks in your browser. When you use the bookmark, Moodle requests for login when needed.

2. Request for a new course area

Use the request form to order new courses: https://moodle.helsinki.fi/course/request.php. Link to the request form is always shown on Moodle main page, in the left hand side block Instructions for teachers.

3. Edit course area settings

You find the course area setting page on your course area in the left hand side block Administration: Edit settings. The most relevant settings to check are, group by group top-down:

- General:
  - Check that the Course full name and Course short name are as they should be.
  - Visible: New course areas are Hidden from students. You can keep it hidden as long as you edit the course area. Remember to Show, i.e. open the course area for students when the course starts.
- Course format: The most typical to use is Format Topics format. Choose a suitable Number of sections (you can change it later as well).

Additional useful settings include:

- Description: If you want to, add a short description in the Course summary field. The text is visible for students in the course category list and before they register to the course area.
- Appearance: If you want to, Force language for the course area to English.
- Completion tracking: Enable completion tracking (Yes) to a) allow students to follow their progress on the course area and b) do follow-up via the Activity completion report (you find it at Administration -> Reports -> Activity completion after you have enabled completion tracking on the course area and in at least one of the course area activities or resources). For additional information, see http://docs.moodle.org/29/en/Activity_completion

4. Add contents to you course area

To add contents to your course area, Turn editing on (in the upper right corner on your course area). Now you find the text link Add an activity or resource in each section on the course area. Resources are static contents added by the teacher (such as files and pages), while Activities are interactive elements where students can participate (such as Forum and Assignment). Note that not all activity and resource types listed in the general instructions behind the docs.moodle.org links above are available in UH-Moodle.

4.1. First design, then implement

The names of activities in Moodle may sometimes be misleading in possible ways of use. Get familiar with the page Assignment submissions in Moodle before you ask students to submit anything to ensure that Moodle serves all your needs.

4.2. News

Each new course area includes the discussion forum News. It is intended for teacher announcements that are also forced to student emails. Note that students cannot write on the News forum, only read the messages!
• For interaction with students, use instead an additional Forum.

5. Before you start teaching

When your course starts, there are two important issues to set.

5.1. Edit the visibility of the course area

There are two phases in editing the course area visibility:

1. First, the course area must be opened to students (see chapter 2 above). Without this setting, students cannot see or access the course area. Note that without your additional actions the course area is then visible to anyone logged into Moodle. Therefore,

2. Restrict access to the course area by deciding who can or how it is possible to enter the course area. This is done by selecting which enrolment methods are used. You find the enrolment methods table at Administration -> Users -> Enrolment methods. The options are

   • to use an Enrolment key for the Self enrolment method. Then, participants can enrol themselves on the course area, and only those with the key can do it. Participants need the key only on the first time they enter the course area. If you chance the key, there is no effect on the participants already in the course area.
   • delete the Self enrolment method (the gray cross) or close the eye. Note that if there are enrolled participants with this method on the course area, their access ends.
   • allow guests on the course area. Guest users are anonymous and cannot participate in any course area activities but can read all contents and discussions. If you want to allow guest access, enable the setting in course area settings (see section 2 above).

5.2. Participants

Participants can access the course area mainly in two ways:

1. For student access it it most recommendable to use the self enrolment method (see above). You can share the course area address or name and the enrolment key e.g. via email, on your first lecture or via the Oodi email function. Students then use the address to find the course area, log in to Moodle and use the key to enrol to the course area.

2. Teachers can also Enrol users (students and other teachers) by hand, one by one. Do this at Administration -> Users -> Enrolled users -> Enrol users.

6. After and between courses

When your course has ended and you don't need the course area anymore, remember to hide the course area from students. Additionally, course areas that have not been used for a long time are automatically deleted.

If you want to reuse your course area or contents on your next course:

   • Remember to take into account the time that student submissions must be saved after the course results are published. The most typical saving time is 6 months, but in some cases (such as maturity exams) even longer.
   • If you want to save the old course area and copy the contents to a new course area: request for a new course area and Import there the contents you want to reuse. For instructions on the importing process, see http://docs.moodle.org/26/en/Import_course_data.
   • If you want to take a Backup from the whole course area or some part of it, go to Administration -> Backup -> select the contents you want to be included in the backup file, and click on Continue buttons. After the file has been created, you can copy it to your computer, memory stick or elsewhere external to Moodle. You can also share the backup file with other teachers if you want to support them with getting started with teaching in Moodle. They can use the backup as their course area template (see below).
   • If you want to reuse your course area, Reset the course area (Administration -> Reset). Then, activities and resources are saved, students and their submissions are deleted.

7. Additional instructions

   • Instructions on the web, such as Moodle documentation on http://docs.moodle.org/ and screencast tutorials.
   • Personnel training, especially if you have not used Moodle before. You can find information about personnel training on the Educational Technology Centre's website. The whole training calendar is in intranet Flamma.
   • E-mail support, if you are an online teacher already, and need to ask questions relating to Moodle tools, or enhancing your use of Moodle in teaching. Please contact Moodle help at ok-moodle@helsinki.fi. The Educational Technology Specialists from Educational Technology Centre are there to help you with your inquiries.

Pedagogical perspective

Have you always wanted to develop your teaching into more online format, but never had the time? We have collected some guidelines and links to a quick introduction to using Moodle in your teaching. Read on!
Before you start developing your course online, think about the following things:

- course objectives (learning objectives)
- evaluation methods that support your learning objectives
- the contents and materials in your course that you need to support your learning goals
- activities in your course that support your learning goals and evaluation methods
- select the Moodle activities only when you have designed the above mentioned issues and know what you want - all Moodle activities do not support all types of working methods!
- accessibility issues

Then, consider which parts of your course work best online (think big but start small), and what kind of activities will help students to achieve their goals. More information on pedagogical design of an online course can be found on Michigan State University's Virtual University website: Pedagogical design considerations

Also, think whether you need to make course materials yourself, or are there materials available, or better yet, can students make the materials as they are learning. Take a wide perspective on what learning materials could be (not only written materials, but simulations, role plays, videos, podcasts, discussions, etc.).

Now that you have your basics thought through, it is time to request for a course area in Moodle. The link to the course area request form is found on Moodle main page.

- See also: Moodle manual for students

Enhancing your teaching with Moodle

You do not have to change your teaching all at once. Start by adding some online elements to your course: discussion sessions, materials and links to additional information, etc. When you are more confident in teaching online, then add more web elements into your course. You can get a lot of ideas from these Teaching with Moodle links. It is also good to know what and what not to do online, check out this Teaching dos and dont's link. There are also more Teaching tips and tricks that you might find useful. Remember also that your colleagues that are already online can help you, just go and ask them how they got started and what they are doing online right now. Everyone has been a beginner at some point 😊

Course templates

It is possible to make course templates for each faculty in Moodle. This makes it even easier for teachers to start using Moodle. With only a few modifications, a course template can be used for teaching any course. Some faculties share their course templates for all teachers to use.

Successful online teaching

It is difficult to give criteria for good online teaching. However, there are some points that might help you in achieving better results when teaching online. Henry & Meadows (2008), have listed nine principles for good online teaching. Also, here at Helsinki University, Löfström at al (2010) have made a handbook for university teachers on Quality teaching in web-based environments.

Hopefully, the links on this page will help your teaching online!