

VLE Guidance Document

Introduction

This guidance document aims to support academic staff at University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) with the effective use of Moodle, in line with the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Policy and the VLE Baseline Standards document.

Whilst this document emphasizes the activities and resources integrated within Moodle, it is also recognised that sometimes it may be necessary and/or more appropriate to use tools which are external to the VLE, for example Microsoft OneNote.

Guidance

By adhering to the guidance and top tips set out in this document, academic staff can enhance the learning experience across online, blended, and face-to-face delivery modes, creating a structured, engaging, and inclusive environment that leverages Moodle's full potential, thereby supporting the University's commitment to academic excellence.

Course design and structure

Clear and consistent layout: Ensure your course layout is intuitive and consistent. Use a clear structure with topics or weekly sections to help students navigate easily.

Baseline standards: Adhere to the VLE Baseline Standards to maintain a consistent student experience. This includes providing essential course information, learning outcomes, and assessment details.

Top tips		Things to avoid	
Course organisation	Clear structure: Organise your course into topics or weekly sections. Use consistent naming conventions and a logical flow to help students to navigate easily. Course overview: Provide a comprehensive course overview, including objectives, learning outcomes, and a schedule of activities and assessments.	Overloading students	Too much content: Avoid overwhelming students with excessive learning materials. Focus on quality over quantity and ensure that each resource is purposeful. Complex navigation: Don't create a confusing course layout. Keep the structure simple and intuitive. It is important to consider the types of devices students may be using to access Moodle. For example, a Moodle page with a lot of content might be unreadable on a mobile device.

Content creation

Engaging materials: Use a variety of multimedia resources (videos, podcasts, interactive activities) to cater to different learning needs.

Accessibility and inclusivity: Ensure all content is accessible to all students. Use descriptive headings, alt text for images, and ensure videos have captions. You can use the *Accessibility* review block to identify and fix accessibility issues in your page.

Copyright compliance: Respect copyright laws and the University's [Copyright Policy](#) when creating and sharing materials.

Top tips		Things to avoid	
Accessibility and inclusivity	Accessible content: Ensure that all learning materials are accessible to all students. Use alt text for images, captions for videos, and accessible document formats. Inclusive practices: Be mindful of diverse cultural backgrounds and learning needs. Provide materials in multiple formats and in Welsh, if the course is taught in Welsh.	Ignoring accessibility	Inaccessible content: Don't overlook the importance of accessibility. Ensure that all students can access and benefit from the course materials. Non-compliant practices: Avoid using non-compliant tools or formats that may hinder accessibility.

Interactive learning

Discussion forums: Facilitate online discussions to encourage student interaction and engagement. Monitor and moderate forums to maintain a respectful and inclusive environment.

Collaborative tools: Use Moodle's collaborative activities such as *Wiki*, *Database*, *Glossary*, and *Group choice* to foster teamwork and peer learning. For example, using *Database* can enable students to work together to build a knowledge base around a subject.

Top tips		Things to avoid	
Active learning	Multimedia resources: Incorporate videos, podcasts, interactive activities, and readings to offer a varied learning experience. Interactive elements: Use quizzes, forums, and interactive content (like <i>H5P</i>) to engage students actively. Active participation: Encourage students	Passive learning	One-way communication: Avoid using Moodle solely as a repository for documents. Engage students with interactive activities and discussions. Lack of interaction: Don't neglect forums and other interactive tools. Active participation from both students and instructors is crucial. Monotonous

	to participate in activities and discussions. Use Moodle's activity completion tracking to monitor engagement.		content: Avoid using only text-based materials. Incorporate multimedia and interactive elements to keep students engaged. If you do have lots of text, try to break this up into manageable chunks, with activities and/or interactive content in between to keep students engaged.
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Assessment and feedback

Diverse assessment methods: Use a mixture of formative and summative assessments, including quizzes, assignments, and peer assessments to evaluate student learning.

Timely feedback: Provide constructive and timely feedback to help students improve and stay motivated. Use Moodle's feedback tools alongside the University's [Academic Quality Handbook](#) to provide consistent feedback and streamline this process.

Top tips		Things to avoid	
Assessment and feedback	Diverse assessments: Use a variety of assessment methods, including quizzes, assignments, and peer assessments, to evaluate student learning. Timely feedback: Provide constructive feedback promptly to help students improve.	Neglecting feedback	Delayed feedback: Don't delay in providing feedback on assessments. Timely feedback is essential for student improvement. Generic feedback: Avoid giving generic or non-specific feedback. Tailor your comments to help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Communication and expectations

Regular updates: Keep students informed with regular updates and announcements. Use Moodle's *Announcements* feature and the *Forum* activity to communicate important information.

Office hours and support: Offer virtual office hours and be available to support students. Create an announcement or use the *Quickmail* block for quick communication from Moodle.

Top tips		Things to avoid	
Communication	Announcements: Use the <i>Announcement</i> feature to keep students informed about important updates and deadlines. Discussion forums: Facilitate discussions to encourage interaction and build a learning community. Monitor and participate in forums to guide conversations.	Inconsistent updates	Irregular communication: Don't leave students in the dark. Regularly update them on course progress, deadlines, and any changes. Outdated materials: Ensure all content is current and relevant remove or update outdated resources.

Training and support

Continuous learning: Engage in ongoing professional development to stay updated with the latest Moodle features and best practices. Participate in training sessions offered by the Moodle, Digital Learning and Digital Skills teams, as well as events such as the Nexus Conference. You can find relevant resources on the [DigiCentre Resource Finder](#) and on [LinkedIn Learning](#).

Peer support: Collaborate with colleagues to share experiences and strategies for effective Moodle use. Join forums and communities of practice within the university, such as the Nexus Learning & Teaching Café.

Monitoring and evaluation

Student feedback: Regularly seek feedback from students on their learning experience and use it to improve course design and delivery. For example, signpost students to use the Module Evaluation Questionnaire or capture your own feedback from students using Microsoft Forms.

Self-assessment: Reflect on your teaching practices and make adjustments as needed. Use Moodle's analytics tools to track student engagement and performance.

Top tips		Things to avoid	
Continuous improvement	Student feedback: Regularly seek feedback from students on their learning experience and use it to improve your course. Professional	Student feedback	Ignoring student input: Don't disregard student feedback. Use it to make necessary adjustments and improve the learning experience.

	development: Stay updated with the latest Moodle features and pedagogical strategies. Participate in training sessions and workshops.		
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Pedagogical strategies and best practices

To maximise the potential of Moodle, it is essential to integrate sound pedagogical principles into your course design and delivery. In this section you will find a selection of key pedagogical strategies and best practices which underpin the VLE Baseline Standards.

Constructivist learning

Constructivist learning emphasizes the active role of students in building their own understanding. This approach promotes deeper learning and understanding by encouraging students to actively engage with the material and construct meaning based on their personal experience, integrating new knowledge with their existing knowledge.

Active learning: Encourage students to actively participate in their learning process through discussions, problem-solving activities, and collaborative projects. Many Moodle activities can be used to support active and collaborative learning, such as *Forum*, *Wiki* and *Glossary*.

Scaffolded learning: Provide support structures to help students build on their prior knowledge and gradually remove these supports as students become more proficient. This might include making use of time on task by letting students know how long is expected or providing additional instructions to your students using the *Text and media area*. Create a scaffolded learning experience using *Lesson* and *Quiz*, as well as many of the activities within *H5P*.

Student-centred learning

Personalised learning: Tailor learning experiences to meet the diverse needs of students. Use Moodle's conditional activities and completion tracking to create personalised learning paths.

Student autonomy: Empower students to take control of their learning by providing choices in assignments and activities. Use *Feedback*, *Questionnaire* and *Choice* to poll students for their opinions and preferences.

Collaborative learning

Peer learning: Encourage students to learn from each other through peer assessments and group work. Use *Workshop* for peer reviews and group assignments for collaborative projects. Moodle can also support you to facilitate group activities. For example, you can use *Forums* to encourage students to discuss and explore specific topics.

Community building: Foster a sense of community within your course. Use Moodle *Forum* or Microsoft Teams to create spaces for informal interaction and support. Start with small low stakes tasks for collaboration and peer learning as students get to know each other, before moving onto higher stakes tasks. For example, if using *Forum* in Moodle, a low stakes icebreaker might help build confidence before students post their first discussion post.

Reflective learning

Self-assessment: Encourage students to reflect on their learning and assess their progress. For example, you can use *Quiz*, *Feedback* or many of the activities within *H5P* to create opportunities for self-assessment.

Reflective journals: Use *Text and media area* to prompt students to reflect and a notetaking tool, such as Microsoft OneNote, to allow students to document their learning journey and reflect on their experiences.

Inclusive learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Design your course to be accessible to all students. Moodle activities and resources can help you design an inclusive and accessible module that aligns with UDL principles. For example:

- Use the *Choice* activity to let students select a discussion topic from a list, addressing UDL Consideration 7.2: Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity.
- Use the *Glossary* activity to define frequently used terms, supporting UDL Consideration 2.1: Clarify vocabulary, symbols, and language structures.

Clarity of information: You should also be mindful of jargon, acronyms and technical terms, especially when using them for the first time. Your students may not know what you are referring to, so provide an explanation or make use of Moodle *Glossary*.

Formative assessment

Continuous feedback: Provide timely and constructive feedback to help students improve. Many Moodle activities allow you to provide such feedback and assign grades within them, such as *Forum*, *Lessons*, *Databases* and *Glossary*.

Low-stakes testing: Use frequent, low-stakes quizzes to help students gauge their understanding and reduce test anxiety. Moodle's *Quiz* activity allows for automated feedback and multiple attempts.

Blended learning

Integration of online and face-to-face: Seamlessly integrate online activities with face-to-face instruction. Use Moodle to provide pre-class readings, in-class activities, and post-class reflections.

Flipped classroom: Use Moodle to deliver instructional content outside of class, freeing up class time for interactive, hands-on activities. Upload lecture videos and readings to Moodle and use class time for discussions and problem-solving.

Engagement and motivation

Gamification: Incorporate game elements such as badges, leaderboards, and challenges to motivate students. Use Moodle's badges and activity completion features to gamify your course, as well as the [Level Up XP](#) plugin in Moodle.

Interactive content: Use interactive content to keep students engaged. Moodle's *H5P* integration allows you to create interactive videos, quizzes, and presentations.

Effective communication

Clear instructions: Provide clear and concise instructions for all activities and assessments. Use *Text and media area* to give detailed guidelines and expectations.

Regular check-ins: Maintain regular communication with students to keep them engaged and informed. Make use of *Announcement* and *Forum* to stay in touch. Alternatively, use your usual communication channels in Microsoft (such as Teams and Outlook).

Continuous improvement

Feedback loops: Regularly seek feedback from students on their learning experience and use it to improve your course. Use Moodle's feedback and survey tools to gather student input.

Professional development: Stay updated with the latest educational technologies and pedagogical strategies. Participate in training sessions and workshops offered by the Digital Learning Team.

Further support

For more specific guidance, please refer to the VLE Baseline Standards document.

For further assistance, contact the Digital Learning Team at digitallearning@uwtsd.ac.uk