Hello and welcome to the fifth edition of the Monash Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) newsletter. We hope that you find this a valuable source of news and information about the Monash VLE Project and Monash's new educational technologies and initiatives.

What's new in this edition?

**Announcements**

- Announcing the Monash Moodle Symposium, 'Moving Forward with Moodle', 6-7 December!
- Moodle 2.3 Upgrade Scheduled for November
- New Assessments Training Launched
- Moodle 2 Introductory Training Sessions Now Available in Google Videos
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- Development Requests Page Launched on VLE Website
Announcing the Monash Moodle Symposium, 'Moving Forward with Moodle', 6-7 December!

The Virtual Learning Environment Project team is very excited to announce that a Monash Moodle Symposium will take place on December 6 and 7 at the Caulfield campus. By December this year all units will have been migrated to Moodle and come semester 1, 2013 all of Monash’s ten faculties will be teaching with Moodle. This therefore seems the perfect opportunity for Monash staff to get together and talk about how to Move Forward with Moodle! Stay tuned for more information about the conference and confirmation of our keynote speakers (hint - you won’t be disappointed!).

Moodle 2.3 upgrade scheduled for November

Moodle 2.3 logo made in Minecraft by Moodle kids

Moodle 2.3 is packed full of new features and functions and word on the street is that staff and students alike are loving it! Monash Moodle will be upgraded to version 2.3 in November and we’re all looking forward to an even better version of Moodle.

Some of the areas that have undergone major improvements are:

Files usability - E.g. Nicer looking file picker displaying images and requiring fewer clicks, better icons, drag and drop files from desktop, file info can be edited and viewed in popup, Google docs to file picker, improved handling of multiple file updates
Unit pages - E.g. Units can show sections on individual pages, blocks can be dragged and dropped, ‘Activity chooser’ added, edit activity and resource names without entering settings
Activities - E.g. Ability to duplicate any activity and then modify the duplicate as required
Assignment Module - E.g. Complete rewrite of assignment module, assignment subtypes no longer needed
Advanced Grading - E.g. New marking guide, rubrics enabled
Quiz Module - E.g. More robust handling of quiz attempts submitted after the deadline, option for teachers to force students to answer quiz questions in order
SCORM Module - E.g. Can now drag a SCORM package straight into the unit page and it will be added as a SCORM activity
Workshop Module - E.g. Workshop submission deadlines shown in calendar, improved support for pagination and filtering workshop submissions by group
Moodle Mobile - E.g. Ability for learners to download unit content via their mobile device

**New Assessments in Moodle 2 Training Launched**

Since November 2011 over 150 introductory training sessions have been offered across all Monash campuses, both in Australia and abroad. These sessions were extremely well attended with over 2,500 Monash staff registering for one or more of these sessions. As most of the University is now teaching with Moodle 2, these introductory training sessions are winding down and more advanced training is taking its place.

The Virtual Learning Environment Project team have been busy developing more in depth training sessions focussing on assessments in Moodle 2. This training was developed based on feedback received formally and informally from staff who had completed the introductory sessions and are now teaching with Moodle. These new 'hands-on' workshop sessions, aimed at staff who have attended the introductory training, consist of two 1 hour modules run consecutively:

**Moodle Assessments Part 1 - Assignments** (one hour 'hands-on' workshop)
- Learn how to conduct assignments and work with grades in Moodle 2. Content covered includes assignment types and configuration; editing assignments; feedback options; and working with the gradebook in relation to assignments.

**Moodle Assessments Part 2 - Quizzes** (one hour 'hands-on' workshop)
- Learn how to work with quizzes and grades in Moodle 2. Content covered includes question types; feedback and scoring options; the question bank; and working with the gradebook in relation to quizzes.

Additional introductory and assessment sessions have been scheduled due to demand, but we suggest registering quickly as sessions are booking out!

**Moodle 2 Introductory Training Sessions Now Available in Google Videos**

For those staff that may not be able to attend face-to-face training sessions, or just want a quick refresher in some aspect of Moodle, Google Videos is now hosting several Moodle introductory training sessions. Below is a list of Moodle 2 training videos available to watch through Google videos:
The Monash VLE Project team is looking forward to participating in the upcoming Monash Technology Fair. The Fair, to be held in the Banquet room of the Clayton campus on 8 and 9 October, will showcase the technologies available to Monash students and staff, including educational technologies, the my.monash portal, and the Google Apps for Education suite. The Fair will also feature vendor participation from companies such as Google, Dell, Oracle and Microsoft. The VLE stand will exhibit demonstrations of Moodle’s interesting features and functions and will showcase examples of how academics are using Moodle to enhance their teaching and learning. Additionally, the VLE stand will demonstrate how Turnitin, Monash’s future university-wide text matching tool, will work and how it will integrate with Moodle assignment submission. We hope to see you there in October!

**Getting Ready to Hang Out with Google+**
Following a successful pilot, Monash University is preparing to release Google+! Students and staff across all campuses will soon be invited to opt in to Google+, where they can share information and content and connect with others.

Google+ is a social collaboration tool that offers users a range of features including:

- **hangouts** - a video conferencing service
- **stream** - a news feed
- **circles** - a means of organising contacts
- **events** - integrated with Google calendar
- **photos** - fast and easy photo sharing with selected users

The hangouts feature can create new opportunities for learning in small groups, as it enables up to ten users to video and voice chat, share screens, use back channel text chat, and collaborate on creating documents. For students, hangouts may facilitate work on group activities and other tasks with peers.

For staff, hangouts may be used to provide virtual consultation hours, or to connect with professionals from across the globe in meaningful, real-time conversation. For example, Lead Educational Designer, Mitch Hughes, will use Google+ to connect with academics later this month for a virtual ‘Share and Tell’ session. See Mitch’s Learning and Teaching Corner below for more details.

Google+ will be released as an opt in service via a link on your my.monash portal homepage and use will be subject to both Monash and Google policies and procedures.

More information on the release of Google+ at Monash will be available over the coming weeks so stay tuned!

**Who’s Using Moodle - And How Often?**

Moodle usage statistics indicate that students must be aiming for HDs this semester as Moodle saw a significant amount of use in the first three weeks! With eight of Monash’s ten faculties now using Moodle it didn’t surprise us that on average, over 28,000 unique staff and students users accessed an average of 52,000 Moodle pages each day.
The graph below shows the number of unique users (staff and student combined) and the number of pages accessed per day since semester two commenced on 23 July. As can be seen from the graph, usage has been increasing since week one of semester.

Learning and Teaching Corner
by Mitch Hughes, VLE Lead Educational Designer

Groups and groupings
Groups and groupings are one of the most powerful features of Moodle for learning and teaching. Used well, there is potentially great educational value to be gained from:

- small, targeted student discussions existing within large student cohorts
- tailored, localised content and activities for cohorts from different campuses
- facilitation of small group activities in any number of configurations
It appears however that at Monash the power of groups and groupings has yet to be fully embraced by many units. This may have something to do with the lack of an equivalent feature in Blackboard, although some of the same functions could be achieved using a range of different system functionality. Perhaps it’s the case that groups and groupings somehow became “lost in translation” between the systems.

The VLE team have developed a range of scenarios that would showcase the power of groups and groupings function. Scenarios include:

- Create news announcements specific to ONE group of students
- Hold different discussions for each tutorial group
- Create a discussion forum for one group of students only
- Make a file available to only one group of students
- Make a file available to only teaching staff
- Extend the due date of a quiz for a group of students
- Ask students to choose their own group
- Create a large number of small activity groups

You can find these resources at any time through the Need Help? link within Moodle.

Dr Andrea Kirk-Brown and Ms Chantal Beukes used groups and groupings in their cross campus unit, MGW3210 - Organisational Wellness. Groups and grouping were used to effectively deliver different assessment information to the student cohorts located on the South Africa and Berwick campuses. Other sections in the unit include a mixture of shared and separated content and activities. The screen captures below show the lecturer view and the view of a student from the Berwick cohort.
Lecturer view of MGW3210

Student view of MGW3210 (Berwick cohort)

(With thanks to Dr Andrea Kirk-Brown and Ms Chantal Beukes for permission to use MGW3210 as an example.)
Sharing teaching ideas

Share and Tell sessions

One question the Educational Design team are regularly asked is whether lecturers can please see other example units. In response, we will be starting “Share and Tell” sessions for Moodle teaching units. The first session is in the calendar for 4pm (AEST), 30th August 2012. This session will be an online meeting hosted on Google+, which will allow presenters to share their computer screens with the other participants and will also be recorded and available for watching at a later date. If you would like to be part of the session and talk about the great things that have worked in your Moodle unit, please let me know at mitch.hughes@monash.edu.

MooTT (Moodle Teaching Tips) unit

Recent contributions to the MooTT unit include Dr Phillip Dawson’s guide to RSS feeds of journals and databases (see screenshot below) and Cameron Nichol’s review of offline quiz creation options (with handy downloadable resources).

![Screenshot of Dr Phillip Dawson’s guide to RSS feeds of journals and databases](http://moodle.vle.monash.edu/mod/glossary/view.php?id=204291&sortkey=CREATION&sortorder=desc&mode=date)

Don’t forget you can add you own Teaching Tips to share as well!
**Educational Design presentations**

Along with the continued training sessions for Moodle, the Educational Design team have been busy preparing for a number of events:

In late July, Mitch Hughes led a one day seminar on Blended Learning as part of the GCAP unit, HED5062 - Contemporary Learning Environments. Twelve lecturers enrolled in the unit attended the seminar and participated in discussions about how to define Blended Learning, an in-depth exploration of some of the features and functions of Monash’s Virtual Learning Environment and an exercise to apply Blended Learning principles to their own context.

Mitch will also be presenting at the GippsTAFE Academy in Traralgon on 27 September 2012. Mitch’s presentation will showcase Monash’s use of technology to facilitate best practice teaching approaches in a range of teaching units across the university. This presentation will be recorded and available on the VLE website following the event. For more information about the event, please see [http://offcampusconnection.monash.edu.au/assets/pdf/elearningforum270912.pdf](http://offcampusconnection.monash.edu.au/assets/pdf/elearningforum270912.pdf)

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**Community Reports**

**VLE Team (and Colleagues) a Hit at MoodleMoot 2012**

![MoodleMoot 2012 Logo](moodlemoot-au2012.png)
In the previous issue of the VLE newsletter we told you about how excited the VLE team was about the upcoming MoodleMoot AU 2012 conference. Well, it turns out that we had reason to be excited as Monash really lead the way this year! MoodleMoot AU brings together all Australian education institutions who are currently using Moodle or considering making the transition to Moodle. The theme of this year’s conference was ‘Riding the Wave’ and Monash certainly made waves on several accounts, not least because Monash staff made a total of seven presentations, more than any other Australian University or higher education institution attending the conference.

It wasn’t the quantity of presentations that had people at the conference talking about Monash, but rather the quality that was the real standout. The presentations were on a variety of topics ranging from the change management approach that guided the implementation of Moodle 2 at Monash to the steps Monash has taken to make Moodle more accessible for learners with disabilities. The innovative ways in which Monash is extending and using Moodle were very well received.

Monash’s Virtual Learning Environment Project team and their colleagues received forty ‘tweets’ acclaiming their work and quoting meaningful parts of their presentations. Upon the conclusion of the conference when attendees were asked to tweet their “highlight”, a delegate from another higher education institution said, “Best Session? All the sessions from the the VLE team at Monash Uni!”.
Monash Invited to do Case Study for Moodle HQ

The VLE team were pretty chuffed to be asked by Martin Dougiamas, Moodle founder and CEO, to do a Monash Moodle case study to be uploaded onto Moodle.com. It seems that there are quite a few people interested in why Monash chose Moodle and how we’ve gone about implementing it. The VLE team are busy writing the case study at the moment and will share it with you all in the next Newsletter. Stay tuned!

Feedback in Action

Development Requests Page Launched on VLE Website

On 7 August the Moodle 2 Development Requests page was published on the VLE website. This page reflects requests for changes to Moodle which have been categorised as ‘development requests’ as they require Moodle’s code to be changed. This list will reflect requests which have been made since Moodle was first introduced in Wave 1 (semester 2, 2011) and will include information regarding whether the feature request will be resolved with an upcoming upgrade or the introduction of a new VLE technology.
Check out our VLE Development Requests page.

Warm regards,
The VLE Project Team

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To subscribe to the VLE newsletter please complete our Google form.

The VLE welcomes contributions about your experience with Moodle and other VLE technologies to our newsletter. To contribute please email vle@monash.edu.