

How I have used the Moodle VLE to support AS/A2 Economics Courses

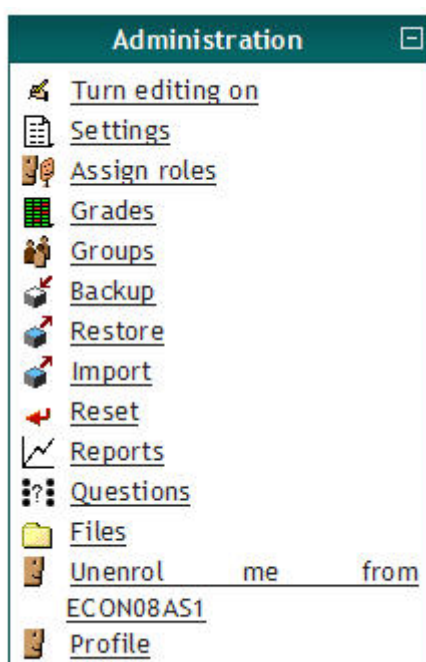
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A work in progress

These brief notes are designed to illustrate how I have tried to build the Moodle system into my teaching and assessment for both AS and A2 Economics students. Moodle itself is constantly evolving and the community forums available at <http://moodle.org/> often provide a rich source of ideas and help from fellow users.

Course management

At its heart Moodle is a **course management system** and as such I find it useful to upload my latest presentations, study notes, lecture notes and revision materials – this is easily done using the **files option** shown below

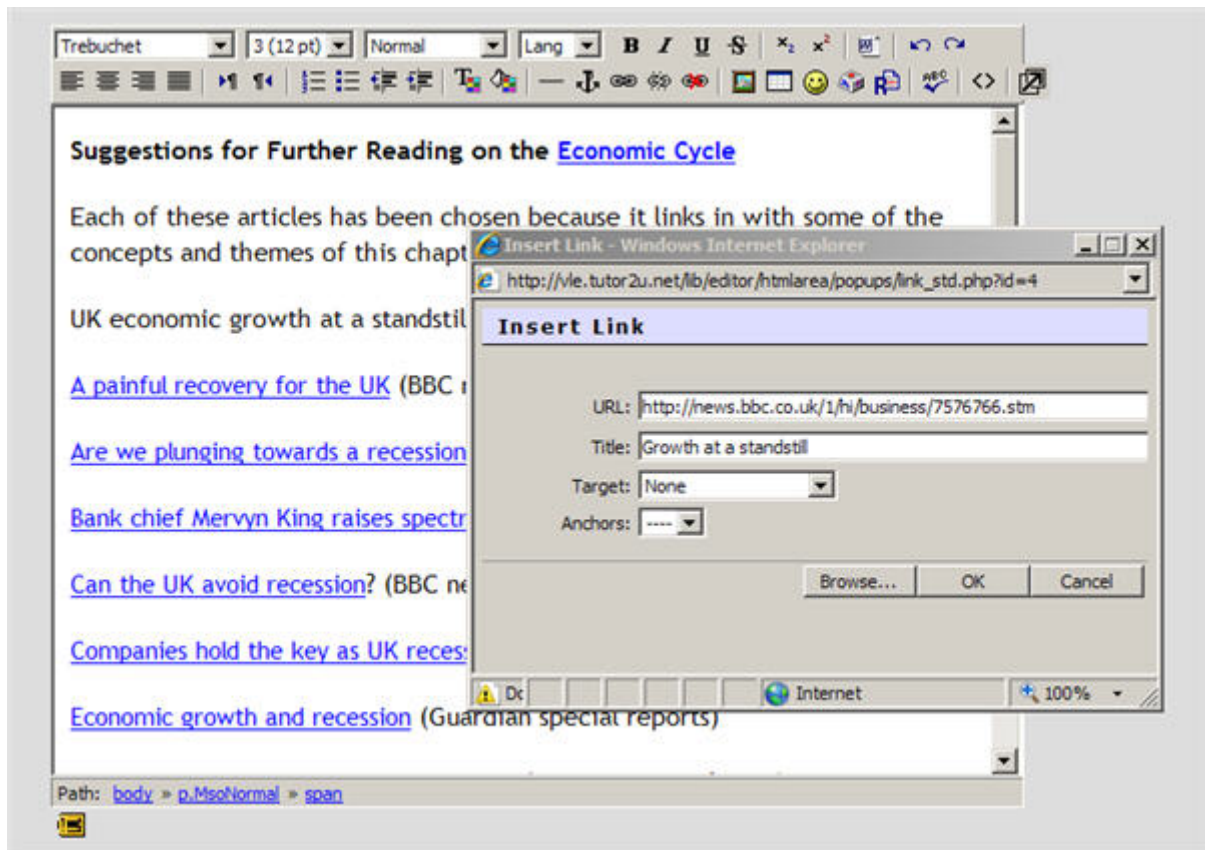


To upload files one simply clicks on **Files** and then create and manage files as you need them – for example:

Name	Size	Modified	Action
Micro_2008_Study_Notes	11.4MB	3 Sep 2008, 07:41 PM	Rename
Micro_Case_Studies	5.6MB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Charts	322KB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Diagrams	4KB	22 Mar 2007, 08:25 PM	Rename
Micro_Economics_In_The_News	279KB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Glossary_Images	34KB	29 Aug 2008, 04:23 PM	Rename
Micro_Housing_Market	1.1MB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Images	3.1MB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_PowerPoints	31MB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Revision_Advice	1.4MB	2 Dec 2007, 05:55 PM	Rename
Micro_Study_Notes	3.4MB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Tests	653KB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_Web_Pages	15KB	30 Aug 2008, 01:20 PM	Rename
Micro_Wikis	7KB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Micro_quizzes	6.5MB	24 Nov 2007, 04:44 PM	Rename
Revision_Focus_2008	947KB	13 Apr 2008, 05:47 PM	Rename

Clicking on any of the directories listed down the left hand side opens them up and there is a simple upload facility for files.

One of the options in Moodle is to **create a new web page** which sits in any individual topic that you choose. This makes it easy for example to add web links on current news stories (such as the one shown below) and then guide students to the resource (Moodle will then tell you if the students have actually accessed it!).



The same is true with extending and amending glossary entries – an easy process.

Search Search full text

Browse the glossary using this index

[Special](#) | [A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#)
[P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#) | [ALL](#)

G

GDP:
 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures the value of output produced within the domestic boundaries of the UK over a given time period. GDP includes the output of the many foreign owned firms that are located in the UK following the high levels of foreign direct investment in the UK economy over many years.

National Income for the UK Economy
 Gross Domestic Product at constant 2001 prices, source: Office of National Statistics

You can also set the glossary so that students can comment on individual entries and add their own in a wiki format,

Moodle as an assessment tool

Day in day out I use Moodle to grade student work and to give them the opportunity to take **online tests**. So the multiple choice tests can be created at will – there is a bank of

questions developed already and it is straightforward to generate new ones either manually or by importing tests created in software such as [Articulate](#) or [Hot Potato](#).

Section	Name	Quiz closes	Attempts
1	Positive and Normative Statements		Attempts: 1
	Introductory Economics	Sunday, 13 December 2009, 03:00 PM	Attempts: 3
2	PPF and The Economic Problem	Monday, 19 April 2010, 01:00 PM	Attempts: 2
3	Markets in Economics	Monday, 19 April 2010, 01:00 PM	Attempts: 2
4	Theory of Market Demand	Sunday, 13 December 2009, 03:00 PM	Attempts: 3
5	Theory of Market Supply	Sunday, 13 December 2009, 03:00 PM	Attempts: 2
6	Market Equilibrium Prices	Sunday, 13 December 2009, 06:00 AM	Attempts: 2

The advantages of the online testing is that one can go into individual student tests and see which questions they got wrong and send them feedback on individual questions and tests. The system is extremely flexible either in terms of the number of times students can take the tests, setting timed ones, setting tests for particular days only etc., password protected tests for specific groups of students.

Once a bank of questions is created, Moodle allows you to draw on these to create new tests either organised by topic or selected randomly e.g. for final revision towards the end of a course.

I use Moodle extensively for students to **upload their written work** to me for assessment. This is done as follows:

Price Volatility in Markets

In many markets there are big swings in prices from one time period to another. What causes price volatility and what are the consequences? This topic looks at the theory and some evidence and examples drawn from real world markets.



Study Notes → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Price Volatility in Markets](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Reading on price volatility](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

Recent Articles → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Blog articles on price volatility](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Food prices may stay high for ten years \(June 2008\)](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Thailand calls for a rice cartel \(May 2008\)](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[30 years of gold price highs and lows \(March 2008\)](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Income rollercoaster for UK farmers \(Feb 2008\)](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Wheat prices reach \\$9 for the first time \(Sep 2007\)](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

[Contemporary art prices rise by 55%](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

Take a Test! → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

Assignment → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

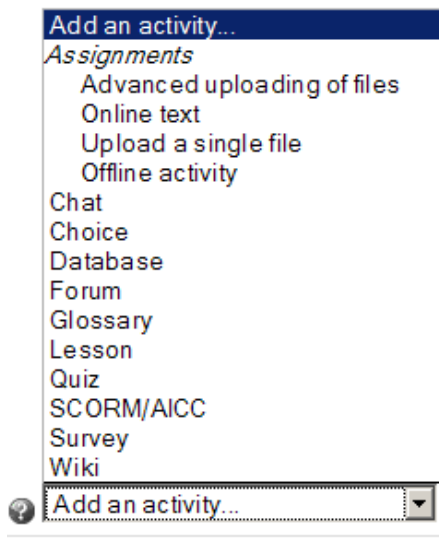
[Explaining price volatility](#) → ⌂ 📄 ✖ 🔄

Add a resource... Add an activity...

Say that I wanted to create an assignment on price volatility (see the image above)

The bottom right of the screen grab above shows two editing options – for new assignments I would click **add an activity**

This menu pops up and I can select an assignment



Advanced uploading of files is my default option – this allows students to upload both draft and finished work should they wish – so typically a student might upload an essay or other assignment (up to a max of 2mb I think) – and I can then tell who has completed their assignment and mark it when I am ready.

So my student has now uploaded their file - I go into the system and open up the file

Grading and feedback

Separate groups: Eton KBV1		First name : All A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z				
		Surname : All A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z				
<input type="checkbox"/> First name / Surname	<input type="checkbox"/> Grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Comment	<input type="checkbox"/> Last modified (Student)	<input type="checkbox"/> Last modified (Teacher)	<input type="checkbox"/> Status	
Rory Brown	No grade				Grade	
Henry Charrington	No grade				Grade	
Robert Cobbold	No grade				Grade	
Michael Evans	No grade				Grade	
Anthony Garland	No grade				Grade	

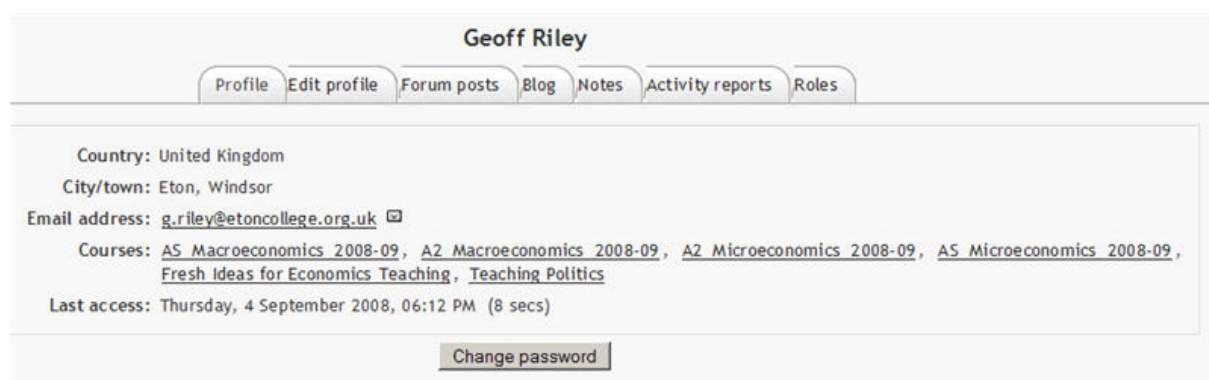
This grading screen comes up and I simply select the student, give a grade and provide written feedback. This can of course be changed if needed – the student gets an email telling them that the work has been marked and graded. In my experience they very quickly head back to the VLE for the written feedback – and one can be creative here e.g. in copying and pasting in links to good web articles that might be used for extension reading.

Everything is saved of course, the marks are sent to a database for each teaching group – so this section of the VLE also becomes your **digital mark book**.

Developing Moodle as a learning resource

I feel that Moodle as a course management system and assessment tool covers most of my basic needs. I would like to try more **collaborative work** with students this year and several of the Moodle options allow this. For example:

1. Using **forums** for individual topics – for example students might submit suggestions for opening and closing parts of essay questions in sessions designed to improve exam technique.
2. Journalistic exercises whereby student has to research an article and then submit to a section of the VLE where reports / features can be stored and then edited by other students. This worked well with a **timed research** and writing piece on sovereign wealth funds last year
3. Moodle really came into its own in May and June with **revision chat-rooms** (all commentaries can be saved, a powerful incentive for students to take this seriously!) – we held **Revision Live sessions** on Moodle on successive nights – one hour for AS and one hour for A2 where upwards of 40 students were in at various points asking questions and getting feedback
4. We will use the **online testing** within Moodle for part of our internal exams this year
5. Moodle is compatible with **flash based digital resources** and storing audio-visual – again a useful way of organising all kinds of resources for students to use.
6. Students can easily generate their own **learning logs** using the blogging software



I find the system easy to manage – as befits open-source software the recent improvements to Moodle are the result of a huge amount of innovative work by dedicated volunteers. One useful tip is that Moodle seems to work better using Mozilla's **Firefox** browser rather than the latest version of Internet Explorer. I have certainly found that to be the case when bringing images into the glossaries and work assignments. The VLE works more quickly when Firefox is doing its work!

No doubt there are proprietary systems with more bells and whistles. But I am a Moodle convert!

Geoff