



A Student Guide to using Moodle



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to assist you in the early stages of using Moodle, particularly when accessing your online course for the first time.

What is Moodle?

Moodle is a web-based learning environment that allows you to access your course materials online and make use of a number of useful built-in facilities to enhance your learning experience.

It brings the dynamics of a classroom environment to the Internet. It allows teachers and students to interact in a 'virtual classroom' in much the same way as in a standard classroom. The difference is that it can be done from any place in the world, at any time and with the resources of the Internet as support.

Moodle courses can be developed as fully interactive classrooms where you may be involved in online group discussions or collaborative group work. Other courses may not involve a lot of online discussion and course material may be presented as a structured set of files (such as Word documents and PowerPoint presentations). It depends on the learning material, your tutor, and the best way to deliver the course.

Some of the advantages of Moodle to support your education at the University of Essex include:

- Increased access to important course information
- Additional learning support where materials and tools are available
- Undertaking aspects of studying anytime, almost anywhere.

To make the most effective use of this system:

- Ensure you know how Moodle is to be used within a specific course
- Exploit the opportunities provided (follow links to readings, participate in discussion forums, complete quizzes, etc.)
- See Moodle as additional support, not a failsafe to missing classes
- Don't leave online work to the last minute.

With each module studied, Moodle will become a more familiar and welcoming learning environment. Eventually, Moodle will simply become another tool used to support learning. As with any classroom, it is a changing environment - expect each module to apply different tools and techniques. Join in, ask questions, and participate as you would in any classroom.

Important: as the University of Essex has only started using Moodle from September 2007 not all courses will be available on Moodle. Your tutor should inform you if he/she is using Moodle to support your learning. If in doubt, please check with your tutor or your course administrator.

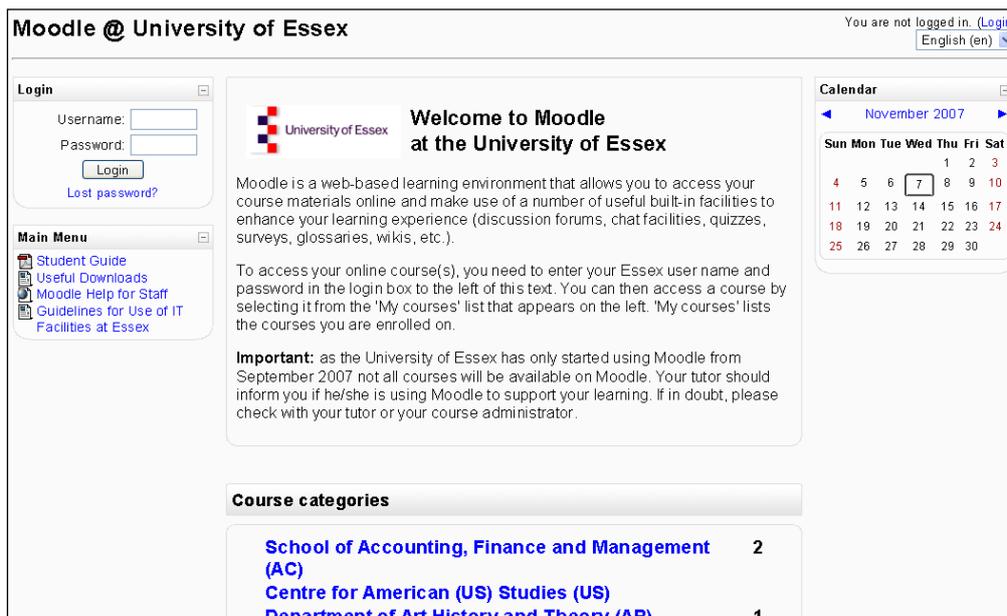
How do I access Moodle?

You can access Moodle through a web browser (such as Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox) on any internet-connected computer. This means that you can access Moodle from home as easily as you can from the University of Essex campus.

(1) To access Moodle, open a web browser window and type in the following web address:

<http://moodle.essex.ac.uk/>¹

(2) You should now see the Moodle home page (as shown below).



(3) On the left-hand side of the screen, you should see a login box. Type your University username and password into the appropriate textboxes and then click on the "login" button.



Note: You do not need to prefix your username with "campus".

¹ It is a good idea to bookmark the Moodle web link so you can return to it at a later time. To save the link, click onto Favourites (in Internet Explorer) or Bookmarks (in Netscape) at the top of the screen. Click Add and then OK. To find the site again simply click onto Favourites/ Bookmarks and scroll down until you find your saved link.

What will I find in Moodle?

After logging in, you should see your name at the top of the screen and have access to all the courses that you are enrolled in.



You will see a list of courses that you have access to, on the left-hand side of the screen (My courses).

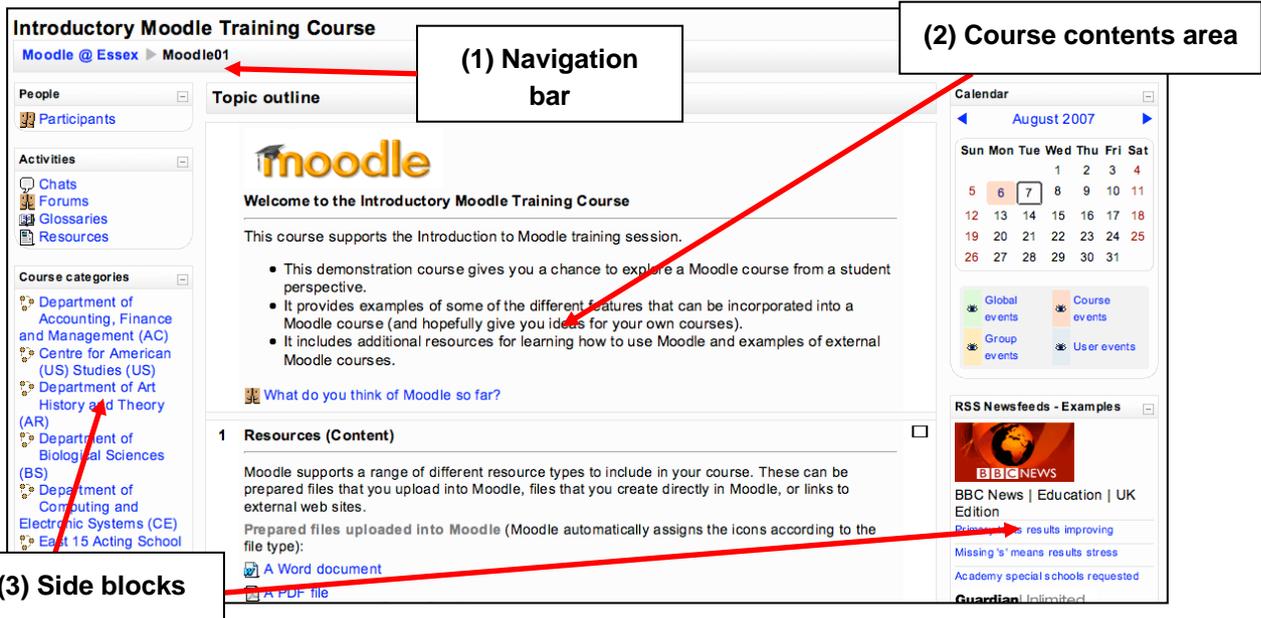
You will see your name at the very top of the right-hand side of the screen.

Note: if you do not see any courses listed under the “My courses” heading, it is likely that your tutor has not yet created a course in Moodle.

Accessing a course

To access a course in Moodle, just click on the name of the course in the “My courses” list. This should take you to the home page of the course.

Each course in Moodle contains similar items, but may look completely different depending on how your tutor has set up the course and what resources the course contains. The example below shows what a typical Moodle course looks like:



The main parts of the homepage of a course

(1) The navigation bar – each Moodle page has a horizontal navigation bar at the top. The navigation bar tells you where you are in the course and it allows you to return to the course page (if you click the short name for the course) at any time.

(For more details, see the section on “How do I navigate a Moodle course?” on page 9).

(2) Course contents area – this is located in the middle of the screen and consists of course sections. The first section usually has general information about the course. The remaining sections contain course resources (such as text documents, PowerPoint slides, HTML pages, images, etc) and activities (such as forums, quizzes, etc).

The screenshot shows a Moodle course page titled 'Topic outline'. It features the Moodle logo and a welcome message: 'Welcome to the Introductory Moodle Training Course'. Below this, there is a paragraph of text and a bulleted list of course details. A red box labeled 'Course sections' has two red arrows pointing to the top and bottom of the content area.

(a) Resources are meant to be perused or read without further interaction. The icon by the side of the resource title indicates what type of file it is. You simply click on the title (or icon) of a resource and, depending on the file type, it will either open directly in the web browser, in a separate browser window, or you may be given the option to download the file directly to your computer.

You will need to have the relevant software application installed on your computer to access the files.

The resources in a course can include:

	Web pages		Word documents
	PowerPoint slides		Excel spreadsheets
	PDF files		Image files
	Sound files		Flash files (e.g. animations)
	Video clips		Zipped files

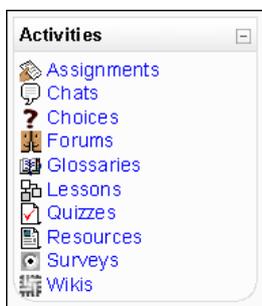
You may also see the **Directory resource** (). This is a folder of files offered directly to

the students by the teacher, rather than displaying them separately. You can open or download the files, but you cannot upload your own files.

(b) Your tutor may include a number of **activities** in your course. The most common Moodle activities include:

	Forum – this is like a bulletin board in that it allows users to post messages and respond to each other’s contributions.		Chat - allows for real time text exchanges between users.
	Glossary - can be used to list difficult terms related to the subject of a course and provide definitions/ explanations.		Wiki - a group work tool that allows students to work with the teacher or with classmates on the creation of documents, such as project reports or papers.
	Choice - used for simple polls consisting of a question with multiple answers. No grade or feedback is given.		Quiz - on-line tests, which can consist of various question types.
	Lesson - this presents learning material (e.g. text, pictures or sound/video) which is linked to a question. If you answer the question correctly you move on to the next part. If you answer incorrectly, you are returned to the lesson material or to a page with additional information.		Survey - a means of getting statistical feedback about the way Moodle courses are received and experienced by students.

(3) Side blocks – most Moodle course pages have a left and right column either side of the course contents area. These contain small boxes called **blocks**. These can give you additional information relating to your course or allow you to navigate to different parts of the course. You will see different blocks depending on what your tutor has set up in your course. Examples include:



The **Activities block** lists and allows navigation between the different activities available in your course



The **People block** contains a link to the list of course participants



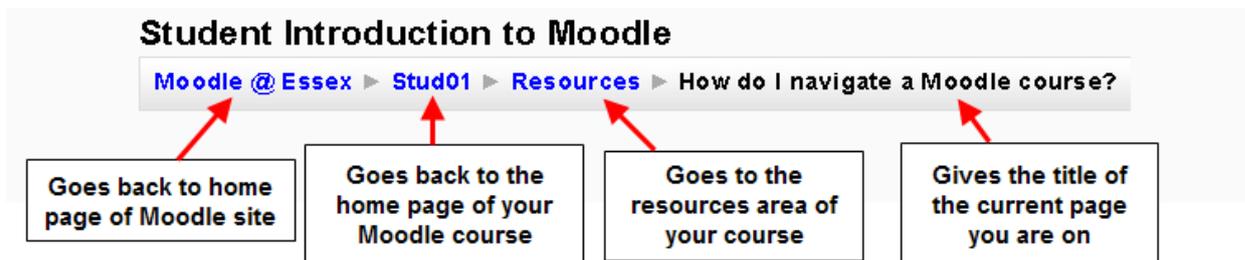
The **Calendar block** can be used to signal forthcoming events at course level or by students to remind themselves of course deadlines.

How do I navigate a Moodle course?

There are two main ways to move around a Moodle course.

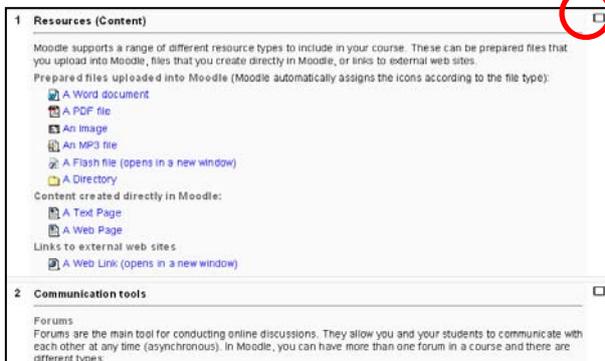
Navigation bar

You can navigate using the **navigation bar** that is positioned below the course title. This not only shows your location in the course, but you can click on the links to return to different parts of the course.



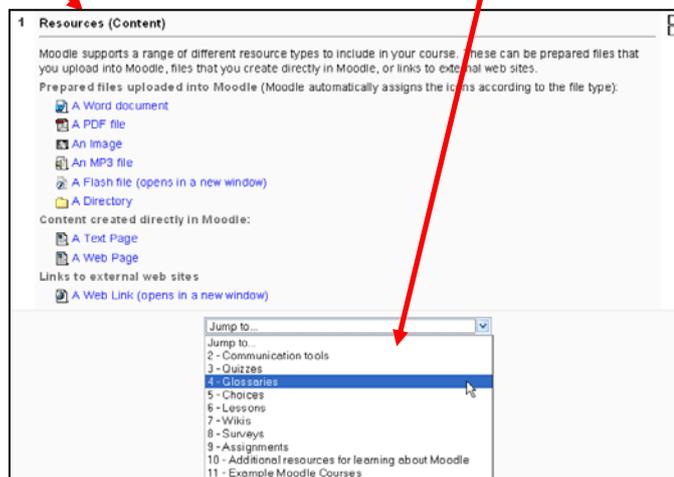
Jump to... menu

If your course contains a lot of topics, it can be tiresome having to scroll up and down the page. You can collapse all of the topics by clicking on the square box (☐) to the right of the topic heading.

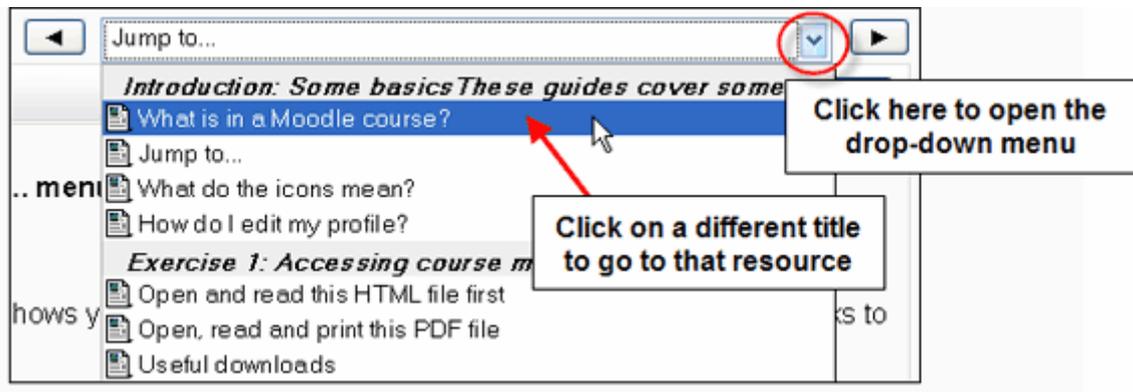


You can then use the "Jump to" drop-down menu to navigate to different sections of the homepage.

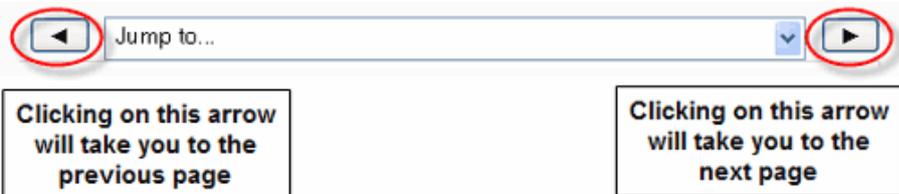
To return to the default view (i.e. restore all the courses sections), click on the double square icon (☐) to the right of the current topic heading.



On some pages in Moodle, you will see a **jump to...** menu that on the top right hand side of the screen. Just click on the small downward arrow next to the title of the current resource and then click on a title from the drop-down menu.



The arrow buttons on either side of the jump to... menu allow to you go to the next or previous resource in the course.



It is possible to navigate between pages by using the navigation buttons on your web browser. **This is not recommended** - you will obtain more consistent results using the navigation options within Moodle.

How do I edit my profile in Moodle?

Once you have logged into Moodle, you can access your profile from almost anywhere, by clicking on the link to your name at the top of the screen.

You are logged in as [Amanda Hayler](#) (Logout)

When you click on your name, you are presented with your user profile summary (which other users can see). This screen includes a number of options, one of which includes allowing you to change information about yourself.

Amanda Hayler
Profile Edit profile

I work as a learning technologist at the University of Essex

City/town: Chelmsford
Last access: Friday, 31 August 2007 00:00 PM (UTC)

Click on the "Edit profile" tab.

In the screen that appears, you can make a number of changes:

Amanda Hayler
Profile Edit profile

Required

First name: Amanda
Surname: Hayler
Email address: amanda@essex.ac.uk
Email display: Allow only other course members to see my email address
Email activated: This email address is enabled
City/town*: Chelmsford
Select a country*: United Kingdom
Timezone: Server's local time
Preferred language: English (en)
Description* ?

It is recommended that you allow other course members to see your email address.

If you disable your email address, you will not receive forum messages sent by your tutor or other students on your course.

Type the city/town that you live or work in.

Type a description about yourself in the Description text area. For obvious reasons it is not a good idea to include personal details such as your home address and telephone numbers.

The Description text area consists of a HTML editor, which has a toolbar along the top that uses similar icons to those you see in most word processing or web editor programs. If you hover over each of the icons with the cursor, you will see a pop-up that tells you the command. You don't need to know HTML code to use the editor – simply type in the text area and use the formatting tools to customise it.

Note: the HTML editor only works in Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox browsers. If you use another browser, a simpler editor will be available to you.

In the next part of the “Edit profile” screen, you can upload a photo or picture that represents you. This image will appear next to your posting in the forums.

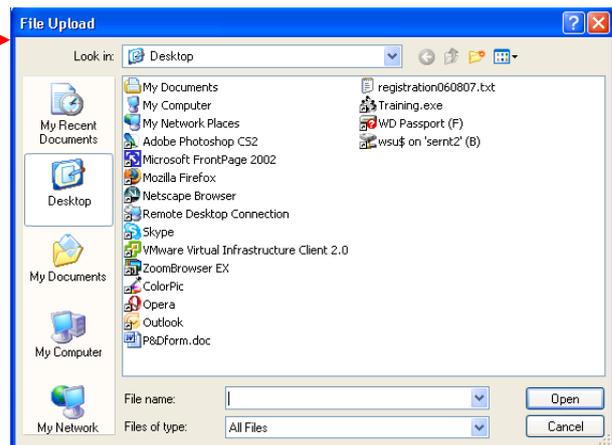
To add an image:



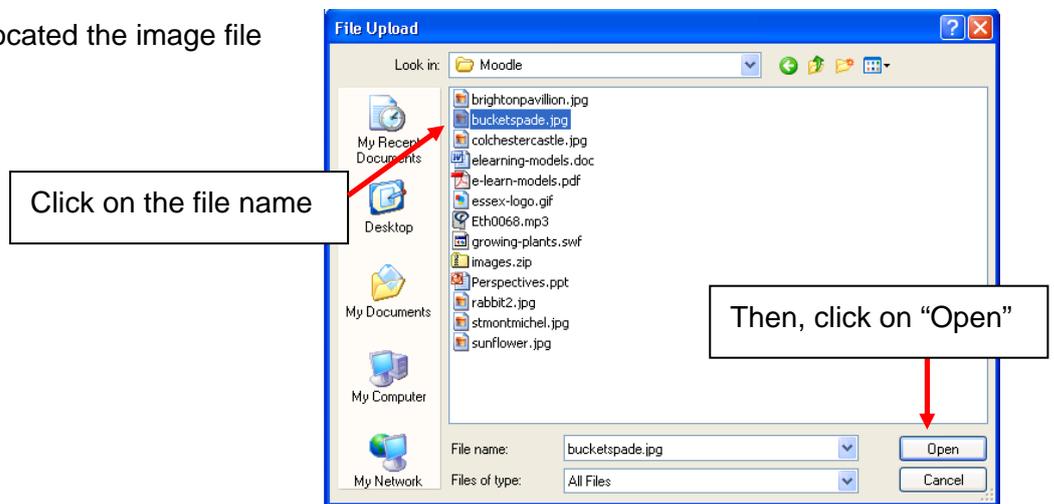
A pop-up window will appear.

Use this window to navigate to the image file that you wish to use. This could be on your M: drive, on a memory stick, your local hard drive, etc. Moodle will accept JPG, GIF and PNG image files.

Make sure the image file you choose is not larger than the maximum size listed (or it will not upload)



When you have located the image file you want to use:



The pop-up window will close.



IMPORTANT: please make sure that any picture you upload is not copyrighted, rude or offensive as it can be seen by all users of Moodle.

When you have finished making changes to your profile, click on “Update profile” at the bottom of the screen.

This will return you to your profile summary page. You should now see the changes you have made, but if you can't, just use the “Reload/Refresh” button in your web browser.

Amanda Hayler

[Profile](#) [Edit profile](#)



I work as a learning technologist at the University of Essex

City/town: Chelmsford

Last access: Friday, 31 August 2007, 03:03 PM (10 secs)

[Change password](#)

[Messages](#)

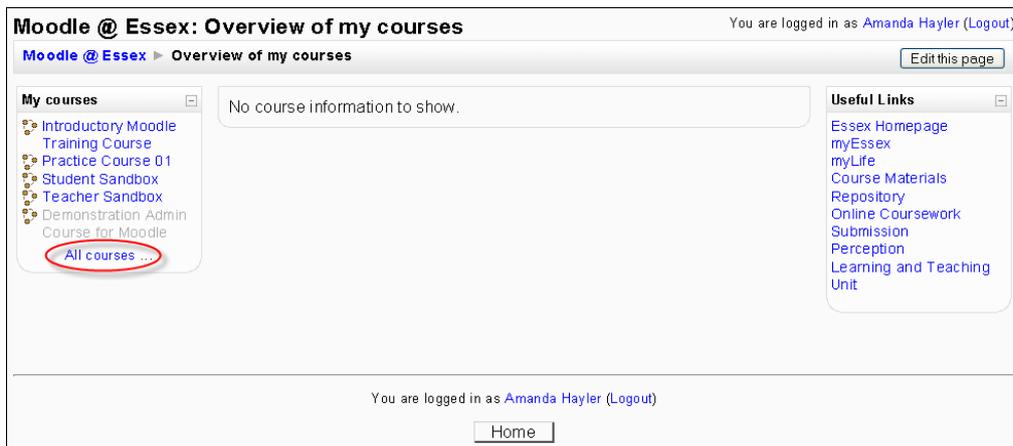
Please note: if you click on the “Change password” button this will take you to the University’s “online password change form”. Changing your password here will affect all of your logins for the University (not just your Moodle login).

Student Introduction to Moodle

You can self-enrol on the introductory Moodle course that has been set up to help you become familiar with using the Moodle learning environment and cover some of the tools that you may use in your taught courses.

To self-enrol on the course, make sure you are logged into Moodle.

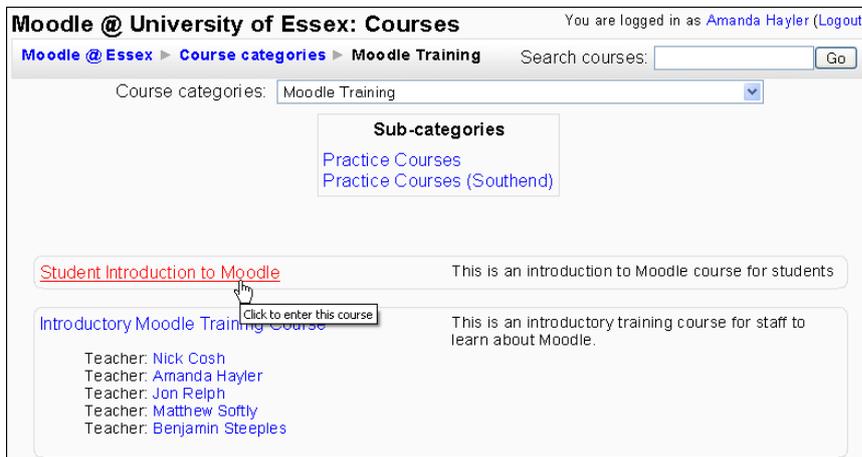
On the home page of the Moodle site, click on the “All courses” link in the “My courses” block.



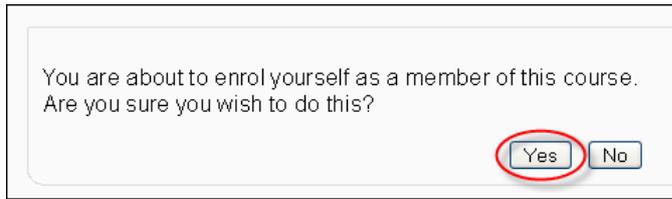
You should now see the “Course categories” list. Scroll down until you see the title “Moodle Training”. Click on the link.

Staff Development	
Health and Safety at Work	7
Step Forwards	
Epigeum	7
Chimera	1
Moodle Training	2
Practice Courses	60
Practice Courses (Southend)	1
Sandboxes	4
Miscellaneous	2

On the next screen, you will see a link to the “Student Introduction to Moodle” course. Click on the link to the course.



You will be asked to confirm that you want to enrol on the course, click “Yes”.



You should now see the home page of the course.

Please note: you only need to self-enrol the one time. When you log into Moodle again, the “Student Introduction to Moodle” course should be listed in your “My courses” block.

Troubleshooting

“I can’t log into Moodle”

Do you know your University of Essex username and password?

Yes

Try logging in again. Check that you are entering your username and password correctly. The default login is on your Computing Service registration card. *Remember, you do not need to add “campus\” to the front of your username.*

If you still can’t log in...

Have you recently enrolled with the University?

Yes

You may have to wait 24 hours to log into the Moodle site. Try logging in the next day.

No

Can you log into other Essex IT services such as “myEssex”?

Yes

Contact the Learning Technology Team: ltt@essex.ac.uk
Please provide your full name, your username, the name and code of the course you are attempting to access, and where you are attempting to access Moodle (e.g. at the University or away from the University).

No

Contact the Help Desk: helpdesk@essex.ac.uk

No

Do you have a Computing Service registration card?

Yes

Your default University username and password are on this card. Use these to log into Moodle.

No

You may not be registered as a student yet. **Contact your course administrator.**

Note: your tutor may have set up a guest login that you can use to access Moodle for a temporary period of time. Please contact your tutor to see if this is enabled for your course.

“I can't open or download a file in Moodle”

(1) If you are using a University computer, please seek advice from a member of staff.

(2) If you are using a computer away from the University, it is possible that:

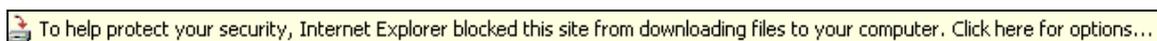
(a) Your computer does not have the correct software to read that particular type of file.

- On the home page of the Moodle site, there is a 'useful downloads' link that gives you access to free downloads that will enable you to view a variety of content files outside of your browser.

or

(b) Your computer is running a pop-up blocker that is blocking you from downloading/opening files.

- If you are using Internet Explorer, you may see a yellow bar below your Internet Explorer toolbar (as below)



Click on the yellow bar and select “allow content”.

Alternatively, you can add the web address of the Moodle site to your trusted sites in Internet Explorer. **Only do this if you are comfortable altering settings on your computer.**

(i) To add the Moodle site to your trusted sites in Internet Explorer, open Internet Explorer, click on “Tools” and then “Internet Options”.

(ii) Click on the “Security Tab”. Click on the button “Sites” (next to “Trusted Sites”).

(iii) If necessary, remove the tick from the “Require server verification (https:) for all sites in this zone”.

(iv) In “Add this web site to the zone:” text box type in: <http://moodle.essex.ac.uk>

(v) Click on “Add”, then click OK, and OK again to exit the options.

- For advice on disabling other pop-up blockers, please refer to this web site: **Guide to disabling pop-up blockers:** <http://chat.ohiolink.edu/popups.html>

Please note: the University does not endorse any of the web sites mentioned in this guide. It also cannot be held responsible for damage caused to your computer by installing software or changing your computer settings.