



An Introductory User Guide for Students



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1 Introduction

When writing this manual we assume that you have at least a basic knowledge of using a computer including input devices like a mouse and keyboard. In addition, it is assumed that you are familiar with your web browser and navigating between pages on the internet.

In this guide you will be introduced to the basics of using Moodle as part of your studies. The most appropriate use of this manual is to have it to hand whilst you use Moodle for the first time. An online version of this guide is available on your Moodle Home page in case you wish to refer to it later in electronic format.

How to best use this guide is up to you. It has been written so that you can either work through it in a linear way or jump to any specific sections as you wish.

1.1 What is Moodle?

Moodle is one of a number of new developing Virtual Learning Environments (VLE). Simply, VLEs are software that is designed to add to traditional learning methods in order to enhance the learning experience of their users. Moodle runs as an interactive website with a number of features and activities designed to engage learners and promote collaborative, student-centered learning.

1.2 Getting Started

Our experiences of Moodle tell us that it is a pretty intuitive tool to use. How easy *you* find it will depend on your own background. That said, a general rule of “have a go and see what happens” can be applied in most cases.

On the Moodle *Home* page you can find our *Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ*. These should help with any difficulties you encounter after working through this user guide. They are found in the *Main Menu* to the top-left of the page.

This document will guide you through:

- how to edit your profile
- page layout including blocks
- basic navigation around the site and your courses
- activities and resources

First of all though, let's look at the most basic - logging on.

2 Logging In.

Moodle is basically a web site like any other and is therefore available wherever there is an internet connection. To get to the Moodle website open your web browser and go to:

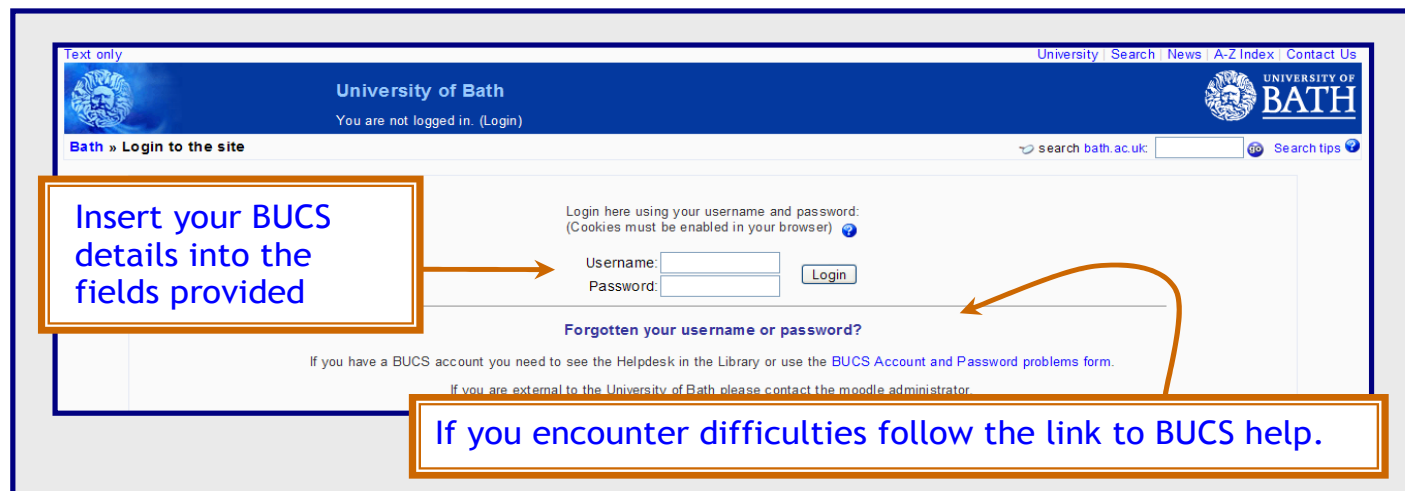


Fig.1: Logging in.

<http://moodle.bath.ac.uk/moodle5> . This will take you to the login page (Figure 1).

You should be able to log in using your *BUCS username and password*. If you encounter any problems, contact the BUCS helpdesk in the library or follow the link on the Moodle login page.

Once you have logged in you will be taken to your *Home* page (Figure 2). This is personalised for each student and will contain some *blocks* and a list of your courses. We will refer to blocks later.

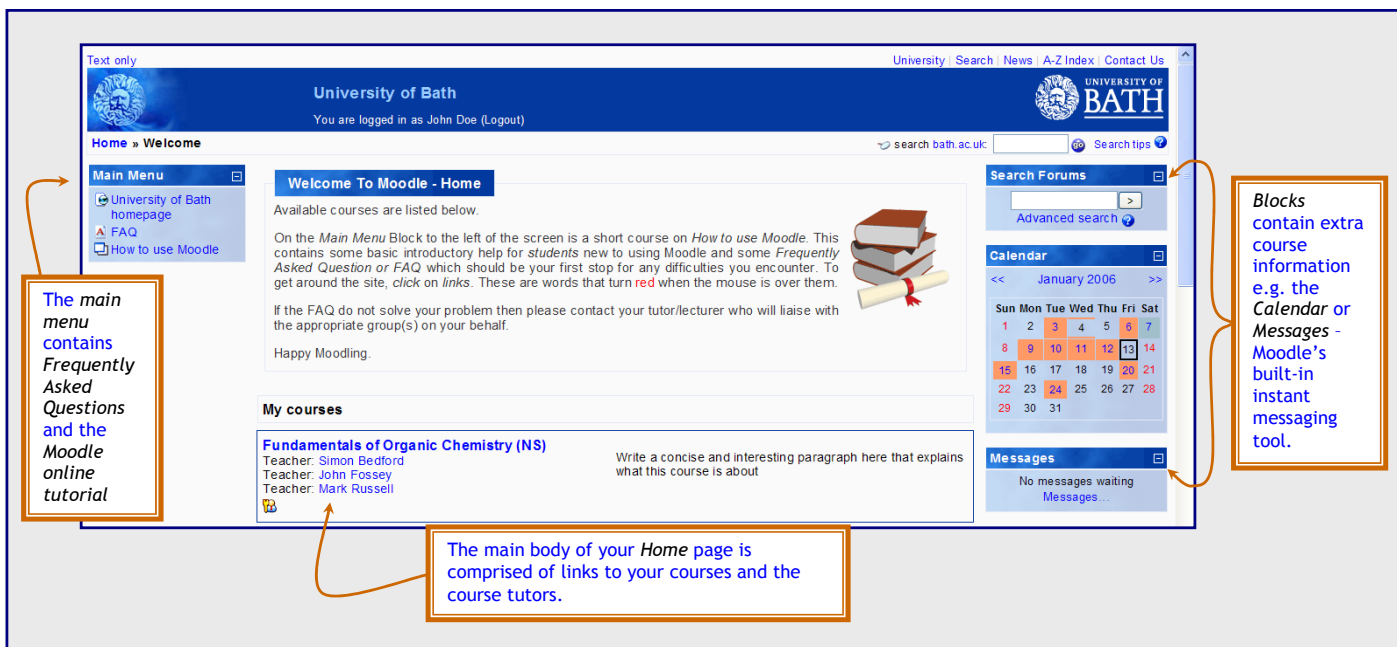


Fig.2: Home Page

Once you have logged in we strongly recommend that you first *Edit your profile*.

3 Editing Your Profile

Now that you are logged on to Moodle we would advise that you go straight to *Edit your profile*. Editing your profile will allow you to become familiar with the options available to you in order to personalise your environment.

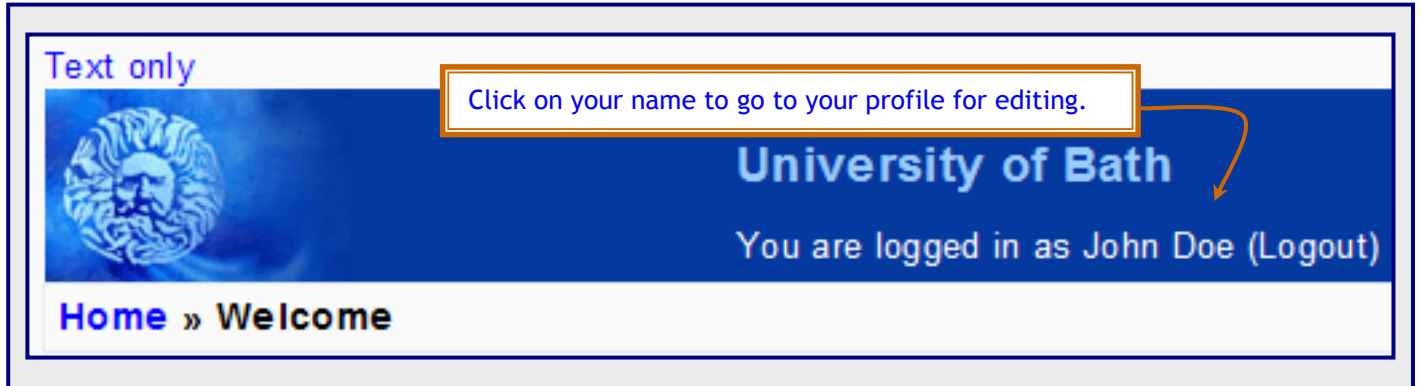


Fig.3: Your name

To edit your profile from your Home page, click on your name on the banner at the top of the page. (Figure.3)

From here you will be taken to your profile page. Select *Edit Profile* from the middle tab under your name. You will now see a page containing a series of options. We will go through those options and give advice on selections.

Whilst you may alter any of the setting most should be left as they are in order to ensure that Moodle functions for you at its best. Figure 4 shows the fields that you could change and a little explanation.

| Field | Setting and explanation |
|-------------------|---|
| Email address | You can use any real email address but to be sure you keep up with course developments it should be the one that you check frequently |
| Email display | It is up to you which of these options you select but our advice is to keep in mind that the purpose of Moodle is collaboration and communication. |
| Email digest type | You should change this to <i>complete</i> to ensure that you receive your course email. |
| Description | This field is mandatory but the information you include could be anything. A good example would be the course you are reading. |
| New picture | When inserting a picture it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate copyright clearance. To insert a picture of yourself click the browse button and search your computer for a picture. Make sure that the file is not larger than the maximum size listed. The image file will be cropped to a square and resized down to 100 x 100 pixels. |

Fig.4: Editing Your Profile

4 Page Layout and Blocks

The *Course* page you see as a student has *Blocks* on both sides and the main content through the middle. Figure 5 highlights some of the features. There are a number of blocks available for your tutor to include or leave out as they see appropriate. Blocks can also be customised (e.g. moved to a different location by your tutor). This means that your courses will all appear slightly different to each other but you should soon become familiar with each.

There are two ways to access your course resources and activities. The first is through the main course content in the middle of the page. Clicking on these links will take you directly to the activity or resource. The second is to use the activities block. Here the links take you to a list of activities/resources organised in their categories e.g. all the forums or all the quizzes. You can then select one. Once you have opened an activity/resource, where appropriate further instructions should be given. For example when you enter a forum you will be given the option to



Fig.5

add a new discussion or click on an existing discussion to read postings. It is important to remember that you cannot break anything in Moodle so if you have any doubts just click and see what happens. N.B. you may wish to exercise caution if you are taking part in assessed work.

The *calendar* is one of the more interactive blocks. It allows you to see events created by your course tutors and peers but it also allows you to add your own entries. This means it can be used as a personal organiser that has the benefit of being accessible anywhere you can get online.

The screenshot shows the Moodle calendar interface with several annotations:

- Top Annotation:** "To add an entry to the Calendar, click on the month/year" - points to the "January 2006" header.
- Left Annotation:** "Holding the mouse over an event will show event information" - points to a date (15) in the calendar grid.
- Bottom-Left Annotation:** "Clicking on the links at the bottom shows and hides those events" - points to the event management links at the bottom of the calendar.
- Right Annotation:** "This will take you into the calendar." - points to the "New Event" button.
- Bottom-Right Annotation:** "Add your new event" - points to the "New Event" button.

The calendar displays a detailed month view for January 2006, showing events such as "Association of Pharmacists Annual Conference" and "Start of submissions for Workshop Test". It also includes a legend for event types: Global events (green), Group events (yellow), Course events (orange), and User events (blue).

Fig.6: The Calendar

5 Navigation

Once you are in your Moodle courses we think it is best not to use your browser’s navigation buttons (the forwards and backwards arrows) as they may get you lost. A better way would be to use the navigation tools that are built into Moodle. These are the *Breadcrumbs* and the *Jump to* menu (shown in Figure 7).

The breadcrumbs are a trail showing the pages you have passed through to get to your current location. They are shown in the top left corner of the page and clicking on them will take you to that point in the course. Note that on the example below there is a *Resources* link. This shows that the page you are in at the moment is a resource and clicking on the link will take you to a list of all resources for your course. The same principle applies with each of the activity types, so if you were in a *quiz* you would have a link to a list of all quizzes in your course.

The Jump to menu is a simple way of getting to any point in the course. Click on the down arrow next to Jump to, to open the drop-down menu. From here you will see the full list of all activities and resources in your course. Clicking on them will take you to that page. Alternatively you can use the left and right arrows to move one step backwards and forwards through the course.

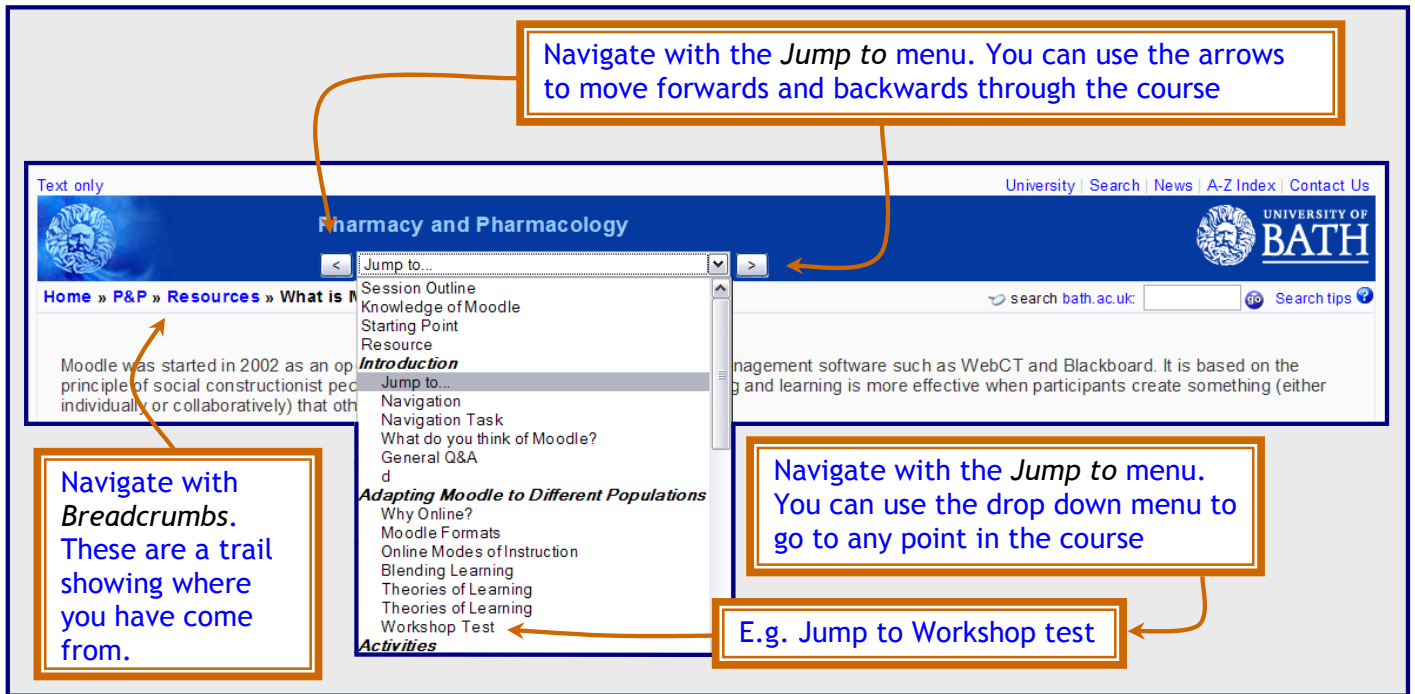
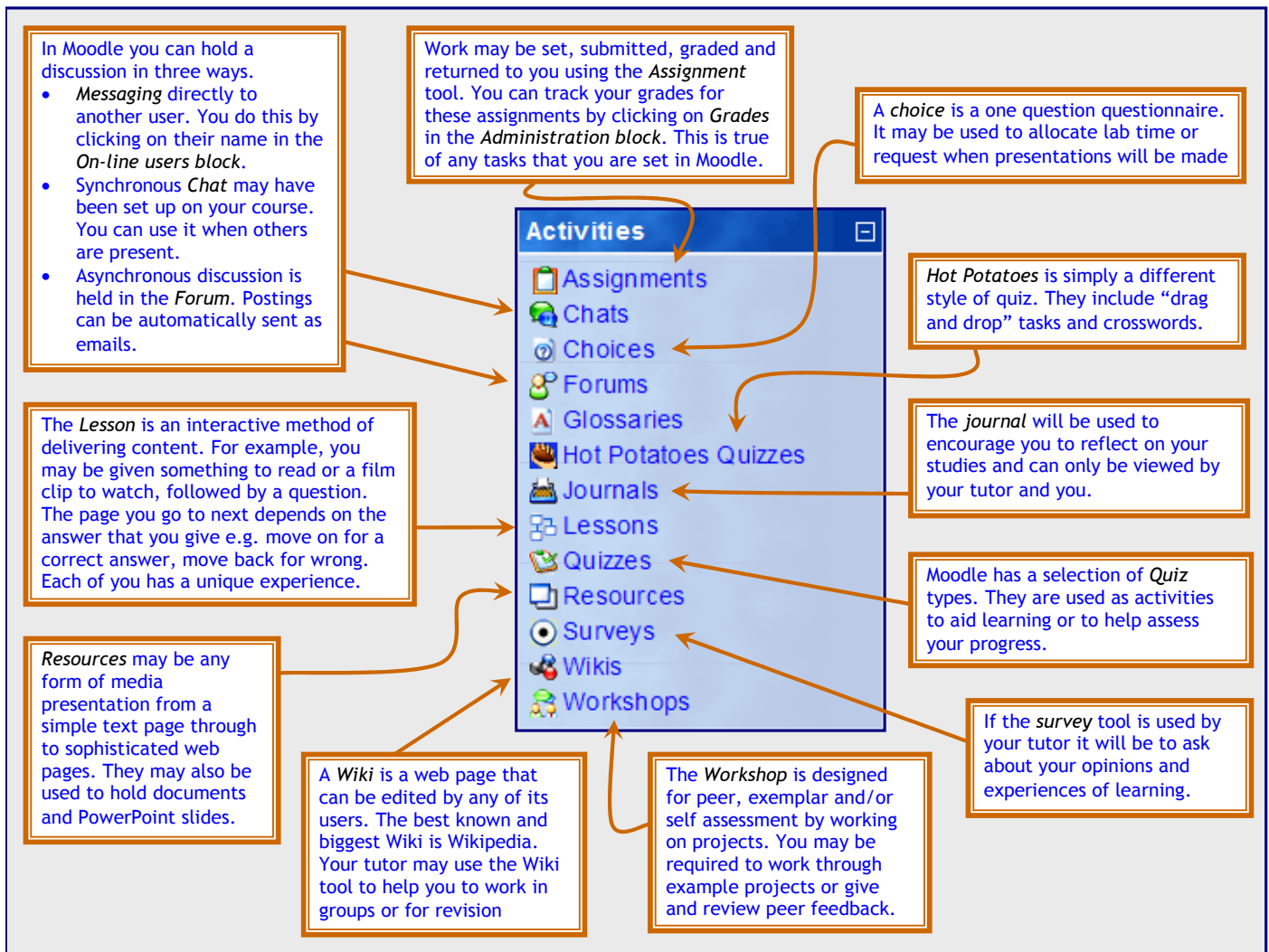


Fig.7: Navigation

6 Moodle Activities

Moodle offers a large variety of activities that are designed to help your learning. When your tutors create activities they will name them. This means that they will *not* appear as simply *Assignment* or *Wiki* etc on the course page. Figure 7 has several examples of this in the drop down menu where activities include “*What do you think of Moodle?*” and “*Theories of Learning*” However, an activity’s icon will always remain the same. This will help you to determine which activity you are about to use.

Figure.8 (below) shows the activities block with a brief description of each activity. This is to help you familiarise yourself with the activities your course tutor may have included in your course and the associated icons.



The diagram shows a central 'Activities' block with a list of activity types. Callout boxes provide detailed descriptions for several of these activities:

- Forums:** In Moodle you can hold a discussion in three ways.
 - *Messaging* directly to another user. You do this by clicking on their name in the *On-line users* block.
 - Synchronous *Chat* may have been set up on your course. You can use it when others are present.
 - Asynchronous discussion is held in the *Forum*. Postings can be automatically sent as emails.
- Assignments:** Work may be set, submitted, graded and returned to you using the *Assignment* tool. You can track your grades for these assignments by clicking on *Grades* in the *Administration* block. This is true of any tasks that you are set in Moodle.
- Choices:** A *choice* is a one question questionnaire. It may be used to allocate lab time or request when presentations will be made.
- Hot Potatoes Quizzes:** *Hot Potatoes* is simply a different style of quiz. They include “drag and drop” tasks and crosswords.
- Lessons:** The *Lesson* is an interactive method of delivering content. For example, you may be given something to read or a film clip to watch, followed by a question. The page you go to next depends on the answer that you give e.g. move on for a correct answer, move back for wrong. Each of you has a unique experience.
- Journals:** The *journal* will be used to encourage you to reflect on your studies and can only be viewed by your tutor and you.
- Quizzes:** Moodle has a selection of *Quiz* types. They are used as activities to aid learning or to help assess your progress.
- Resources:** *Resources* may be any form of media presentation from a simple text page through to sophisticated web pages. They may also be used to hold documents and PowerPoint slides.
- Wikis:** A *Wiki* is a web page that can be edited by any of its users. The best known and biggest Wiki is Wikipedia. Your tutor may use the Wiki tool to help you to work in groups or for revision.
- Workshops:** The *Workshop* is designed for peer, exemplar and/or self assessment by working on projects. You may be required to work through example projects or give and review peer feedback.
- Surveys:** If the *survey* tool is used by your tutor it will be to ask about your opinions and experiences of learning.

Fig.8: Activities and Resources