



BLE eAssessment & Feedback Technical Development

Coursework Module for Moodle

Available from: https://github.com/ULCC/open-mod_coursework

Contact: Alistair Spark, VLE Manager, RVC aspark@rvc.ac.uk

Platform:

Moodle plugin

Summary/purpose:

The purpose of the Coursework module, specifically developed in the context of the UK higher education market, is to improve Moodle's function for summative coursework assignments.

This plugin, which is an alternative to the Moodle Assignment tool, supports a variety of marking workflows that are not supported by other tools. It allows for double-blind marking, sample marking and single marking with moderation, which are the three key workflows for marking practice in the UK HE sector but also^[N1] many more. The allocation of students or groups to specific markers can be arranged either manually or automatically. It integrates with the Plagiarism API (for Turnitin) and the Moodle Advanced Grading API (to make use of Moodle Scales and Rubrics). It also supports assignments with personal deadlines, no deadlines and the regular ones where everyone has the same deadline. In addition, it has the ability to provide individual students with an extension.

Coursework has been piloted and subsequently rolled out at the RVC, which developed it in partnership with the University of London Computer Centre (ULCC), the University of Plymouth and LSHTM. It was a major evolution of the earlier Jisc-funded project, managed by the University of Exeter, called OCM (Online Coursework Management).

Known issues:

The tool is still undergoing regular updates, but the core functions are now complete. During the pilot, student submission of assignments was flawless; there

were no reported technical issues from staff or students. The double-blind marking workflow worked well; however, markers involved in the pilot were notably late in marking their assignments and well beyond their set deadlines for initial marking. Although not a flaw with the tool itself, since this was purely due to academic staff time pressures, this is likely to remain a trending concern during any rollout.

Coursework does also require a fair amount of Moodle administration time in order to match the institution's particular marking workflow variants, but that is also what makes it universally usable.

Usage:

Coursework was piloted at the RVC in Spring and Summer 2015 across three courses, each with different aims, grading scales and marking workflows. A number of issues and improvements were identified during these pilots beyond the previously identified requirements for a full rollout at scale. The pilots were run with a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) in order to tease out any issues with the permissions of the different roles, assess the willingness of markers to move to online marking and feedback, and identify any further functionality requirements.

Coursework was subsequently rolled out fully at the RVC throughout the 2016–17 academic year, following the presentation of a paper presented to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee in May 2016. Its use remains optional, but is the recommended solution for any paperless submission of summative work and, as of June 2017, is currently used for more than 90% of submissions. Rollout for distance learning courses began in Spring 2017 following the availability of a 'no deadline' assignment type. The only holdouts are for assignments where a single marker is marking over 60 papers, a situation in which the markers have a preference for paper.

Benefits and Challenges:

Following a consultation exercise, an overwhelming majority of markers were confident about marking online and giving feedback, with 88% of surveyed respondents being either 'very confident' or 'confident' about using the tool. While this was very positive, markers felt much less confident about PDF annotation, therefore a PDF annotation toolkit was developed with information on tools available on the various platforms and relevant existing online guidance available.

All markers who responded to the post-pilot survey stated that they would be comfortable marking all future submissions through Coursework. Feelings

were mixed, however, about rolling this out to all submissions. Overall, it is really positive that markers are so open to online marking and feedback. Indeed, if they did not already have some prior experience of electronic assessment, this was solely due to lack of opportunity not willingness. More than 75% of markers expected that Coursework would be beneficial to them.

Time is, however, a major concern for markers, in particular due to the absence of a physical pile of paper on a desk to remind them that they must mark the papers, and the reduced visibility for managers of the marking workload.

One of the concerns before the pilot was to ensure that markers would review the Turnitin similarity reports of student submissions; from the pre-pilot questionnaire, 74% of respondents reported that they would either review all of the submissions or specific papers if they suspected plagiarism.

Take-Aways:

Staff training was adapted based on the pre-pilot survey, with online guides and video walkthroughs for markers. Some on-site workshops were scheduled, which became feedback sessions rather than training sessions since the markers had already finished marking successfully.