

Navigation improvements

User pain

In order to find my way around Moodle, I need to request help/be trained, or I have to persevere.

1. The navigation is confusing
 - a. When navigating the navigation nodes are expanded and collapsed depending on where I am, which is confusing. I have difficulties understanding where the menu I am trying to find are. (E.g. Course administration becomes collapsed when navigating into a module)
 - b. Why should I look into "Administration" to find my grades or my profile settings as a student?
 - c. Hard to understand the differences between the course profile and site profile if ever the user has realised that they both exist
2. The learning curve is steep
 - a. The nodes are not self explanatory, so I cannot guess what is found underneath (Site pages, Course administration, ...)
3. Finding what I am looking for is time consuming
 - a. As a consequence of the above

Target

- Everyone not yet familiar with Moodle

Objective

A new way to navigate through Moodle which is simpler, more straightforward and easy to get around.

Benefits

- Faster to navigate to the essential task => efficiency
- Cleaner UI => satisfying user experience
- Match common expectation (edit profile/logout/message under the user full name...)
- No settings/navigation blocks may speedup Moodle
- Less confusion for a new user not yet familiar with Moodle

Risks

- Experienced user needs to re-learn how to navigate in Moodle.
- Existing themes might not be compatible

Ideas

- A student can quickly access his courses, grades, settings, profile from a static place in

the UI. And so removing the need for them to expand nodes in the navigation block, or accessing the “Administration” block for some stuff

- The different nodes of the Administration block are displayed on a “Preferences” page. For instance, the “Course administration” items would be listed on a page, each node being a title and each of its elements listed underneath. The benefit of this is that one link leads to all the settings, and thus the need for an Administration disappears.
- A teacher can quickly access the “Options” of a course through a static node. The same way a user can access anything associated to his account.
- The same for modules, an easy dropdown to get to the preferences page of the module, and to access the more frequently used options.
- A navigation happening through the breadcrumb/navbar to remove the need for the nested and cumbersome navigation in the Navigation block. This can be problematic to access site pages or pages which do not clearly have a hierarchical position. We could counter that by providing “in context” links. For instance, adding a new block entry should be available from the Blog page.
- Providing a sitemap page to counter the lack of navigation block when something is not easily accessible.
- Ability to “Star” some pages to quickly access favourites.
- Develop a “Smart search” to easily access the content in the current course, other courses, etc... and the admin settings for admins.

Implementation concerns

- Challenging to allow for 2 navigation systems because the above one requires some changes to be done to core.
- Holding all the logic in a theme will not be possible in all cases, or will be very hacky.
- Performance could be affected, some core changes might be required to get the required data from a cache rather than the DB.

See:

- https://docs.google.com/document/d/16BjsINun13StUFOQaejj3Gawz9jk22ir_r49f3MblnM/edit?usp=sharing
- Some of the inspiration comes from Concrete5: <http://www.concrete5.org/trial/>
- Navigation inconsistencies: <https://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-34838>
- Minimal by Moodlerooms: <http://demo2k12.moodlerooms.com>
- Users’s personalised profiles: <https://moodle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=226791>

Solutions

The new navigation system is too complex to be one single tasks, we have separated them into smaller projects.

User-specific pages

The first goal of this project is to remove the need for the user to use the navigation block or the administration block to access their profile and user-specific pages (blog, forum posts, messages, ...) and their profile settings and preferences.

Static user menu

We are suggesting to add a static user menu, visible as a dropdown on a desktop.

- **View profile:** goes to the profile view. The current profile design will be greatly improve and will contain info and links to badges, blogs, last posts/discussions.
- **My home:** goes to My home. It currently contains course list and private files.
- **My grades:** goes to grade report, currently there is no page to display all the grades of a user throughout courses.
- **Messages:** goes to the current user message page
- **Preferences:** goes to a new page referencing all different preferences (account, blogs, forums, badges...)
- **Logout**

My home, my dashboard

This page becomes the path to My courses as it already was, and the path to the private files. So this page could be highly improved to include more information such:

- **My courses**
- **My private files**
- A summary of my grades
- Some recent messages or notifications
- The calendar and upcoming events

My profile page

The profile page will contain information from the current profile page and:

- **Badges:** on your own profile you'll see all badges, for other profiles only the public badges. You'll have a link "Manage my badges".

- **Last posts/discussions:** we may want to display the three last posts if it's not too much info - at least we should display "See forum posts" / "See forum discussions" links...
- **Blogs** - could could see the last blog post if it's not too much info - at least we should display a "Visit Barbara's blog" link.
- **Edit profile:** A button to edit your profile is needed, and redirects you to the "Edit profile" form.

Viewing the profile of another user

Currently the code managing the navigation and the administration nodes "My profile" and "My profile settings" is shared with the nodes "Mr. X profile" and "Mr X profile settings". It makes little sense to keep those nodes if we are not using them for our own profile.

We are suggesting to remove those nodes, by adding more links on the profile page. Depending on your permissions you have access to more or less information about a user. Here are all the available options:

- **Badges:** View the badges of a user (if allowed by the user, or has permissions)
- **Forum posts and discussions:** Access to the posts by this user
- **Blog:** View this user's blog
- **Notes:** View or add notes about this user
- **Activity reports:** View the logs of that user
- **Permissions:** Manage the permissions in that context, view the roles of the user
- **Log in as:** Ability to log in as the user
- **Profile settings:** Edit this user's profile
- **Preferences:** Edit some of the user's preferences, such as the ones in the profile settings and messaging options.

There needs to be consistency in between the elements shared between the "My profile prototype" and "Viewing someone's profile prototype".

Merging site profiles and course profiles

Not many users truly understand the reasoning behind two different profiles, both displaying different information, having inconsistencies, etc... While we need to keep the "Course profiles" to display information specific to the course, and to provide links to content related to the course only, we can display all the information available without having a need for the course profile itself. If the information is available in a course profile, it should be on the site profile too, and vice versa.

Preferences page

The preference page contains all links necessary for the user to set up their Moodle site: Account, blogs, forums, badges, ... While implementing this we should reformat the "My profile settings" page to only contain information relevant to the profile. Anything else that is a real setting or preference should be moved into another specific page.

Ideally, some more work should be done to merge the different preferences pages into a single one. For instance, the Blog preferences only contain 1 single field, and the same applies for Badges preferences. Due to the current design it seems tricky to do, unless we develop a new APIs similar to the admin settings page, which would be more user friendly.

Dropdown in the breadcrumb

If each node of the dropdown gives access to its neighbours, then this can be really helpful to quickly jump from one place to another as we could do it in the navigation/settings blocks. However, that does not provide a quick access to the children.

Even before we get rid of the navigation block, we could already implement the navigation via the breadcrumb. This would already come handy when access some pages from the users' preferences page.

Accessing the site pages

We need to find a way to provide access to the site pages. Some are more important than others, for instance Calendar vs. Tags.

Course administration

Replacing the current Course administration in the Settings block with something else to remove the need for it in the Settings block. It could be a dropdown somewhere leading to a Course preferences page, and it could also contain the Course specific links from the navigation, such as "Badges", "Participants". "Grades" could be there too.

Grade administration

As soon as you get into a grade report, even as a student, you are shown a "Grade administration" node in the "Settings block". We should also find a way to replace this.

Module administration

Same as the Course administration one, we could have some sort of a preferences page for the module itself.