

Rollover options for Moodle

At the the end of the Session it is prudent to consider how Moodle Courses will be carried over to the following academic year. This is particularly true when there is student activity recorded in the course.

Firstly consider the following...

- Does the course contain any student data at all? Generally this will require that the course contains one or more interactive activities and that students have actually taken part in them (for example, forum discussions)
- Does the course contain staff supplied resources masquerading as student data? For example an initial 'warm up' post in a forum to stimulate discussion. If the forum is cleared this will also be removed.
- Will the course run in substantially the same form in the next session? Is it easier to reuse the course (with or without modification) or to create and populate a new course?
- Is the course using automatic enrollment (it would have a valid University Course Code in the 'CourseID' field of the course settings). This causes students who are currently recorded as being registered on the course to be enrolled into the course when they log in. Students are (currently) never automatically removed from courses regardless of passage of time or changes to University enrollment records.

Possible Options:

1. Do Nothing

Don't do anything. Leave the course alone and continue to run it in the following session.

PROS:

Very little effort (especially if you have a lot of courses). May be perfectly appropriate if the course is all or nearly all resources for students and no interactive activities.

CONS:

Student enrollments will 'build up' over sessions as all the previous year's students will remain in the course. Previous year's materials in any Forums or other interactive activities will remain.

2. Hit the Reset Button

The Course Administration block has an option called Reset. Clicking this provides an options page allowing you to select what is reset. The idea is that all materials from interactive activities are removed (e.g. forum postings, assignment uploads, quiz responses). You can select that only certain activities are affected if required. It will also unenroll selected groups of users - typically, you would want to eject all students in readiness for the following session. Beware of throwing yourself out!

PROS:

Can be done by 'ordinary' staff users with edit permissions for the course. Generally quick, straightforward and intuitive.

CONS:

Any record of prior activity is destroyed. Previous years students will no longer have access for reflection/revision etc.. Not all activity types implement the reset feature comprehensively or at all (for example, Wikis are not reset)

3. Create a copy of the course

Use backup and restore to create an exact copy of the course. This is moved to an appropriate category (e.g. Archive courses 2008/9) and the original course reset as above.

PROS:

The course is kept along with all its users and their interactions. They can continue to access the course.

CONS:

It requires permissions in Moodle that ordinary staff will not have. It effectively needs to be done by an administrator or Moodle Support person (the rights to create new courses is needed). The process is relatively slow, complex and error prone. For all the courses in an average department it is likely to be a significant task. Students have reported increased confusion by being faced with a list of courses containing both current and old ones.

4. Use the "Create course archive block"

This is a new, experimental block available to staff in all University Moodle sites. It can be added to any courses (from the 'Blocks' menu with 'editing on') and enables an HTML 'snap shot' of the course to be made of the current state of the course. All linked files are included and the whole thing is delivered as a zip file

that can (when expanded) be viewed by any browser.

PROS:

It provides a relatively quick way of generating a 'take away' copy of the course that does not depend on Moodle being available, nor does it require an active user account or enrollment for the course. It does not result in the Moodle site being 'cluttered' with archive courses that require additional administrative effort and may be confusing to students seeking courses.

CONS:

It is not (currently) comprehensive - not all activities will be included (although all the common ones are). It cannot 'understand' the interactive and group functionality. It can only produce a particular view (for example, just what Students will see). In summary, it will work well for a great many courses with simple structure and mostly resources and forums. It is likely to be less successful for more complex courses.