

La Trobe University's centrally supported Learning Management System (LMS is Blackboard/WebCT CE 6 (formerly WebCT).

The LMS provides academic staff with an internet based framework in which to situate unit study materials and a variety of tools with which to manage communication and interaction with and among students. The tool set offered by the LMS falls into five broad categories:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Organisational Tools</b> | Calendar, Search, Syllabus                                       |
| <b>Communication Tools</b>  | Announcements, Chat, Discussions, Mail, Roster, Who's Online     |
| <b>Content Tools</b>        | Learning Modules, Local Content, Media Library, SCORM, Web Links |
| <b>Student Activities</b>   | Assessments, Assignments, Goals                                  |
| <b>Student Tools</b>        | My Grades, My Progress, Notes                                    |

You can use any of these tools or any combinations of these tools to support your students achieve the intended outcomes. You might choose to use only a Mail tool for communication and a Learning Module to host your learning materials or, if you are familiar with the system and are more confident you may use a larger selection of tools to engage your students.

When you are using the LMS, some screen elements are predetermined, for instance navigation buttons in a Learning Module. While this may seem constrictive, it means you can get started more quickly.

When you are designing your unit in the LMS, aim to keep things simple. Because it is so easy to add and edit tools and other items, it can be very tempting to create a complicated environment in which your students may lose their way. Don't be worried if your content seems simple, remember that your audience is more concerned about getting access to the learning materials that you have provided online rather than how pretty or tool-rich the environment may appear.

Calendar



This tool allows you to view and create dated reminders about events. Staff and students can create unit related entries that are viewable to all staff and students. **NOTE:** The ability to do this is determined by the unit designer or instructor.

All users can create personal entries that are not related to any course but are for personal reminders. These types of entries are private.

Search



The Search tool allows you to conduct a search for data within a unit

**For example** - If you remember sending a discussion message regarding Assignment Five, but you can't recall in which discussion topic you posted the message, you can do a keyword search to retrieve the message.

To perform a search, you must enter keywords, select the area of records you want to search, and select the area in the unit you want to search. You can also apply date restrictions and specify preferences for viewing results.

Syllabus



Using the **Syllabus** tool, you can make a syllabus available to Students to provide them with information such as:

- your contact information and office hours
- the objectives of the unit
- the academic policies of your institution, as well as your own policies regarding late assignments and make-up exams
- a unit outline, which could include important dates
- an overview of lessons
- a list of required texts and recommended reading.

Announcements



You can use the **Announcements** tool to create and send text announcements to students and staff involved in a unit.

Announcements appear on the My WebCT page or on the Announcements screen. Announcements can also appear as pop-up messages, which appears on log in. **For example** - You can use the Announcement tool to inform students that the due date for a quiz or assignment has changed.

Chat



The Chat tool allows you to communicate in real time with other people involved in the unit.. You can use Chat to engage in real-time conversations with everyone or with a selection of individuals. You can also use the Chat tool's Whiteboard to draw objects, enter text, import images, and create slide shows that can be viewed in real time by other users. **For Example** - Use Chat to provide information on office hours, online guest speakers, exam reviews, and study groups. Use Whiteboard to display images, draw objects or draw freehand, and present slide shows.

Discussions



The Discussions tool allows you to create topics relevant to the unit where students and staff can post and reply to messages. You can ask questions, generate discussion, and encourage students to share feedback and ideas. You can assign grades for quality of participation, just as you would in a classroom.

There are three types of discussion topics:

- Threaded: Create a threaded topic for a more traditional online discussion. Participants post and reply to messages. Replies that are associated with the same post are grouped together, creating message threads that can be expanded and collapsed.
- Class blog: Create a collaborative blog (weblog) space by allowing participants to post a chronological series of entries on a particular topic. Participants can then add comments to any blog entry.
- Journal: Create a journal topic to give your students a place for their own writing. The journals can be kept private between the student and the lecturer or can be shared with the class.

**For Example** - If you are teaching English literature, you can create discussion categories for different literary genres: English Novels and English Plays. In each category, you can create topics for the literary works that are being studied:

- English Novels: Pride and Prejudice, Oliver Twist, A Room with a View.
- English Plays: Romeo and Juliet, She Stoops to Conquer, The Importance of Being Ernest.

To start a discussion on the novel Pride and Prejudice, you can post a message such as "Do you think the characters in Pride and Prejudice are conscious of social class?"

Mail



The Mail tool allows you to communicate with students and staff involved in your unit through written correspondence, in text or HTML format and file attachments. The Mail tool is restricted to the LMS and ensures that you do not receive undesired or irrelevant messages from external sources. This restriction also contributes to the stability of the messaging system by limiting exposure to viruses.

Who's Online



You can use the Who's Online tool to chat in real time with students and staff users who are enrolled in any of the units with which you have an involvement and who are logged in to the LMS at the same time you are logged in. You can access the Who's Online tool from the My WebCT page.

Learning Modules



Use the Learning Modules tool to organise and display learning materials. You can add files from your computer or create new files online. You can also add other items, such as a Discussion topic directly in to your Learning Module. You can add items from the following tools:

- Assessments
- Assignments
- Chat
- Discussions
- Media Library
- Weblinks

After you have added content to a learning module, you can structure the content hierarchically within a table of contents by using headings and outline numbering. This will help you visually communicate how information is organised and in what order the materials should be viewed.


**Learning Module Settings**


You can modify settings to make the learning module available or unavailable, as well as specify release criteria that must be met for the learning module to become available. **Action Menus**


An Action Menu provides students with navigation links to content, such as a discussion topic that is relevant to the learning module. An Action Menu can also provide links to the following tools: Bookmarks, Create Printable View, and Notes.

These tools provide students with different ways to interact with the learning module. **For example** - You can add the Bookmarks tool to let students create links to pages within the learning module or you can add the Notes tool to let Students create private notes relevant to content in the learning module.


You can add an Action Menu to a learning module and to each content link within a learning module.

**Local Content**  Local Content allows you to reference media files that would be inefficient to download from a server. Because the files are loaded from the Student's computer rather than over the Internet, students with slower connections can view large files. This means that you can create links to multimedia files in your unit without slowing down online activities.

**Media Library**  Use the media library tool to build a database of text, image, video and audio entries to enhance your unit. You can organise the entries into collections. **For example** - For a music appreciation course, a unit designer creates three collections titled *The Baroque Period*, *The Classical Period*, and *The Romantic Period*. Each collection contains audio files that sample the music of the period, image files that contain pictures of important composers, and text files that define important terms

**Weblinks**  You can use the Web Links tool to compile a list of Internet addresses. These Internet addresses can then be added to folders and learning modules to reference web pages outside of your unit. **For example** - Use Web Links to create a link in a folder or learning module to an online essay that you want members of your course to read

You can also organise web links into categories, and set permissions to allow Students to create web links for particular categories.

**Assessments**  If you are a unit Primary Designer or Designer, you can use the Assessments tool to create the following types of assessments:

- **Quizzes:** A quiz is an online test that students complete and submit for marks. The marks are recorded in the Grade Book.
- **Surveys:** A survey is an online questionnaire that students complete and submit anonymously. You can use surveys to allow Students to give feedback or opinions.
- **Self tests:** A self test is an online test that students complete and submit for marks so they can assess their understanding of course material. The marks are not recorded in the Grade Book.

If you are an Instructor or Teaching Assistant, you cannot create assessments but you can view them. You use the Assessment Manager to view and grade Student submissions, and run reports to compare the performance of Students.

All questions are saved in the Question Database.

## Assignments



There are two types of assignments:

### Text

A *Text* assignment requires Students to submit their assignment by entering text in the Assignments tool, attaching their own files, or doing both. Students can enter text directly on the assignment screen. However, if Students are expected to submit a large amount of text or if they need to supplement the text with other material, they have the option to attach files.

### Web Site

A Web site assignment requires Students to submit a ZIP file containing linked HTML files that create a Web site. Students specify an entry point for their Web site and use relative links to link all pages.

After students complete and submit their assignments, you use the Assignment Dropbox tool to view, manage, and evaluate submissions. On the Teach tab, a link to the Assignment Dropbox tool appears under Instructor Tools. You can grade submissions or mark them as **complete** if the assignment does not require grades. You can also provide feedback to students and return submissions if you want students to work further on the assignments.

## Goals



The Goals tool allows you to record the goals for a course, and to create categories to organise them. **For example** - You may want to create an Institution category to record your institution's general goals for all students, as well as a category for each topic in your unit.

## My Progress



The My Progress tool allows students to view a report that includes information about their level of participation in the course. This includes:

- First access
- Last access
- Total time spent in the unit
- Number of folders and files that have been viewed

## Notes



With the Notes tool your students can create general or learning module notes to use as a reminder. General notes are relevant to the entire course; learning module notes are relevant to specific content within a learning module, such as a quiz or discussion topic. Both general notes and learning module notes are private and cannot be viewed by anyone else involved in the unit.