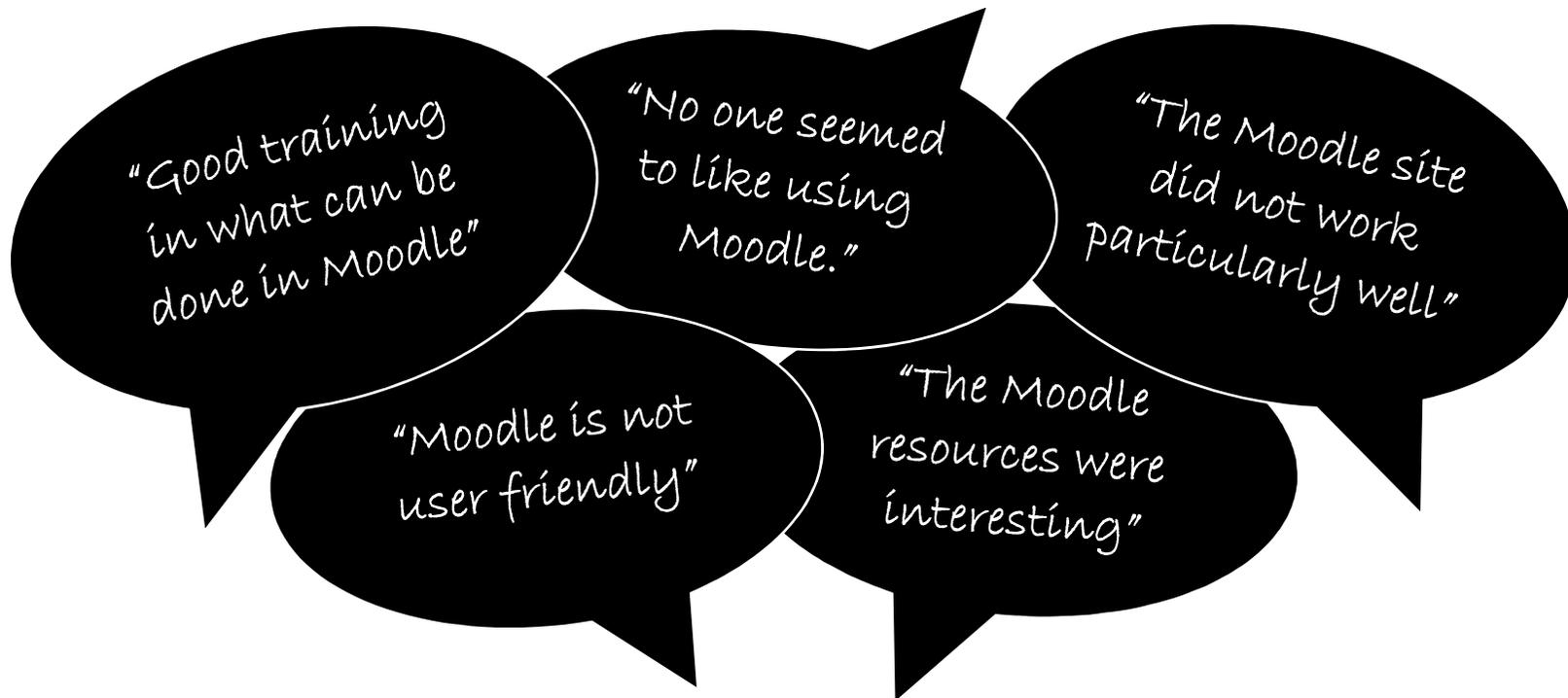


# Moodle for UCL Arena One

Critique and enhancement report for the Teaching Associate Programme

Mira Vogel (ELE, seconded to CALT), May 2015



This report documents our responses to a formal evaluation and other feedback, and is structured round indicative quotes. For a more detailed view than the screenshots can provide, UCL people can enrol in Arena Playpen on Moodle.

“... it was all hidden away at the bottom of some endless moodle page”

Before, section pages were titled as sessions but contained undifferentiated types of copy and content for different purposes.

Section pages had low glanceability.

It wasn't immediately clear how and when to engage with the material.

Salience was haphazard e.g. embedded video visually dominated.

Pages were overloaded.

If you were aware of something you needed to do, finding it required patience.

Participants were overlooking key information.

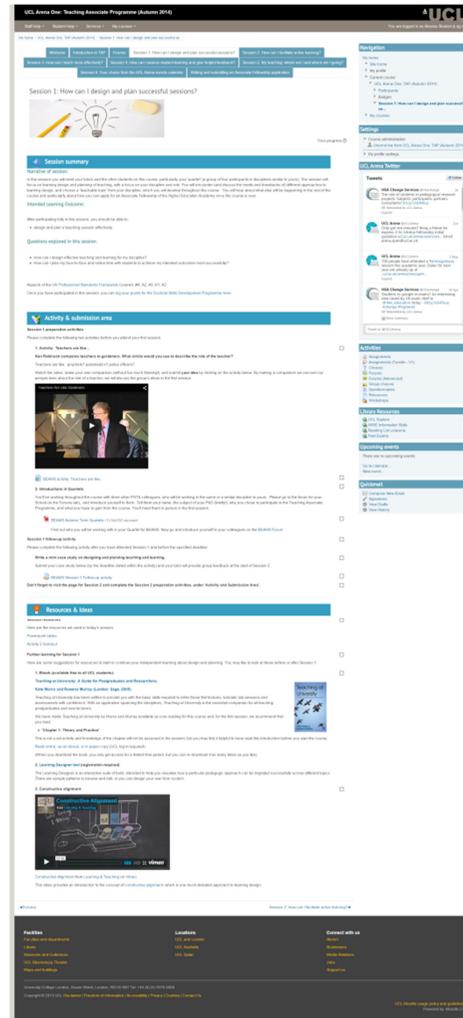


Figure 1 Endless Moodle page

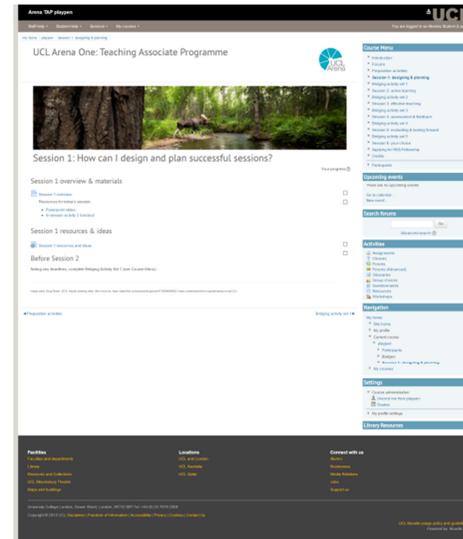


Figure 2 Section pages as signposts

Now each session and each bridging activity has been separated into dedicated section pages.

Section pages are designed minimally with small screen users in mind.

Section pages are reserved for signposting e.g. overview, instructions, links.

Each section page has a consistent structure created with headings.

Resource descriptions aren't displayed here on section pages; titles are concise but distinctive.

Resources are linked from section pages, not embedded.

Substantive content exists in separate pages.

In line with shorter pages, there are fewer sidebar blocks.

The Recent Activity block is enabled.

Activities block enabled as another way to filter and discover.

# “It’s not always clear how all the different resources posted on Moodle relate to each other”

Before, resources were dispersed across the different sections.

Resources were diverse but there was no unified list.

It could be unclear which resources to prioritise.

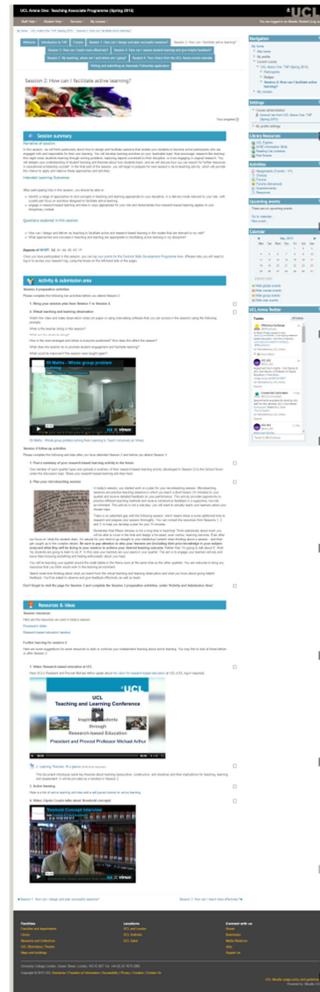


Figure 4 Resources before

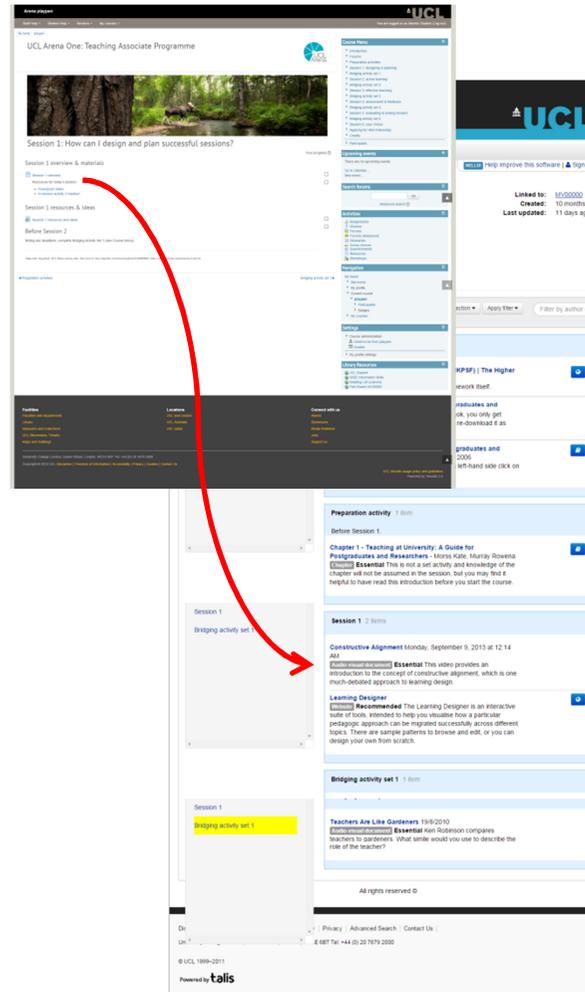


Figure 3 Example ReadingList@UCL

Now we’re modelling ReadingList@UCL.

Every resource has its own record in the reading list, including external materials and media (not handouts though).

The reading list is organised into sections corresponding to sessions.

It’s possible to link to a reading list section, a resource, or a chapter in a resource.

Notes for students are attached to the reading list record, not Moodle.

Reading list items can be designated as Essential, Recommended or Optional

Activity descriptions (on Moodle) may be a good place to bring up cross-references.

Configure Course Menu block to appear on every page.

“I sometimes find the way work is assigned on Moodle to be confusing.”

Before, preparation activities were subsumed into pages for later events, and sometimes overlooked.

No heading styles were used so it was harder to identify key information, and inaccessible to screen readers.

Activity completion was used, but inconsistently, because activities and resources were inconsistently presented.

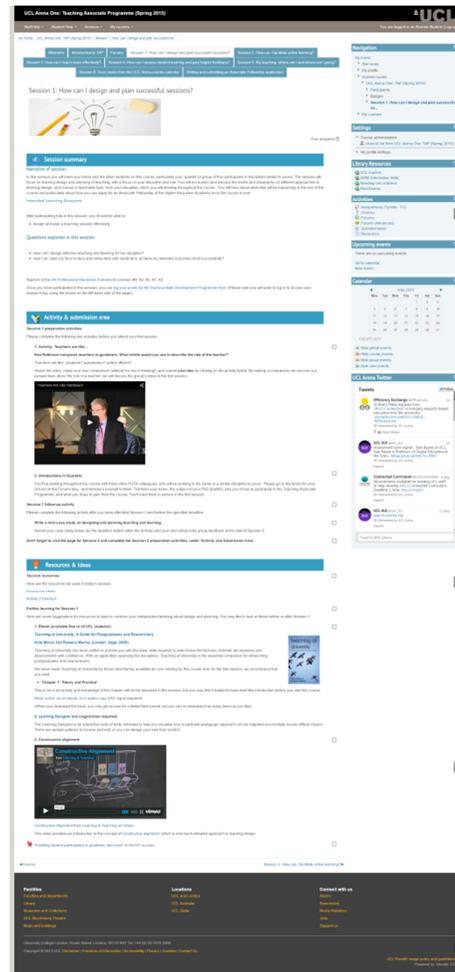


Figure 5 Activities subsumed

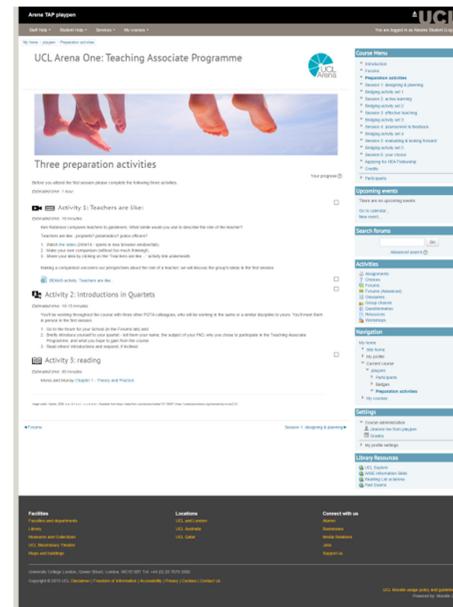


Figure 6 Clearer

Now each activity set is separate from each section.

Each activity set appears in place in the course menu.

Each activity is a separate entity, carefully titled with the course menu in mind.

A unique banner image (usually a bridge) and heading help with orientation.

Glyphs denote activity type - another immediate visual cue to help with orientation in longer pages.

Indentation makes pages easier to scan.

Consistent headings help orientation and accessibility.

Activity completion checkboxes offer a visual overview of tasks.

The Upcoming Events block is enabled – assessment deadlines appear here.

To avoid students missing the Session sections, signpost to next Session page.

# “Impose deadlines for moodle activities prior to the session to ensure everyone is up to speed”

Before, to avoid the need for maintenance, there were no dates on Moodle.

Staff sent out reminders via Forum.

However, students sometimes missed events or deadlines.



Figure 7 No dates

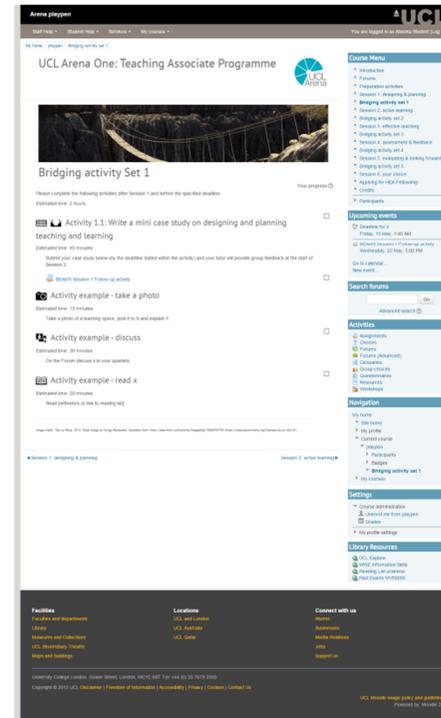


Figure 8 Dates and other ways to keep track

Now activities between sessions are set out in one place for easier planning.

The Upcoming Events block displays imminent deadlines.

These are Assessment or Quiz deadlines, along with anything entered into the Calendar.

Moodle activity sets have an estimated completion time.

Activity completion helps students keep track of what they have done or need to do.

Forum posts may be needed for motivation and reminders.

# Style & set-up notes for Arena Moodles

## Relate to the UCL E-Learning Framework

The actions here draw on principles set out in the UCL E-Learning Framework, an evolving document which can be found at <https://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/UCLLearning/UCL+E-Learning+Framework>

## Groups

1. To enable whole-school discussions, students exist in at least two groups: one for All [School] and one for their quartet.
2. To show students who is in which group, once groups have been created, set up a Group Choice uneditable by students.
3. To avoid irrelevant information being displayed to students, use Groupings consistently.

## Formatting and appearance

4. Make consistent use of Moodle styles (Heading 1, 2, paragraph &c) since these are more accessible than e.g. bold formatting.
5. Observe C.R.A.P. principles of contrast, repetition, alignment and proximity to make section pages glanceable and easy to scan.
6. Minimise the amount and variety of content and blocks that appears on any single page.

## Content

7. On section pages (i.e. those linked from the Course Menu) be minimal with content.
8. Use concise resource and activity titles – again, consistently - to distinguish those elements; avoid displaying resource or activity descriptions.

9. Use a consistent structure, terminology and headings for Session and Bridging Activity Set pages.
10. Use ReadingList@UCL for all resources.
11. To display a reading list item either directly link to its record, or use the Moodle ReadingList resource.
12. Consider using the glyphs provided to improve glanceability.
13. Use banner images; ensure they are styled to resize dynamically when the window width changes.
14. To be able to apply Activity Completion, present resources consistently as discrete resources, and not as e.g. a list of links in a label.
15. Cite all image sources in the Credits section.

## Orientation and engagement

16. For aesthetic reasons you may disagree with, enable the Course Menu block instead of tabs and configure it to appear on every page.
17. Provide key dates using the Upcoming Events block and maybe a well-titled early Forum post.
18. Activity Completion is on by default so remember to switch it off for everything except key activities and key bits of information.
19. Include instructions for any activity within the Description of that activity, linking out to more detail if needed. Avoid putting them into a section page.
20. To help students plan and stay motivated, include estimated completion times for activities up-front.
21. Instructions are crucial and should be prepared while testing out the activity from a student point of view.
22. To experience your Moodle work from a student point of view, use the Moodle test user service.

## Refer to the checklist

23. Do refer to this, since it's intended to help the setter-upper avoid several gotchas. You can find it where you found this document.