

Handing in Work through Moodle

In this chapter we turn briefly from handing work out to handing it in. This chapter is just an overview of how work can be handed in. It's a natural thing to want your students to hand in work after handing out a worksheet and that's exactly what we'll be doing in this chapter.

In my Backyard Ballistics course I hand out an Energy Conversion worksheet. This is a Word document in which there are spaces for answers. I usually print out enough copies for my students; they then fill them out and hand them back to me.

Rather than my students having to remember to take a worksheet home with them, rely on them not letting it scrunch into the bottom of their school bags, and assuming it has survived this far, having them remember to hand it in, I want to use Moodle to hand out the work, have my students complete the work on their computers and hand it in via Moodle (I'm also fortunate that my school supplies each child in Years 10 and 11 with a notebook. However, it's worth mentioning that we did carry out a survey among parents and only two children out of approximately 100 in Year 10 at that time didn't have access to the Internet at home). Managing my handouts through Moodle also means I can think about managing the grades online (it's not something I worry about with this handout but we will learn more about managing grades online in later chapters).

In this chapter we shall:

- ◆ Learn how students can hand in a worksheet or a simple piece of homework online
- ◆ Show how work can be marked online

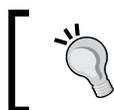
Handing in the work

Work can be handed in through Moodle using the assignment activity. Moodle provides four types of assignment activity, and they will match any kind of project that you are likely to set your students. Turn editing on, go to any topic, and click on the **Add an activity** list. In this list you will see the (at least) four different assignment types Moodle supports. They are:

- ◆ Offline activity
- ◆ Online text
- ◆ Upload a single file
- ◆ Advanced uploading of files

At this stage, for my purposes the best type of assignment to use is the **Upload a single file** assignment. As the name suggests, it basically allows students to upload a file, which is just the thing for handing in your homework. I say you will see at least four different types of assignment because each activity you see listed in the **Add an activity...** menu is a "plugin" module, and other assignment types, which may have been installed in your Moodle, are available (refer to the Moodle website at <http://moodle.org> for details).

Don't be afraid to investigate the different assignment types now. With editing turned on, click on **Add an activity...** and select any of the assignment types. That way you can get a feel for the kinds of settings we'll be dealing with later in this chapter and, for assignment types other than **Upload a single file**, later in this book.



If, while you are trying out different assignment types, you mistakenly add an assignment to your course, you can easily delete it by clicking on the delete icon next to the assignment name.

Now we're ready to get started.

Managing homework online

This is just personal preference, but I like to have a separate topic to hand out homework. Doing this allows me to hide the topic until I'm ready to hand the work out and it stops me from being asked about upcoming homework (often by parents who have borrowed their children's login details to see what is coming up in the lesson). There are two other alternatives to simply hiding the homework until I'm ready to hand it out:

- ◆ Resources and activities can be made available only when other online tasks have been completed.

-
- ◆ In assignment activities, you can specify a time period during which the assignment is available. You'll be encountering the settings for this shortly (and they are the same for all assignment activities).

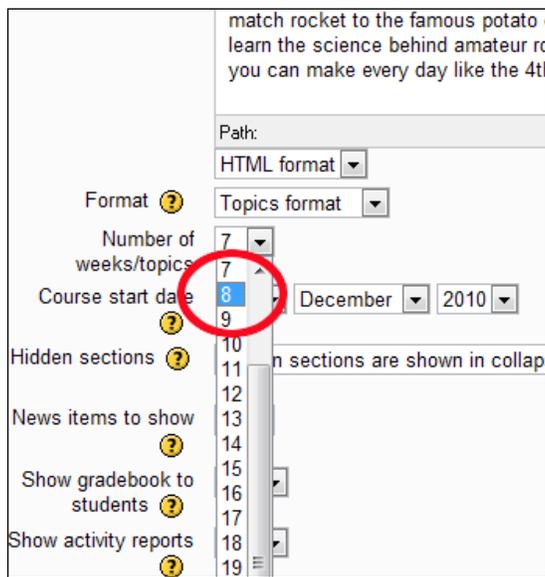
First we need to add a new topic to our course, and then we can add in an assignment activity.

Adding a new topic to a course

I'm going to add a new topic to my course specifically for my students to download and hand in their homework. Then I'm going to hide that topic until I'm ready to hand out the work (I don't want to be bombarded by questions from my students and/or their parents on topics I haven't yet covered in class). Remember how we configured a hidden "teacher's only" topic in the course in *Chapter 3, Adding Documents and Handouts?* I'm going to do the same with my homework box. I've decided that I want to ensure that my students focus on the preliminary work before they start attempting any assignments by completely hiding them from students.

Time for action – adding a topic to a course and hiding it

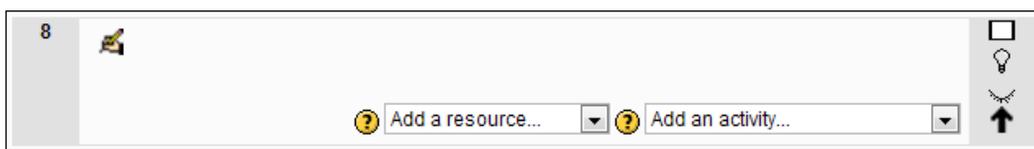
1. Return to your course front page and choose **Settings** from the **Administration** block.
2. Scroll down to the number of weeks/topics setting and change the number in the drop-down list to add another topic to your course:



3. At the bottom of the page, press the **Save changes** button. That's it, we're done and now there's a new empty topic at the end of your course.
4. For the moment, I want to hide this topic from students. Click on the eye icon on the right-hand side to hide the topic:



5. It depends on your theme but, to show that a topic is hidden, two grey bars are shown on the left and right-hand side of the topic:



What just happened?

We've now got a new, empty topic added to our course. I don't want students to be able to view the assignment until we are all ready, so I've hidden this topic from them for now.

Configuring the homework box

Firstly, my new, empty topic has been added to the end of my course, below the hidden teacher documentation. I want the teacher documentation to be at the very end so I'm going to use the move up/move down icons to rearrange topics. Then I'm going to edit the summary of the topic and give it an introduction and provide some suitable encouragement. Next I need to hand the homework out using the skills learned in *Chapter 3, Adding Documents and Handouts*. Finally I need to include an Upload a single file assignment activity so my students can hand their homework back to me. Here's how:

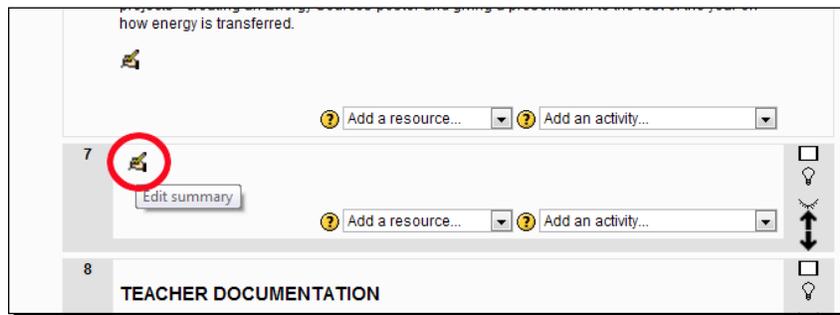
Time for action – configuring the homework box

1. With editing turned on, click on the move up icon in the homework box or on the move down icon in the Teacher Documentation topic:

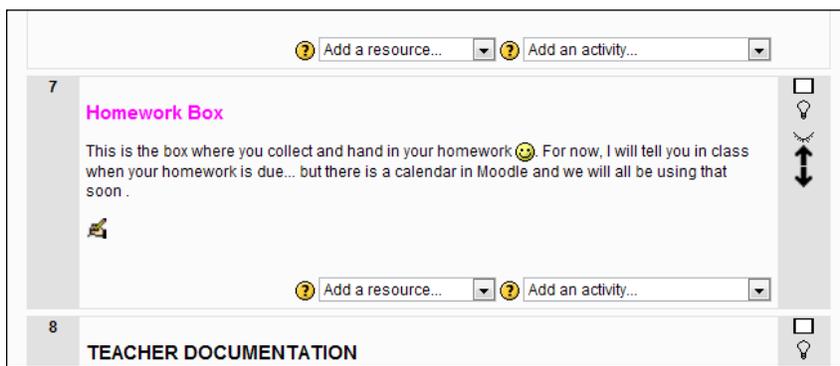



 Note that you may see crosshairs instead of the move up/down icons. If it's a crosshairs icon you see then click on it and drag to move the topic.

- Now let's give the homework box a title by configuring the topic summary as we did with the other topics in Chapter 2, *Setting up your Courses*. Click on the edit summary icon (in my case, the hand holding a pencil):



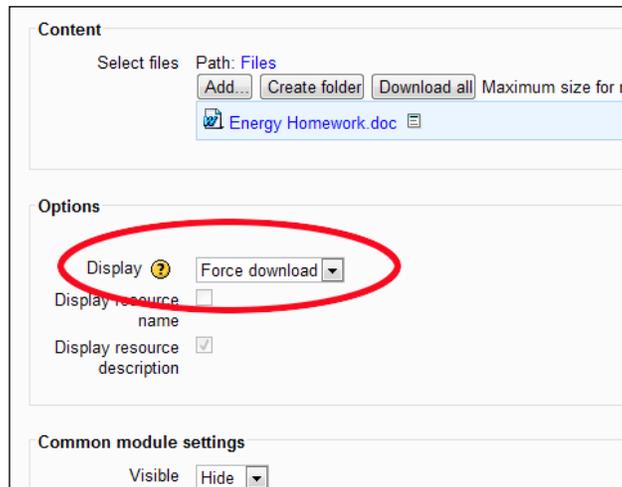
- Then enter your text:



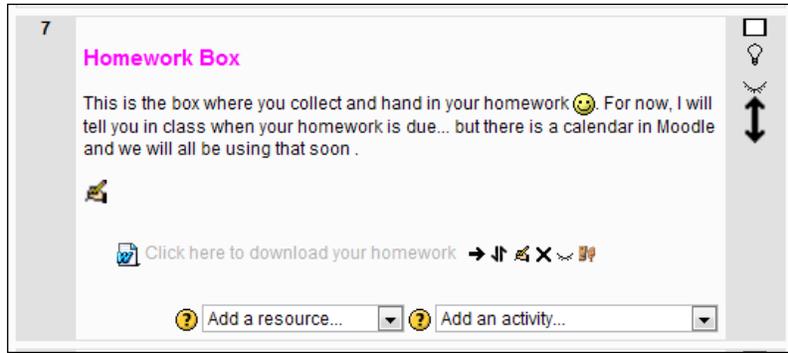
4. Now I need to upload the homework to Moodle. I'm going to upload it to **My private files**. Recall that you can access **My private files** from the **Navigation** block via **My profile**:



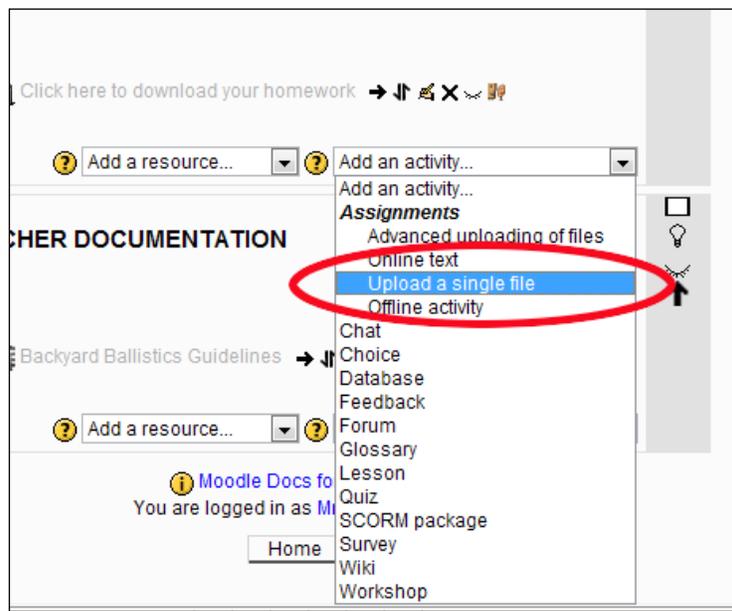
5. Once the file is uploaded we can then provide a link to it from our course (refer to Chapter 3, *Adding Documents and Handouts* for details). Note that when configuring the link to the file, I'm going to **Force download** so that the homework sheet is downloaded rather than have it displayed in the student's browser window:



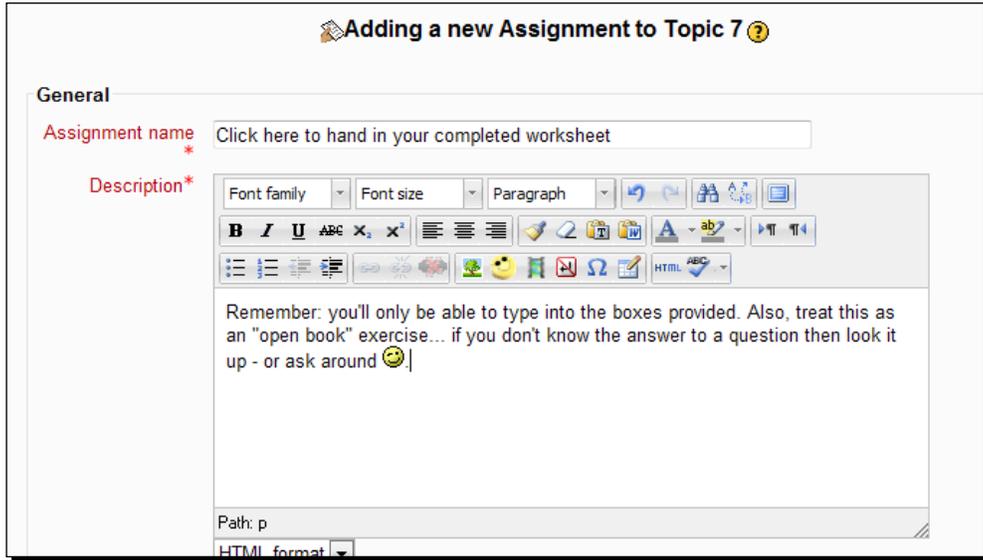
-
6. After adding in the link, my **Homework Box** now looks like this:



7. Now it's time to provide a means for my students to hand in their work. Click on the **Add an activity...** drop-down menu and select **Upload a single file**:



8. Give the assignment a name (remember this is the text that your students will need to click on to hand in their work so I'm going to call mine "Click here to hand in your completed worksheet") and enter a description:



9. Rather than describe all of the settings, most of which are self-explanatory, I'll just point out now the main ones. Firstly, we can specify a time window within which our students can hand in their work. For this exercise, I'm not worried about being too specific about this in Moodle so I'm going to click on the checkboxes to disable this feature:



10. Because I'm not specifying a time window, **Prevent late submissions** can be left as "**No**". Although my colleagues object, I quite like the **Email alerts to teachers** feature (it's a good way of determining the working practices of your students, that is, do they hand in their homework at 3 am the night before it's due?). Like most teachers, I'm very far from an "Inbox zero" and if you don't want to be receiving lots of e-mails from your class as they hand in their work then make sure this feature is turned off. Here are the rest of the settings as I have them:

Grade

Grade

Grade category

Upload a single file

Allow resubmitting

Email alerts to teachers

Maximum size

Common module settings * Show

Group mode

Visible

ID number

There are required fields in this form

It's worth noting that, although I've left the grading for this activity to be out of 100, I often get asked whether you can change this to be out of 8 (for the key stage levels in the UK). The answer is "yes", simply click on the **Grade** drop-down menu and select **8** from the list. I also get asked whether it's possible to specify our own scale such as, A, B, C, D, E, and F, or Referral, Pass, Merit, and Distinction. The answer, again, is "yes".

- 11.** When you're finished, scroll down to the bottom of the page and press the **Save and return to course** button. My **Homework Box** now looks like this:

7

Homework Box

This is the box where you collect and hand in your homework 😊. For now, I will tell you in class when your homework is due... but there is a calendar in Moodle and we will all be using that soon .

Click here to download your homework → ⬆️ ⬇️ ⬅️ ⬆️ ⬇️ ⬅️

Click here to hand in your completed worksheet → ⬆️ ⬇️ ⬅️ ⬆️ ⬇️ ⬅️

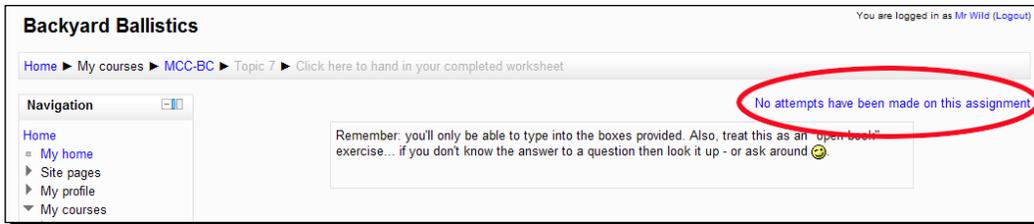
🔍 Add a resource... 🔍 Add an activity...

- 12.** And that's it, we're done!

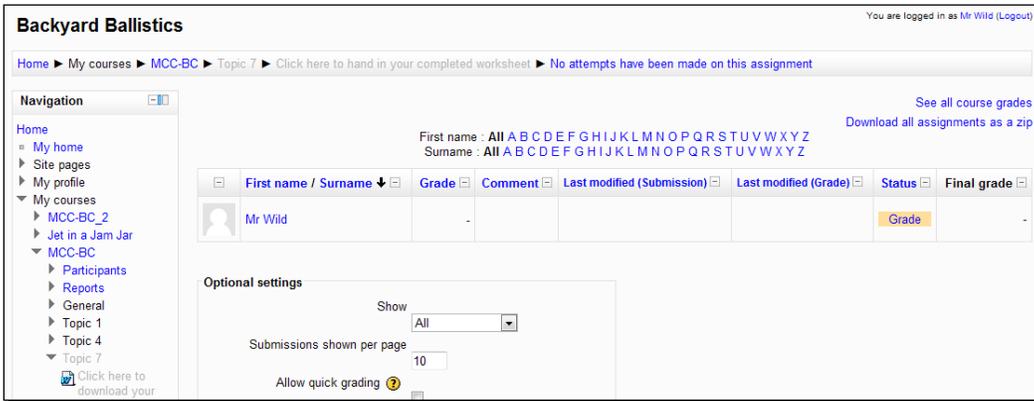
What just happened?

I've just converted my class homework exercise to Moodle. Rather than printing out the worksheet, I've uploaded it to Moodle and provided a link in my course for my students to click on so they can download it from there. I've also used an Upload a single file assignment activity so that, rather than handing me a paper copy, they can complete the homework on their computers and hand it in through Moodle.

Click on the assignment now to see what happens. You'll see a screen displaying the task you've just set, and in the top right-hand corner you'll see a **No attempts have been made on this assignment** link:



Click on that link now. You'll be taken to a list of students who are enrolled on your course. If you don't have any students enrolled on your course then you will see just your own name listed:



I don't yet want students enrolled on my course until I know it is set up to be how I want it. The solution is to introduce a "control student" on our course. Let's do that in the next section.

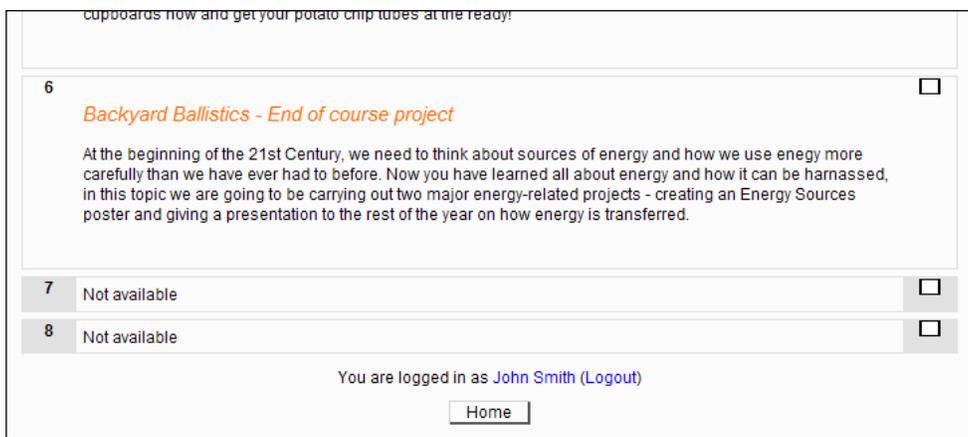
Introducing a student on your course

You've just seen how easy it is for us to hand out homework and provide the means for our students to hand in their work via Moodle. However, we do need to have a feel for how it is to be a student using Moodle to hand in work, check our grades, and teacher feedback, too. What we need at this stage isn't one of our actual students. We need a "control student", and there are two ways we can introduce one on our course:

- ◆ Ask the admin to create a pretend student and either you or they can enroll them on the course. If the administrator then gives us the login details for this student then we can log in as them and see what it is like as a student on our courses.
- ◆ Ask a colleague to enroll on our course. Our colleagues may be teachers on their own Moodle courses but, as long as they aren't already teachers on our course, when they join us in our courses they will be enrolled as students. Moodle doesn't know that they are teachers in the real world.

I've gone for the first of the two options, for no better reason than my colleagues didn't want me to have their login details (they obviously don't trust me) and they aren't always going to be around when I need them to help me test out my course. My admin has enrolled on my course a student called John Smith, and my admin has given me John Smith's login details. I'm sure you've found this option already, but why not simply use the **Switch role to...** menu at the top of the course main page? I'm not using that setting because Moodle still knows that I am a teacher. That option is best when you want to check how our course would look if we were a student, not how it would behave if we were a student.

Before I log in as a student I need to reveal the assignment topic. If I don't and I'm a student then I'll see this:



The screenshot shows a Moodle course interface. At the top, there is a banner with the text "cupboards now and get your potato chip tubes at the ready!". Below this is a list of topics. The first topic is numbered "6" and titled "Backyard Ballistics - End of course project". It has a description: "At the beginning of the 21st Century, we need to think about sources of energy and how we use energy more carefully than we have ever had to before. Now you have learned all about energy and how it can be harnessed, in this topic we are going to be carrying out two major energy-related projects - creating an Energy Sources poster and giving a presentation to the rest of the year on how energy is transferred." To the right of this topic is a closed eye icon. Below it are two more topics, numbered "7" and "8", both titled "Not available", each with a closed eye icon. At the bottom of the page, it says "You are logged in as John Smith (Logout)" and there is a "Home" button.

The topic isn't available. Make sure you click on the closed eye icon to open the eye and reveal the topic before you log out.

How a student hands in homework

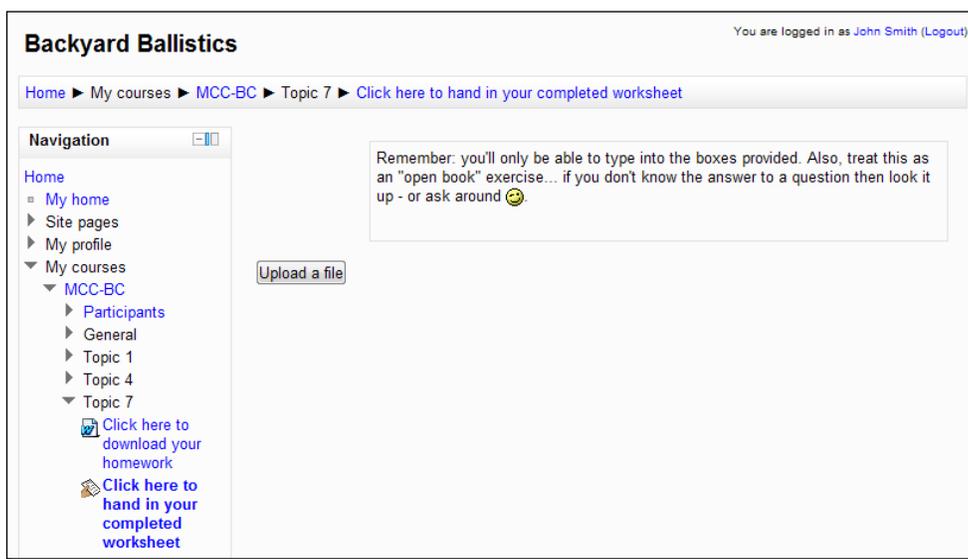
I've logged out and then logged back in as student John Smith.

As already mentioned, it is a very good idea to see what we are expecting our students to do when we ask them to upload their homework to us online. At the very least, we need to know what we are talking about in case they have any questions or problems. If you don't have a student login or you are still logged in as yourself and have asked a colleague to check that your assignment is working correctly, it's a good idea to take a good look over their shoulder while they are running through the following steps. Together, let's run through what a student must do to upload homework to us.

Time for action – uploading a file to teacher

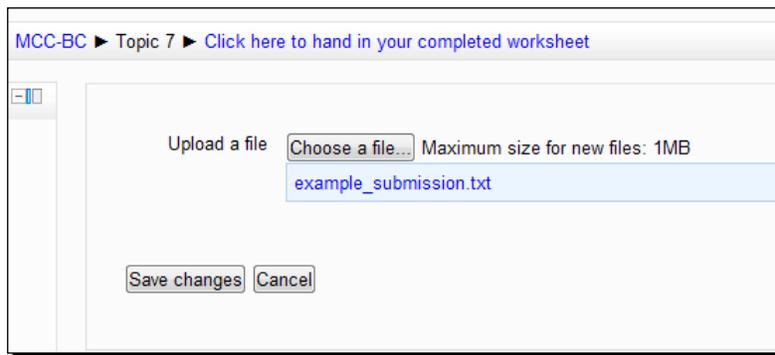
I only have one computer to work from, so the first thing to do is for me to log out and log back in as my pretend student "John Smith". If you have the luxury of having two computers next to each other then you can log in as yourself on one and your pretend student on the other at the same time. You might have two different browsers (for example, Firefox and Internet Explorer) installed on the same computer. If so, you can log into one as a teacher and the other as a student. Don't try to log in as two different people on the same computer using the same browser, it doesn't work. Now that you are logged in as a student:

1. Return to the course main page and click on the **Advanced uploading of files** assignment you added earlier. You will be presented with the following page:

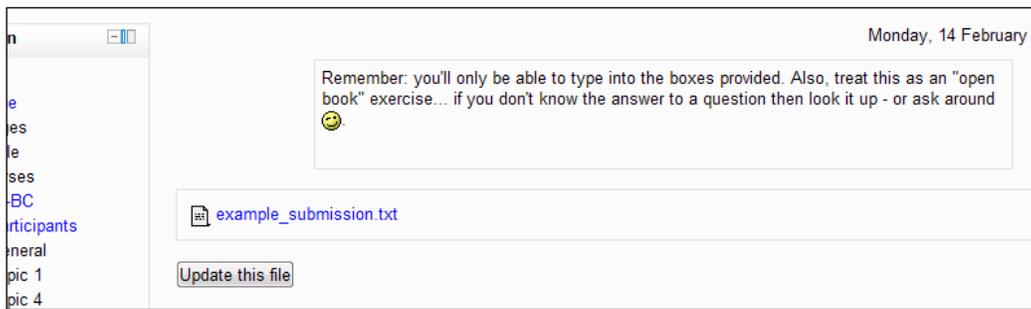


-
2. At the top of the page is our description of the assignment. Immediately under that is an **Upload a file** button.

Click on the **Upload a file** button now. The **Choose a file...** button opens the **File picker** dialog. Recall that using the File picker allows us to select a file from different repositories or, if you select the **Upload a file** option, allows us to select a file on our computer (or the network if we are in school). You can choose any for now, just to prove the point. I've quickly created a text file using Notepad called `example_submission.txt`. Click on **Upload a file** and select the file you want to upload and press the **Open** button. The name of the file is now displayed in the box:



3. Press the **Save changes** button. You will now see the file listed and (because I gave students the option to resubmit) an **Update this file** button:



4. That's it. We're done!

What just happened?

It was easy for us to convert our assignments to Moodle. Now we've seen how easy it is for students to convert to using Moodle to hand in their assignment submissions, and now we've actually got a piece of work to mark (albeit a pretend piece) and I am ready to start marking.

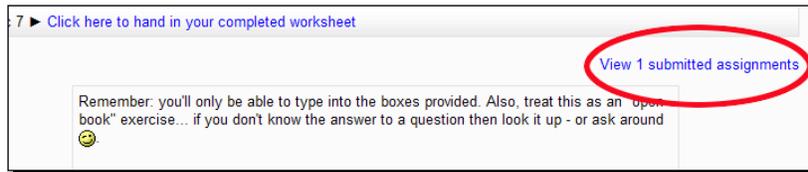
Before moving on to the next section, make sure you are logged in as yourself rather than as a student.

Marking homework

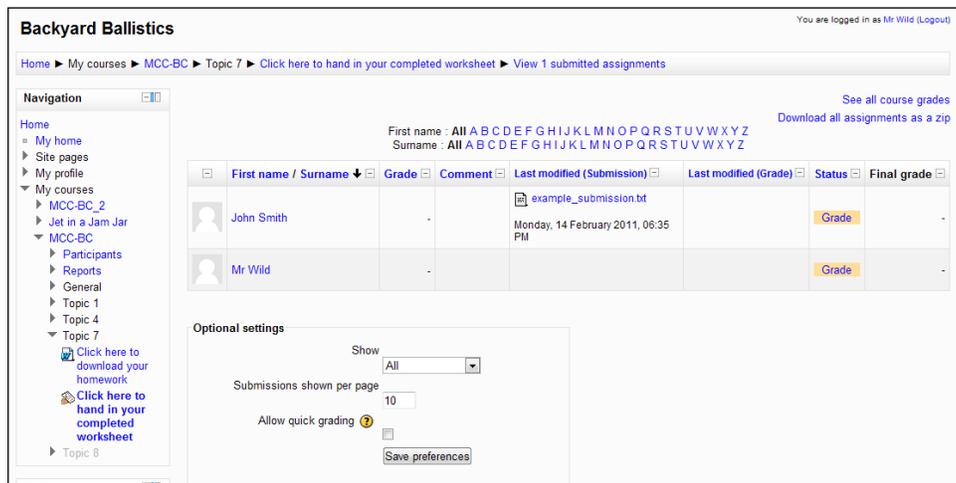
Managing student homework is one of my biggest headaches (students forgetting to bring their homework into school, me misplacing (ahem) worksheets at school) but by converting to Moodle I can avoid my biggest problems. Let's see how easy it is to check in Moodle.

Handling student submissions

Make sure you are logged in as yourself again (that is, not John Smith, in my case). Return to your course front page and click on the **assignment** link. When enrolled as a student, I submitted an assignment to this activity. Now look for the link in the top right-hand corner of the page:



Click on the **View 1 submitted assignments** link. You are taken to the **Submissions** page for this assignment. You will see the submission we made previously now listed:



If I click on `example_submission.txt` I am asked if I want to open or save the file. Let's save it, make some comments, and see how these are fed back to the student. How do we provide feedback on project submissions using Moodle?

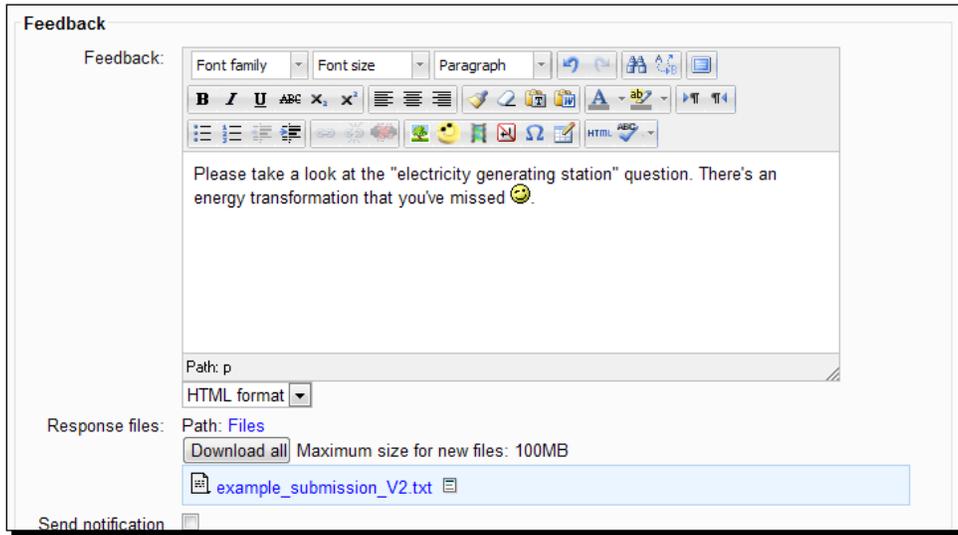
Time for action – providing feedback on student submissions

I'm going to add a comment to `example_submission.txt` and then save the file locally as `example_submission_v2.txt`. I'm then going to provide this slightly modified file back to the student by way of feedback on their work so far:

1. Click on the **Grade** link in the status column, along from the student's name. The feedback screen is displayed:

The screenshot shows the Moodle 'Feedback: John Smith' interface. At the top, it displays the user's name 'John Smith' and the date 'Monday, 14 February 2011, 06:35 PM'. Below this is a 'Submission' section with a link to 'example_submission.txt'. The 'Grades' section shows 'Grade: No grade' and 'Current grade in gradebook: -'. The 'Feedback' section features a rich text editor with a toolbar containing options for font family, font size, format, bold, italic, underline, text color, background color, bulleted list, numbered list, link, unlink, insert image, insert video, insert audio, insert table, and HTML source. Below the editor is a 'Path' field, a 'Response files' section with an 'Add...' button and a note that the maximum size for new files is 100MB, and a 'Send notification emails' checkbox. At the bottom, there are 'Save changes' and 'Cancel' buttons.

2. At the top of the screen is another link to the file the student has uploaded. In the bottom half of the **Feedback** screen is an area allowing me to provide feedback (in the form of both text and response files) to the student. Click on the **Add...** button. The **File picker** dialog is displayed. Use the dialog (via **Upload a file**) to select `example_submission_v2.txt`. Press the **Open** button.
3. Press the **Upload this file** button. The file is now uploaded to Moodle. Enter your comment on this work in the **Feedback** box:



4. When you are finished, press the **Save changes** button (immediately beneath the editor).
5. The **Submissions** page is updated accordingly and we're done:

	First name / Surname	Grade	Comment	Last modified (Submission)	Last modified (Grade)	Status	Final grade
	John Smith	-	Please take ...	example_submission.bt Monday, 14 February 2011, 06:35 PM	Monday, 14 February 2011, 07:03 PM	Update	-
	Mr Wild	-				Grade	-

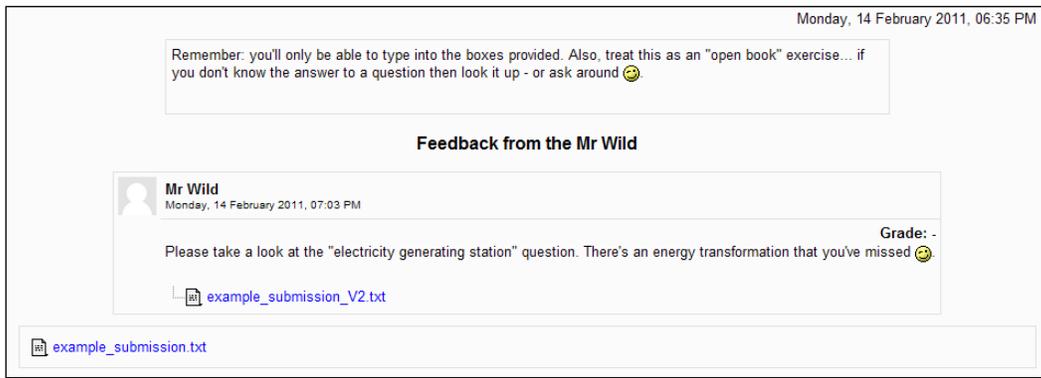
What just happened?

Providing feedback on student submissions is easy when you convert to Moodle for handing out and collecting homework. We don't have to worry about sending out e-mails (depending on how Moodle is set up, students are sent an e-mail advising them that you have provided some feedback) or worry about spreading viruses by asking your students to bring in their homework on memory sticks. Everything is kept contained online within Moodle. But what does it look like for students when we provide feedback to them?

Confirming that our feedback has been received

It is a good idea at this stage to log in as a student again, so we can experience what it is like to be a student receiving teacher feedback.

Logging back on to Moodle as a student and clicking on my **Advanced uploading of files** assignment I see the following page:



The screenshot shows a Moodle submission feedback page. At the top right, it says "Monday, 14 February 2011, 06:35 PM". Below that is a reminder box: "Remember: you'll only be able to type into the boxes provided. Also, treat this as an 'open book' exercise... if you don't know the answer to a question then look it up - or ask around 😊". The main heading is "Feedback from the Mr Wild". Below this is a message from "Mr Wild" dated "Monday, 14 February 2011, 07:03 PM". The message says: "Please take a look at the 'electricity generating station' question. There's an energy transformation that you've missed 😊". To the right of the message, it says "Grade: -". Below the message is a link to a file: "example_submission_V2.txt". At the bottom of the page, there is another link to a file: "example_submission.txt".

My note is displayed, and the student has the opportunity to download the corrected file I uploaded.

Marking student submissions

The process of marking student submissions is easy; from the **Submissions** page click on the **Grade** link along from the student's name. The feedback screen is displayed. Select the final grade from the **Grade** drop-down menu.

Have a go hero – training for parents

If you are using Moodle to hand out and collect homework and are worried that pupils and parents might need help learning how to use the technology, then consider running twilight/after-school sessions for parents. This might be especially useful if you are going to be handing out work to younger students.

Pop quiz

When I handed out the homework to my students, I provided a link to a file. When it came to specifying how the file should be displayed, I chose the **Force download** option. What effect does this have?

Summary

We learned how to hand out and collect homework through Moodle.

Specifically, we covered:

- ◆ How to add a new topic to a course, and how doing so allows us to hide homework, and its supporting reference materials, until we are ready to hand the work out.
- ◆ We discussed how an **Upload a single file** activity can be used to collect homework.
- ◆ How handing in homework looks from the student's point of view. We discussed the importance of knowing how students submit homework, so that you are ready to give help and guidance as students begin to work online.
- ◆ How to provide feedback on student work and how we could comment files and hand these back to students online.