MODULE 2

Development and Distribution of T&L Materials

After completing this module, you should be able to:

- Add a welcoming message and course info to your course website
- Insert summary of topics to be discussed in each week
- Add content by creating hyperlinks to files and web pages.
- Display directory of course materials
- Manage course materials orderly and systematically

Introduction

The main thing you most probably want to do when creating a course in e-learning is adding contents like lecture notes or links to external resources. Contents are added into you course using the "+Add an activity or resource" menu which is available in every sections of your course menu. You will need to be in editing mode by turning editing on to see this menu.

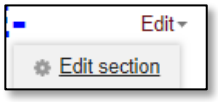
However, before you start adding contents, you probably want to add a welcoming message to your students so that they know they have come to the right place. This is usually located in the top section of your course website (what we usually call section or week zero). Furthermore, it is a good practice to display a course synopsis, a brief description about your course, right at the top of your course website plus some contact information on the instructor.

Editing Course Summary

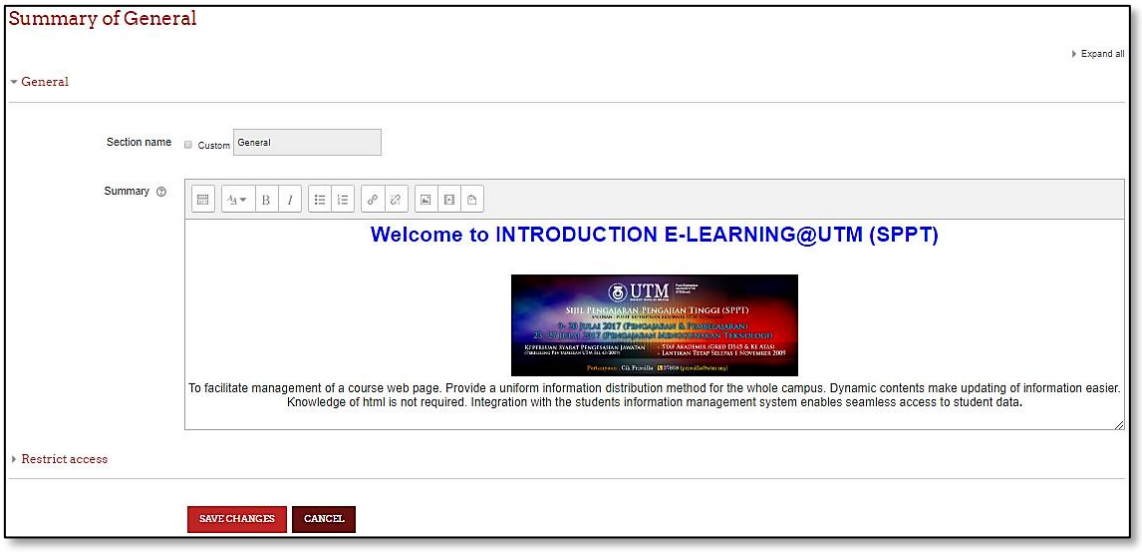
Weekly course summary will have to be prepared or editted before course material can be orderly added into your course. Usually in the first section This summary will highlight to your students topics or activities that will be covered in the respective week. Follow the steps outlined below to add course summary.

1. Click the "Turn editing on" button.

2. Go to the top section of your course page (week zero) and click on the "Edit" link to open the "Summary" window.

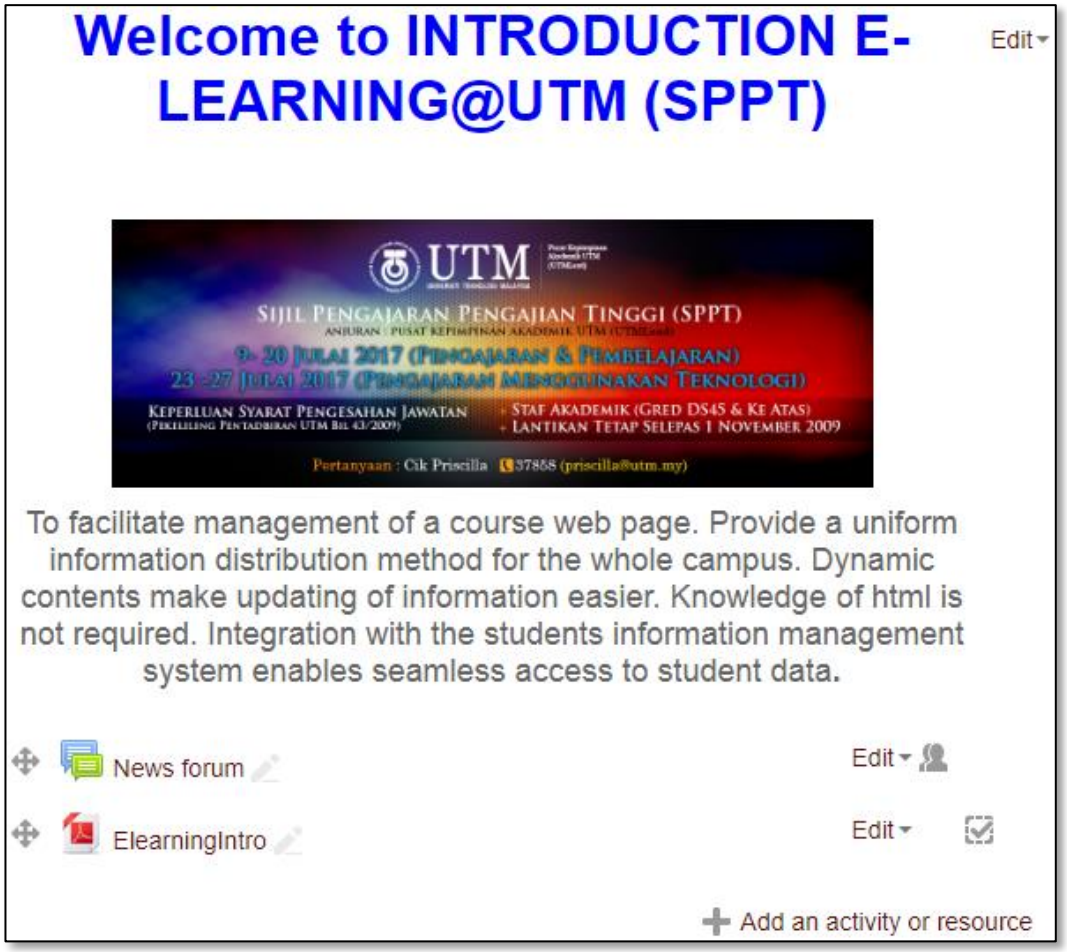


3. Type a welcoming message and course info, in the space provided.



4. Click “Save changes” button to save your editing.

5. Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 to add a synopsis of your course in this section. After you have completed these steps, your top section should look like the following:



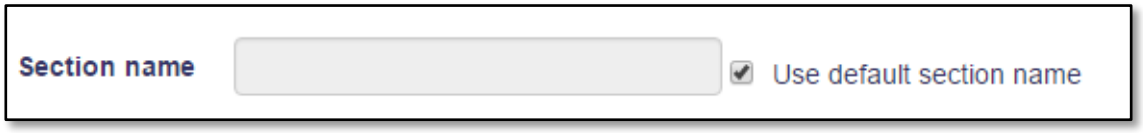
Once the course info and summary are added, you are now ready to add content to your course. Let’s start by adding a simple “Labels” into your course page.

Adding a Label

Labels enable you to add additional text or graphics to your course page. Labels can be used to add banners to courses, label sections of resources and activities, or provide quick instructions on the front page of your course. To add a label:

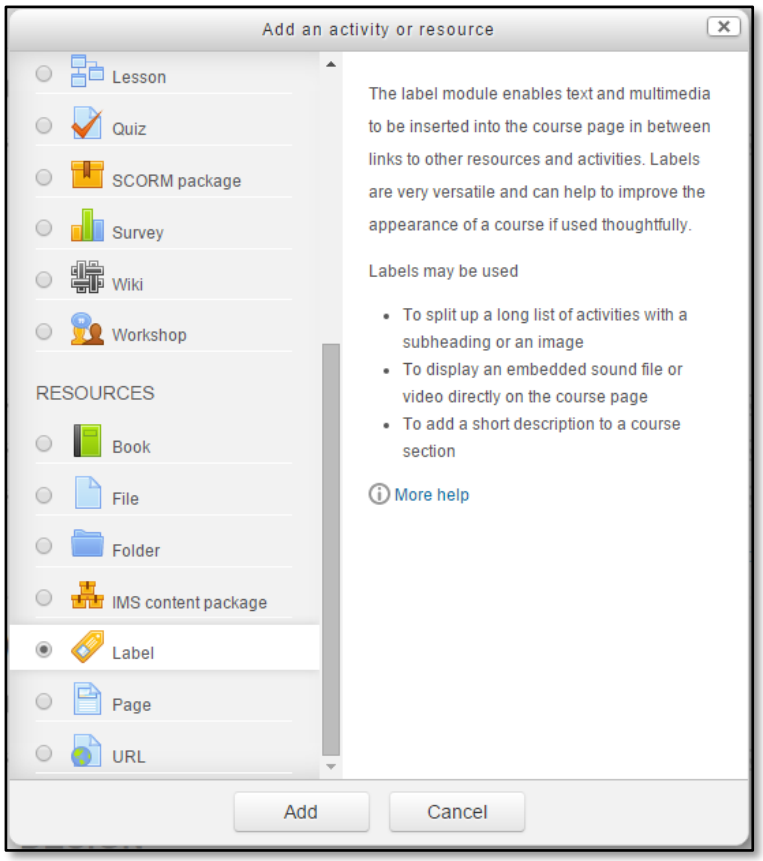
1. Click the “Turn editing on” button.

2. Go to week one of your course and click on the "edit summary" icon .

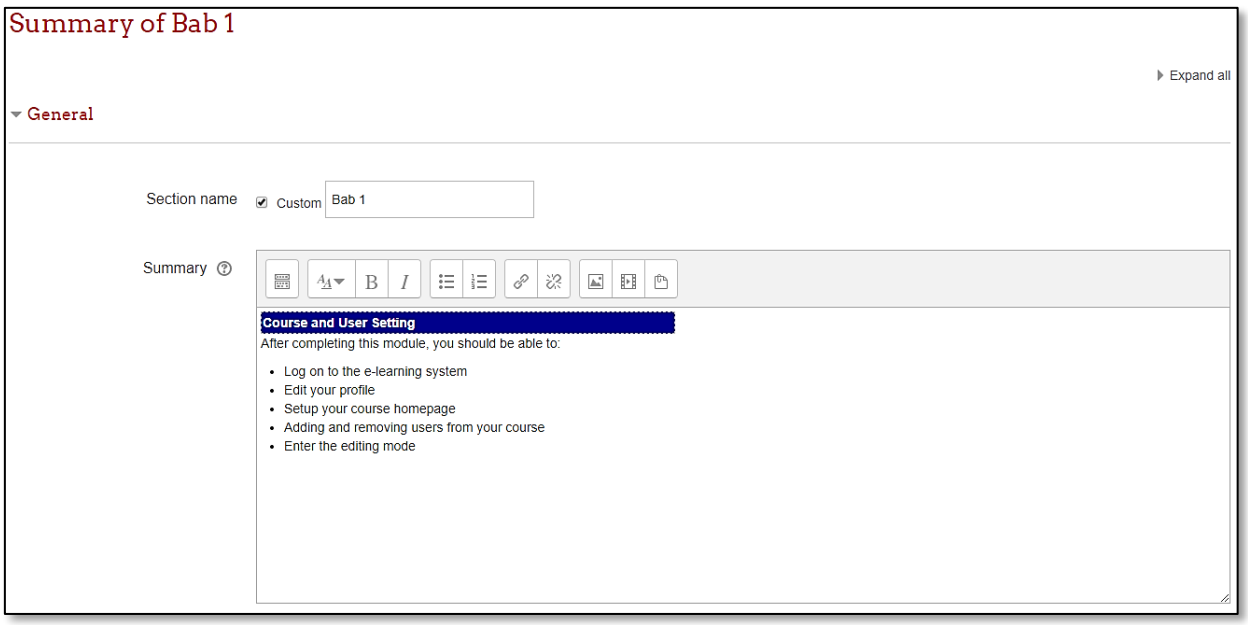


3. Click “Save changes” button to save your editing.

4. Create your label using the “+Add an activity or resource”. In this case, select “Label” under “Resources”.



5. Type in the topics you want to discuss in this week in the “Label text” space.



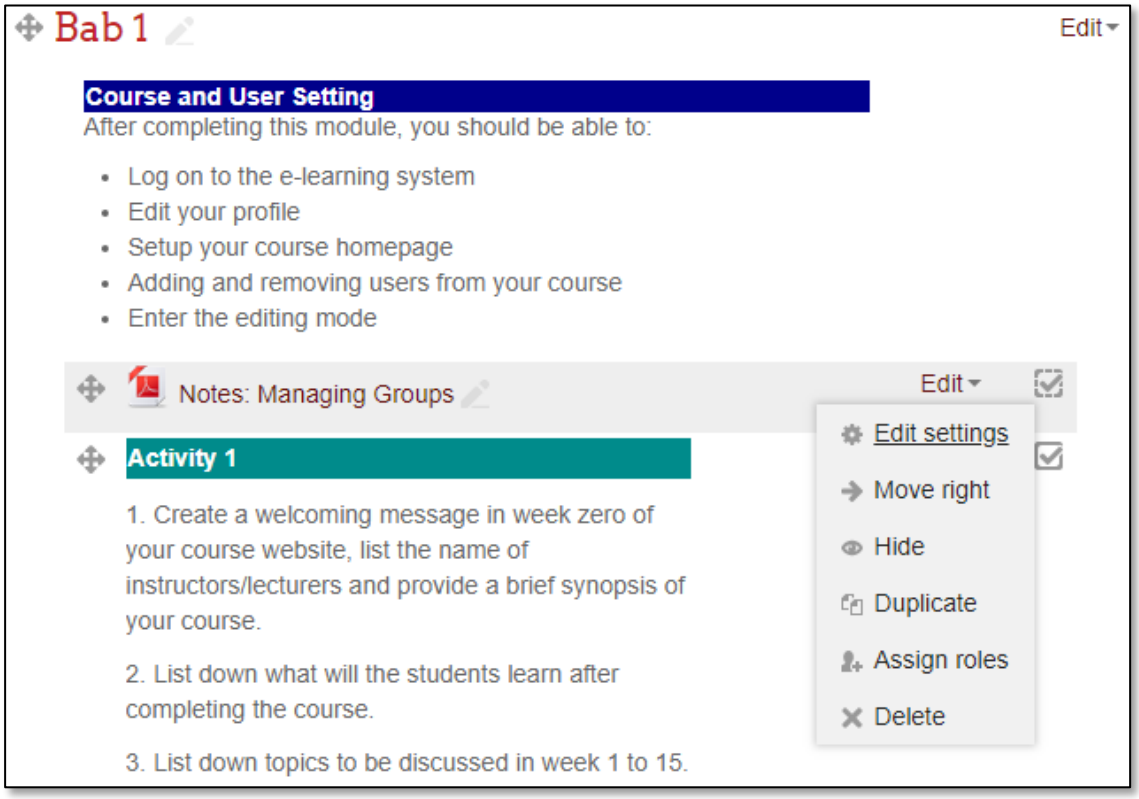
6. After you have created your summary, click the “Save and return to course” button.

7. Repeat the same procedure for all sections to insert topics to be discussed in each section.

Once you have created a label, the full text of the label will appear in the section where you created it.

You can use a hidden label to provide information only for other lecturers in your course, since students are unable to see hidden items.

If you want to use a label to identify a grouping of resources and activities within a section, you can indent the links under the “Edit” settings and click “Move right” to each resource or activity link. This will give your grouping some visual separation from the rest of the content.



Linking to a File or a Web Page

You can also upload and store any digital content that you have created in other applications to the e-learning system. Documents you create in a word processor or presentation package can be shared with students in your course. You can also easily add links to other web sites to give your students access to important web resources.

Uploading files

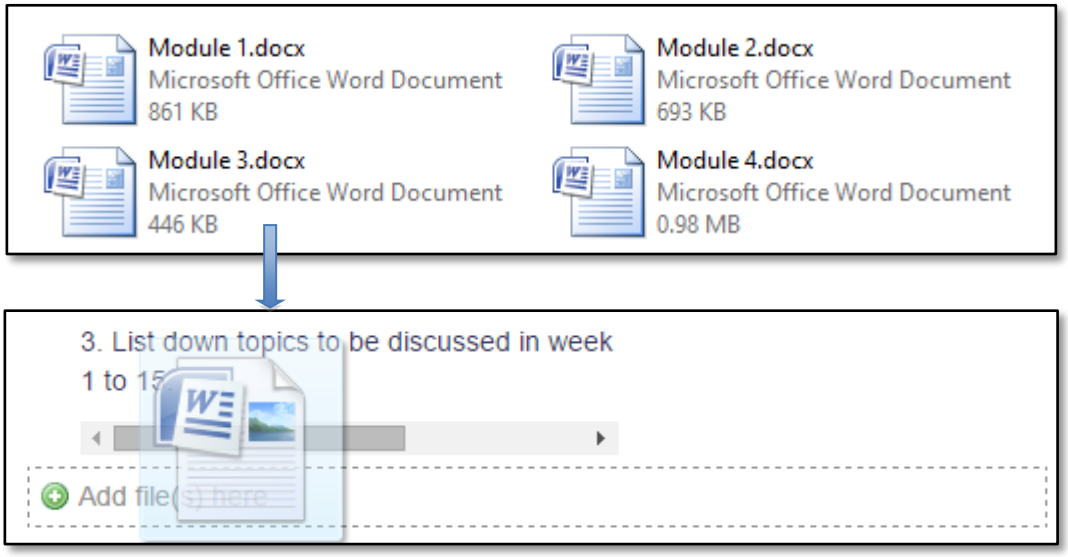
In version two of the e-learning software, you don't have to manually upload the files before creating a link to it. You only need to *drag and drop* the files to the relevant section on your course page.

To add a link to a file by using drag and drop:

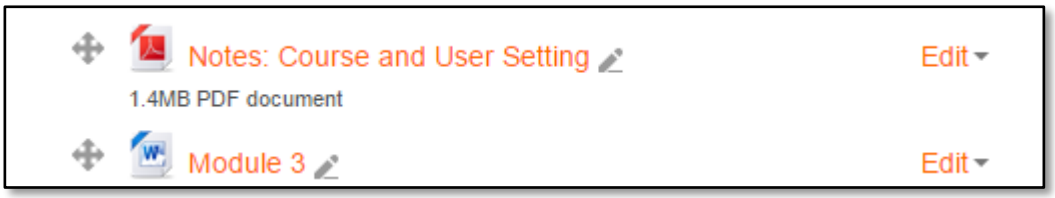
1. Click the “Turn editing on” button.

2. Open the folder containing the files you want to upload.

3. Drag the file to the section where you want to create the link.

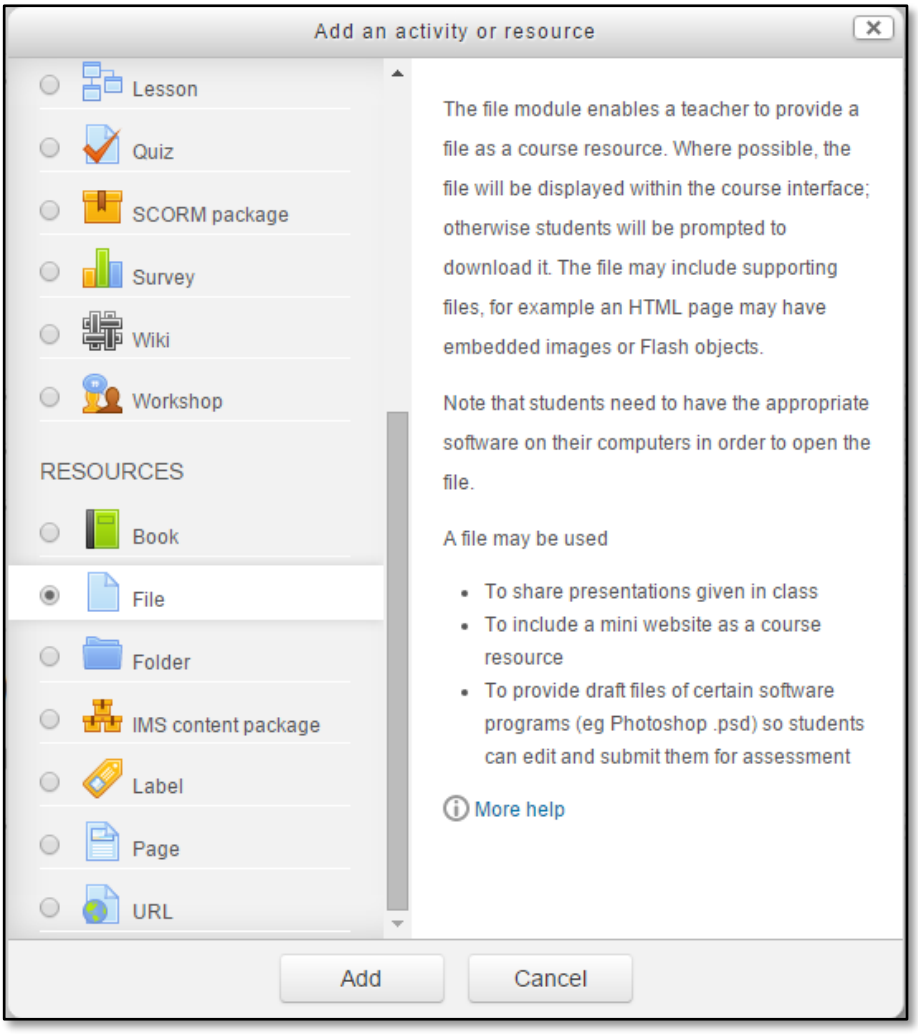


4. Once the file is uploaded to the server, you will see a link created. By default, the system will use the file name as the name of the link. You can change the name of the link later.

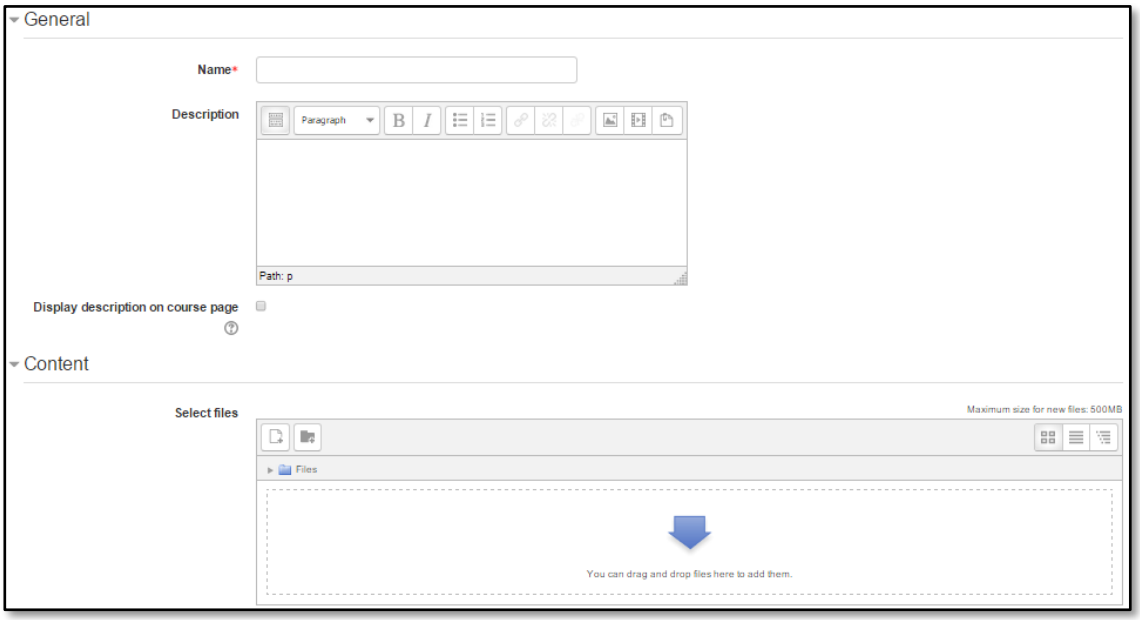


To create a link to a file by uploading the file to the course area first

1. Click "+Add an activity or resource". A pop up window listing the type of activities and resources will appear. If you selected any of the activities or resources, a brief summary of what they are all about will be displayed on the right hand side of the pop up window.



2. Select "File" and hit the **Add** button. A new window will pop up.



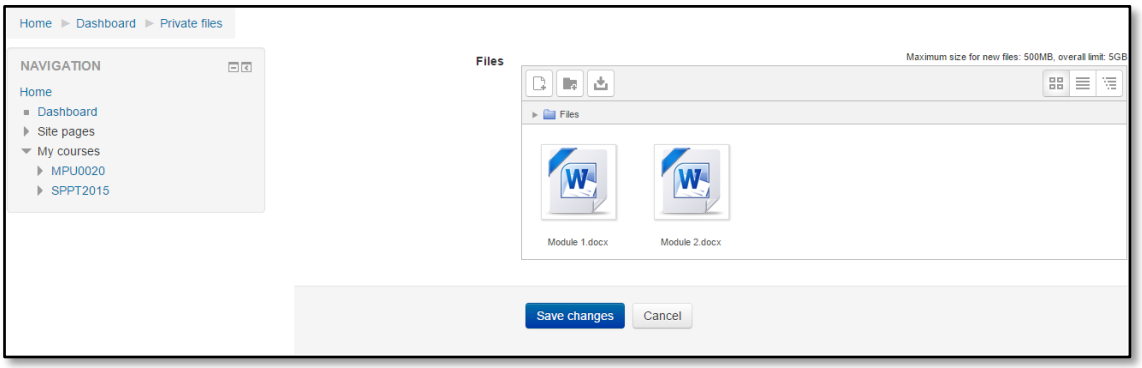
3. In the general section of the window, type in the name of the link for that file and a brief description about this resource.

4. Open the folder containing the file and drag the file to the content area. Once the file is uploaded to the server, click "Save changes".

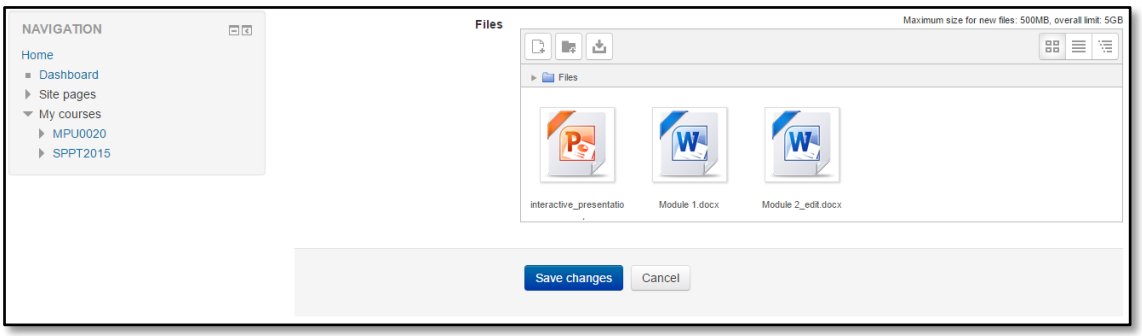
Creating a link to a file in the Private File Area

The current version of the e-learning software allows an instructor to create a link to a file in his own area. One advantage of this method is that the same file can be shared by other courses managed by the same lecturer. However, if the lecturer is no longer teaching the course, the link will be broken.

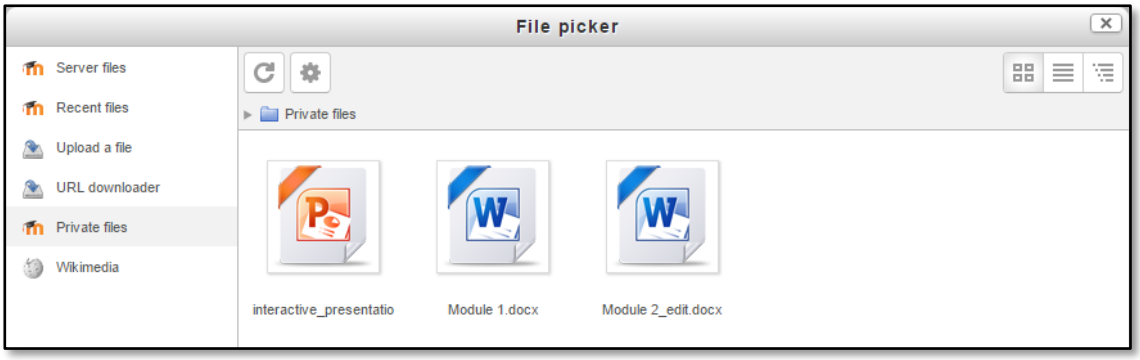
1. Go to your Dashboard. In the "Private Files" area, select "Manage private files…" A window which shows a list of all files in your area on the server will appear.



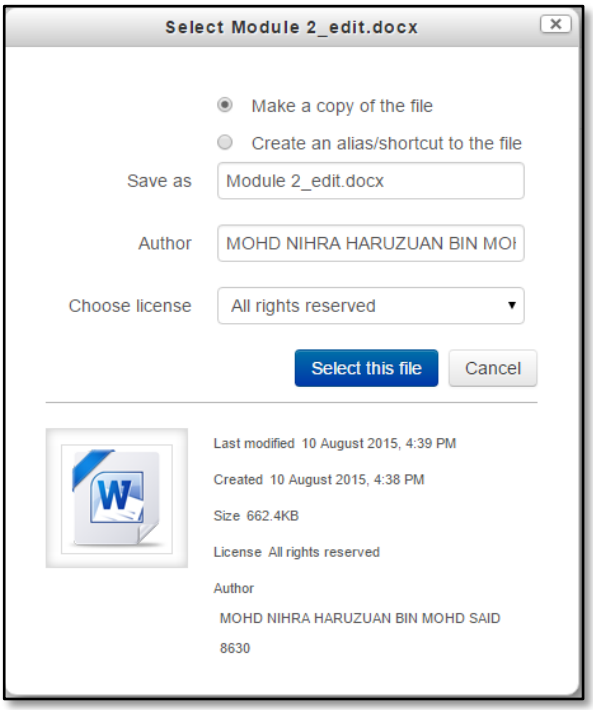
2. Drag and drop the file that you want to upload to this area. Once uploaded, the file is shown in your list of files on the server. Remember this file can also be accessed from any courses you teach.



3. Next, you crate the link by using the "Add an activity or resource" menu. As usual type in the name of the link and provide a brief description about the link. In the Select files section, click the **Add…**option. A file picker window will appear. Select Private Files.



4. Select the file you want to link to. When a pop up window appears for that file, select "Create an alias/shortcut the the file" followed by "Select this file" button.

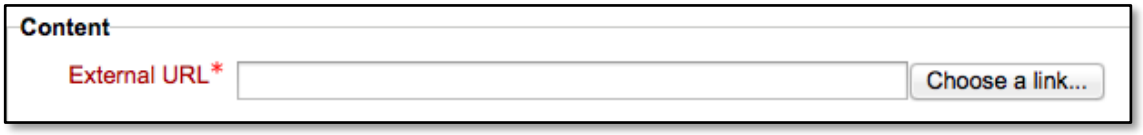


5. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click one of the "Save" buttons. The name of the resource will now be a link in the course section.

Creating a link to other Web Sites

To add a link to another web site:

1. Click the “Turn editing on” button.
2. From the “Add an activity or resource” menu select “URL”
3. Enter a name for the link and write a summary.



4. In the "External URL" field, enter the address of the page you want to link to.

   There are a number of ways to display the external website. Some are listed below:

   - Automatic - The best display option for the URL is selected automatically
   - Embed - The URL is displayed within the page below the navigation bar together with the URL description and any blocks
   - Open - Only the URL is displayed in the browser window
   - In pop-up - The URL is displayed in a new browser window without menus or an address bar
   - In frame - The URL is displayed within a frame below the the navigation bar and URL description
   - New window - The URL is displayed in a new browser window with menus and an address bar

5. Finally, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the “Save changes” button.

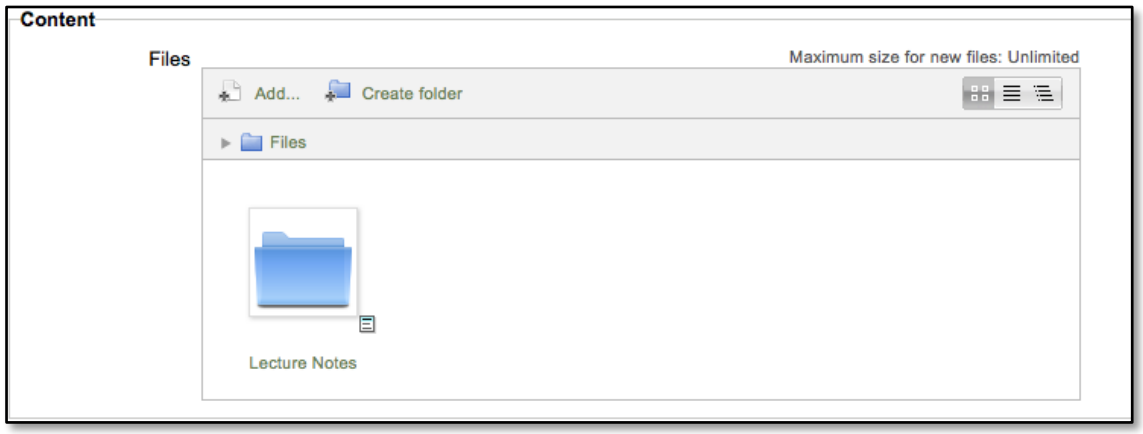
Displaying a Folder

The other option for displaying files is to create a link to a folder within the files area. To display a folder:

1. In editing mode, select “Folder” from the “Add an activity or resource” menu in the course section where you want to add the folder.

2. On the Edit page, enter a name for the resource and write a summary.

3. In the Content section, create a folder where you want to upload your files. Once created, you can start uploading files (by drag and drop) from your computer.



4. Click one of the "Save" button.

5. When a student clicks on the resulting folder link, she will see a list of all the files in that folder. If the folder contains subfolders, she will also be able to browse these.

Adding Media Content

Adding media content can help you communicate some ideas and processes more easily than text alone. Imagine trying to teach a language if the students aren't able to hear it spoken. Or how much easier it would be to learn how volcanoes work if you could see a video or an animation. Fortunately, Moodle makes it easy to add rich media content to your course. The Moodle media filters automatically recognize your media type and put the right sort of link into your web page so students can access it easily.

Media content may be added using the same steps as for the earlier section "Uploading files":

1. In editing mode, select "File" from the "+Add an activity or resource" menu in the course section where you want to add the link to the media file.

2. Enter a name for the resource and write a summary.

3. Click the "Add…" button or start uploading files (by drag and drop) from your computer.

4. Either upload the media file or, if you uploaded it previously, find the file you want to add in the files area.

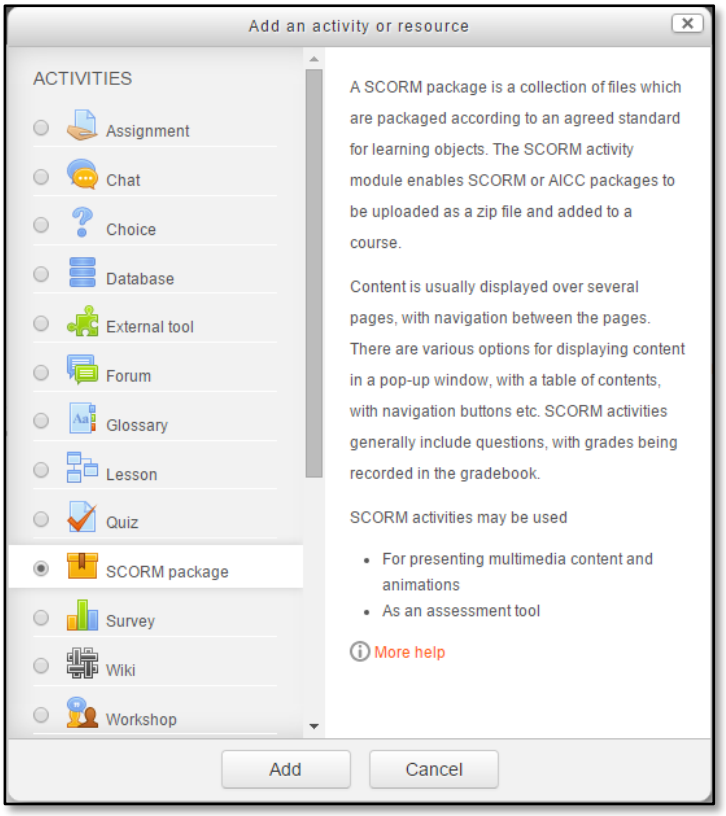
5. Click the Choose link opposite the media file. The files window will close and the location of the file will be entered automatically into the page.

6. The name of the resource will now be an active link in the content block.

MP3 files are automatically embedded in a streaming player made with Flash.

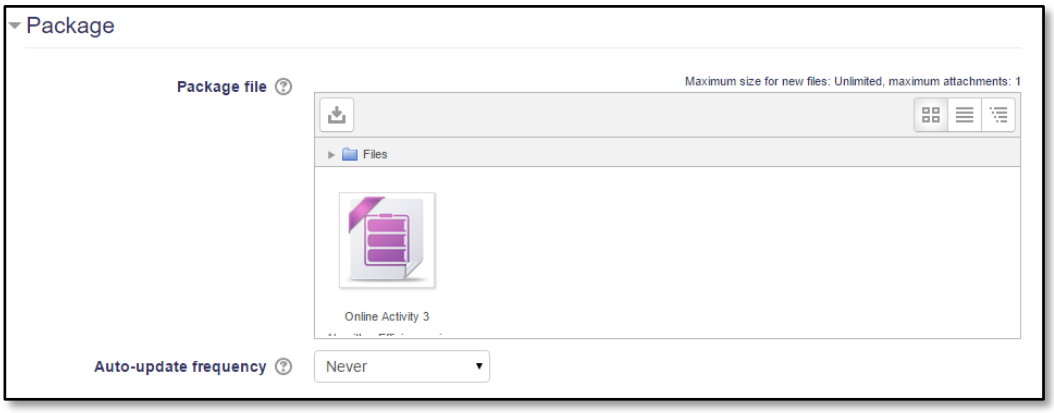
Adding a SCORM Package

1. To add a SCORM package to your course, firstly, turn on editing mode, select "SCORM" from the "+Add an activity or resource" menu in the course section where you want to add a SCORM package.



2. Enter a name for SCORM package and write a description.

3. Click the “Add…” button or start uploading SCORM package (by drag and drop) from your computer.



4. After you have added your SCORM package, click the “Save and return to course” button.

6. The name of SCORM package will now be an active link in the content block.

Effective Content Practices

There are a few effective practices that can make life easier for you and your students. First, there are file format tricks to ensure your students can download and use your content. Second, make sure the bit size of your files is as small as it can be, so your students won't grow old waiting to download tomorrow's lecture notes. Third, there are creative ways to use static content in your courses to help you and your students succeed.

File Formats

Every file you create and save on your computer has a specific file format. For example, Word files are saved in Word format, and can be opened only in a compatible version of Word. However, this can cause problems if your students don't have the same version of Word you do. A solution is to continue to create your documents in Word but save them as Rich Text Format, or RTF, a format that a wide variety of word-processing programs can open.

In most versions of Word, you can save a file as RTF by following these steps:

1. Select "Save As" from the file menu.

2. Choose RTF from the file type drop-down.

3. Save the RTF copy of your document.

There are a number of file formats for displaying text and images that almost everyone can open, regardless of their computing platform, and you should strive to use these whenever possible. These formats include RTF, Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Portable Display Format (PDF), and picture formats, including PICT and TIFF.

Reducing File Sizes

As important as creating files your students can open is making sure those files are a manageable size. Graphics are usually the biggest offenders, and they crop up in some unlikely places. There are three strategies that will give you the best results for the effort.

Strategy 1: Save your PowerPoint presentations as PDF

Big PowerPoint files are often the worst file-size offenders. It's too easy to add cool transitions, clip art, and images that expand a simple hour-long presentation into a multimegabyte behemoth that takes an hour to download. Not a good use of time for something that students will simply print out and bring to class.

We recommend exporting your presentation as PDF using OpenOffice.org. Students will get the benefits of the outline of the lecture, including graphics, and be able to print copies of the presentation slides, and the file will be quick and easy to download.

Strategy 2: Scan articles as text, not images

There are many good articles that just aren't available in electronic format. If you want to avoid printing an entire reader, scanning articles is an easy way to give your students access to important resources. Many libraries now have electronic reserve services that will scan them for you.

Scanning articles can result in very large files because most scanner software, by default, scans everything as a graphic. So when you scan a page, you're really creating a picture of the page that is much larger than a text version. The computer has to store information about every dot on the page, not just information about the characters and their placement.

The solution is to use a software tool called Optical Character Recognition, or OCR. This great tool recognizes the shape of the letters and gives you a text version of the article. You can then manipulate the text version in the same way you'd edit any other text document. It has the added advantage of being accessible to screen readers for students with visual disabilities.

Free OCR software is available for download here: code.google.com/p/ocropus/. OmniPage Pro is currently the most popular OCR package. It's come a long way in the last few years and is now very powerful. If you have a relatively clean photocopy of the articles you want to share, scanning them will be a very fast process.

Strategy 3: Reduce your image size and use compression

Finally, if you have digital images, it's very important to optimize their size and resolution for sharing over the Web. Modern digital cameras and scanners can produce amazing, crystal-clear images, but at a price of very large file sizes. A full-resolution photograph in a modern camera can be 4 megabytes, which will take more than 5 minutes to download on a 56k modem.

Most cameras and scanners come with free utilities that enable you to manipulate images. Other programs such as Photoshop are fully featured, professional packages with lots of tools. To reduce your file size, you only need some very simple tools, provided by most image-manipulation software.

The key to getting manageable images is to first reduce the size of the image. If your image will be primarily viewed on the screen, you can make it 72 dpi and it will still be viewable. If you plan to have your students print the image, then it will need to be higher resolution. Experiment with some different sizes and resolutions to get a result you're happy with.

When your image is the right size, save it at the minimum quality as a web-compatible format such as JPG or GIF. These formats make your file size even smaller by eliminating unnecessary and redundant data.

By reducing the size of your files, you'll make life easier for yourself and your students. But the smallest, most portable files in the world don't mean much if your students can't use them successfully in your class. Next, we'll discuss some interesting ways you can use content to make your Moodle class a valuable resource for your students.

Creative Content

The e-learning system allows you to upload just about any file that resides on your computer. However, the key to a successful content strategy is knowing what content helps your students be successful and what is unnecessary or confusing. Below are two best practices for adding content to your course. These practices work well in a range of course designs, but there are others that might work just as well for your particular course.

Uploading lecture notes

One of the easiest ways to use the system to increase student learning is to upload your lecture notes before the lecture. Providing access to your lecture outlines before a class meeting gives your students a tool to help prepare for class and structure their class notes. If students know which topics you consider important enough to include in your lecture, they are more likely to pay attention to those areas in any assigned readings. During class, they can use the lecture notes as a basic outline and concentrate on elaborating the main ideas with examples. Lecture notes are also a useful tool for students whose first language is different from that of the speaker. If they get lost during a lecture, they can refer to the notes to get back on track.

If you use PowerPoint in your lectures, a simple way to create and upload lecture notes is to save your slides as an RTF file. The RTF file eliminates graphics and other extras and provides the students with a plain-text outline. It will be easy to download and print for class.

External web sites

Effectively using the Web means you don't have to create or photocopy everything you want to use in your class. There is a lot of quality content available on the Web, if you know where to look and how to evaluate it. A full discussion about vetting online resources is beyond the scope of this book, but your institution's librarian can recommend some sources to get you started.

Most newspapers and news magazines have online versions you can bring into your class for discussions of current events. Universities, schools, and nonprofit organizations publish huge amounts of content available for you to use free of charge. In addition, there is a growing open content movement, which publishes content available for anyone to use.

Most open content is published under a Creative Commons license, which allows users to choose the type of public license they want to use (http://creativecommons.org). Authors can use the CC licenses to license their work for use through any combination of attribution (their name stays attached), with a share-alike license (you can share any

derivative works as long as you use the same license), or noncommercial use (you can't use the materials for commercial purposes). The Creative Commons site also has a search engine for content that has been licensed using a CC license.

In addition to the general content released by people under the Creative Commons licenses, some universities have begun publishing course materials for use by the general public. These collections are known as OpenCourseWare (OCW) repositories. MIT has the most well-known collection, but other universities are following suit.

Some of the bigger collections are:

MIT (http://ocw.mit.edu)

> MIT offers a comprehensive collection of courses from accounting to zoology. Some of their courses have video lectures available in addition to the syllabus, lecture notes, and problem sets.

Utah State University (http://ocw.usu.edu)

> Utah State offers a good collection of basic courses with an emphasis on biological and irrigation engineering and instructional technology.

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (http://ocw.jhsph.edu)

> This is a collection of public health courses from one of the world's leading medical schools.

UK Open University (http://openlearn.open.ac.uk)

> The OU offers full-text versions of their content, instead of just course outlines and notes.

In addition to the institutional collections, there are a growing number of user-created content sites available on the Web. These sites allow anyone to create, change, remix, and catalog content. While the quality of the content can vary wildly, there is a large and growing body of excellent content available for you to use.

Some of these sites are:

Wikipedia (http://www.wikipedia.org)

> An online encyclopedia developed by thousands of volunteers. Anyone can create and edit documents.

Wikibooks (http://en.wikibooks.org)

> A sister project of Wikipedia. It aims to create open textbooks that are freely available to the whole world.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Simply using Google as a tool in your class vastly expands the amount and variety of content available to your students.

Summary

Ultimately, it is you who decides the content you develop and share in your course. Static contents provide resources for students as they engage in the learning process. In this module, we've looked at how to upload and create content for your e-learning course. In the following modules, we'll discuss some of the dynamic activities you can add to your class to make it truly compelling.