



**student guide:**

# Using ymoodle

## **YMCA George Williams College**

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This guide uses specially adapted material from a number of sources. However, a lot of the guide is derived from material written by Shirley Crawford/Celia Webster in September 2009 for Cornwall College [http://virtual.cornwall.ac.uk/file.php/2161/documents/Guide\_to\_using\_Moodle\_Sept\_09\_P.pdf]. We also benefitted from material developed by the University of Illinois Graduate School. Additional material has been written by Mark K Smith.

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Internet support

Find our support pages on [www.ymoodle.org](http://www.ymoodle.org)

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# Introduction

**Welcome** to ymoodle. In this small booklet we explore ymoodle and answer some commonly-asked questions.

## What is ymoodle?

ymoodle is a learning environment that you can access via the web. It runs on a piece of software – Moodle - that is used by many colleges and universities.

Via ymoodle you can access learning materials, communicate with tutors and other students, and submit your assignments.

It is organised into areas called arenas. Some of these arenas are programmes (courses), some provide support for the different people (like managers and supervisors) who are involved in courses.

## How do I use ymoodle?

Basically you just go to [ymoodle.org](http://ymoodle.org) and log in on the front page.

You will receive your username and password from the College. Your username will often be in the format of **firstname.lastname** and your password will be a mix of letters and numbers.

The first time you log in you will have to change your password – and agree to the Acceptable Use Policy. This is known as activating your account.

## **The ymoodle front page**

Across the top of the front page of ymoodle you will find buttons to access different support areas for students, supervisors and managers. You can also access the library catalogue and other network events.

On the left side you will find some smaller blocks. These include a news area, calendar and quick access to various aspects of the programme.

On the wider right side you will find an introduction – and a listing of the different arenas that you can visit. For most students the top arena will be your course.

Wherever you are in ymoodle, clicking on the College logo will bring you back to the front page.

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# Your programme

When you click on your programme you will be taken to the main programme page. Like the front page it is split into two.

## **Blocks**

On the left are various blocks. These allow you to:

Access different assignments, forums and resources

Read the latest programme news

Administer your profile etc.

## **Topics**

On the right are various 'topics'. At the top of the column you will see the welcome area. From here you can do various things:

**Use the forums** to join in discussion on your study group forum or the level forum.

**Message students and programme staff** - : choose who you want and send a message. For staff you can use 'Message my teacher' on the left.

**Read study materials:** If you click on the title of the unit then a screen version will appear; if you go to the resources section of each course you can download a print (A4) version.

**Access handbooks etc.** via a link to the open page for degree students.

**Access study support** for help with how to structure assignments, undertake research - and lots more.

**Submit assignments** online and access further details of tasks etc.

Each course has its own topic area. Within each you will find:

- Learning materials
- Briefings for activities
- More learning resources

- Key forms for you (and others) to fill in.

The learning materials come in two different sizes – screen size and print size. They are usually in pdf format (which can be read by the free Adobe Reader programme). One of the advantages of this is that you can switch on ‘Read Aloud’ – and have Reader speak the materials to you.

### **Viewing the current unit**

When all the units are displayed there is a lot of material on the screen. You can clear out a lot of the clutter by pressing the small box at the top right hand side of the unit you are working on. This then shows only that unit (or topic).









To show all units click the top box again.

### **Icons**


















There are lots of different icons in ymoodle.

There are two main types of icon.

**Resources:** These icons are linked to files that open in different applications. This means that to open them you will need to have the right software on your computer.

Moodle application resources			
	Link to a Word document		Link to a PowerPoint presentation
	Link to an Excel Spreadsheet		Link to an Adobe Acrobat file
	Link to a graphic/image		Link to a flash file or movie
	Link to a sound file		Link to a zipped file

**ymoodle activities and resources.** Below is a table showing some of the icons you may see in your programme. As each programme is different, you may not see all of the icons described below.

Moodle resources and activities			
	A webpage or text page		A directory containing files
	A discussion forum		Appointments
	A quiz/test		Feedback or questionnaire
	Link to a website		A Wiki
	A chat session		A Glossary
	An assignment		A Slideshow
	A choice - similar to a poll		A Database
	A lesson		A Scorm (Interactive resource)
	A book		

## Application viewers

Some resources in Moodle require you to have specific software installed on your computer in order to view the files. Most people will have some of these:

**Flash and Shockwave:** <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>. If you do not want to install the Google bar make sure you remove the tick. (We recommend you do not install it as it is not that easy to remove).

**Reader (for pdf files):** <http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>. Again, if you do not want to install the Google bar make sure you remove the tick. (We recommend you do not install it as it is not that easy to remove).

**VLC media player:** <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>. Great free, open source, media player. Plays just about everything.

**QuickTime player:** <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>. The multimedia platform and player from Apple. Watch what you tick – Apple try to get you to download all sorts of other things like iTunes and their Safari browser.

You might also be interested in downloading free, open source alternatives to Microsoft Office:

**OpenOffice:** <http://www.openoffice.org/>. Powerful suite with a word processor, spreadsheet, drawing, database and presentation package.

**LibreOffice:** <http://www.libreoffice.org/>. A reworked version of OpenOffice with similar features but with a cleaner design etc.

## Navigating ymoodle and your programme

There are five main ways of moving around ymoodle and programme.

**1 – Navigation buttons:** We have included some key links at the top of all pages. Pressing the ymoodle logo will take you to the opening page; through the library button you can search the library catalogue etc. and the network button takes you into an area for all students, former students and others associated with the College.

**2 - Breadcrumb Trail:** this is a menu positioned below the top navigation bar which shows your position on ymoodle. It looks something like this:

[ymoodle](#) ► [helping, mentoring and community learning](#) ► [Assignments](#) ► [Assignment 1](#)

In this example you click on 'ymoodle' to go to the opening page, and on the second link to go to your programme – in this case 'helping, mentoring and community learning'.

The above is only one example of how the breadcrumb trail menu may appear; it will be different in each course. Keep an eye on this as you navigate around, you will notice that it changes to reflect your current position.

**3 - Jump to:** If your programme contains a lot of units it can be tiresome having to scroll up and down the page. You can collapse all of the topics by clicking on the **square box** to

the right of the topic heading.

When all the topics or units are collapsed, you will find a **jump-to** box at the bottom of the topic, which you can use to navigate to another unit or topic.

The topics can be fully restored by clicking again on the + sign in the squared box to the right of the current topic.

**4 – Programme Menu:** In the left hand column you will find additional menus. From here you can go straight to assignment and activity briefings and submissions; forums; and resource listing. You can also edit your profile and pick up messages.

Finally, it is possible to navigate between pages by using the backward and forward buttons on your web browser. **This is not recommended;** you will obtain more consistent results by using the navigation options within Moodle and the course pages.

# Your profile

## **What is a profile?**

A profile contains details about you, such as your name and details of the ymoodle programme on which you are enrolled. It also contains other information some of which you can change. This is similar to profiles used in social networking sites like Facebook. As other people can see your profile by clicking on your name you should be careful what information you enter.

## **How do I edit my profile?**

Once you have logged into Moodle, you can access your profile from almost anywhere, by clicking on the link to your name at the top or the bottom of the screen.

When you are in your profile, click on the Edit profile tab. You will then see the following screen, click on the button Show Advanced to see your complete profile.

On this screen you can change your email address along with other options. We recommend that you do not disable your email address as you will not receive messages sent by your tutor or other learners in ymoodle.

Enter information in the City/town field as this field is blank by default and is a required field.

You should write some basic information about yourself in the description box, in addition to your college course name that you will see here, so that other users know who you are. For obvious reasons it is not a good idea to include personal details such as your home address and phone numbers, doing so is entirely at your own risk.

A picture is linked to all ymoodle accounts which by default is a smiley face, you can change this to any other suitable image if you wish.

### **How do I change my picture?**

You can upload a picture from your computer to ymoodle which will be used in various places to represent you. The best image to use is a close-up of your face, but you can use any you like. When using images you should be aware of copyright law and should not use anything belonging to someone else whose permission you do not have.

The picture must be in JPG or PNG format (ie the file names will usually end in .jpg or .png).

You can get a picture file using one of four methods:

1. Using a digital camera: your photos will most likely already be on your camera/computer in the correct format.
2. You can use a scanner to scan a printed photograph. Make sure you save it as JPG or PNG format.
3. If you're artistic, you might draw a picture using a paint program.
4. Search the web for copyright free images: You can find out about how to search for copyright free images at Intute <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/imagesearching/>

Other sites are Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/> Open Clipart <http://openclipart.org/> Microsoft Clipart <http://office.microsoft.com/clipart>

Finally, if you still can't find anything, there is a Creative Commons search engine at <http://search.creativecommons.org/>

To upload your picture, open your profile and click on the **Edit profile** tab. Scroll down the page until you see area which displays the default smiley picture.

To upload the image, click the "**Browse**" button and navigate to where the picture is stored on your computer and select it.

NOTE: Make sure that the file is not larger than the maximum size listed, or it will not be uploaded.

Then click "Update my Profile" at the bottom - the image file will be cropped to a square and resized down to 100x100 pixels. When you are taken back to your profile page, the image might not appear to have changed. If this happens just use the "**Reload/Refresh**" button in your browser or press F5 on the keyboard.

When you return to your profile you should see your new picture.

IMPORTANT: Please make sure that any picture you upload is not copyrighted, rude or offensive as your picture can be viewed by all users of ymoodle.

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
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# Reading study materials


To access study materials all you need to do is find the unit you want; scroll down to resources; and click on the materials you require.

When you click on a study materials' link the unit will download to your computer. It should also open automatically in a new window. This so that you can swap quickly between ymoodle activities and the unit. If it doesn't open automatically just click on the unit title in the 'downloads' window of your browser.

For study materials you will usually find two versions: one that is labelled 'print version' (which is an A4 format); and another (with just the unit name) which has been designed for the screen.

Study units are in the pdf format with this logo: . They need a special reader (usually Adobe Reader or Acrobat).

You adjust the size by altering the % figure in the Adobe bar at the top of your window.

If you press  the whole page will display – and you can then scroll up and down the document a page at a time by pressing Pg Up or Pg Dn on your keyboard.

## Links

There are live links within the study materials. Just click on blue underlined text and you will jump to another page or resource.

## Real out loud

If you find it difficult to read from a screen e.g. if you have a mild visual impairment or dyslexia, then you might benefit from switching on the *Read Out Loud* facility in Adobe Reader.

When using Reader within your web browser then you need to use short cut keys. Control + Shift + Y switches it on; Control + Shift + V reads a page; and simply clicking on a paragraph should read that paragraph.

If you are running Reader on its own, go to *View*, click on *Read Out Loud* and then switch on read out loud. Then choose whether you want to just the current page or the

whole document. Once read out loud has started reading the document you can just listen to one paragraph by clicking on it.

## **Reflection points and fytds**

In the materials you will find either reflection points fytds (for you to do). These are highlight things that are worth taking a short time to think about. They may also involve some activities.

## **Feedback**

We depend on you to tell us about your experience of using the materials as we are always looking to improve them. Just click on the [feedback link](#) in the ymoodle unit.

When filling the form remember to choose a programme and unit from the drop down menus.

# Using forums

Forums enable all programme members to communicate with each other.

These are essentially used in five different ways:

*News/Announcement forum* – Most programmes have this type of forum which is used by the course tutor(s) to post announcement to students on a course. These messages are also automatically sent to users email addresses and displayed in the course forum. Generally you cannot reply to these messages.

*A single simple discussion* - is just a single topic, all on one page. Useful for short, focussed discussions.

*General Forums* – These forums can be set up in many different ways. They are used for discussion with your tutor and/or other course members; anyone can start a new discussion topic at any time. The forums can be named anything by the tutor but are usually called an ‘Open forum’.

*Each person posts one discussion* - Each person can post exactly one new discussion topic (though everyone can reply). This is useful when you want each student to start a

discussion about say, their reflections on the week's topic and everyone else responds to these.

*Q And A Forum* - The Q & A forum requires students to post their thoughts/answers before viewing other students' postings. After the initial posting, students can view and respond to others' postings.

Any forum in which you can post messages also allows you to attach files to the message.

There is no limit to the number of forums which can be in a course.

Students on ymoodle programmes are divided into groups. For example according to year, tutor or area. This enables forum postings to be targeted to a specific group.

## **Understanding forums**

When you enter a forum you will see a list of discussions topics. Each message will have a subject heading so that the reader will know what the discussion is about. Clicking on a subject heading will open the original message where you can view the message and any replies (*replies to a message are known as a thread*).

The front page of a forum also gives details on the name of the person who started the discussion, the number of replies and the date of the last posting; this is useful when

checking to see if there are new messages. If you want Moodle to flag message which you have not read, you can set this up in your profile.

When you view a message you will see the replies. You can click on the dropdown menu at the top of the screen to determine the order in which you would like to view the thread.

To add your own reply to a thread, click on the **reply** link at the bottom of the message you are replying to. This will open the HTML editor, some of the toolbar icons are similar to those found in most word-processing programs. Type your reply to the message.

If you want to attach a file to your message there is an option at the bottom of the page. You can also select whether you want replies to your message emailed to you.

When you have finished, click on **Post to forum**. You will then see a message informing you that you have 30 minutes in which to edit your post before it is posted to the forum and emailed to everyone to everyone who is subscribed to the forum.

### **Replying to forum messages received via email**

When you receive a forum message via email, it will contain the text of the message and any attachments.

If you click on any of the reply links at the bottom of the message, your web-browser window will open and you will have to log into ymoodle. This will take you to the forum from which the original message was posted.

**Show parent** – this will display the parent message to which this reply relates.

**Reply** – this will open the message you are viewing with a reply box below the message, where you can post your reply to this message.

**See this post in context** – will display the whole thread of messages relating to this topic.

It is important to remember that when replying to forum messages you should use the reply link at the bottom of the message so that you are taken to the original message in Moodle from where you can post a reply.

**Do not use the normal reply button in your email software on the toolbar** as this will send your reply to the personal email address of the person who posted the message, which means that your reply will not appear in the forum.

## How to control forum messages

If a forum has been set up with mandatory subscription, you will be able to view all the messages relevant to you and you will also receive copies via email.

If you are subscribed to several ymoodle forums you can get overloaded with emails, luckily there are ways in which you can control your subscriptions and the way/amount of messages you receive. This page and the next describe how you can control forum messages.

## How to subscribe or unsubscribe from forums

**Note:** The term subscription does not mean that you have to pay to belong to a forum.

The following shows you the different information you will see to the top right of your screen once you have entered a forum.

*Everyone is subscribed to this forum:* In this instance everyone is subscribed to this forum by the tutor so you cannot unsubscribe. You will receive all of your messages sent from this forum via email.

*Everyone can choose to be subscribed. Subscribe to this forum:* In this situation you will be able to choose if you want to subscribe to the forum, if you do subscribe (*by clicking on the link to **Subscribe to this forum***), you will also received the messages via email.


*Everyone can choose to be subscribed. Unsubscribe from this forum:* You can unsubscribe from a forum at anytime by clicking on the link to **Unsubscribe from this forum** you will still be able to view the messages in the forum but you will no longer receive them via email.

# Completing assignments and activities

You can view assignment and other tasks that you have to complete within ymoodle. You can also submit your assignments (and receive comments).

## Accessing assignments and activities

You can access assignments two ways.

- Click on the assignment icon  or the name of the assignment or activity you have to send in within the units on your programme page or the course page; or
- Click on the assignment icon in the list of activities at the top of the left hand column.

## Different types of assignments

Most of the assignments and tasks that you need to submit involve uploading a single file. This means you work on your assignment or activity within your word processor – and then upload it via ymoodle.

If you don't have access to ymoodle, or you hand write your assignments you can send copies in directly to the Course Administrator – but you need to arrange this beforehand.

When uploading an assignment we **require** it in Word format or rtf (rich text format) or pdf. Just about all word processors will be able to save in one of these formats.

There are some other types of assignment that can be used within ymoodle:

**Offline** assignments, as mentioned above, are completed following the tutors' directions. These directions may involve doing activities online, including through ymoodle.

**Online text** assignments are completed by submitting text through the text box provided in the assignment. If you have not submitted your assignment, you will see a prompt to edit your submission. Clicking on 'Edit my submission' will bring up a text editor. You can use this write and submit your assignment. You can also copy and paste your assignment from another document.

## **Draft assignments**

You can upload a draft of your assignment onto the system as a backup.

**ymoodle** will allow you to have two files on the system at any one time. If you want to upload a file, and have two already on the system, you will have to delete one by pressing the red cross next to it.

## **Submitting assignments**

Remember – you can only submit a single file. You have to include your cover sheet, bibliography and any appendices in that file.

To submit the assignment:

1. Upload the final file. (On Diploma Studies at the moment this and (2) is all you need to do for most units)
2. Check you have uploaded the right file by opening it.
3. Press ‘send for marking’.
4. You will then be asked to ‘Agree’ to a statement that says the assignment is all your own work and is not plagiarised etc.

5. The assignment is now submitted. It is date and time-stamped. A message is also sent to your tutor that the assignment has been submitted.

To check it has gone in click on 'Assignments' in the activity area on the left hand side of ymoodle. This will bring up the assignment page. Against the assignment on the right hand side there should be a date in the 'submitted' column. You might also see the file name – but this isn't always so – especially if you have resubmitted something or the tutor has had to fix a mistake!

## **File size**

There is a limit to the size of file you can upload.

If you have inserted images it could be you have a very large file - and you may not be able to upload it into the system. There is a limit on the size of file you can upload. You can reduce the file size in Word quite easily. In more recent versions you can save as a pdf - and this can dramatically decrease file size if you are using images. Alternatively, open the file. Go to options and choose "Advanced" or "Advanced properties". Find the section on image size and quality, tick 'Discard editing data' and lower the default target output to 96ppi. This can cut the size of your file by 40 to 50 per cent.

## **Assignment comments**

You can also access tutor feedback via ymoodle. On the assignment page click on the assignment in question. Scroll down the page and you will see the feedback section.

## **Grades**

We don't put grades into the system until the assignments have been seen by a second marker. This means that you will be able to see your feedback before you get your marks. Any marks awarded are provisional. They have to be confirmed by external assessors.

## **Resubmissions**

If, after uploading your file, you realize that you've uploaded the wrong one, you need to contact:

- the programme administrator if you are on Diploma Studies or,
- your tutor if you are on a degree programme.

Diploma Studies students can then simply upload the right file.

Degree students should **send their tutor the right file directly and ask them to switch the file you submitted back into a draft**. You can upload and then submit the right file so that everything is ready for the external examiners.

You can also resubmit work via later ymoodle if you have had a problem. Before you do this you must talk with a tutor.

## **Copies**

Please make sure to keep a copy of your file after you upload it just in case!

## **Problems with the system.**

If you experience problems with the system –

- Degree students should message their tutor and send their assignment directly to them by normal email.
- Diploma students should message their programme administrator and send their assignment directly to them by normal email.

# Messaging

You can send a message to another person who is online within your programme; this is carried out by clicking on an envelope icon under online users. This facility may or may not be available within your course, depending on how the tutor has set it up.

Clicking on an envelope adjacent to someone's name will open up their message dialogue box; this is similar to instant messaging. You will not see an envelope next to your name as you cannot send yourself a message!

If the person you send a message to goes offline, they will see it waiting the next time they login to ymoodle. It may also be e-mailed to them (see message preferences below).

The messages box shows who messages are from and how many messages there are.

## Message preferences

When in your profile click on the button marked Messages, then click the Settings tab. From here you can set up preferences for your messages which includes whether you want messages to be e-mailed to you when you are offline.

When you receive a message from someone you can, reply, add the contact to your message list, or block messages from that person. You can also search for people by clicking on the search tab.

In contacts, move your mouse over the icons under incoming contacts to see what each icon is for. The message history holds a record of all of the messages you have sent and received from people in your contacts list.

When you reply to a message you will see the pop-up window recording your conversation, this window refreshes every 60 seconds. This can be useful to talk to your tutor if is she/he is online when you are working from home. Note: if your computer blocks pop-up windows then you will not see the pop-up window, see the help sheet under the main menu on the Moodle homepage.

## **Warning**

Note that all messages, logs and actions are recorded in ymoodle and can be traced if the system is misused or abused.

# Searching

From the front page – and from some of the course pages you are able to search the courses that you are enrolled on. The search looks at forum posts, assignment briefings – and any documents and materials (in Word and pdf) that are within your courses.

## **How to use search**

Look for a block in the left hand column called ‘global search’.

Enter the keywords you want to search for and press go.

The results should then be fed back to you.

If the search doesn’t return what you want you can click on the ‘advanced search’ option just above the search results.

# FAQs and troubleshooting

## **What does Moodle stand for?**

The word Moodle was originally an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment.

It's also a verb that describes the process of lazily meandering through something, doing things as it occurs to you to do them, an enjoyable tinkering that often leads to insight and creativity. Anyone who uses Moodle is a Moodler.

## **Why am I not receiving messages via email from forums?**

You have probably not entered your email address correctly in your profile, or you have disabled your email address, see the appendix to this booklet.

## **I am getting overwhelmed with messages from forums, what can I do about it?**

Read the section on forums.

## **I am getting instant messages from people I do not know, how do I stop this happening?**

If you are having problems with messages, you can block people sending you messages.

## **I have blocked messages from someone by mistake. How do I unblock them?**

To undo a messaging block you'll have to find each person you've blocked - open your messaging window by clicking 'Messages...' in a 'Messages' block.

- Click on the 'Search' tab.
- Use the 'Search for a person' controls to find the user you blocked.
- Click the red circle to the right of the user's name.

**I see that some people have pictures next to their name, how can I have a picture?**

See the 'Your profile' section in this booklet to on how to upload a picture to your profile.

**I'm having problems downloading and opening files**

There could be several reasons for this. Talk to a course administrator.

# Appendix

## Setting up email and forum preferences

If you are on a course(s) which uses forums, you can sometimes be overloaded with forum messages coming to you via email, especially if you only check your email occasionally. Fortunately there is a way you can control this.

Whilst logged into Moodle click on your name at the top or bottom of the page. This will take you to your profile. Click on the tab marked **Edit Profile**. You will see the following options (if not click the **Show Advanced** button to the top right).

**Email display** - this allows you to select your email preferences. You should check that your email account is set up to **Allow only other course members to see my email address**. This is so that you can be contacted by you tutor who will send you important messages and other members of your course will be able to contact you.

**E-mail activated** - Check that your email address is enabled, do not disable it, if you do you will not receive forum or email messages from your ymoodle programme.

**E-mail format** - you would normally not change it from Pretty HTML format.

**Email digest type** - this is where you can set up how you want to receive forum email postings. The default is No digest this means that you will get every single individual message posted to your email account.

**Complete** - is one single email containing all of the messages sent to you in one message per day.

**Subjects** - one daily email from all the Moodle forums to which you are subscribed. This one message contains the subject headings only, if you want to read the messages in full you will have to read them in the forums by clicking on the links in the message.