

University Of Florence E-Learning Platform

Manual For The **Teacher**

Introduction:

- 1) **This guide is meant for teachers who are in need to set quickly a course, with Moodle Platform into the installation specific for the University of Florence. It is not a complete manual, but a quick guide dedicated to essential settings.**
- 2) It will not treat topics such as: how to install the platform, how to create a course, how to use the more complex activities as Workshop, Lessons or Quiz or the management of the groups.
- 3) It is assumed that the course has already been created by the *administrators* of the Platform, that the teacher is able to correctly perform the login procedure with the *username* and the *password* provided by the Secretariats, according to the standard procedure in use by University of Florence.
- 4) The intent of this quick manual is to describe, within few pages, how to become operative with Moodle in a short time and be able “to populate” its own course with resources (i.e. materials) and the most simple *activities*, but sufficient to start a remote course. The guide is based on Version 1.8.x of Moodle.
- 5) Manuals and tutorials more comprehensive are available on Web to deep those topics that, deliberately, are not treated in the present document (see paragraph "Learn more").

Terminology notes

- **Course:** the term **Course** is recurrent in Moodle and relevant documentation. It should be clear that, in this case, the course is equivalent to a **teaching** brought into action in a determinate Academic year. In other documents related to the e-learning of the Florentine University it is used the term **virtual class** that must be considered as a synonymous of "course". So, there will be different "editions" of the same course/teaching, one for each academic year, for which it has been requested the activation.
In this document, it will be mainly used the term "Course".
- **Registration:** a "registered" user is who has the "credentials" (username and password) to access the platform. The credentials, as previously mentioned, consist of the *roll number* and *password* provided to both students and teachers by the Secretary. At the first access, additional data will be requested (i.e. the email address). Anyway, a registered user does not have the access to any course, unless "enrolled" (as student or teacher).
- **Enrolment:** A registered user may be "enrolled" to a course as teacher or student. In the first case, it will be directly enable by CSIAF (see following paragraph), in the second case, instead, the student will do the "auto-enrol" to a course by itself, by simply clicking on the title. At the first access to a course, it is requested a confirmation and, eventually, the “Enrolment key” (See section "What to say to students").
- **Guest:** It is a non registered user who access without login and it is enabled only to reading. In the courses, it is necessary to establish an access policy for this type of users, i.e. to indicate whether or not they can access to the single course (see paragraph "How to change course' settings).

Who should do what (and when ...?)

The creation (also called "activation") of a course is taken care of by CSIAF, upon receipt of the request signed by the President of the Degree Course of the teaching to be activated, by using the form that can be downloaded from the home page of the platform.

It is possible to specify in the form different names of persons to enable on the course such as "Teachers" i.e. with rights to modify contents and activities. These people (for example teacher's collaborators) must have, anyway, the access credentials supplied by the University.

Once the course is activated, teacher and collaborators can "set it" (as explained below) and it is their care to duly inform students about the access mode.

What to say to students

In occasion of the first lessons in presence, the teacher must inform students about the existence of the virtual class, the access mode and scheduled activities.

In particular, the following information should be given

- The URL address of the platform: <http://e-l.unifi.it>, from which download another [quick guide](#) similar to this one but meant for students;
- The access mode to the platform: the students must only use the **roll number** and the **password** provided by the Secretary at the moment of the enrol (or withdraw of the university book), the same credentials used for booking the examinations and other online services of the University (Attention: the roll number consist of 7 characters; eventually, if the roll number is composed by 6 characters only, a zero has to be added after the letter D);
- The eventual **Enrolment key**, set by the teacher to prevent unwanted access to its course. It is up to the teacher to decide whether to leave free access to the course to all the students or to limit it only to those students who are really attending the course in presence. In this case the teacher will include an "enrolment key" to the course' settings, i.e. a password which will be required by the system at the first access to the course by the students (see following paragraphs). Obviously, such a key must be communicated to the students in advance.
(*Warning*: in order to avoid further "enrolments" after the course has started, the teacher can change the enrolment key **without communicating** it to students. In this way no other new user will be able to enrol, unless expressly requesting it to the teacher, who may decide to enrol it **manually**).

How to register students (or to enable other teachers) manually

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the manual enrolment of students might be required to manage special situations. To make students' enrol, it is necessary to use the item "assign roles" from the menu "Administration", which is usually placed on the left side of the course's area. Then select "Student" from the roles' list. The following window is displayed:

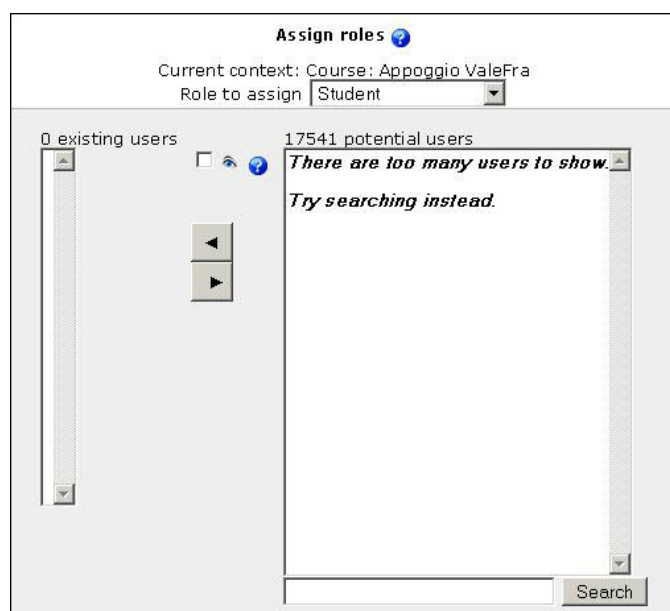



Figure 1 - A course in the Teacher visualization, before "Turn editing on" mode activation

In the list, on the left, there are shown the students already enrolled, while in the right one there are the "potential" users to enrol. Anyway, in consideration of the high number, no name is displayed. Then proceed by including the surname of the student in the "Search" box. Once identified the student to include, select it (from the box on the right).

By clicking on button  the student will be enrolled to the course.

Instead, the key that shows the arrow in the inverse way allows erasing the users.

To add a new teacher or collaborator to the course, the procedure is the same, it only changes the selection of the role after clicking on "assign roles": in this case, select "teacher".

Working area in "student" and "teacher" visualization

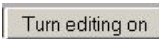
Once "entered" into the course, by clicking on the course's title, it is displayed an "area" usually constituted by three columns: two smaller ones, on the side, containing the "blocks" and a central one, larger, that is the real "working space", where the teacher can include resources and activities.

As previously mentioned, it is assumed that the course has already been created and set on the typology "topics format" (there are two other typologies of course: "Weekly format" and "social format" that are not treated in this guide, even if differences, at operative level, are not many). In this case it should be displayed a window similar to the one shown in Figure 2. In the central part there are shown a certain number of empty "rectangular", all numbered, except the first. These "boxes" represent the patterns, the macro-topics in which the course can be logically subdivided, while the first one, with no number, is meant as "container" of general information or as introduction to the course (for example, in the Weekly format, boxes represent the weeks the course is carried out and they are already labelled with the start-end dates of the weeks).

Anyway, in the format "topics format" each teacher can freely assign to these boxes the most pertaining meaning for the specific course (pattern, topic, and subject)


The number of visualized boxes depend on the general settings of the course and it can be modified at any time (see "how to modify course" settings).

The present visualization of the course corresponds (with some exception) to what a hypothetical student would see when connected to the course. So the teacher can have immediately an exact idea of how the course is presented to students.

The main difference between student's and teacher's visualization is represented by the presence of the key  placed in the upper part, on the right.


By clicking on this key, it activates the real “teacher’s mode”, that allows to make changes through the insert, modification and cancellation of resources and activities (see Figure 3).

In this mode there are present several icons, placed near to each element shown. Hereby is their meaning (which can also be visualized by positioning the mouse’s pointer on the icon, without clicking):



 Modify or create the side text. For example, to assign the title “Module 1” to the first box, it is necessary to click on the symbol placed near to number 1 of the first box. This icon also allows modifying the setting of a resource or activity subsequently its creation.


 move the item to left

 move the item to right. It is useful for creating re-entered structures

 reposition of the item, higher or lower respect to the actual position. The use of this function is not so “friendly”: as a matter of fact, after clicking on the icon, it will appear a series of “segnaposto” (place marks) that show the possible positions where the item under move can be released. To complete the procedure, it is necessary to click on the place mark correspondent to the position in which the item has to be set. If, instead, the item does not have to be moved, click on key “annulla” that is located in the upper part, on the right (see Figure 4)

 cancel the item. Warning: the operation of cancellation is not reversible!

 make visible/invisible  the item to students. The insertion of “invisible” items can be useful to maintain in platform resources or activities still “under construction” that will become visible once completely defined.

 This icon is relevant to the management of the groups, which topic is not included in this guide

It has to be noted how in the teacher’s visualization it “appeared” the unnumbered topic preceding that identified by number 1 with inside a forum called “Forum news”. The forum news can be used by the teacher to enclose updated information about the course. It is automatically present in each course; it can also be cancelled but, as explained, if not in use, it is not shown to the students.

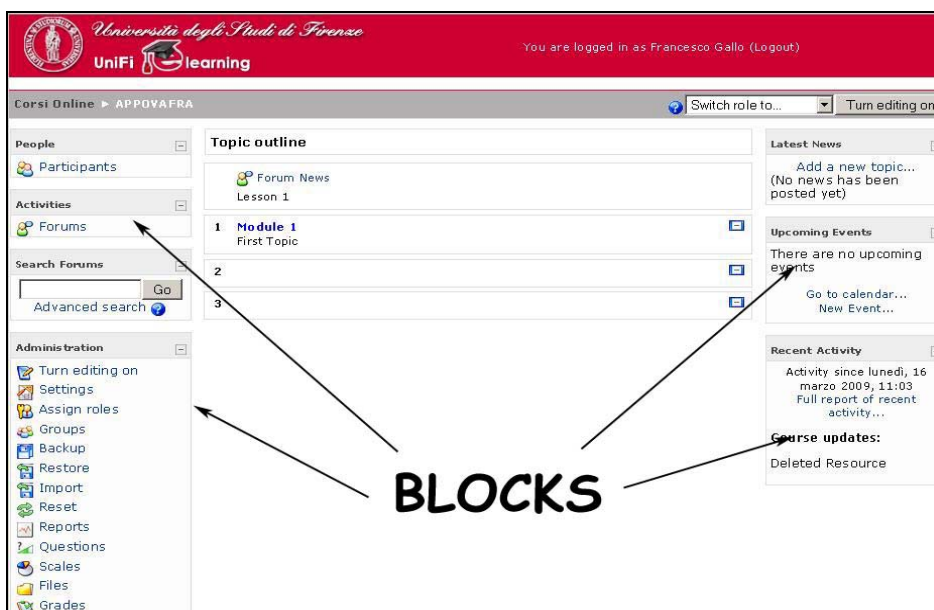


Figure 2: a course in teacher’s visualization before the “modifica” mode activation

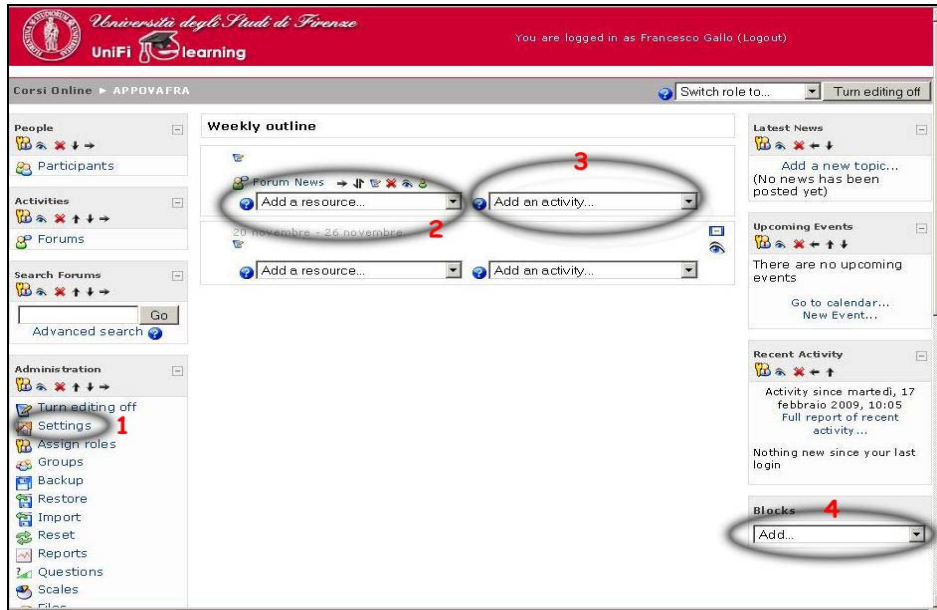


Figure 3: the course in teacher’s visualization with “Turn editing on” activated

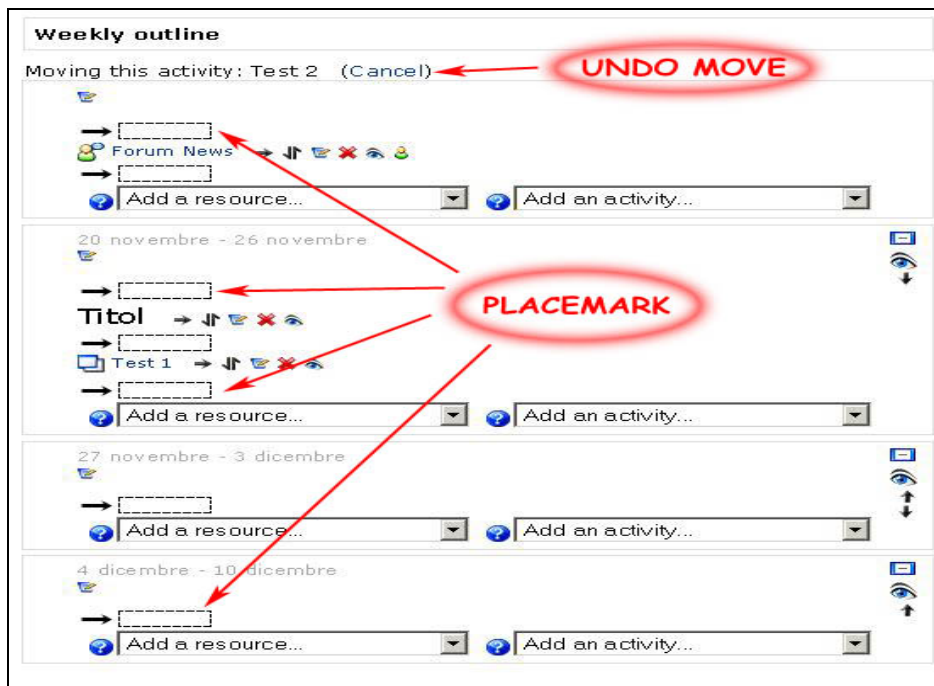


Figure 4: during the moving of an item

What are the “blocks”?

The blocks, as shown in Figure 2, are items of the user’s interface that are shown in the right and left columns, alongside topics. They represent information items or they supply the access to some functions. The teacher can hide, move or eliminate the blocks, as well as add others by selecting them (among those activated by the administrators) from the pull down menu (see reference 4 in figure 3).

Figure 5 shows the contents of the menu “Blocks”, with the items that can be included such as, for example, the calendar or a panel containing the HTML text freely editable by the teacher.



Figure 5: pull down menu “Blocks” open


How to modify the settings of the course (for example change the “summary” or insert the enrolment key)

The general settings of the course include a series of parameters that have been set by the administrators at the moment of the creation of the course. Still, the teacher has the possibility to modify them. In most case, for example, it will be necessary that teacher insert the **summary**, that is the description of the course which will be visualized in the courses list of the web site. Between the settings there is also the number of boxes to visualize (i.e. it is possible to increase it, if necessary) or the denomination to use for teachers and students of the course. There are also other parameters in the settings that can be left as they are.

It is a good rule for novice users, not to modify parameters of unclear meaning without having first consulted an administrator or a skilled user. However, it is in the “spirit” of Moodle to allow experiments of all kinds, therefore it is important to know that a “normal” use cannot, in any case, make “disastrous” operations for the site, so, if you feel, just try!

Another important item about settings is the **enrolment key**: it consists of a password that can be set to limit the access to the course only to those students whom teacher will communicate the key directly (see previous paragraph “what to say to students”).

To access to the mask of Settings, it is necessary to click on link “Settings” in the panel “Administration” that is normally located on the left side (see reference 1 in figure 3).

Hereby is the explanation of main settings. Anyway, an online help is available for each one of them by clicking on key  present on each line.

- *Number of weeks/topics*: it is the number of boxes visualized in the area of the course. These can be increased or decreased as liked. In case they are decreased, the contents present in eventual boxes no longer visualized are, anyway, kept in store.
- *Course start date*: it is the starting date used in the weekly format to entitle the boxes. In case of format by topics, it is used for setting the starting date of the log, that is the tracking system of students and teachers activities
- *Hidden sections*: the teacher has often the need to prepare resources and activities before submitting them to the students. As a matter of fact, these resources and activities can be made visible/invisible. It is suggested to set this parameter to “hidden sections are completely invisible”

- *Show activity reports*: the activity report is an important instrument for summarizing what each user has done inside the virtual class. The reports are always visible to teachers; this setting allows to make them visible also to students (obviously each one can only visualize its own and not the other ones)
- *Availability*: the course can be made totally invisible to students. It is a useful setting during the under construction stage, before starting the on line activity
- *Guest Access*: **guests** are users NOT REGISTERED in the platform (users external to the University). Therefore it is necessary to set this parameter in an appropriate way, if it is not wanted that such type of users visualize the contents of the course. In any case, however, guests can participate to activities: they can exclusively visualize resources only (i.e. they cannot intervene in a Web forum)

How to insert a file for the download by students (i.e. a file of Word, PowerPoint, PDF, Flash etc)

It is possible to enclose on Moodle Platform any type of file that will be later downloaded by students for the offline visualization (or to be visualized directly on line through the plug in of the browsers). Being a file that will be first uploaded on the platform by the teacher and then later downloaded by the single students, it is recommended to consider the file's "weight", i.e. its byte dimensions.

It is a good rule not to propose large files that users with slow internet connections could difficult use. Also the teacher could have problems to upload large files; in some cases it could even result impossible to load certain files on the platform, since there is a limit fixed by the administrators of the site and the platform (in our case, it is 40 Mb)

The file to be downloaded, as well as HTML documents or links, are considered "**resources**", therefore, to add one, the first step will be to open the pull down menu "Add a resource.." (see reference 2, in Figure 3) relevant to the topic in which the file has to be added

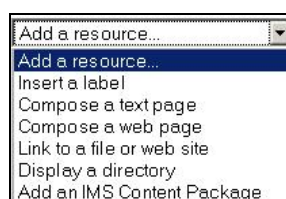


Figure 6: the pull down menu "aggiungi una risorsa" open

The subsequent steps are the following:

2. choose from the pull down menu "link to a file or web site"
3. it opens up a window with the request to insert a title (it will be the one shown in the box of the topic) and a summary of the subject that is being included (figure 7)

Adding a new Resource to week 1

General

Name* Example files for the guide

Summary

Trebuchet 1 (8 pt) Lang B I U S x₂ x₂ [Icons]

Percorso: body

Link to a file or web site

Location http:// [Choose or upload a file... Search for web page...]

Window

Window Same window [Show Advanced]

Parameters

[Show Advanced]

Common module settings

Visible Show

[Save changes] [Cancel]

Figure 7 : summary of files

4. click on “choose or upload a file...”
 5. at this point it opens a particular file management windows showing the files already uploaded on the server and the eventual folders set. It is like a “Windows Explorer” of Windows relevant to the specific files of the course
- Practically, the system allows inserting only links to files that have already been transferred to a kind of “store” of the course’s files on the server. Figure 8 shows this window still empty because no file has been transferred yet.

APPOVAFRA » Files

	Name	Size	Modified	Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	backup	0 bytes	19 feb 2009, 11:26	Rename
<input type="checkbox"/>	moddata	0 bytes	19 feb 2009, 11:26	Rename
<input type="checkbox"/>	testlive	6KB	19 gen 2009, 10:24	Rename

With chosen files... [Make a folder] [Select all] [Deselect all] [Upload a file]

Figure 8: the window “Files” still empty

6. Assuming that the file has not been loaded yet, click on “Upload a file”. The window also shows the maximum dimension limit allowed for the upload
7. at this point it will open up the classic window “Upload file” from which it will be possible to select the file to upload

8. Once the upload is finished, the window of file management will be displayed again but, at this point, the file will be included in the list of files in the server. So for selecting it, it is sufficient to click on “Choose”

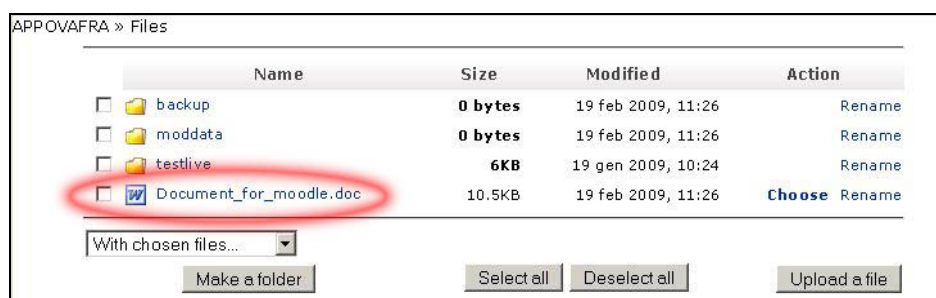


Figure 9: the window “Files” with uploaded files

9. to complete the operation, it is necessary to return to the mask shown in Figure 7 and click on “Save changes”




Figure 10 : the course with the new added resource

HOW TO CREATE A HTML RESOURCE

Instead of uploading a series of Word, PowerPoint, PDF or other type of files for the download by the students (who need the appropriate programme for opening them, i.e. for the document included in the example it would be Microsoft Word) it is possible to insert an HTML resource directly, that is a text eventually accompanied by images which will be used by the students directly without the need of download.

The text to insert in this type of resource can be “copied and pasted” directly from a Word file or from any other application of word processing or author system.

The procedure is similar to the insertion of a file but, from the pull down menu shown in figure 5, it has to be selected the item “Compose a web page”.

The window that opens up is illustrated in Figure 11 and it consists of two parts: the first, it is similar to the summary requested for a new file, the second is, instead, composed by an editing area that includes instrument bars as those present in the common word processing programmes, by means of which it is possible to format the text as desired, by selecting character type, dimensions, colour etc, without need to know or to visualize the HTML code (for the skilled ones it is anyway possible to visualize the code by clicking on the icon  of the instrument bar)

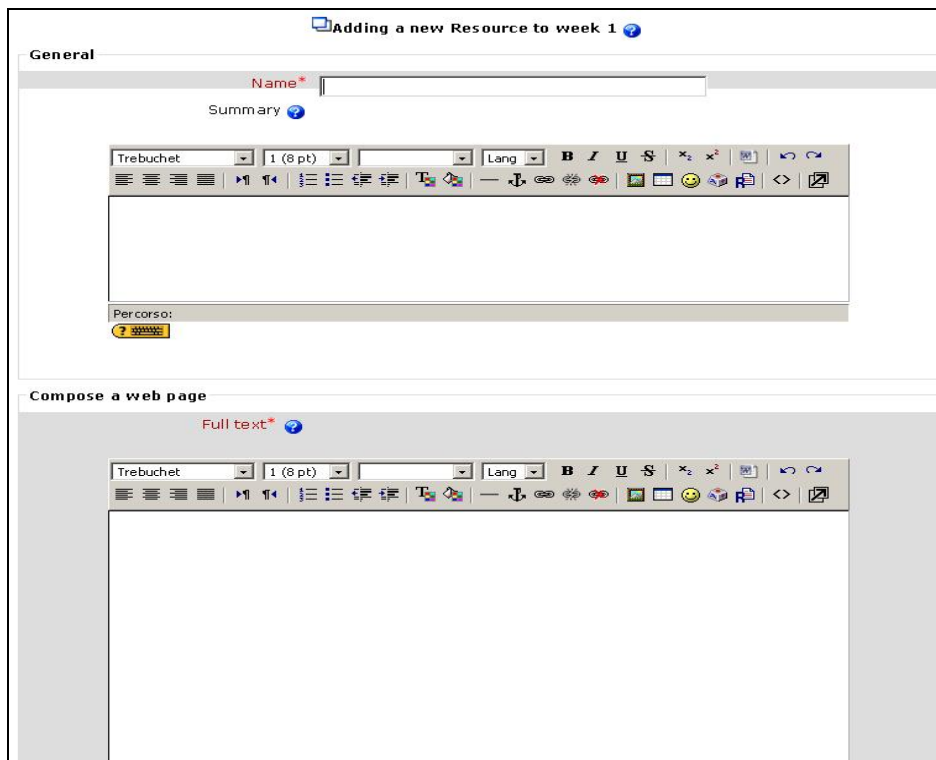



Figure 11 : editing window of a HTML resource

In the editing window it is possible to write or paste text from other applications. To insert an image, the procedure to follow is the same as it is usually done in Microsoft Word through the function “inserisci immagine”, by clicking on key  of the instrument bar. In this case it will be displayed a special window, dedicated to the management of images.

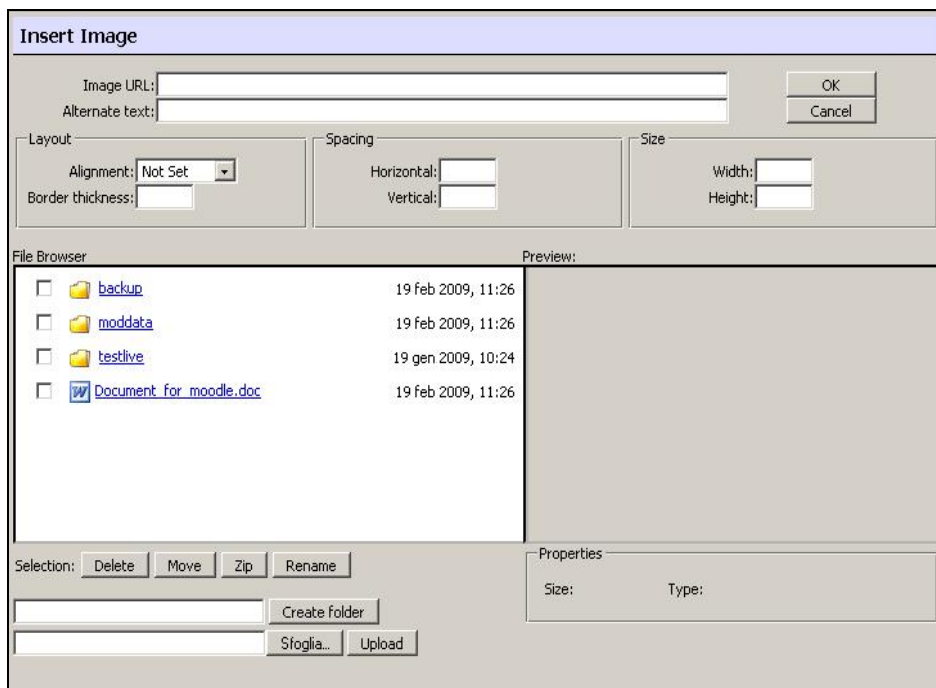



Figure 12 : the window “inserisci immagine”


As a matter of fact, the windows show the same “folder” in which are stored all the other files of the course (see in Figure 12 the Word file previously uploaded)

To insert a new image, click on key “sfoglia” (placed below) to select the file from the own PC (with the common Windows mask “Upload file”).

Once selected and transferred the file on the server by means of key “Upload”, it will be possible to include the image on the text of the resource by using the key “OK” (located in the upper part, on the right). For the maximum accessibility of the resource, it is important to insert an “alternative text” (in the homonymous box, placed in the central upper part) to be used in case the image cannot be visualized or, as well, by special software dedicated to the accessibility by visually impaired.

It is also important to note the presence of a particular key showing the Word icon , in the upper part, on the right, in the instrument bar.

This key must be activated in case a “copy and paste” from Microsoft Word is done. In fact, in some cases, this programme inserts automatically the HTML code which might interfere with the correct visualization of the text in Moodle. This key allows “clearing” the text by those spurious HTML codes. It is sufficient to click on it once, at the end of the editing, before pressing the key “Save changes” (at bottom page) that causes the storage of the page.


It is often necessary to insert tables in the text; in the specific case, these can be simply copied from the original text or created directly by means of key  of the instrument bar

HOW TO INSERT A LINK TO A WEB PAGE

A link to a web page internal or external to the course (for example a page of any web site) is considered a resource of file type.

So it must be followed the procedure described in paragraph “how to insert a file...” by selecting the item “link to a file or web site” In the mask shown in Figure 6, after entering a summary, insert the URL directly into the box “Location”. In order to avoid digit mistakes, it is advisable to make a copy-and-paste of the box “URL” of the browser (open in another window) that shows the required page.

HOW TO INSER THE TITLES IN THE BOXES (TOPICS/WEEKS) CONSISTING THE COURSE

By clicking on icon  alongside each box number, it opens up an editing window of the text, same as the one described in “how to insert an HTML resource”, where it is possible to include the appropriate text.

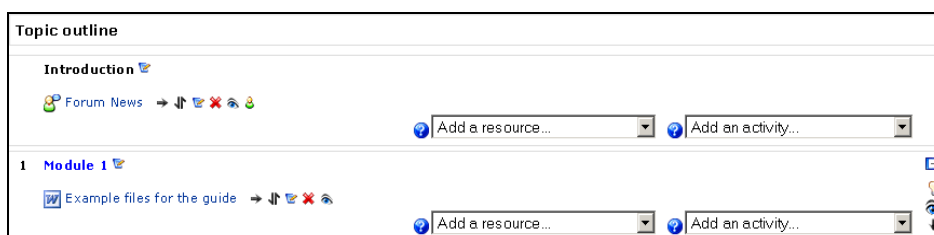


Figure 13 : the first two boxes of the course with set titles

HOW TO VISUALIZE A FOLDER INSTEAD OF THE SINGLE FILES

In case files to be proposed to students are too many, it is advisable to regroup them into folders and insert resources of “folder” type from which students can download the single file therein included. In this case the teacher must operate in 3 times:

1. As first step, built up a folders' structure on the server by using the item "Files" from the menu "Administration". The mask is the same one as illustrated in Figures 7 and 8 in which it is shown the key "make a folder"
2. Once created the necessary folders, the teacher will provide to insert the file, by using the same "files" function.
3. once folders are ready, it is necessary to use the item "Display a directory" from the pull down menu "add a resource..."

It will open up a window similar to the others relevant to the resource and it will be requested the insert of the "summary".

Then select the desired folder from the pull down menu proposing the folders (including eventual sub-folders) present in between the files of the course (see Figure 14)

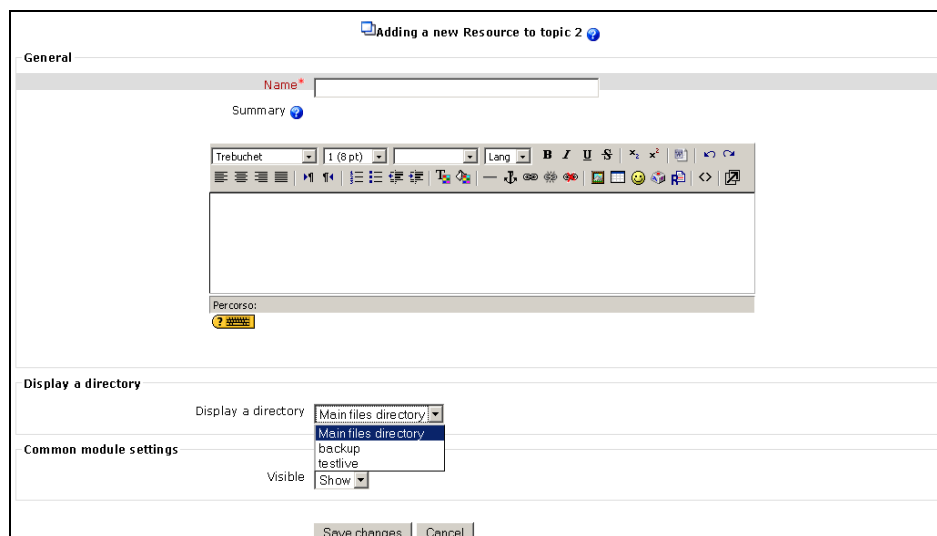



Figure 14 : it shows the insert of a resource of the type "Display a directory"

WHAT IS THE RESOURCE "ETICHETTA" NEEDED FOR?

The "labels" are simple texts that can be inserted into the boxes to give instructions to students, supply additional information or even only to separate resources and activities with spaces and lines.

For example, to "divide" a box in two, a possibility is to insert a label consisting of only one horizontal line (key  of the instrument bar)

The insertion mask of the "labels" is, in fact, based on the same editing area described for enclosing an HTML resource.

HOW TO INSERT A WEB FORUM

Besides the resources, i.e. materials and contents of the course, it is most likely needed to insert some "Activities" or interaction instruments with and in between the students.

Moodle offers teachers a rich set of activities, very different in functionality and complexity. In the present guide we will only describe how to insert a Web forum, one of the most commonly activities used for the collaborative e-learning, or simply for activating a communication system with and in between the students.

To insert a Web forum it is necessary to activate the pull down menu “**Add an activity...**” (see reference 3 in figure 3) relevant to the box in which the forum will be added.

Following steps are:

2. choose “Forum” from the pull down menu
3. it opens up a windows, as shown in figure 15, in which it has to be inserted a series of parameters that allow setting in different ways the possible actions executable in the forum. In particular, besides the name and the summary, typical of each resource and activity in Moodle and of obvious meaning, hereby is the explanation of main settings:
 - *Forum type*: the default choice “Standard forum for general use” is appropriate for most of the cases; the other choices makes it possible to activate particular forum in which is allowed only one discussion thread (“A single simple discussion” or where everyone can activate only one new thread “Each person posts one discussion”).
 - *Force everyone to be subscribed*: the concept of “enrolment” to the Moodle’s forum consists in the possibility to receive or not new messages inserted in the forum by email. Usually, each user can choose whether activate it (default setting “No”). The teacher can, anyway, “force” the mandatory enrolment for the duration of the course (“Yes, forever”) or in the initial phase only (“Yes, initially”). In the latter case, users are all initially “enrolled” but they can later disable the function. It is necessary to think carefully about the mandatory activation of the enrolment to the forum: it is true that the receipt of new messages by email can be useful but, in case of very crowded and lively forums, it could turn into a high number of incoming emails receipt. Except in special cases (for example in a forum used as news, it is recommended the use of the mandatory enrolment to increase the chance that students read the posted notices) it is better to leave users free to enrol or not to the forum.
 - *Read tracking for this forum*: the function of “tracking” allows keeping track of the unread messages. It is useful to users because in this way they can easily highlight the messages still to be read. The teacher can enable the function mode “Optional” (each user chooses whether to activate it) or mandatory (“On”) or to disable it (“Off”). It is suggested to set it in mode “On” so that students find it already working.
 - *Maximum attachment size*: it is possible to limit maximum dimensions of the files that students can attach to the message, or also to prevent enclosing of attachments to messages (by setting “Uploads are not allowed”).
 - *Allow posts to be rated*: Moodle allows the evaluation of each message inserted in the forum. The settings allow establishing whether and who can enclose and see the evaluations, according to a series of different combinations. Management assessments, however, fall outside the scope of this guide; for activating a simple discussion forum, in most of the cases evaluations can be disabled (by unflagging the box “Use ratings”).

Figure 15: window of the forum' settings

Other settings (such as the ones relevant to the block, i.e. the possibility to block the insert of new messages by students if they exceeded a certain number) may be omitted.

Once the forum is activated, it will be necessary to insert one or more **discussions**, to which students will be invited to participate. The discussion are inserted by clicking on key [Add a new discussion topic](#) that is located in the upper part, on top of the list of active discussions. Obviously, in case of forum just inserted, the list will be empty.

HOW TO SEND AN EMAIL MESSAGE TO ALL THE STUDENTS

There is not an “internal” email system in Moodle, however, it is possible to send messages to all students by using a web forums characteristic, i.e. the enrolment to the forum. Practically, by using the **Forum News**, which is always present in the first upper box of each course, an email can be sent to all students. In fact, this forum provides, as default setting, the **mandatory enrolment** of users. It follows that each message added to this forum is automatically sent by email to all. It is also possible to set other forum in the same mode.

HOW TO TRACK STUDENTS ACTIVITIES

Whatever happens in the platform, from the simple access to the visualization of a file and the adding of a message in the forum, is constantly tracked, that is stored in an archive called **log**. It is possible to access to these information in two main modes

- through the **Reports** from the Administration Menu) it is possible to get detailed reports about the access to each single resource and activity, individual or collective
- through the **Activity report** of each single user. This access mode is much more readable and promptly usable in respect to the ones mentioned in the previous point. However it is accessible only individually. As a matter of fact, to obtain the activity report it is necessary to click first on **”participants”**, then select a single student (or teacher, reports are available for each type of

user) and finally select the flag “**Activity report**”. The activity report is a document that can be printed and it contributes to the evaluation of student’s activities, as a sort of “electronic register”. In fact, it reports all readings done (in respect to the resources) and the activities (i.e. the messages in the web forum).

TO LEARN MORE

As it can be noted by looking at the menu in figure 16, possible activities in Moodle are many. This guide deals only about “forum” but certainly, after a first stage of familiarization with the platform, each teacher will want to experiment more complex activities or the management of groups (these topics will soon be available on specific guides, also of multimedia type, downloadable from <http://e-l.unifi.it>

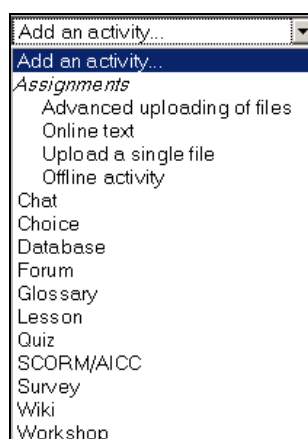


Figure 16 : pull down menu “Add an activity...” open

This way of proceeding the “experiment” is probably the best to learn the several Moodle’s functions and it also the one “encouraged” by the structure of the platform.

On the web site <http://e-l.unifi.it> are already available some introductory video, specific for the installation of UniFI. Thematic guides on individual activities and specific management (i.e. groups) are under preparation both in textual and multimedia versions. All these materials will be available for visualization and download at <http://e-l.unifi.it>

Finally, it is available on the net a rich documentation about Moodle. For further and more detailed information see the official web site www.moodle.org and particularly, the documents section <http://docs.moodle.org/>

There is also a resources available on the web, in Italian:

The “video lessons” of Prof. Roberto Chimenti, dedicated to the various functions of Moodle, available on the site <http://www.lezionionline.net/learning/modules.php?name=elabs>. After the registration (free of charge but mandatory) it is possible to access a series of animation videos (with or without audio, in Italian) that show directly all the operations relevant to Moodle, starting from the installation till the setting of each type of resource and activity.