



Differences between Moodle and WebCT (Blackboard)

WebCT and **Moodle** are two Learning Management Systems with lots in common, but there are some key differences which make each one special in its own way. We note these differences below. If you have used WebCT before, this document will help you understand Moodle better.

Overview

WebCT (Blackboard)

The Blackboard Learning System allows instructors to post course information and course materials, readings and assignments and provides functionality for basic discussion and other collaborative tools (from Blackboard).

Designed for teacher directed/centered delivery of content

- Especially geared for lower level courses, large classes.
- Proprietary, vast user base.
- Based on licensing fee.

MOODLE

Moodle is a course management system (CMS) - a free, Open Source software package designed using sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective online learning communities. You can download and use it on any computer you have handy (including webhosts), yet it can scale from a single-teacher site to a 50,000-student University (from moodle.org).

Moodle tools focus on:

- Content delivery for course information
- Intended use is group work, collaboration, communication, sharing, activities, and critical reflection, a collaborative type of learning.
- Open Source (free)
- UVic could actually participate in Moodle development

Similarities

Student enrolment in courses
Restricted access
Customization
Uploading files (e.g. Word docs, PowerPoint, audio files)
Linking to external web sites
Zip course & provide on CD to students
SCORM compliant

Discussion forum
Synchronous chat
Quizzes, tests
Drop box
Course calendar
Grades
Monitoring student participation
Copy course over from semester
Customized template



Differences in Key Features

Feature	Moodle	WebCT
Bandwidth	All features work on dial-up	Bandwidth hog, may time out
Learning Curve	Can use w/o manual or training. Provides excellent, easy to use "help" website.	Not as intuitive, many components need to be configured initially. "Help" website complicated.
Discussion	Photos, nested threads	See posts at one time, not nested
Tools	Blog, wiki, journal, glossary, workshop	Whiteboard
Cost	Free	Cost
Customization	Open Source, so can change locally	Need to request change from WebCT (may not happen)
User Stats	Chart Comparing students; number of visit per page	Time student spent on each page

Course Format

Moodle	WebCT
<p>Selecting a course listed under <i>My Courses</i> results in a course home page with one of three different formats: Topics, Weekly, or Social.</p> <p>The format used is determined by the Instructor's choice in the course Settings from the Administration block.</p>	<p>Selecting a course listed under <i>My Courses</i> results in a course homepage with a single format of presentation and some fixed organizational categories and sub-categories.</p>

Initial Interface



The initial interface can be customized differently in each system, but the above is the standard type of layout.



Moodle Interface Student View

Activities menu side-block. This menu provides quick links to the different tools and resources. Allows you to search all the forums for you.

Students can monitor their grade progress (or block can be hidden by instructor)

Breadcrumb

Main Block where course content is shown. Sections and/or particular tasks can be hidden from students until they are required.

The calendar tool will allow you to see at a glance all important upcoming events.

Students can see who is online

Blackboard View

Student

Course Tools allow you to access course material, complete quizzes and assignments.

My Tools allow students to monitor their own progress. They can view their marks and track their activities in a course.

Main Course Block. If course content is organized chronologically or by topic, you may see several content folders, each containing the appropriate material to be used at a specific time or for a certain subject area.



Communication Tools

Tool	Moodle	WebCT
Email	<p>Using the instant messaging tool, you can send messages to offline users and they will read them once they log in to their Moodle account.</p> <p>Messages will be emailed if the user is offline.</p> <p>Message tool allows all Moodle users in the course to communicate.</p>	<p>You send email to all your students, or to those in a subset workgroup.</p>
Chat	<p>Using the instant messages, you can chat with online users.</p> <p>Messages will be emailed if the user is offline.</p>	<p>Using the instant messaging tool (The tool) will only allow you to send messages if the other user is online.</p>
Discussion Forum	<p>There are three types of Discussion Forums that you can choose depending on your needs.</p> <p>Instructors can rate their students on what they post and let students rate their colleagues.</p> <p>When you post to the class Forum, that posting can be automatically emailed to the class participants.</p> <p>Since posting remains visible in the Forum, those not receiving emails can check for unread postings. You can create a Forum for each class workgroup, then handle each separately.</p>	<p>One type of Discussion Forum where a student can reply to discussions without creating topics.</p>
Tool	Moodle	WebCT
Whiteboard	<p>No similar tool yet.</p>	<p>You can use a Whiteboard tool where students can share in real time drawings and images.</p>



Grades and Scales

Tool	Moodle	WebCT
Scale	You can create your own scale (Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent...) and use it in all graded activities	No similar tool
Adding Grades to a not graded Tool	You create an assignment of type Offline activity and then supply grades and comments for that assignment.	If you had an offline activity grade that you wanted to add to your student columns, you must enter those grades into a new column in the student columns.

Tracking Students

Moodle	WebCT
<p>You can get reports showing the number of times, time, date, frequency and IP address of each student who accessed course content, discussion forums, course assessments, and assignments.</p> <p>You can get a report that shows number of attempts and time per attempt on each assessment for individual students. Instructors can maintain private notes about each student in a secure area.</p> <p>You can get a report that summarizes individual student performance on assignments.</p> <p>You can set a flag on individual course components to track the frequency with which students access those components.</p> <p>You can monitor students who are currently logged in to the course.</p>	<p>You can get reports showing the number of times, time and date, and frequency with which each student or all students in a course, accessed course content, specific course units and discussion forums.</p> <p>You can also get a report showing the duration of time each student spent on course content, specific course units and discussion forums.</p> <p>You can share this tracking information with students.</p>

Announcements

Moodle	WebCT
When you add any resource or activity with date like quiz or assignment, it will be automatically added to the course Calendar, and will also display in Upcoming Events and the resource/activity creation will show in Activities block.	The quiz date does not appear automatically in the course Calendar



Assignments

Moodle	WebCT
There are three types of Assignments that you can choose depending on your needs. There is the Offline Activity, Online Text, and Upload a single file assignment.	Only one type of assignment, where a student submits files to this assignment.

Wiki

Moodle	WebCT
The Moodle Wiki module enables participants to work together on web pages to add, expand and change the content. Old versions of the web pages are never deleted and can be restored.	There is no similar tool.

Lessons(Workbook)

Moodle	WebCT
<p>The lesson delivers content in an interesting and flexible way. It consists of a number of pages.</p> <p>Each page normally ends with a question and a number of possible answers. Depending on the student's choice of answer they either progress to the next page or are taken back to a previous page.</p> <p>Navigation through the lesson can be straight forward or complex, depending largely on the structure of the material being presented.</p>	There is no similar tool.

Choice

Moodle	WebCT
The teacher asks a question and specifies a choice of multiple responses. It can be useful as a quick poll to stimulate thinking about a topic; to allow the class to vote on a change in the class schedule course; or to gather research consent.	There is no similar tool.

Hide/Reveal

Moodle	WebCT
You can hide/reveal a specific and single file (Lecture or PowerPoint...)	You can hide/reveal only tools like content module. You cannot hide a specific file or lecture inside a tool.



References and Comparison Tools

EduTools. (2006). CMS: Product Comparison System.
<http://www.edutools.info/compare.jsp?pj=8&i=358,386>

Blackboard vs. Moodle, Dr. Kathy Munoz and Joan Van Duzer
<http://www.humboldt.edu/~jdv1/moodle/all.htm>

What are other institutions saying about using Moodle?

[The Open University of the UK](#)

"We see the development of Moodle applications, along with involvement of the Moodle Open Source community giving our students a great advantage in e-learning. Plus, the innovations added by the OU will be available to the entire Moodle community. It's a two-way creative street."

[San Francisco State University](#)

"The structure of Moodle is very easy,"

[Athabasca University](#)

"(Moodle's) appealing visual design, the ease and intuitive feel with which online activities can be added, the online help and support provided by the documentation and user groups make this a superior and user-friendly LMS."

[Macalaster College](#)

"I wish my other issues had such nice solutions."

[Dordt College](#)

"We have moved from Blackboard to Open Source Moodle, and it is going very well."

[Luther College](#)

"All and all we are finding Moodle a refreshing and remarkable change from our four years with Blackboard."

[George Fox University](#)

"However, the upgrade to BlackBoard with yearly price increases so that I would have the right to use their software finally made it very clear that I could not build a Web Services Strategy without owning my LMS."

[Augsburg College](#)

"Many of our faculty were just putting up with Blackboard. We had far far more people excited about moodle after our may sessions."

[University of Dubuque](#)

"WebCT and moodle seem to match up pretty much across the board in terms of features. Moodle is the big winner in the ease of use category, IMO and based on feedback from faculty and students."

[Lincoln University](#)

"There is quite a growing interest in Moodle in NZ and we have trialed it this year. The reaction from the staff and students who used it was very positive and there were no technical problems during the trial - very stable. We plan to go over to it fully in 2006."

[Concordia University](#)

"Moodle is a free, open-source alternative to commercial courseware that is widely used in universities around the world. Its large client/developer base, as well as optional commercial development and support, make it the optimal choice."