

Moodle 2.0 Status Report

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Summary

After careful assessment, CLAMP recommends that member schools use the Moodle 1.9 branch during the 2011-2012 academic year. Considerable work has been done on Moodle 2.0 since January 2011, including the resolution of two key blockers (unenrolling a student removes all of the student's data from the course, wiki causes 1.9 to 2.0 upgrades to fail). However, several blocker issues remain for member schools that will take time to be resolved. In addition, there are several blocks and modules that still need to be converted to 2.0.

While we like the changes we see to Moodle's code base and development practices, and Moodle 2.0 has a number of attractive features, CLAMP feels that Moodle 1.9 represents a

stable, well-tested iteration of the LMS and is most suitable for production environments during the 2011-12 academic year.

Moodle's core development team has extended Moodle 1.9.x branch support through July 2012, giving us time to concentrate on migrating essential modules and blocks to the Moodle 2.0 framework. In addition, CLAMP will be encouraging member schools to run Moodle 2.0 pilots during 2011-2012 in order to help us (and Moodle core) identify bugs as well as develop Moodle 2.0-specific training and documentation.

CLAMP will be supporting Moodle 1.9.x by releasing a new Moodle: Liberal Arts Edition, based on the latest 1.9 code, after Moodle Hack/Doc Fest, Summer 2011 at Hampshire College in Amherst, Mass.:

<http://www.clamp-it.org/events/moodle-hackdoc-fest-summer-2011/>

CLAMP will be supporting Moodle 2.0 as well. We plan to:

- identify and begin writing essential Moodle 2.0 documentation at Hack/Doc
- create a timeline for converting any remaining plugins or blocks
- update this report on the status of blockers and potential blockers
- establish a group of CLAMP schools interested in piloting Moodle 2.0 in 2011-12

This assessment is based on an initial review of Moodle 2.0 conducted at Moodle Hack/Doc Fest VII at Furman University in January 2011 and a re-evaluation done in April 2011.

Major issues that will likely prevent colleges from upgrading to Moodle 2.0 include:

- Moodle 2.0 upgrades from 1.9 often fail or require manual intervention
- Moodle 1.9 backups can not be restored to Moodle 2.0 installations.
- Administrators can no longer perform mass uploads of files to courses.

In addition, several important modules or blocks are not yet ready for Moodle 2.0 and would prevent the upgrade for schools who rely on them. These modules include:

- Quickmail block
- Feedback module
- Scheduler module
- Sharing Cart module
- Banner/Luminis Message Broker plug-in

There have also been significant interface changes to the administration and faculty navigation menus. This necessitates reworking or rewriting existing documentation and will likely require retraining faculty and staff as well.

Blockers, Possible Blockers, and Issues

Blockers

The following issues are considered blockers, meaning that they prevent us from recommending Moodle 2.0.x for production installations.

Quickmail upgrade to Moodle 2.0

The third-party block Quickmail allows faculty to easily send emails to students enrolled in their class, bypassing the Moodle messaging system and replicating similar functionality in Blackboard. Several interested programmers are working on a Quickmail upgrade for Moodle 2.0, but it is still a work in progress.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/CONTRIB-2014>

Mass upload of files for administrator

There is not a good method for administrators to mass upload files to a course. This is because administrators can no longer simply copy files into a course folder within moddata; instead every file must be added through the file interface so that Moodle can create a hashed-reference to the file. We are evaluating workarounds.

Possible Blockers

Potential blockers indicate problems that could prevent some schools who rely on a particular feature, plugin or block from upgrading to Moodle 2.0. A list of the most popular Moodle blocks and modules, and their current 2.0 status, can be found in Moodle Tracker:

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/CONTRIB-1988>

CLAMP has created a Google Doc that inventories all of the modules and blocks that CLAMP schools use, and their current upgrade status.

- [View the inventory.](#)

Anonymous Forums

There is a 2.0 version of Anonymous Forums (a CLAMP-developed option for forums), but an upgrade path needs to be created for 1.9 forums.

Moodle 2.0 performance

JMeter load tests of Moodle 1.9 and 2.0 have revealed that Moodle 2.0 can be significantly slower at the same tasks than its 1.9 counterpart. A discussion of this issue, with JMeter test plans, graphs and in-depth analysis, can be found in this forum thread:

- Moodle Forum: <http://moodle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=162045>

Scheduler upgrade to Moodle 2.0

The third-party module Scheduler needs to be upgraded to Moodle 2.0, but is no longer maintained. CLAMP is evaluating possible replacements.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/CONTRIB-2636>

Moodle 2.0 upgrades from 1.9 often fail or require manual intervention

Upgrading existing installations from 1.9 to 2.0 often encounter problems that require manual debugging by the Moodle administrator. Our experience is that many of these issues relate to the wiki, but those particular bugs have been fixed. A new round of upgrade testing is needed.

Moodle 1.9 course backups can not be restored in Moodle 2.0

Right now there is no way to restore a Moodle 1.9 course into a Moodle 2.0 instance. The recommended upgrade path for a Moodle course is to upgrade an entire archived Moodle instance from 1.9 to Moodle 2.0, and then backup and restore from that. This is problematic for schools with large numbers of Moodle 1.9 backups. This is currently listed as a “blocker” for Moodle 2.1.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-22414>

Sharing Cart module upgrade to Moodle 2.0

The first 2.0 release for this activities-sharing “shopping cart” is scheduled for June 2011.

- Sharing Cart documentation page (including timeline) http://docs.moodle.org/en/Sharing_Cart

Banner IMS enrollment plugin upgrade to Moodle 2.0

The Banner IMS plugin, which allows Banner schools to push course and enrollment data to Moodle via an IMS data file and/or the Luminus Message Broker, is not available for Moodle 2.0.

The plugin is currently in beta. A full release is planned for the summer.

- Banner IMS enrollment plugin forum post: <http://moodle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=172797>

Feedback & Questionnaire

While the Feedback module is included as part of Moodle 2.0, it is not active by default. Our testing didn't turn up any issues with Feedback, but Moodle Core intends to combine Feedback and Questionnaire into one module in Moodle 2.1. Questionnaire itself is now available for Moodle 2.0

- Activity Module: Feedback: <http://moodle.org/mod/data/view.php?rid=95>
- Activity Module: Questionnaire: <http://moodle.org/mod/data/view.php?d=13&rid=84&filter=1>

Lightbox Gallery

The Lightbox Gallery module needs to be upgraded to Moodle 2.0

- Lightbox module page: <http://moodle.org/mod/data/view.php?d=13&rid=1021>

Resolved Blockers

Grade data is purged when a student is removed from the course

In Moodle 2.0's initial release, when a student is unenrolled from a course, their grade data was deleted. This was a major departure from Moodle 1.9, where the student data remains, and becomes available again if the student is re-enrolled in the course. This was a problem because sometimes students are unenrolled from the course accidentally, or change their mind and want to re-enroll after leaving the course. Moodle core has created a solution in which there are two options for unenrolling students:

- "Disable this enrolment but retain all grades"
- "Remove this enrolment completely and delete all grades"

You can follow this issue in Moodle tracker. The issue has been marked as "fixed and closed", but CLAMP wants to do another round of testing.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25718>

Wiki Upgrade Fails

In the initial Moodle 2.0 release, upgrading a Moodle wiki from 1.9.x to 2.0 fails. This can cause the entire Moodle upgrade to fail if you use the wiki module in your Moodle instance. This problem has been marked as fixed in Tracker, but CLAMP wants to do another round of testing.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25501>

Notable Issues

The following issues appeared during our testing.

Table of Contents links broken in Moodle 2.0 wiki

The links for the automatically-generated table of contents in the Moodle 2.0 wiki do not work.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25695>

Wiki HTML Comments Editor Broken

The HTML editor for wiki comments doesn't work. If you highlight text and click on any of the editor buttons, nothing happens.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25883>

In collaborative wiki, with separate groups, teacher cannot view group wikis

<http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25732>

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25732>

Teacher listed in assignment grading (but not gradebook)

Teacher is listed along with students when grading an assignment through the "View X completed assignments" link (but is not in Gradebook).

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-25872>

The name of the first page in the wiki can not be changed

This could be a feature or a bug, but our sense is that you should be able to change the page name.

- Moodle Tracker: <http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-6488>

Role-less participants in a course

It is possible to have “role-less” participants in a course by first enrolling them, and then removing their role assignment. These role-less participants can still enter the course, but have minimal or no access to activities. Any grades lost will be restored if the participant is re-enrolled as a student.

Issues with importing courses

If you have more than 250 courses in your system, your instructors don't get to import courses that they previously taught.

Additional Testing Needed

Quiz Module

Quiz has changed in several ways and needs additional testing by CLAMP to evaluate whether it is ready for production.

Changes and Improvements

Navigation interface overhaul for administrators and faculty

The user interface in Moodle has been overhauled, consolidating most of the administrative navigation menus into the lefthand navigation. This is good (it's more up-to-date and one never loses sight of certain essential material) and bad (everything is moved and it can become quite confusing).

A good example of this is the “Login as student” option. Once a link under the student's profile, this link has now been moved to the lefthand menu. However, because of the size of the newly-expanded menu, the link often appears off screen when looking at student information.

As a result of these changes, much of the existing documentation for faculty, particularly those that rely on the administration menus, will need to be reworked or rewritten.

Enrollments and Roles

Enrollment interface is changed; the left-right box is gone in favor of a drop menu. Once a student is enrolled, you can remove all roles from them, but we're not sure what they become. We assume they become the equivalent of an authenticated user.

We verified that course enrollment via CSV works, and discovered you can now create groups via CSV.

There is now an "other user" capability. You can use this to add people as managers, who are like power users, but do not have as many capabilities as administrators.

Faculty can set their own enrollment options for a course, allowing in guests to just that course. They can restrict access based on a password.

File Repositories

Internal Files

Everything works and works well as long as you don't try to do more with it.

For example, you can upload multiple files, which can be accessed via the same link. This would be useful for uploading a web archive (e.g. a collection of web pages and images with an index page linking them together) but if you uploaded 3 word files, only the main file will be accessible.

You can have a global file quota for users.

Private Files

Moodle 2.0 allows you to have private files accessible by the user. The interface is confusing however, because although it looks as though it's saving each file as you upload them, it doesn't save any of your work until the entire collection is saved.

External Repositories

Moodle 2.0 supports external repositories, such as Flickr and Google Docs. These file repositories can be configured via the following menu:

- Site Administration > Plugins > Repository

If you're adding a file, you'll see repositories (including private files) and you'll be able to authenticate to the various services. Once you pick a file, Moodle will copy the file into its file system. It is not possible to point to an external file resource using this tool; Moodle will always copy the data to its local file system.

The testers found this to be a significant drawback, as there are many times when we might like Moodle to point to an external file resource and not copy the data over (e.g. GIS data sets).

Note: The File Upload Limit for Moodle is also the maximum size limit for copying files over from an external repository. e.g. if you limit file uploads to 50 MB, then the biggest file you can copy over will be 50 MB.

Internal Repositories

You can set up repositories in Moodle that allow certain users to copy files to their own private files folder or individual courses. This is done by creating subfolders for each repository within Moodle's moddata folder. Potentially, these folders could be SMB mounts or symlinks to other folders containing larger files. As such, it could provide administrators with a work around for getting large files into Moodle, but it is not a mass upload tool. In addition, as with other repositories, a copy of the file is made into Moodle's database structure; it's not possible to link to an external location for a file.

Course Management

Restrict Access

The "Restrict Access" feature allows faculty to prevent students from accessing a particular resource or activity until a certain start/stop date or until a grade is achieved. It is enabled in the site admin in Advanced Features > Restrict availability. It's a great feature to schedule when resources or activities are to display. Set the condition for displaying in the resource or activity. Select to hide until the condition is met or display in grey w/the condition listed until the condition is met

Conditional Activities

Can be used to restrict access to resources or activities based on certain criteria/conditions, and you can cascade these conditions.

Enable in the site admin in Advanced Features > Activity completion

Not enabled by default at the course level though. Enable by selecting "Enabled, control via completion and activity settings" from the "Completion tracking" drop down in the "Student Progress" section in the course settings.

Course completion

Did not look at thoroughly, but is supposed to give a snapshot view of the status of where students are in their completion of activities.

Gradebook

The gradebook itself hasn't changed from Moodle 1.9 to 2.0, but menu locations have.

Outcomes worked with scaling, but seemed like an afterthought. We had issues with importing grades from CSV. Nothing would map properly; this needs to be looked at further.

Cohorts

Essentially cohorts are groups that can be setup by a Moodle admin. The group agreed there is no pressing need to use these since these groups would need to be maintained by the Moodle admin and not the course admin.

We found updating the cohorts challenging because they're tied to course categories. To

update, one must go to the course categories section of the Moodle system settings. Jason Bennett was hoping cohorts would be able to fix his CLAMP Moodle Exchange item (<http://cme.nitle.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=2989>), but it will not. He wants meta courses to automatically generate groups based on the enrollment in the child courses.

The bottom line is that cohorts must be managed by the Moodle admin, which is not very scalable.

Quick Hits

- The ability to create “cohorts” that can be imported into multiple courses; cohorts can be broken down and assigned quickly to groups in courses.
- “Other users” in a course that are not participants. Someone with the default “Manager” role is assigned as an “other user” and can develop the course without showing up as a participant (in assignments, gradebook, etc.) More investigation needed.
- File repositories: Users can now add files from a suite of repositories called the “file bank”
http://docs.moodle.org/en/File_bank
- External files: External repositories currently include Flickr (both public and private), YouTube, Google Docs, DropBox, WebDAV, and more. Success varied. An interesting option is called “File System Repository.” There is an area in the Moodle file space where an admin can store files, create a symlink to another drive, mount a drive, etc. All of the Repositories are file- rather than folder-driven, and they typically copy files from the repository.
- Option to “suspend” student’s involvement in a course, suspending their active participation and access, but retaining their course records.
- Conditional and timed release of activities and documents.
- AJAX is required for Moodle 2.0; disabling JavaScript causes serious problems with the user interface.