Learning Management Systems at NC State: FAQs

Q: What learning management systems (LMSs) does NC State support?
A: NC State and DELTA currently support Moodle, Blackboard Vista, Elluminate, and WolfWare Classic.

Q: Is Blackboard Vista going away? Why?
A: Yes. Our license for Blackboard Vista expires in June 2011. Blackboard will not be continuing the Vista product line and does not offer a way to upgrade to their new product. Therefore, we have to migrate to a different LMS. After an evaluation of various product capabilities and the support we could expect for them, we chose Moodle to underpin our campus LMS.

Q: When will Blackboard Vista go away? How long until I have to move to something else?
A: June 2011. If you are currently using Blackboard Vista, you will need to migrate your content by the end of the Spring 2011 semester.

Q: What will replace Blackboard Vista?
A: Moodle. Moodle provides a robust set of tools and features to help you deliver content and engage your students online. We are redefining the concept of our campus LMS to include all of the technology that will help you teach your class and Moodle will underpin this new system.

Q: Is WolfWare changing?
A: Yes. WolfWare will be the term used to describe our entire collection of LMS tools that will include the tool sets included in Moodle, Elluminate, MediaSite, the unique tools in the current WolfWare system (e.g. class mailing lists, file storage options), and other current and emerging Web-based tools. The single point of entry for these tools will be at http://wolfware.ncsu.edu/. The current incarnation of WolfWare is being renamed “WolfWare Classic.”

Q: What is WolfWare Classic?
A: The “old” WolfWare, originally developed on our campus over 13 years ago. To reflect the philosophy that all of our campus LMS systems can work together to provide quality online learning spaces, we have chosen to use the name ‘WolfWare’ for the entire collection of tools. The old WolfWare will be called “WolfWare Classic” and will remain available until we implement the unique functions of this system into our plans for the “new” WolfWare, our integrated LMS.

Q: I've always used WolfWare for my courses. Do I have to use Moodle?
A: Yes and no. WolfWare Classic runs on outdated hardware that we can no longer purchase. Therefore we must provide the functionality of WolfWare Classic (such as public Web space and class e-mail lists) in some other way. It will take 2 to 3 years before WolfWare Classic functions are available in the “new” WolfWare (which includes Moodle and other Web-based tools). You can continue to use WolfWare Classic during this time. After we have migrated all Blackboard Vista users and have successfully replicated the WolfWare Classic functionality in the new WolfWare system, we will start working with Wolfware Classic users to migrate them to new versions of the tools they use.

Q: Can I do everything in Moodle that I could do in Vista?
A: Yes and no. Moodle has a rich set of features similar to Vista, but it is a different system so there is not an exact one-to-one correspondence in functionality between the systems. There are things you can do in Vista that you cannot do in Moodle (like learning modules & selective release) and vice versa (like wikis and polls).
Q: Is Moodle still in testing mode or is it fully functional?
A: Fully functional. Moodle has been evolving since 1999 and is now at version 1.9.6. Moodle is used to run 52,000+ sites with 30 million users and 2.7 million courses worldwide. We have been testing Moodle at NC State since Spring 2008, and as of Spring 2010, Moodle is being deployed as a fully functional enterprise-level LMS solution for the campus.

Q: Where can I get help converting my Vista course to Moodle?
A: Contact LearnTech: learntech@ncsu.edu. There are also guides to some common conversion processes available at http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/Migration_Guides.

Q: I’m teaching a new course next semester. Which LMS should I use?
A: Moodle. We strongly encourage you to do any new course development in Moodle since both Blackboard Vista and WolfWare Classic will eventually be phased out.

Q: How do I get a course section set up in Moodle?
A: Log in to Moodle and select your course from the drop-down list. A full set of directions is available at http://delta.ncsu.edu/get_help/faq/solution.php?solution=3593. (In the DELTA Web site, under Get Help, click on FAQs and then search for Moodle.)

Q: Are there classes or resources available for me to learn about Moodle?
A: Yes. DELTA offers Moodle workshops covering Moodle basics, course design techniques, tips for using the gradebook, and how to convert content, activities and quizzes from Blackboard Vista to Moodle. DELTA also offers online resources for Moodle training. Sign up for a workshop or view online training materials at http://delta.ncsu.edu/learn/workshops/.

Q: When can I get the new NC State themes for my Moodle course?
A: They are available now on the Moodle server. Their names begin with either "ncsu_" or "custom_banner_". Instructions for inserting a custom banner theme are available at http://delta.ncsu.edu/get_help/faq/solution.php?solution=3704.

Q: How can I duplicate my learning modules from Vista into Moodle?
A: Moodle blocks are approximately the same as Vista learning modules in their functionality. Imagine that your Vista learning modules were all available on the front page of your course. Then they would be Moodle blocks.

Q: I have hundreds of questions in Vista’s test bank. Do I have to rewrite them all in Moodle?
A: No. You can migrate all the most common question types from Vista to Moodle using Respondus. Detailed instructions are available at http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/Migrating_Quizzes_from_Vista_to_Moodle.

Q: Where do I find out more information about the LMSs at NC State?
A: For more information about LMS timelines and process at NC State, read about the LMS strategy at http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/LMS_Strategy. Contact Dr. Marty Dulberg (LMS Coordinator) at marty_dulberg@ncsu.edu.

Q: You are asking us to learn a completely new system. How long will this one be around?
A: We periodically review the LMS product space every 3 to 5 years and in conjunction with the community select what best serves their needs. With that said, one of the most attractive things about Moodle is that there is a very vibrant group of adopters behind it who are continually making small improvements. My hope is that as LMS's evolve the pen source nature of Moodle will mean that it will evolve in that direction as well. This will mean that the faculty will probably be subjected to the occasional annoying minor change in the UI without the trauma of a completely new system for what we hope are many years. Evolutionary change rather than a revolution every five years, that's the goal but there's no way anyone can predict the future that far out when it comes to IT, particularly when our mission as educators calls for us to be innovative.

For instructional support, contact the LearnTech Help Desk at (919) 513-7094 or learntech@ncsu.edu.