Using the Chat Feature in Moodle

Guidelines

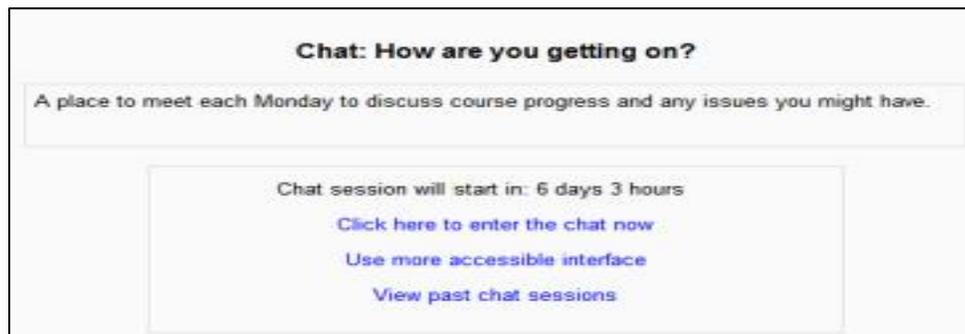**Prepared for CETE MNU by Shimna Shakeeb**

Moodle Chat

The *Chat* activity allows course members to hold real-time, text-based conversations with other course members. An instructor can add more than one Chat activity to a Moodle course, so be certain you enter the correct chat if there is more than one.
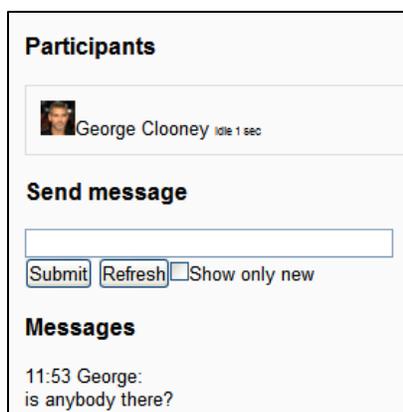
Join a Chat Session

To participate in a Chat activity, select the link to the Chat on your Moodle course page. You can also click Chats in the Activities block to see a list of all available chat activities.
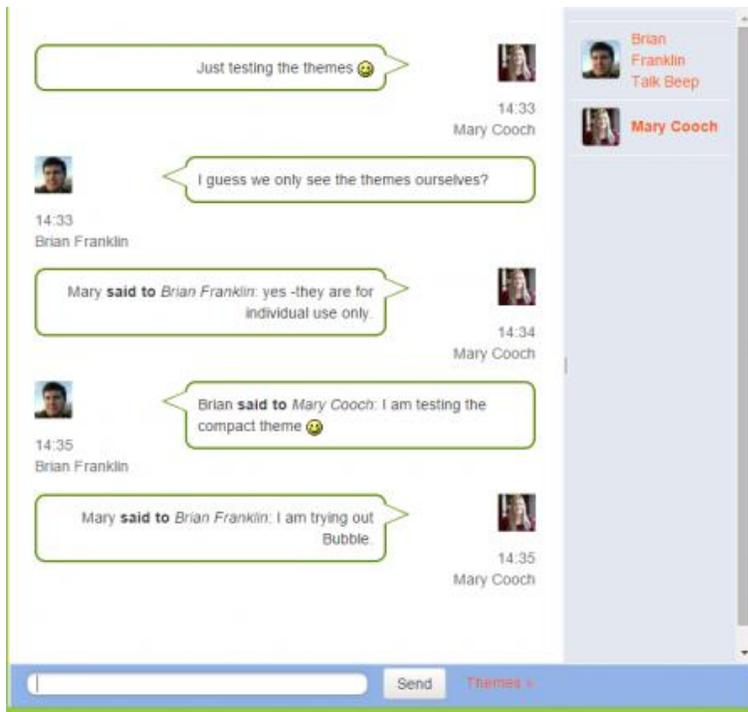
The Chat page will open displaying the description for the chat.

Chat: How are you getting on?

A place to meet each Monday to discuss course progress and any issues you might have.

Chat session will start in: 6 days 3 hours
Click here to enter the chat now
Use more accessible interface
View past chat sessions

As you click the chat link on the course page you see two or three options:

- Click here to enter the chat now - this takes you to the chat using the chosen site default chat method - for example Ajax.

- Use more accessible interface - this gives a simpler chat room without frames and javascript:

Participants

George Clooney idle 1 sec

Send message

Submit Refresh Show only new

Messages

11:53 George:
is anybody there?

- if this has been enabled and the user is allowed to view past chat sessions, this takes them to a list of past sessions with links to the chat.

To enter the chat room, click *Click here to enter the chat now.* Or, to use a screen reader-friendly version of the activity (without frames and javascript), click Use more accessible interface.

- In normal view, the screen is in two parts with the participants on the right, the messages on the left and a box at the bottom into which users type their message and press "Send" to make their contribution:

- Users can change the appearance of the messages by clicking on "Themes" next to the "Send" button. Alongside the default course theme, there are two other available themes. 'Bubbles' looks like this:
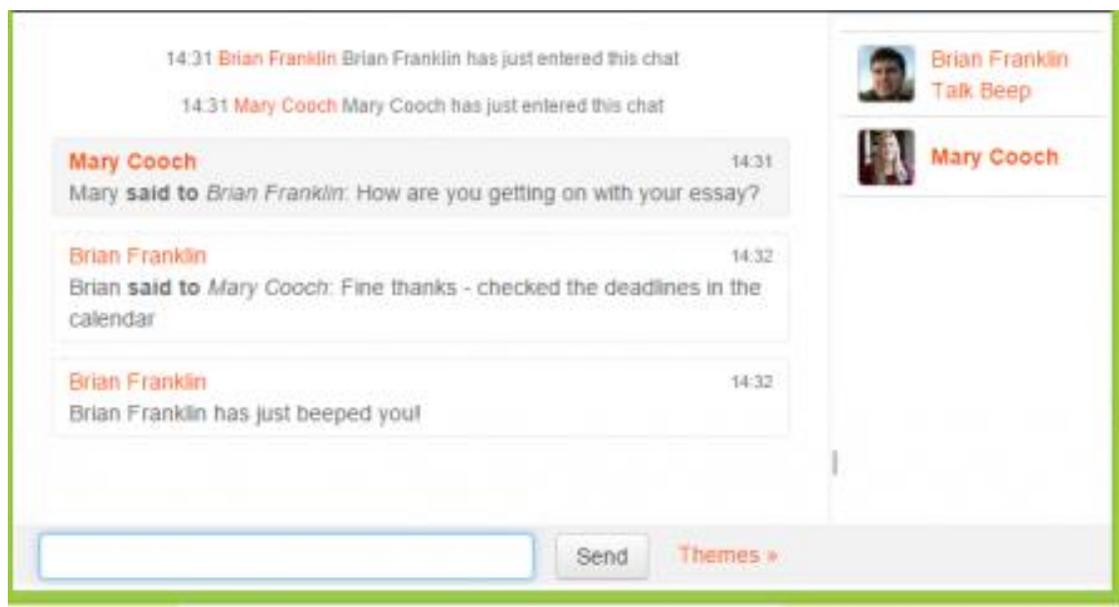
Bubbles theme

'Compact' looks like this:
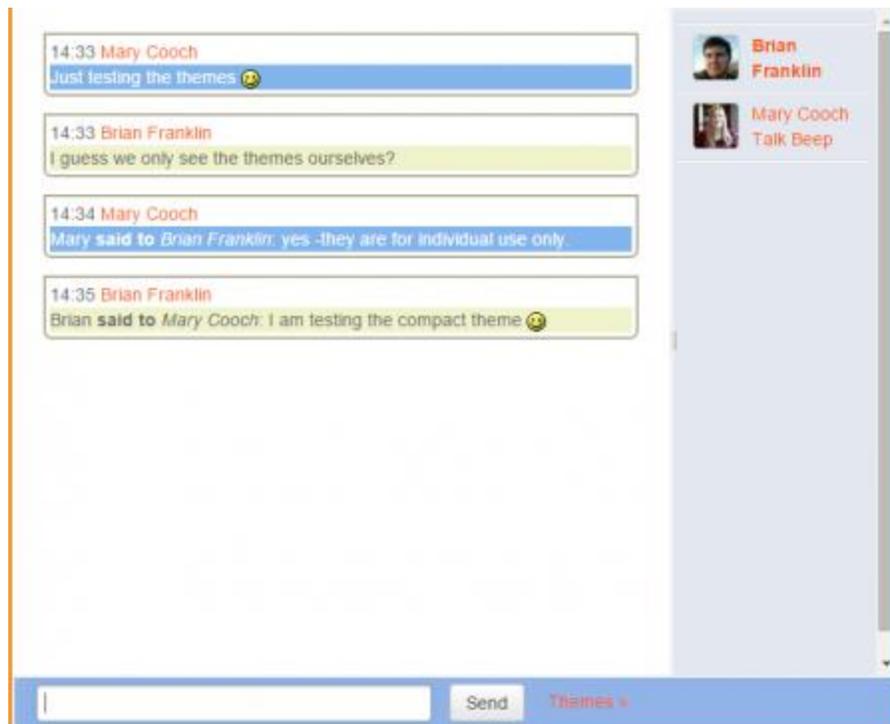
Compact theme

The chat module contains some features to make chatting a little nicer.

Smilies
Any smiley faces (emoticons) that you can type elsewhere in Moodle can also be typed in here and they will be displayed correctly.

Links
Internet addresses will be turned into links automatically.

Emoting
You can start a line with

/me

to emote. For example, if your name is Kim and you type

/me laughs!

then everyone will see "Kim laughs!"

Beeps

You can send a sound to other people by hitting the "beep" link next to their name. A useful shortcut to beep all the people in the chat at once is to type "beep all". Safari users may need to allow sounds for the specific site. Linux users may require a browser plugin to be installed to play sounds.

Talk

If you click the 'Talk' link by a person's name, it will then add their name in the chat box to show your message is directed at that particular person, such as: 'Mary **said to** *Brian Franklin...*'

HTML

If you know some HTML code, you can use it in your text to do things like insert images, play sounds or create different coloured and sized text.

Chat window scrolling

If the chat method (chat method) is set to Ajax in the Site administration (the default setting), then chat window scrolling will stop automatically if you move your mouse away from the chat window.

If the chat method is set to Normal, then there is an auto-scroll checkbox next to the input text box, which you can untick to prevent scrolling.
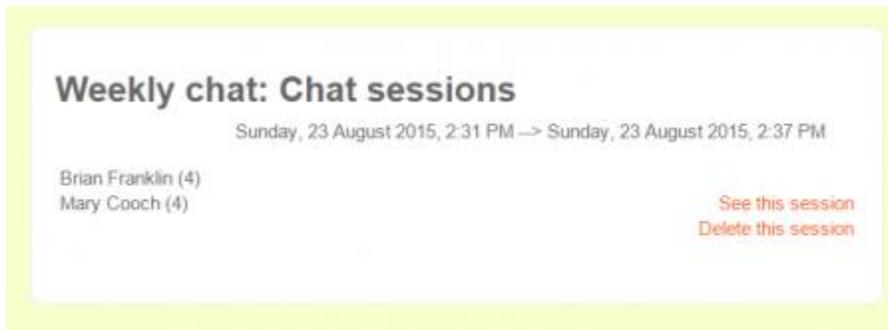
Chat reports

- To view previous chats (if you have permission) click on the 'View past chat sessions' link.

Teachers can also access past chat sessions from the Chat administration in the Course administration block.
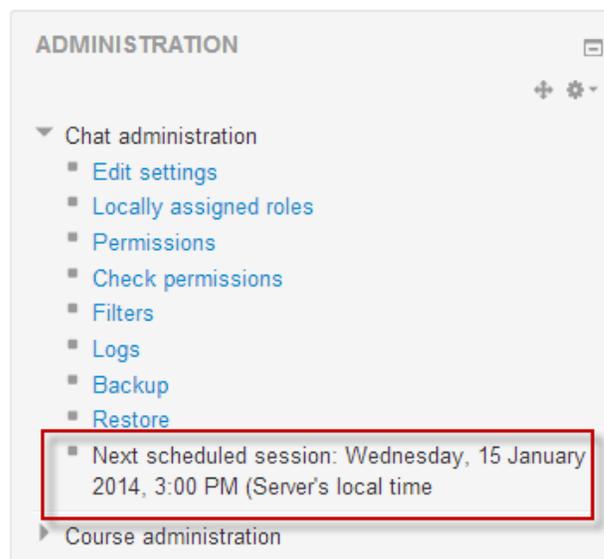
- This will bring up a listing of each chat session under the current chat topic. The listings include the time the chat started and ended, which users participated, and how many messages each user sent. Individual sessions may be deleted by clicking the 'Delete' link.
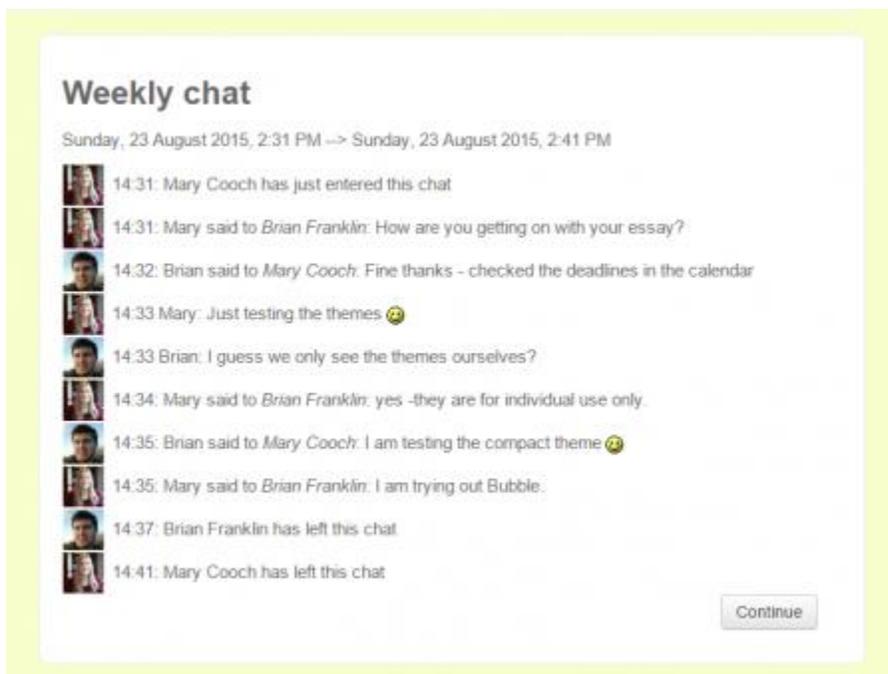

Clicking on 'See this session' will display a transcript of that particular chat:

Why use chat?

- Chat has an advantage over a Forum in that it takes place in Real Time. It is especially beneficial when the group chatting is not able to meet face to face. Examples might be:
  - Regular meetings of staff on large or split campuses to discuss student or curriculum issues;
  - Regular meetings of students doing online courses to enable them to share experiences with others on the same course but potentially in a different city (or country)
  - A teacher working with his students even though he is out of school
  - A student temporarily unable to attend in person chatting with their tutor to catch up with work.
  - Students out on work experience getting together to discuss their experiences with each other and their tutor
  - Younger children using chat at home in the evenings as a controlled(monitored) introduction to the world of social networking

Why NOT use chat?

- Unless a tutor/moderator is permanently present in the chatroom -or unless the chat is hidden and revealed at certain times, it is difficult to control what is said once a chat has started.
- Younger students particularly may find it difficult to stay on task and be prone to adding non-useful comments or "beeping" others for the sake of it.
- In some situations, a forum might be preferred as it allows for reflection before posting and gives a period of time where the post might be edited.

PREPARING FOR A CHAT IN MOODLE

One of the keys to a successful chat is preparing the students for effective participation. To do that we have to consider many elements.

1.BASIC CHAT ETIQUETTE FOR STUDENTS

Before the first chat, consider giving your students a short handout with some basic etiquette instructions. You can even include these in the chat announcements. The following are some sample instructions:

1. *Wait for the speaker (moderator/ lecturer facilitator) to ask for your questions*
2. *If you want to ask a question and it cannot wait, send a "?" and wait for the moderator or speaker to acknowledge you. This is the online equivalent of raising your hand.*
3. *If you have a comment or observation, send a "!" and wait for the moderator or speaker to acknowledge you. When the speaker reaches a good place to pause, he or she will invite you to comment.*
4. *If you need multiple line, use "…" at the end of a line to indicate there is more to come. Without the "…" at the end of a line, other participants assume that you have finished what you have to say.*
5. *Don't use upper case*
6. *Give others time to respond to your last message. Sending messages in a rapid sequence, without giving others a chance to respond, can make the chat feel more like an interrogation than a conversation. Also when you get a response to one of your questions or comments, you might not be able to tell which question/comment the person is responding to*
7. *Don't judge the other person on their typing skills. Lots of smart people cannot type well.*
8. *Think before hitting Enter. The chat will be saved and the transcript will be used for assessment purposes.*
9. *Use humour carefully. Without facial expressions and tone of voice, humour especially sarcasm- often translate poorly online. For example, you can say "You gotta be kidding!" in person and make it clear by your tone and expression that you are teasing the other person. Online, it can just as easily be translated as "You are stupid".*
10. *If you are stepping away from the chat, please send a message to indicate so. Moodle doesn't enable you to set your status like many instant message programs, so you need to inform your fellow chatters when you step away and come back to the chat.*

2. PREPARE FOR A DEFINITE STARTING AND ENDING TIME

'Start and end on time" is a good advice to follow for any class. For an online chat, it is especially important. If a face-to-face class starts late, you can keep the class engaged with conversation until the class starts. Most students will not walk out of the room and when class start they will be there ready to participate. If an online chat starts late, you will have no idea if a participant has walked away from his/her computer while waiting for the chat to start and if/when he/she will return. In an online chat, a late starting time can make your students lose interest more easily than in a face to face classroom.

Chat is designed to help people engage by being interactive. It is a good idea to be sure to select appropriate titles for each chat. In the description, be sure to include a connection to the specific unit, the learning objective, and the outcomes or assessments. Again for a synchronous chat, it is possible for it to be ineffective because people are late to the chat or they are quickly bored. You can help prevent this by coming to the chat prepared with some material. This is material which you can use for discussion before the chat begins, but that is not essential for the chat. For example, you might spend a few minutes asking the students about their experience level with online chats or weather their navigation through the course is clear. Or, you may find some interesting or outrageous trivia about the chat subject and quiz the students about tit until all the participants have arrived.

3. MODERATING THE CHAT

The chat should be actively managed by the moderator (Lecturer/Facilitator). The moderator should:

- Restate the topic at the beginning of the chat
- Bring off-topic posts back on topic.
- Issue a number to each participant and require participants to answer in order, that is, a particular number 2 cannot click the Send button until participant number 1 has posted comment and so on.
- Write in UPPER CASE to let the students know that it is the lecturer.

4. PREPARE A GREETING FOR LATECOMERS

Students might enter the chat at different times. When a student enters a Moodle chat, that person sees only the transcript going forward; the student doesn't see what has already been said in the chat room. If you have a welcome message for students as they enter the chat, you'll need to repeat it each time a student enters the chat. Keep this message in a text file where you can quickly copy and paste it into your chat window.

If your greeting is several paragraphs long, you should be aware that Moodle's chat windows does not recognize the Enter character. Therefore, if you paste two or more paragraphs into the chat window, they will be recognized as one long paragraph. Instead, use shift+ Enter to create hard-line Breaks between the paragraphs.

4. FOCUS

Chatting online requires more effort than talking. Limit the chat session to one specific topic or activity and stick to it. Students should come prepared to discuss one topic or complete one task only. As the moderator you should be prepared to keep the chat on topic. Unless brainstorming and expanding, the topic is part of the chat's goals and you should respond to off-topic postings by bringing them back on topic. This lends structure to the chat session and helps students stay focused.

5.INSERT HTML

You can insert HTML code into your chat. This is useful for sharing links, embedding graphics and formatting text in your chat. To insert a link, just type the web address. In a chat, links that you type become automatically clickable. You can insert images by placing them into the standard HTML image tag. If the image is on the WEB, include the full link to the image.

Reference

Moodle, https://docs.moodle.org/38/en/Using_Chat#Chat_reports

Nash, S. S. (2016). Moodle 3. x Teaching Techniques. Packt Publishing Ltd.