

# USING MOODLE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND VETERINARY MEDICINE OF IASI

## PLATFORMA MOODLE DE E-LEARNING A U.S.A.M.V. IASI

CĂLIN M.<sup>1</sup>, CHIRUȚĂ C.<sup>1</sup>, CROITORU C.<sup>1</sup>

e-mail: mcalin@uaiasi.ro

**Abstract:** *In the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year, a Moodle e-learning platform was installed and put into use at The University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iasi. Its end users are the university students who benefit from the courses developed by their teachers. The first results of using the e-learning technology are starting to be seen. The paper presents some aspects of how the platform is being utilized from an administrator's perspective. An emphasis is given to user registration, to student course enrollment and to managing rights and permissions for teachers who develop their own courses on the platform.*

**Key words:** *e-learning, Moodle*

**Rezumat:** *Incepând cu anul universitar 2012-2013, la USAMV Iași a fost instalat și este în funcțiune o platformă Moodle de e-learning ai cărei beneficiari finali sunt studenții Universității. Primele efecte ale utilizării tehnologiei e-learning în procesul didactic au început să fie observabile. Lucrarea prezintă câteva aspecte ale exploatării acestei platforme din perspectiva administratorilor acesteia. Sunt evidențiate elemente legate de gestionarea eficientă a înregistrării utilizatorilor, de înrolarea studenților la cursuri și de alocarea de drepturi și obligații cadrelor didactice care solicită crearea de spații de clasă virtuală pentru dezvoltarea cursurilor proprii.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *e-learning, Moodle*

## INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year, a Moodle e-learning platform was installed and put into use at The University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iasi. Its end users are the university students who benefit from the courses developed by their teachers.

The Moodle software environment was installed on an IBM server that was purchased during a research program (CEEX 1801 No. 74/31.06.2006) that was carried out between 2006 and 2008. One of the themes was studying and assessing the benefits of developing an e-learning system at the University. One conclusion was that from various points of view Moodle would be the most appropriate choice.

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași, Romania

After one academic year the first results of using the e-learning technology are starting to be seen. The paper presents some aspects of how the platform is being utilized from an administrator's perspective.

## **PREMISES FOR USING MOODLE AS SOFTWARE SOLUTION**

As mentioned above, the decision of using Moodle came after assessing different potential options. On the one hand, Moodle is now continuously and systematically developed by Moodle Pty Ltd ([www.moodle.com](http://www.moodle.com)). Moodle is now used by numerous organizations, including universities, to develop and manage e-learning courses. On the other hand Moodle is free, being developed as an open-source project.

Before putting into current use the Moodle platform, in two preceding annual sessions about 50 teachers in the University were trained in creating e-learning courses using Moodle. In the years that preceded. Those training sessions were held in cooperation with AUF – l'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie who provided the teaching staff.

The main element of the infrastructure (the server) being available, and having an initial number of teachers trained in developing e-learning courses under Moodle, the next thing that had to be accomplished was the platform administration. This activity was assumed by the academic staff of the IT group of disciplines which is part of the Department of Sciences of the University.

## **THE MOODLE PLATFORM AFTER ONE ACADEMIC YEAR OF UTILIZATION**

A Moodle platform is accessed by a few categories of users which are placed on four levels, as shown in Figure 1. The significance of these levels is the following:

- a user on some level benefits of the services provided by the users on the levels below;
- a user on some level grants access rights to users on the levels above.

The server on which Moodle was set up is installed in the ITC Center where the continuous and proper functioning of all the similar machines held by the University is supervised.

The Moodle site can be found at <https://193.231.26.58>.

As mentioned, the site administration is made by the academic staff from the IT group of disciplines.

The administrator performs the users registration into the system. The main method used for this is the so-called *bulk uploading* (Buchner, 2011) that allows importing in one step the attributes of multiple users from a text file. The respective file is carefully prepared using a multiple step procedure through a Microsoft Excel workbook that finally generates a CSV format. The goal is to generate a absolutely valid text file that will subsequently be used in the bulk

uploading procedure as Moodle doesn't prove to be very explicit when it comes to signal errors that may possibly occur in the input data.

Automatically generated usernames have a standardized format that would permit future users filtering and searching.

Student	Benefits of resources and activities within the courses he is enrolled to
Teacher	Creates, develops and manages courses and grants student access to the respective resources and activities
Moodle administrator	Performs the overall administration of the site and of its users. Grants access rights to different categories of users.
Server administrator	Ensures the proper and safe functioning of the server machine

**Fig. 1** – Categories of users of a Moodle platform

Each member of the teaching staff receives two usernames:

- One username will be used to enroll him with *teacher* rights to the courses that he develops and maintains. The general structure of this username is

*xy-name.surname*

where *xy* is an internal coding of the department the teacher belongs to.

Example:

`h2-calin.marius`

- A second username will be used to enroll him to its own courses with *student* rights, in order to see them "with student eyes". The general structure of this username is

*xy-stud.name.ss*

where *ss* are the first two letters of the surname. Example:

`h2-stud.calin.ma`

All of the students being in their first academic year were assigned a username that they will use throughout their studentship. The students usernames are also standardized, having the general form

*aaaa999-name.surname*

where *aaaa* is the acronym of the programme of studies, and *999* is the group the student belongs to in the students directory. Example:

tppa426-ionescu.radu

The administrator also creates and sets up the framework of each new course following the request that came from a teacher. He also makes the first two enrollments to the course: the two usernames of the teacher that were described above. The teacher will then make all further development of the course using the *teacher* username that he owns.

At present the students enrollment to courses is also made by the administrator. To manage more efficiently their enrollment to different courses, students were grouped in *cohorts*. This concept was introduced in Moodle 2.0 and it permits a more efficient grouping. Cohorts are particularly useful (Rice, 2011) when one group of students must be enrolled to more than one course (the courses of one semester) and when the movement of students from one course to another must be done (between semesters).

After one academic year, approximately 1350 user are registered, that is all of the students from the first year, all the members of the teaching staff and a few more users registered separately.

There are already about 30 courses under development and current use. The administrator maintains an introductory course aimed to the teaching staff that makes the first steps in creating Moodle course material. These lecture notes were made using existing literature (Rice, 2011) and elements from the official Moodle site ([www.moodle.org](http://www.moodle.org)).

Future development include:

- registration and course enrolment of new students at the beginning of each academic year;
- registration of the site as a standalone domain;
- automation of cohorts enrolment and movement from one course to another;
- designing of a personalized look of the site;
- increasing the number of courses.

## REFERENCES

1. Buchner A., 2011 – *Moodle 2 Administration*, Packt Publishing, ISBN 978-1-84951-604-4
2. Rice W., 2011 - *Moodle 2.0 E-Learning Course Development*, Packt Publishing, ISBN 978-1-849515-26-9
3. [www.moodle.com](http://www.moodle.com)
4. [www.moodle.org](http://www.moodle.org)