

# USING A LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

## WHAT TO PROVIDE IN AN LMS OR VLE



When moving your language teaching to a distance mode, you may be able to make use of an online learning management system (LMS) or virtual learning environment (VLE). In fact, your institution may already provide such a system to its teachers and learners. This help sheet is only relevant to those colleagues who are involved in the creation of LMS or VLE courses, or in discussions about them.

The LMS may be the sole platform used to deliver your learning at a distance, or it could be one of several tools involved in the delivery of your teaching, as part of a hybrid model. The advice below is based on the Open University languages model, but it will of course need to be tailored to your own context.

The LMS can be the backbone of your teaching delivery. The main elements are:

- a study planner
- online materials and activities
- assessment materials
- resources
- communication tools.

Below you will find more guidance on each of these elements.

## STUDY PLANNER

The study planner is typically the main page that is displayed when students access your online course in a learning management system.

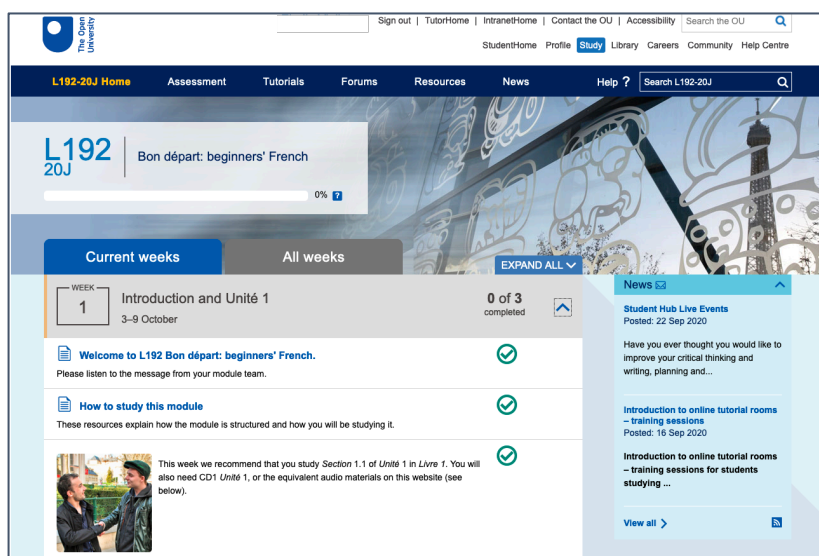


Figure 1 - Open University Beginners' French study planner sample

It can be organised chronologically (e.g. 1 block per week) and provide a week-by-week plan, or it can be thematic (e.g. 1 block per unit) and provide links to all the resources needed for that unit.

It should contain only key information and links to further pages: if it is too busy, it will be confusing. Each block or section should provide an at-a-glance view of what learners need to cover in a given week or unit.

It should contain all the steps students need to work through each week or for each unit, such as for example a link to the relevant materials, a link to the relevant assignment, a link to the relevant resources or tools.

Instructions must be brief but very clear (see Figure 1 and 2).

Photos or images can be used, sparingly, to help provide a visual structure by differentiating between sections (see Figure 1 and 2).

Figure 2 - Open University French Studies 1 study planner sample

## ONLINE MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

These are best organised in chunks equivalent to the length of sections in the study planner (i.e. one week or one theme at a time). Each chunk or section should be linked to from the study planner.

Any materials needed by students which are not online can also be referred to in the study planner (e.g. this week you will study chapter 2 in your grammar book). That way, learners can see everything they need to study in a given period of time or for a given theme or unit (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Open University Beginners' German study planner sample

## ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

If assessment is a key part of a course, it is useful to have a dedicated section of the LMS for this. It should contain all assignments with instructions and information on deadlines and submission. It should also provide any assessment guides, rules or regulations, if relevant. It should include or link to any tools needed to prepare or submit assignments (for example a link to an online assessment submission system, if relevant). Assessment materials should also be included or linked to in the study planner (see Figure 3).

## RESOURCES


Resources that are useful to more than one section of the learning materials can be pooled in a central 'resource' online area or page, especially if they are useful for revision purposes. They can be resources from the course, links to central resources that are not specific to the course (such as university-wide systems or content) or links to additional external resources.

Useful resources for a language course could include the following:

| RESOURCES  | EXAMPLES                                      |
|--|---|
| content summaries that are useful for <b>revision</b>                                  | grammar, vocabulary, or culture notes         |
| <b>reference</b> documents and tools   | links to online dictionaries, libraries, etc. |
| <b>external resources</b> that students can use in their own time for further practice | links to TV/radio channels, films, news, etc. |


If audio-visual media are embedded in online activities, or if audio tracks or videos are needed to work with books or workbooks, it can be useful to also include them in a specific resource area of the LMS for students to download to computers or mobile devices in bulk.

Where relevant and possible, it is good practice to include alternative versions of the same materials in different formats, for accessibility purposes.



## Resources


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### L226 Module guide


"Please note the following important update to the module guide: The Residential school in Alicante is **not** taking place in this academic year. All students will be joining the Alternative learning experience online."

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### Level 2 Accessibility Guide


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### Accented and special characters: how to type them

This document shows how to type accented and special characters on PC and Mac computers and common mobile devices.

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### Acknowledging your sources in Level 2 language assignments

39KB

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## Alternative Learning Experience (ALE)




### Alternative Learning Experience (ALE)

The face-to-face residential school in Alicante, which is normally part of this module, will **not** go ahead in this academic year. All students will be joining the online 'Alternative Learning Experience' (ALE), which will be held between February and April 2021.


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## Language practice



### Pronunciation Guide


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### Flashcards for vocabulary and grammar learning

Many students find flashcards helpful for learning vocabulary and grammar, by allowing frequent practice, a little at a time. This page explains how.


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### Practising with other students in a self-help group

An online student room allows you to meet and talk to your fellow students so that you can practise your listening and speaking language skills. Here are some suggestions for how to do this

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### Help Centre study skills

Tips and advice for the skills you need as an OU student: taking notes, writing assignments, managing your study time, and lots more

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Figure 4 - Open University Spanish Studies 2 resources page sample

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Communication tools are important to allow learners to connect with teachers and with each other. It helps students not to feel isolated and contributes to keeping motivation. They can be used for social purposes, for teachers to share news or information with learners, for students to ask questions, etc.

When teaching at a distance, you may also use some online communication tools to deliver online classes.

Online communication can be

- **synchronous**, such as in a live class delivered through a video conferencing tool, or
- **asynchronous**, such as online discussions or chats taking place in online forums.

It is useful to consider what options are available to you, and which tool best serves your purpose when designing an online course or choosing a tool or tools to deliver your teaching or support your students. You are likely to need different tools for different purposes, but you may wish to ensure that you do not ask your students to use too many different tools, to avoid confusing them.

Links to the relevant tools can be provided in a central online area or page, or they can also be included in the study planner when they are used for any scheduled events, e.g. online tutorial, theme-specific forum discussion, etc. (See Figure 5).

|   |   |
|---|---|
|  Thema 1: Landschaft und politische Strukturen           |   |
|  <b>Thema 1: Landschaften und politische Strukturen</b>  |  |
|  <b>Teil 1: Landschaften</b>                             |  |
|  <b>Forum: Landschaften in deutschsprachigen Ländern</b> | (Unread posts)  |

Figure 5 - Open University Advanced German study planner sample

## FIGURE REFERENCES

### Figure 1

The Open University (2012). 'Study planner'. L192: Bon départ: beginners' French (restricted online access).

### Figure 2

The Open University (2017). 'Study planner, week 6'. L112: French Studies 1 (restricted online access).

### Figure 3

The Open University (2012). 'Study planner, week 4'. L193: Rundblick: beginners' German (restricted online access).

### Figure 4

The Open University (2019). 'Resources'. L226: Spanish Studies 2 (restricted online access).

### Figure 5

The Open University (2010). 'Study planner, Thema 1 '. L313: Variationen: Advanced German (restricted online access).