

Monash Moodle Case Study



Established in 1958, Monash University is the youngest member of the Group of Eight Australian universities. Monash is an energetic and dynamic university committed to quality education, outstanding research and international engagement.

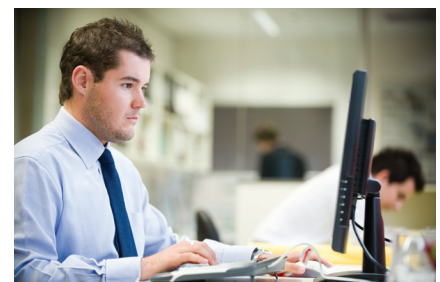
It has grown to become the largest university in Australia, with six campuses in Victoria, Australia, a campus in Sunway, Malaysia, a campus in Ruimsig, South Africa, and a centre in Prato, Italy. This campus network supports over 65,000 students and around 8000 academic staff.

The decision to move

Monash started a critical exploration of their Learning Management System (LMS) options in 2009, prompted by the need to upgrade the version of their primary LMS at the time. At this time there were at least four other LMSs being used by various faculties and campuses concurrently, each requiring their own support systems and resources. There was an urgent need to consolidate these LMSs and find a uniform solution.

After the completion of a business requirements review and extensive consultation with key stakeholders and

users, Moodle 2.0 was recommended on the basis that it best aligned with the University's strategic educational objectives. The flexibility inherent in an open source solution was critical to ensuring the capacity of the LMS to meet emerging teaching and learning needs.



MONASH University



The transition to Moodle

Monash adopted a user-centred approach in four stages – or ‘waves’ – to implement the transition to Moodle. In the first wave, Monash trialled the system with 50 units representing all faculties and campuses. Based on the results and feedback from the first wave, the roll-out process was adjusted for the next wave of users.

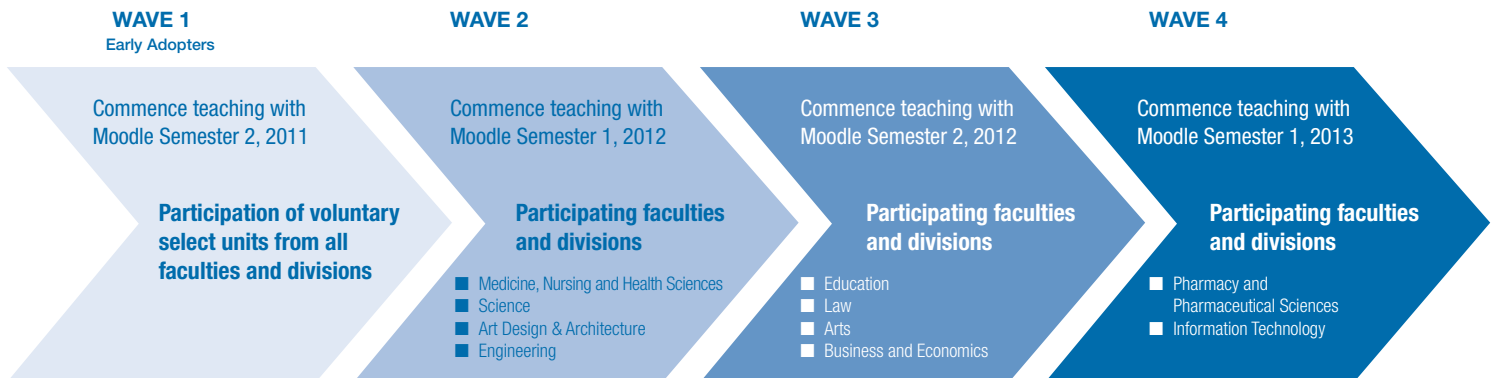
With this wave-based approach, an opportunity was created to ‘learn as we go’ and to make improvements based on user feedback and evaluation.

This approach to the implementation allowed key stakeholders to directly influence the approach adopted. This user-led control over the transition process resulted in positive and active preparation and high levels of engagement within each faculty prior to their transition to Moodle.

Over several months, the Monash implementation team, known as the Virtual Learning Environment team, worked closely with key faculty contacts to develop personalised transition plans for each faculty’s transition to Moodle. In these

meetings, faculties were consulted on a wide range of options regarding their transition, such as where and when training sessions should be scheduled and what content would be most appropriate based on the faculty’s learning needs and appetite for change. Faculties were provided information to help their decision-making. For example, they were given a choice between migrating existing content or starting from scratch, and could determine when the migration should occur.

Moodle Roadmap for Faculties/Divisions



Moodle use at Monash

Moving to Moodle has provided new opportunities for Monash academic staff to explore a blended learning approach to teaching. Many teaching staff have restructured their online content to be more sequential or modular, taking advantage of Moodle’s flexibility to design content and activities with the student experience in the foreground. For example, more lecturers and tutors are using Moodle’s discussion forums to support learning activities, rather than simply as a social or administrative function. A significant proportion of faculty schools and departments are also moving towards online submission of assignments for the first time.

The initial Moodle training built enthusiasm within Monash academic staff to trial the more interactive and collaborative features of Moodle. The choice and feedback activities appealed to academics who were interested in finding out students’ pre-existing knowledge before they attended a face-to-face teaching session. Other academics have seen the potential for glossary and database to provide rich collaborative activities for their students. Finally, the flexible structure of the workshop activity excited academics from all subject areas with its potential to host deep thinking peer assessment activities.

Giving back to the Moodle community

One of the real strengths of Moodle is that it is open-source, providing members of its community an opportunity to weigh-in on and contribute to the development of the product. Monash has enjoyed being an active member of this community and, in partnership with our Moodle Partner, Netspot, has recently made several contributions.

Monash is currently co-developing two Moodle enhancements as part of the Netspot Innovation Fund.

One project aims to develop an analytics block to identify students at risk of disengaging. Another aims to develop a Moodle plugin to detect computer programming code similarities for use in an educational context.

Usability and accessibility is also a priority to Monash University. Monash engaged the expertise of its experts in the field to develop a Moodle theme that is accessible. This theme was rolled out to Monash students in July 2012 and the University is working towards releasing this code to the community.

Moodle in the future

Monash recently endorsed its Education Strategic Plan 2011-2015, intent on refreshing the modes and methods of learning and teaching. Through this plan, the University aims to increase student engagement and promote active, collaborative learning, beyond knowledge retention.

Moodle has helped Monash to meet students’ expectations that they can ‘learn any time and anywhere, that the use of technology will be central to their learning, and that study (and work) will be increasingly collaborative in nature’¹.

Monash is now looking ahead to identify innovative ways in which Moodle can enhance and support a sustainable and positive change in the way Monash undertakes education.



1 Monash University. (2011). *Education Strategic Plan 2011 – 2015*, retrieved from www.odvce.monash.edu.au/assets/documents/education-strategic-plan.pdf