# Using Assignments in the VLE

**GUIDE** 

v2.0



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Last updated: 20 October 2023



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### A. Introduction

The **Assignment** activity allows you as tutor to collect work from your students, review it and provide feedback. The work students submit is visible only to the tutor, unless a group assignment is assigned.

Managing student work using an assignment activity presents the following benefits:

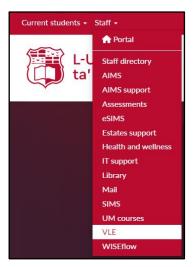
- Paperless management of student work The assignment activity provides a convenient database of student submissions that you can manage online.
- Providing feedback through the VLE VLE assignments include a feedback interface through which you can provide feedback comments, and upload feedback files.
- **Due dates automatically appear in the Calendar** If you specify a due date for an assignment, that date will appear in the *Calendar* block and in the *Scheduled activities* block. Students can see at a glance when their work is due.

Students can submit any digital file type, including, for example, word-processed documents, spreadsheets, presentations and images. Assignments do not necessarily have to consist of file uploads. Alternatively, tutors can ask students to submit online text within the assignment activity. Otherwise, they can also ask students to do both.

- Online text Students enter content directly into a text box on the assignment submission page. Useful for short papers or articles.
- File submissions Students upload files on the submission page. Useful for long essays or other file-based work.
- Both online text and files Students can upload files and enter text online. For example, a student can upload a file containing an essay and use the online text box to provide a brief description.
- Offline work (no online submission) Tutors can also create an assignment activity with no online submission options for students. This is useful for evaluating work such as papers which are to be collected as hard copy, classroom presentations, performances or lab experiments. Tutors can use this activity to provide feedback in the VLE. Moreover, the due date will appear in the VLE area's Calendar and the Scheduled activities block in the Dashboard.

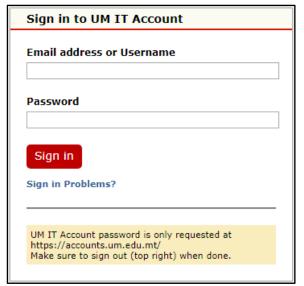
# B. Accessing VLE areas

1. Select **VLE** from the *Staff* drop-down menu at the upper left-hand corner of the University of Malta homepage.

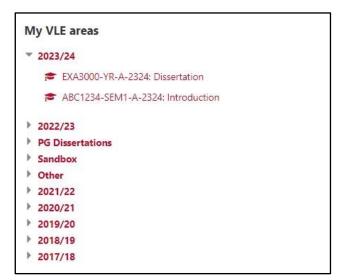


2. If you are already signed in, you will immediately be directed to the VLE. Your VLE Dashboard will be displayed, showing all the areas you have access to.

If you are not signed in, the UM IT Account authentication screen will be displayed. Type in your **Email address or Username** and **Password** in the respective fields, and click the **Sign in** button.



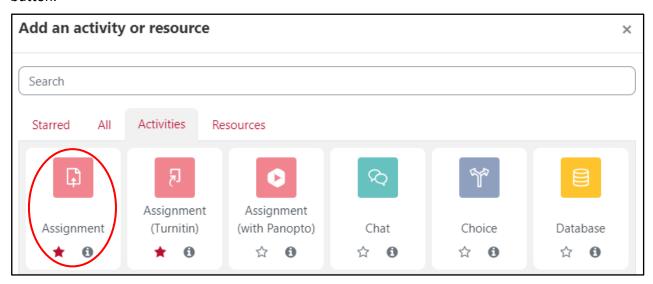
- 3. Locate the VLE area you want to access within the My VLE areas block.
- 4. Click on the VLE area.



# C. Creating an assignment activity

You need to create an Assignment activity so that all students will be able to submit their assignments online through the VLE.

- 1. Click the Start editing toggle button (top-right corner of the VLE area).
- 2. In the section where you want to add the Assignment activity, click the **Add an activity or resource** button.



3. Select **Assignment**. The *Adding a new Assignment* window, which is broken down into a number of sections, will be displayed.

By default, the following sections are automatically expanded:

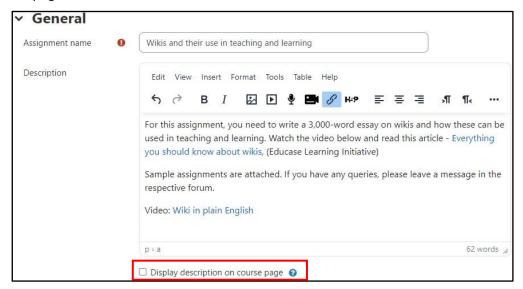
- General \*
- Availability \*
- Submission types \*

The following sections are automatically collapsed:

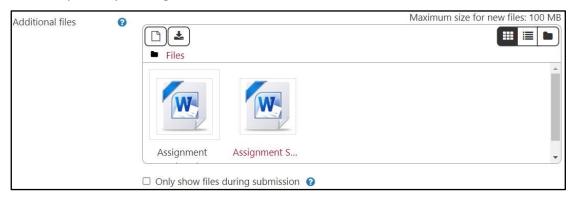
- Feedback types
- Submission settings
- Group submission settings
- Notifications
- *Grade* while grading is enabled for an Assignment activity, it is important to note that all official and final grades may only be accessed via eSIMS.
- Common module settings allows the use of groups and groupings in an Assignment activity.
   More information is available in the Using Groups & Groupings in the VLE user guide, with special reference to section E, namely, Making use of Groups.
- Restrict access not required, however more information is available in the Using Conditional Activities in the VLE user guide.
- Activity completion not required, however more information is available in the Using Activity Completion in the VLE.

\* These sections must be completed

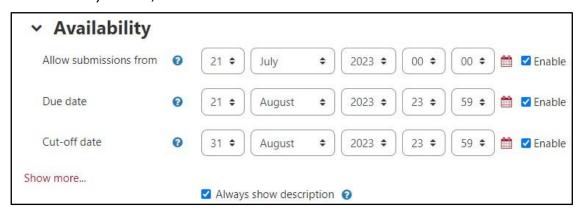
- 4. Under the *General* section, in the **Assignment name** field, enter a meaningful name for the assignment activity.
- 5. In the **Description** field, it is recommended that you enter information about the assignment. Tick the option **Display description on course page**, if you'd like to display the description on the VLE area homepage.



- 6. Additionally, you may include any detailed activity instructions in the **Activity instructions** field. These instructions will be displayed once students access the respective Assignment activity.
- 7. Within the **Additional files** designated area, you can include attachments of additional files to provide students with further details, or to include sample assignments or an answer template. Additional files can be uploaded through drag-and-drop in the designated area, or through traditional upload by clicking the **Add...** button.



8. In the Availability section, set the date and time for:



- Allow submissions from This is the start date, and determines when students can start making their submissions. Students cannot submit their assignments prior to this date.
- **Due date** Determines when the assignment will be due. The due date will show in the VLE area's *Calendar*, as well as in the *Scheduled activities* block in the VLE Dashboard.

**Note:** submissions will still be allowed after this date but any assignments submitted after due date are marked as late. To prevent submissions after a certain date, set the assignment **Cut-off date**.

• **Cut-off date** – Determines when the assignment will no longer accept submissions. Tick the **Enable** checkbox to set a date and time.

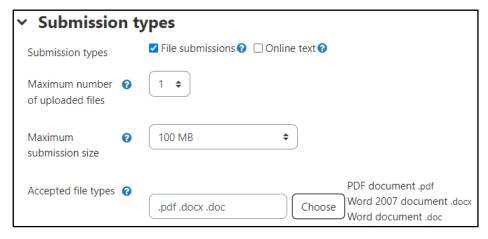
To adjust the required dates, you may follow one of the steps below:

- a) Use the drop-down menus to set the day, month, year and time (24-hour clock).
- b) Click the calendar icon adjacent to the dates. This will display the calendar, from which you can easily navigate to the day required. Note that the time can only be set using the drop-down menus available.



When setting the time for the due date and cut-off date, it is recommended that you set one of the following: 12:00 or 23:59.

- 9. In the Submission types section, you may set:
  - **Submission types** Determine whether you want your students to submit a *File submission*, *Online text*, *both*, or an *offline submission* (disable both the *File submission* and *Online text* options. Further information is also available in Section A).
  - Maximum number of uploaded files If file submissions are enabled and students are required to upload multiple files, set this to the number of files required.
  - Maximum submission size Leave this setting as default, that is, **100MB**.
  - Accepted file types If required, you may specify the file types that can be submitted. You
    may either enter the file extensions in the field or use the file type selector by clicking the
    Choose button. If the field is left empty, then all file types will be allowed.
  - Word limit Optionally, you can enable this for Online text submissions. Specify a limit to
    the number of words an Online text submission may contain. Note: this setting is available
    only if Online text has been enabled.



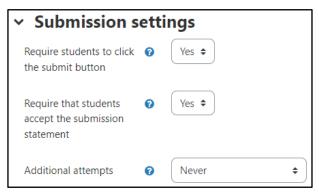
- 10. If you would like to provide feedback to your students, expand the *Feedback types* section to choose the required feedback type. You may set:
  - **Feedback comments** If enabled, you can write comments for every submission. These comments will only be visible to the individual student. If it is a group submission you can choose to apply the same feedback to the entire group (further information in Section F).
  - Offline grading worksheet If enabled, you can download the spreadsheet to input feedback without the need to be logged in the VLE. This can be useful if you anticipate providing feedback while disconnected from the internet.
  - Feedback files If enabled, you can upload files containing inline feedback comments and suggestions. For example, tutors can upload a MS Word document with comments or a spoken audio feedback file.
  - **Comment inline** If enabled, the *Online text* submission will be copied into the feedback comment field, making it easier to comment inline or to edit the original text.



- 11. Expand the Submission settings section. The following settings may be applied:
  - Require students to click submit button If enabled, students will need to click the Submit
    button to declare their submission as final. This setting is recommended in order to prevent
    students from making re-submissions, particularly if you have already provided feedback for
    their submissions.
  - Require that students accept the submission statement If enabled, students will need to
    acknowledge the statement before proceeding with their submission. The submission
    statement states the following:

I confirm that this submission is my own work, except where explicitly and individually indicated, and that all sources used in its preparation and all quotations are clearly cited. I accept all responsibility for any copyright infringement that may occur as a result of this submission.

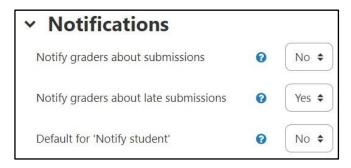
- Additional attempts Determines whether a student can make additional attempts at the
  assignment. The available options are, Never, Manually and Automatically until pass.
- Maximum attempts The maximum number of submissions attempts that can be made by a student. Note: this setting is available only if the Additional attempts setting has been set as Manually.



- 12. If you would like to allow students to submit in groups, expand the *Group submission settings* section. The following settings may be applied:
  - Students submit in groups If enabled, students can submit their work as a group rather than individually. For example, a group of students can submit one file that contains the joint work of the group. Note: Groups must be enabled and created within the study-unit prior to using this setting. Further information is available in the Using Groups & Groupings in the VLE user guide, with special reference to section E, namely, Making use of Groups.
  - Require group to make submission If enabled, users who are not members of a group will be unable to make submissions.
  - Require all group members submit If enabled, all students in a group must individually submit the same assignment for the group submission to be considered as submitted. Otherwise, if this is disabled, the group submission will be considered as submitted as soon as any member of the student group makes a submission.
  - **Grouping for student groups** Choose the grouping that the assignment will use to find groups for student groups. If not set, the default set of groups will be used.



- 13. Expand the *Notifications* section. The following settings may be applied:
  - **Notify graders about submissions** If enabled, tutors will receive an email alert whenever a student makes a submission. **Note:** This may not be practical in a class with a large number of students.
  - **Notify graders about late submissions** If enabled, tutors will receive an email alert whenever a submission is made after due date.
  - **Default setting for "Notify students"** Choose the default setting for "Notify students" for when feedback is provided. This will be updated in the assignment feedback interface. It is recommended that you set this setting to **No**. This can be changed manually in the feedback interface.



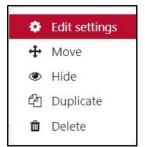
14. Click the Save and return to course button.

# D. Editing or deleting an assignment activity

While it is possible to edit the settings of an existing assignment, it is recommended to do so carefully, particularly if the assignment is already accessible to students, and students have already started submitting their work. Changing some options, such as changing participants when working with groups, may result in student confusion and in loss of work that might have already been submitted.

To edit the settings for an assignment you have already created:

- 1. Click the **Start editing** toggle button on your study-unit page.
- 2. Click the **Edit** (3-dot) icon adjacent to the activity and select **Edit settings** from the drop-down menu. The assignment's settings page will be displayed.
- 3. Apply the necessary settings.
- 4. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click the **Save and return to course** button.



To delete an assignment activity completely from the VLE area:

- 1. Click the **Start editing** button on your VLE area.
- 2. Click the **Edit** (3-dot) icon adjacent to the activity and select **Delete** from the drop-down menu. The confirmation dialog box will be displayed:



3. Click **Yes** to proceed with deleting the assignment activity.

# Note:

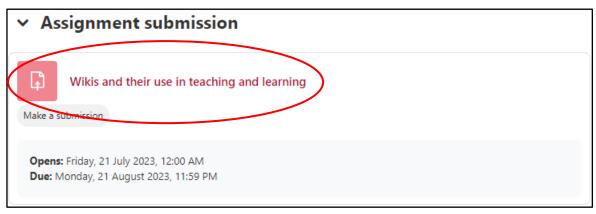
• The deleted *Assignment* activity will first be sent to the recycle bin for fifteen (15) days, allowing time to restore it if this has been deleted in error.

# E. Accessing students' submissions

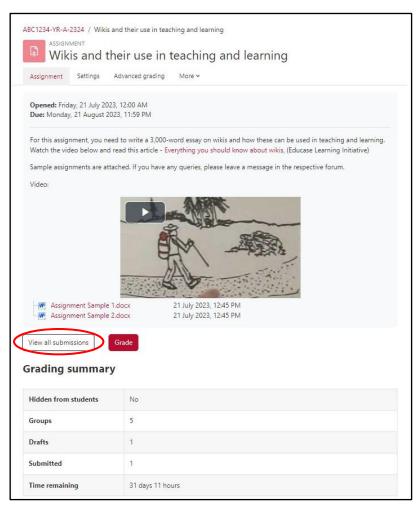
The *Submissions* page for the Assignment activity within the VLE allows you to view and download students' submissions, as well as provide feedback. More information about feedback is available in Section F below.

To access students' submissions:

1. In your VLE area homepage, click on the assignment activity link.

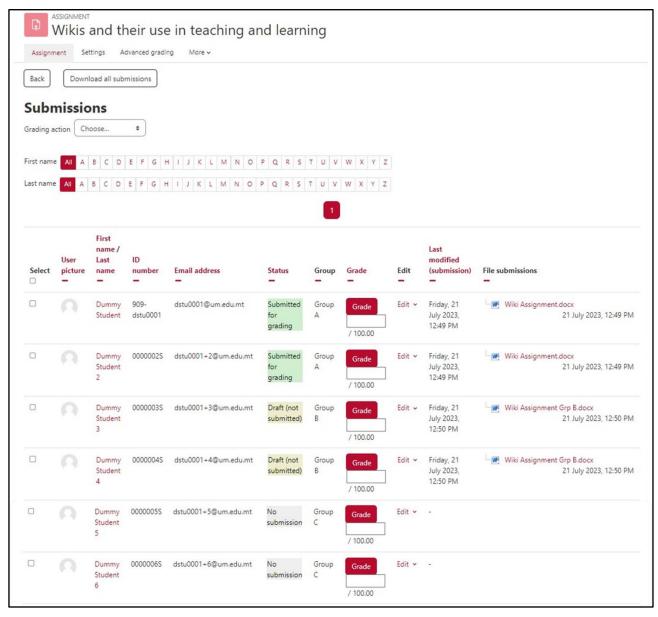


The assignment page opens and displays the description of the assignment, and a summary of submissions.



2. Below the summary, click **View all submissions**. The *Submissions* page will open.

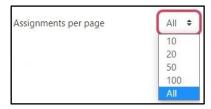
A table showing the student details, their submissions and the respective submission date, as well as the submission status is displayed.



By default, all submissions are displayed within the table. You can change this setting within the *Options* section, which is available beneath the submissions table.

To change the number of submissions per page:

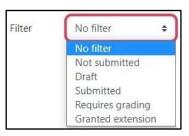
• Set the **Assignments per page** setting to the desired option. You can choose between *10, 20, 50, 100* or *All*.



As you set the required option, the page will automatically refresh to reflect the changes.

You can also filter the submissions according to the submission status. To filter the submissions:

• Set the **Filter** setting, within the *Options* section to the desired option.

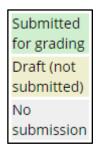


As you set the required option, the page will automatically refresh to reflect the changes.

### a. Submission status

It is recommended that you take note of the submission status before you commence the feedback process. A submission can be in either of the following three (3) states:

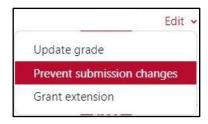
- **Submitted for grading** student has successfully submitted the assignment.
- Draft (not submitted) student has successfully uploaded the assignment, but has not yet submitted.
- **No submission** student has not made any submissions yet.



If you have required students to click the **Submit** button (as recommended in Section C, step 11), you may find that some submissions may still be marked as *Draft* (not submitted), meaning the student has uploaded a file(s) or entered some text, but not clicked the **Submit assignment** button.

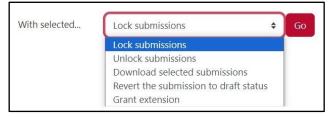
If it's past the due date, it is recommended that you prevent further changes to *Draft* submissions, prior to starting the feedback process. To prevent changes:

- 1. Click on the **Edit** link adjacent to the student whose submission is marked as *Draft*.
- 2. Select Prevent submission changes.



If you want to prevent multiple students from editing their submission:

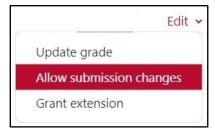
- 1. Tick the checkbox in the **Select** column for each student whose submission is marked as *Draft*.
- 2. Choose the setting **Lock submissions** within the **With selected...** drop-down menu, which is available beneath the submissions table, and click the **Go** button.



A confirmation dialog box will be displayed.

3. Click OK.

Likewise, you can also revert a student's submission to draft if they have uploaded the incorrect file. Instead of selecting *Prevent submission changes* select **Allow submission changes**.

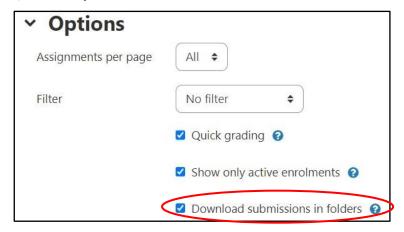


## b. View and/or download submissions

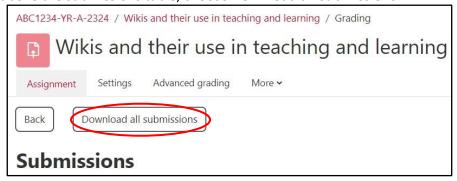
In case of an *Online text* submission, you can easily view the students' submissions online, and you can also download the submissions as HTML files. In case of *File submissions*, you must first download the students' files to be able to view them.

To download one file at a time, click the file name within the **File submissions** column. The file will immediately be downloaded to your computer.

Alternatively, if you have multiple participants, it is recommended that you download all student submissions as a ZIP file. This can be helpful if you wish to print the submissions or provide file feedback. Note that, you may either download each submission in a folder or as individual files. To download submissions in folders, tick the option **Download submissions in folders** within the *Options* section.

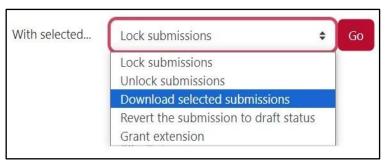


Subsequently, above the submissions table, choose **Download all submissions**.



You may also download selected submissions:

- 1. Tick the box adjacent to the students' name whose submission you want to download.
- 2. From the With selected... drop-down menu, select Download selected submissions.



A confirmation dialog box will be displayed.

### 3. Click OK.

The submissions will be downloaded as a ZIP file.

When the ZIP file is downloaded, locate and unzip the ZIP file.

- Each file / folder will automatically be renamed to include the respective student's name.
- For file submissions, the file type will be the same file type as submitted by the student.
- For online text submissions, an HTML file will be generated for each student's online text submission. You can open this in a browser or in a word processing application such as MS Word.

### F. Feedback

### a. Different types of feedback

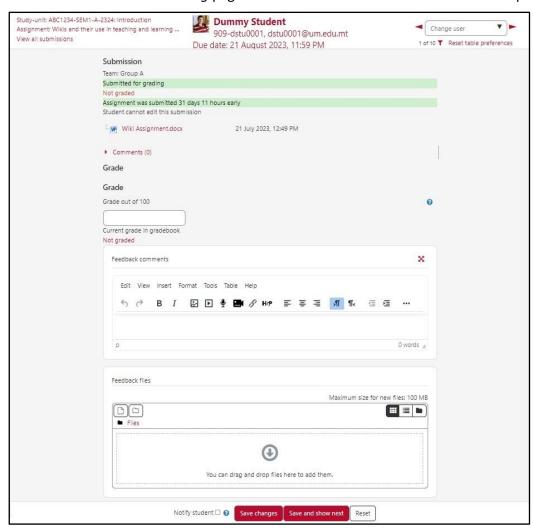
There are mainly four (4) feedback types that you can use, namely:

- **Feedback comments** If enabled, you can write comments for every submission. These comments will only be visible to the individual student. If it is a group submission you can choose to apply the same feedback to the entire group.
- Offline grading worksheet If enabled, you can download the spreadsheet to enter feedback without the need to be logged in the VLE. This can be useful if you anticipate providing feedback while disconnected from the internet.
- Feedback files If enabled, you can upload files containing inline feedback comments and suggestions. For example, tutors can upload a MS Word document with comments or a spoken audio feedback file.
- **Inline comments** This can be enabled for an *Online text* submission, in which case the text will be automatically copied into the feedback comment field, making it easier to comment inline.

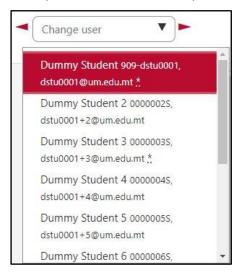
# b. Enter feedback for one student at a time

You can view each student's submission individually and input your feedback. This method is practical if you have a small number of students. To provide individual feedback:

- 1. Access the required Assignment activity.
- 2. Click the **Grade** button. The *Grading* page for the first student's submission will be displayed.



- 3. Write down any feedback comments in the Feedback comments field.
- 4. Feedback files may be attached in the **Feedback files** section.
- 5. If the Assignment activity was set to allow for group submissions, the **Group submission settings** will also be available. In particular, the setting **Apply grades and feedback to entire group**. Set this to *Yes*, if you'd like to give the same grade and feedback to the whole group. Otherwise, set this to *No*.
- 6. Click Save changes to save your feedback entry for the current student.
- 7. You can easily navigate between students or select a particular student from the drop-down menu (top-right corner). Repeat steps 3 6 above, for every student.



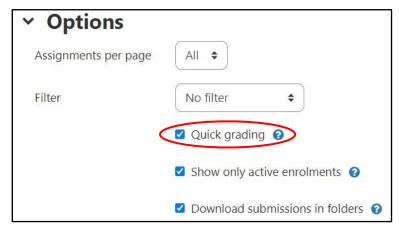
c. Enter feedback for multiple students at once

### **Feedback comments**

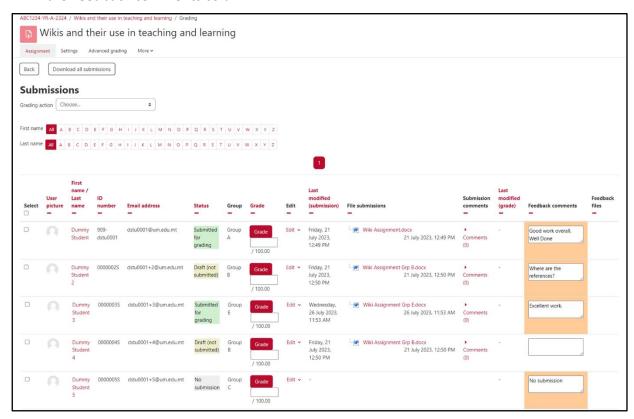
If you will be providing feedback in terms of comments, **Quick grading** allows you to submit feedback to multiple students on the *Submissions* page directly.

# To enable Quick grading:

- 1. Access the assignment's *Submissions* page (refer to Section E).
- 2. Scroll down to the **Options** section, beneath the *Submissions table*, and tick the checkbox adjacent to **Quick grading**.



The page will automatically refresh to reflect the changes. Text fields are made available within the **Feedback comments** column.

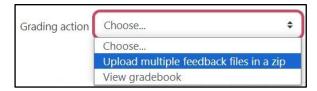


- 3. Enter the feedback comments with respect to the student's submission.
- 4. Click the **Save all quick grading changes** button.

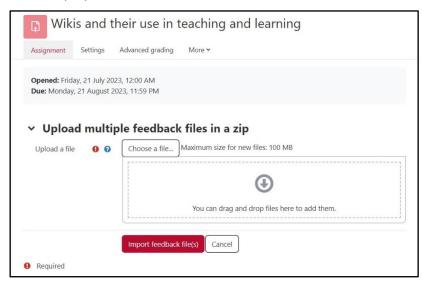
### **Feedback files**

To be able to upload multiple feedback files, please follow the steps below:

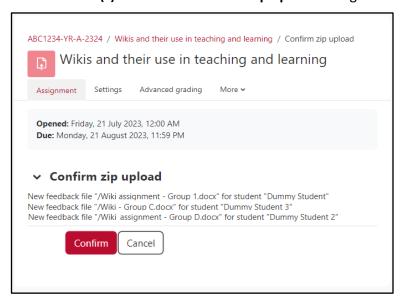
- 1. Download all students' submissions simultaneously, as a ZIP file (refer to Section D(b))
- 2. Extract the ZIP file and evaluate the students' submissions. Add any reviews and feedback comments to the document file.
- 3. Save the file using the **same** original filename, that is, do not save as a new file.
- 4. Once you have finished reviewing all files, compress all files into a new ZIP file.
- 5. Access the assignment's *Submissions* page (refer to Section E).
- 6. From the **Grading action** drop-down menu, above the *Submissions table*, select **Upload multiple feedback files in a zip**.



The following page will be displayed.



- 7. Drag-and-drop the ZIP file in the designated area. Otherwise, you can click the **Choose a file...** button and locate the required ZIP file.
- 8. Click the Import feedback file(s) button. The Confirm zip upload dialog box is displayed.



9. If all required feedback files have been uploaded, click **Confirm**. This will display a dialog box with a brief summary of the number of feedback files uploaded and the number of students affected.



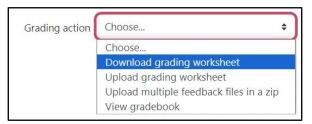
10. Click **Continue**. The feedback files are displayed within the **Feedback files** column in the *Submissions table*.

# d. Offline grading worksheet

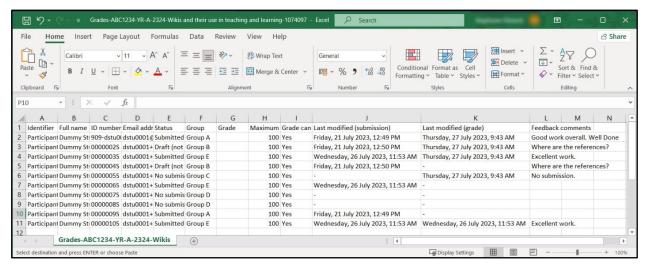
The **offline grading worksheet** allows you to provide feedback without the need of being logged in the UM VLE or connected to the internet. With offline grading, you will be able to enter feedback into a downloadable spreadsheet and then upload the spreadsheet to the UM VLE at a later time. **Note:** To make use of offline grading, this must first be enabled (refer to Section C, step 10).

To provide feedback using the offline grading worksheet:

- 1. Access the assignment's *Submission* page (refer to Section E).
- 2. From the **Grading action** drop-down menu, above the *Submissions table*, select **Download grading worksheet**.



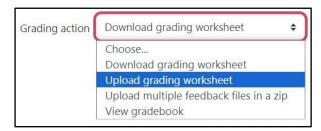
The grading worksheet is immediately downloaded on your computer as a CSV file. This can be opened using MS Excel or a similar application.



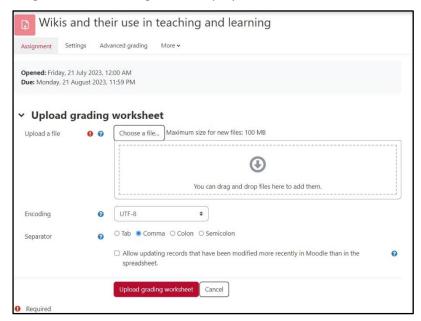
- 3. Enter the feedback comments in the respective Feedback comments column.
- 4. Save all changes to the CSV file.

After submitting all required feedback, you may proceed with uploading the worksheet.

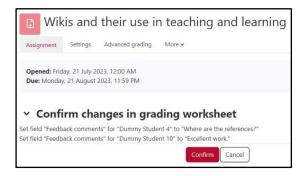
- 5. Access the assignment's Submissions page.
- 6. From the **Grading action** drop-down menu, above the *Submissions table*, select **Upload grading worksheet**.



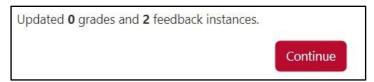
7. The **Upload grading worksheet** dialog box is displayed.



- 8. Drag-and-drop the ZIP file in the designated area. Otherwise, you can click the **Choose a file...** button and locate the required ZIP file.
- 9. Tick the Allow updating records that have been modified more recently in Moodle than in the spreadsheet checkbox, if you have recently made any feedback changes in the assignment activity directly. Note: When the grading worksheet is downloaded, it contains the last modified date for each submission and respective feedback. If any feedback is updated in the assignment activity after the worksheet is downloaded, by default the VLE will refuse to overwrite this updated information when importing the grading worksheet. By allowing this option, the VLE will disable this safety check, meaning it may be possible for multiple tutors to overwrite each other's comments.
- 10. Click the **Upload grading worksheet** button. The **Confirm changes in grading worksheet** dialog box is displayed.



11. Confirm that all changes are displayed, and click **Confirm**. This will display a dialog box with a brief summary.



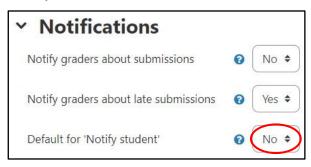
12. Click **Continue**. The feedback comments are displayed within the **Feedback comments** column in the *Submissions table*.

### e. Control when feedback is sent to students

The main concern tutors have during the feedback process is to control when feedback notifications are sent to all students simultaneously, so that students may access the assignment activity and review any feedback provided. In view of this, there are two (2) course of action which can be implemented.

# Set Default setting for "Notify students" to No

When setting up a new assignment activity, it is recommended that you expand the *Notifications* section and set **Default setting for "Notify students"** to **No**, as instructed in Section C (step 12) above.



This is mostly recommended if you will be submitting feedback to one student at a time. You can then notify students by sending an announcement message using the *Announcements* forum.

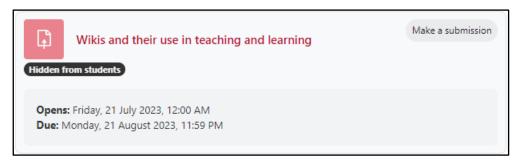
# Make the assignment activity unavailable to students

It is recommended that during the feedback process, you make the particular assignment activity unavailable (hidden). Students will not be able to view or access the activity.

To make your assignment activity unavailable:

- 1. Click the **Start editing** toggle button (top-right corner of the VLE area).
- 2. Click the **Edit** (3-dots) icon adjacent to the assignment activity, and select **Hide**.

The Assignment activity will be greyed out, indicating that it is hidden. A useful notification for hidden activities, Hidden from students, will also be displayed beneath the activity.



### Note:

• The sending of notifications is affected by the visibility of the assignment. Therefore, if you have set the **Default setting for "Notify students"** to **Yes** and the assignment is hidden, notifications will **not** be sent upon providing feedback.

In case of feedback files bulk upload and offline grading worksheet upload, a notification will only be sent if **Default setting for "Notify students"** is set to **Yes**, and upon making the assignment available to students, if **less than 24 hours has elapsed since the upload**.

If more than 24 hours has elapsed, you are encouraged to send an announcement message through the **Announcements** forum.

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