
Changes and new features in the VLE

(Sep 2023)

GUIDE

v1.0

User Services
IT Services



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Table of contents

Overview	1
User interface	2
Start editing / Stop editing toggle button	2
Tabular navigation	2
Add new sections easily	2
Collapsible sections	3
Course index drawer	3
New text editor	4
Calendar	4
New activity icons	5
Activities	6
Renaming of activities	6
Content updates	7
Activity completion enhancements	8
Assignment activity enhancements	9
Activity instructions	9
Zoom appointments	10
Assignment (with Panopto) activity	11

Overview

The upgraded VLE for academic year 2023/24 is based on Moodle 4.1. In the move to Moodle 4, Moodle worked on revamping the user interface to provide a simplified, modern look that gives users an enriched user experience. Whilst all existing functionality will be retained, the new version of Moodle brings changes to the layout of your VLE areas. There are also changes to make Moodle more accessible.

We encourage both tutors and students to go through the primary changes outlined in this guide to help them familiarise themselves with the new interface. Features that are only applicable to **Tutors** are marked accordingly, while the other features are applicable to both tutors and students.

User interface

- **Tutors:** The **Start editing / Stop editing** toggle button is now available in the top-right corner of the navigation bar.
- A **tabular navigation menu** at the top of each VLE area, as well as activity pages, allows users to easily navigate between key pages.
- **Tutors:** Easily **add new sections** anywhere within a VLE area.
- Users can now choose to either **Collapse all** or **Expand all** sections to navigate the VLE area more efficiently. Any section can also be collapsed / expanded individually.
- The introduction of the **Course index drawer** on the left side of the screen has improved VLE navigation even further. The drawer acts as a table of contents for activities and resources available within a VLE area.
- A **new text editor** has been introduced.
- The **Calendar** can now be accessed while browsing any VLE page via the *User menu*.
- The activities and resources **icons** have changed in Moodle 4.1.

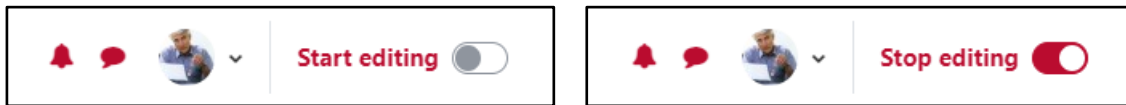
Activities

- Some activities have been renamed to help users identify them more intuitively.
- Tutors can now opt to immediately inform students when adding / updating study material in a VLE area by enabling the **Send content change notification** option.
- If tutors make use of **activity completion**, information regarding what students are required to do is displayed on the VLE area homepage.
- Tutors may now include **activity instructions** when setting up a Moodle *Assignment* activity.
- The *Zoom meetings manager* activity now allows tutors to **schedule office hour appointments** for students to easily book a slot.
- Students may now easily submit assignments that require multimedia files (e.g. podcasts, videos) via the new **Assignment (with Panopto)** activity.

User interface

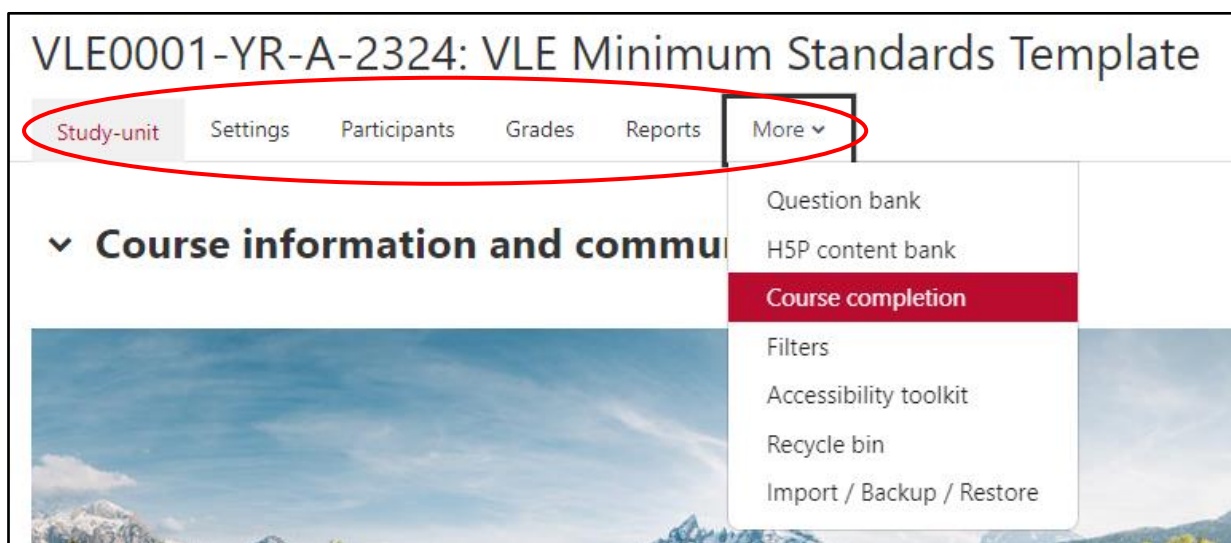
Start editing / Stop editing toggle button

Within any VLE area, the **Start editing / Stop editing** toggle button is now accessible to tutors in the top-right corner of the navigation bar.



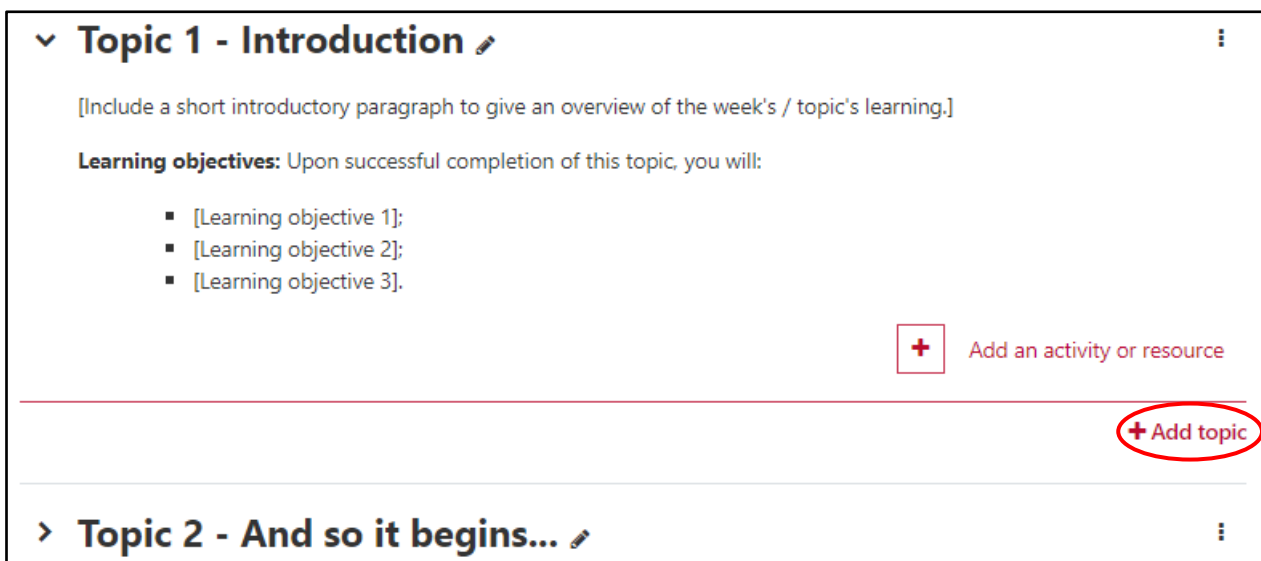
Tabular navigation

New menus have been introduced to aid navigation within VLE areas. In the previous version, links to important pages were available in the right-hand side drawer and the *Actions menu*. Now, the tabular navigation menu at the top of each VLE area allows you to navigate between key pages all from one place, such as **Settings**, **Participants** and **Reports**. Several other functionalities such as **Question bank**, **Recycle bin** and **Import / Backup / Restore** are also available within the *More* drop-down menu.



Add new sections easily

Tutors may easily add new sections anywhere within the VLE area. While in editing mode, an **Add topic** button is now available below every section. If tutors opt for the weekly format, an **Add week** button is only available beneath the last week.



Collapsible sections

Whether tutors opt for the *Topics format* or the *Weekly format*, all users can now choose to either **Collapse all** or **Expand all** sections to navigate the VLE area more efficiently. Any section can also be collapsed / expanded individually. Note that whether a section is collapsed or expanded is unique to each individual user, so if a tutor collapses a section, they will only collapse it for themselves, not for all their students as well.

VLE0001-YR-A-2324: VLE Minimum Standards Template

Study-unit Settings Participants Grades Reports More ▾

> **Course information and communication** ↕ Expand all

▾ **Topic 1 - Introduction**

[Include a short introductory paragraph to give an overview of the week's / topic's learning.]

Learning objectives: Upon successful completion of this topic, you will:

- [Learning objective 1];
- [Learning objective 2];
- [Learning objective 3].

> **Topic 2 - And so it begins...**

> **Assessment**

Course index drawer

▾ **Activities**

- Welcome forum discussion
- Choose your tutorial dates
- Classroom exercise
- Feedback
- Wiki - build it together

Navigation has been improved further with the introduction of the *Course index* drawer on the left side of the screen, which acts as a table of contents for activities and resources available within a VLE area. Students can click on an activity and navigate directly to it.

If tutors enable [activity completion](#) [PDF] for particular resources / activities, students can easily see what they still need to complete. A green-filled circle indicates that the activity is complete, while an unfilled circle indicates that the activity is yet to be carried out.

Moreover, tutors can also use the course index to conveniently move resources and activities by dragging and dropping them in the main content area or within the course index itself.

▾ **Topic 1 - Introduction**

Learning objectives: Upon s...

Getting started - podcast

Lecture 1 - Notes

Lecture 2 - Notes +

▾ **Topic 2 - And so it beings...**

Further readings...

Lecture 2 - Notes +

New text editor

A new text editor called TinyMCE has been introduced, which allows users to create formatted content with a user-friendly interface. The toolbar features the most common tools that one finds in most editors. The *Insert*, *Format* and *Tools* menus list additional features that one might require.

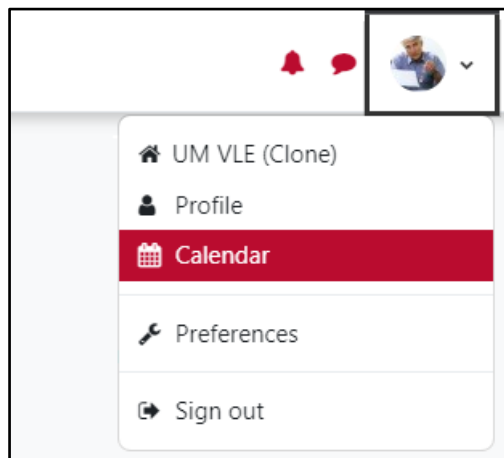


Note:

- The *Font colours* and *Background colours* tools are not featured in the TinyMCE editor due to accessibility concerns. This is one of many accessibility improvements that Moodle has made. While colours can be useful to convey a message or draw attention, the misuse of colours can lead to accessibility issues due to insufficient colour contrast. Enough contrast between the foreground colour (e.g., text, links, etc.) and the background colour is required to ensure people with moderately low vision can tell the colours apart and see the content. Hence, it is recommended to use other formatting tools such as **bold**, *italics* and underline to emphasise text instead.

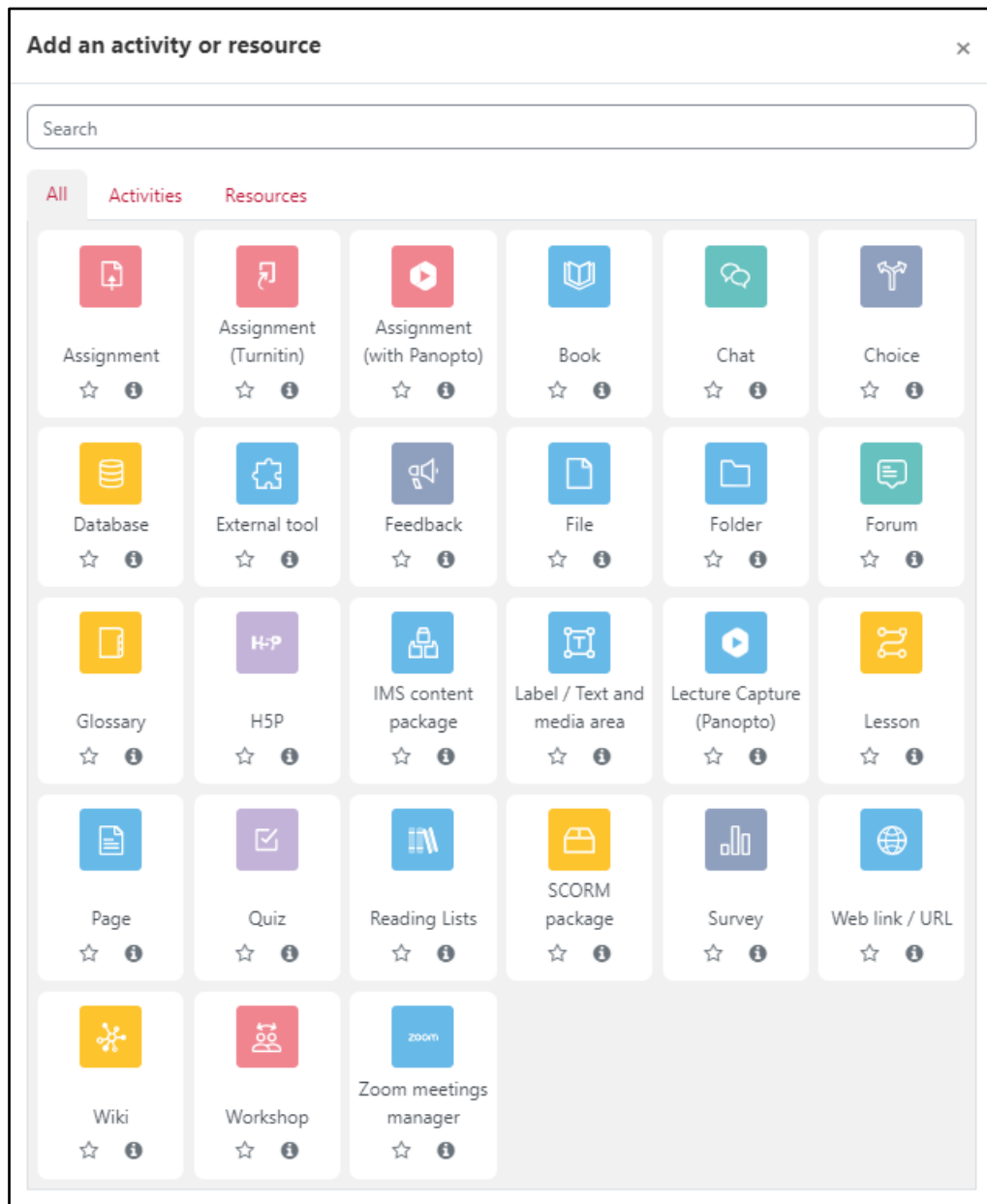
Calendar

All users can now access the VLE *Calendar* from any VLE page via the **User menu** available in the top-right corner of the navigation bar.



New activity icons

The activities and resources icons have changed based on the type of content. The new icons can be found in the *Activity chooser* and will also appear next to each activity / resource in the VLE area. Tutors can launch the *Activity chooser* by turning editing on and clicking the **Add an activity or resource** link within the desired section.






The icons are colour-coded to help identify the type of content:

Colour	Content type
Blue	Resource
Pink	Assessment
Green	Communication
Yellow	Collaboration
Purple	Quiz
Grey	Poll / Evaluation

Activities

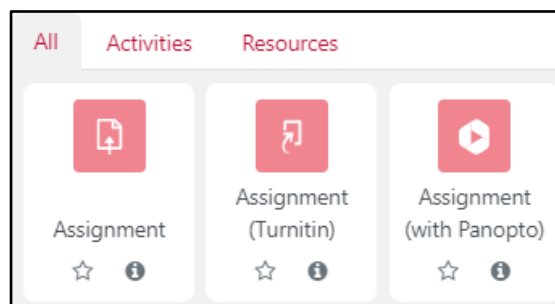
Renaming of activities

The following resources / activities have been renamed to help users identify them more intuitively.

	<i>New name</i>	<i>Previously referred to as</i>
 Assignment (Turnitin)	Assignment (Turnitin)	Turnitin Assignment
 Label / Text and media area	Label / Text and images area	Label
 Web link / URL	Web link / URL	URL

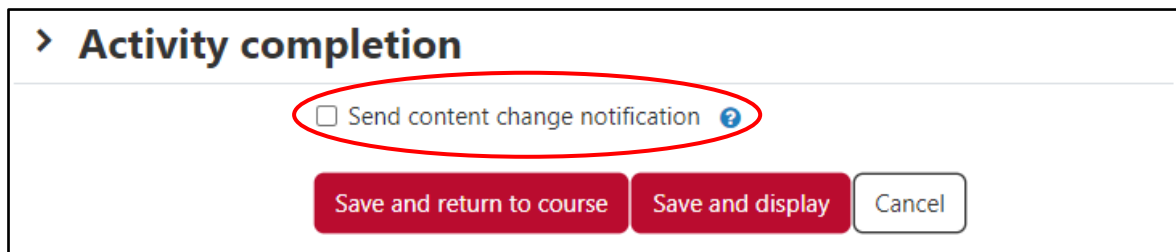
Note:

- The functionality of all activities / resources listed above remains exactly the same. Only the name of the component has changed.
- The standard *Assignment*, the *Assignment (Turnitin)* and the *Assignment (with Panopto)* activities now display at the top of the *Activity chooser* so that tutors can easily set up the type of assignment they would like to assign their students.

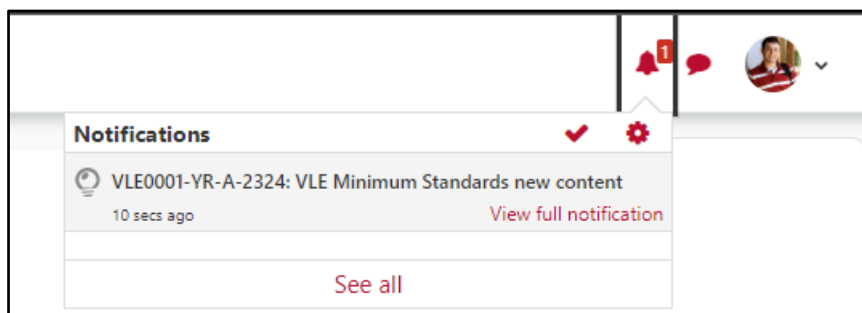


Content updates

When adding new content or updating existing content, tutors can now opt to immediately inform students by enabling the **Send content change notification** option available on the *Settings* page of any activity / resource. This option is available just above the *Save and return to course / Cancel* buttons.



If a tutor checks this option, users will receive a notification via the VLE platform. A copy of this notification will also be sent to the users' University email address.



Note:

- The *content change notification* is only generated if the VLE area is visible to students.
- All enrolled users will receive this notification, that is, any co-tutors enrolled on the VLE area, as well as the tutor who set up / updated the activity, will receive the notification.
- Tutors should make use of this new feature carefully so as not to spam their students. If students receive a notification for every additional / updated content, they may easily choose to ignore such notifications. Remember that students are enrolled in several study-units concurrently.
- Users may choose to disable the email notification option if they feel they're getting spammed. This can be done as follows:
 1. Click the **User menu** (top-right corner).
 2. Select **Preferences**.
 3. Select **Notification preferences**.
 4. Disable the *Email* setting for the **Course content changes** option.
- The **Recent activity** block remains available in all VLE areas. This lists the course activity updates since the user last accessed the VLE area, such as updated resources, forum posts and submissions.

Activity completion enhancements

[Activity completion](#) [PDF] allows tutors to set completion criteria for resources and activities. A *Done* icon is shown next to the resource or activity when the student meets this criterion. The criterion might be viewing a file, submitting an assignment, participating in a forum discussion, as well as students manually marking the activity as complete (e.g. for reading a textbook).



This feature helps students track their progress in a VLE area and can be mostly beneficial for fully online or blended learning study-units. Activity completion can also be used to unlock study material based on a student's progress, by [restricting access to the material until the completion of a previous activity](#) [PDF]. Tutors can view the *Activity completion report* at any time to check the progress and engagement of students.

The Moodle 4.1 upgrade improved how students can view the activity completion details:

- Information regarding what the students are required to do to complete a task is displayed on the VLE area homepage. If the task is completed, the activity completion status is updated accordingly.

The screenshot shows a list of activities in a VLE interface. Each activity is represented by a colored icon, a title, and a 'To do' status. The 'File' activity has a 'To do: View' status. The 'Ice breaker discussion' activity has a 'To do: Start discussions: 1' status and a 'Done: Post replies: 2' status. The 'Pre-lecture 4 exercise' activity has a 'Done: Make attempts: 1' status. Below the list, there are 'Opened' and 'Closes' dates and times.

- Students can easily see what tasks they still need to complete by accessing the *course index* drawer on the left of the screen. A green-filled circle ● indicates that the activity is complete, while an unfilled circle ○ indicates that the activity is yet to be carried out.

The screenshot shows a 'Activities' drawer on the left side of the screen. The drawer is titled 'Activities' and contains a list of activities. Each activity is preceded by a circle indicating its completion status: 'File' has an unfilled circle, 'Ice breaker discussion' has an unfilled circle, and 'Pre-lecture 4 exercise' has a filled green circle.

Assignment activity enhancements

Activity instructions

In addition to the *Description* text field, tutors may now also add instructions in a designated *Activity instructions* text field.

General

Assignment name !

Description

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Help

↶ ↷ **B** *I* 🖼️ 🎥 🎤 📎 H-P ☰ ☷ ☹️ ...

Submit this exercise by **not later than 17 Nov**. You may submit a .docx or .PDF file.

p 17 words ↗

Display description on course page ?

Activity instructions ?

Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Help

↶ ↷ **B** *I* 🖼️ 🎥 🎤 📎 H-P ☰ ☷ ☹️ ...

1. Choose a topic that you have considerable knowledge about. It could fall into one of the following categories:

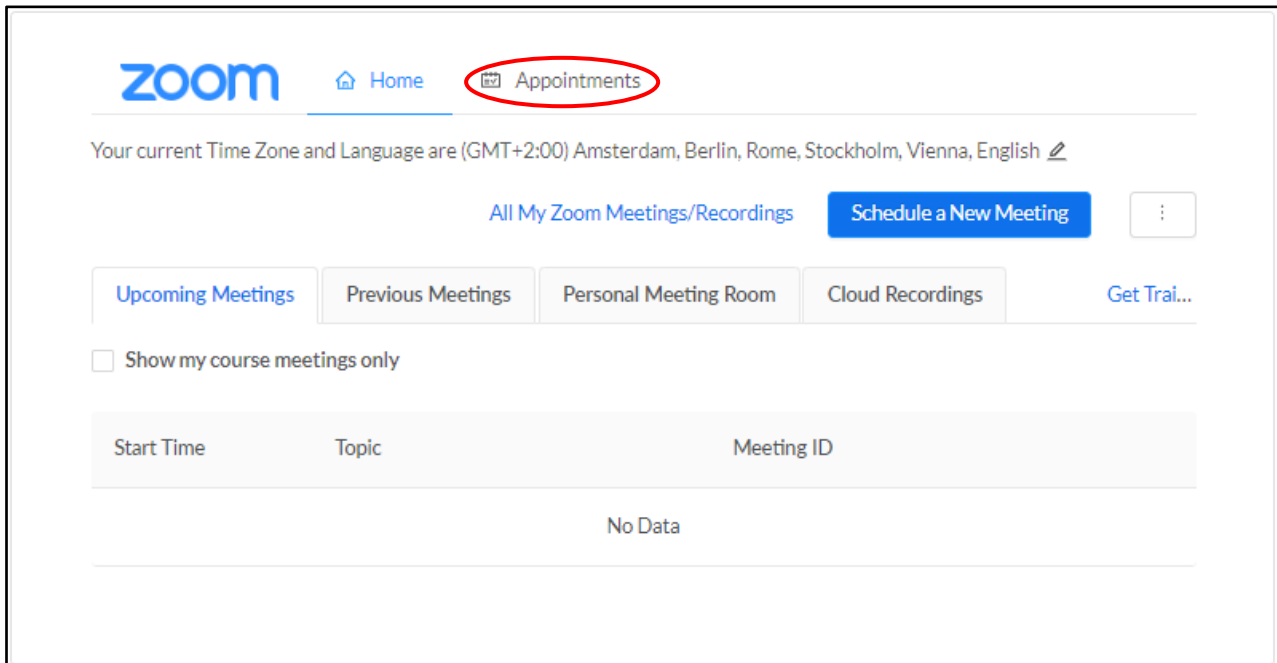
Use - how does your audience use a product or a service. *E.g. How to operate a device, software, machine, etc; How to use a service like online drop/add.*

p > em 208 words ↗

Zoom appointments

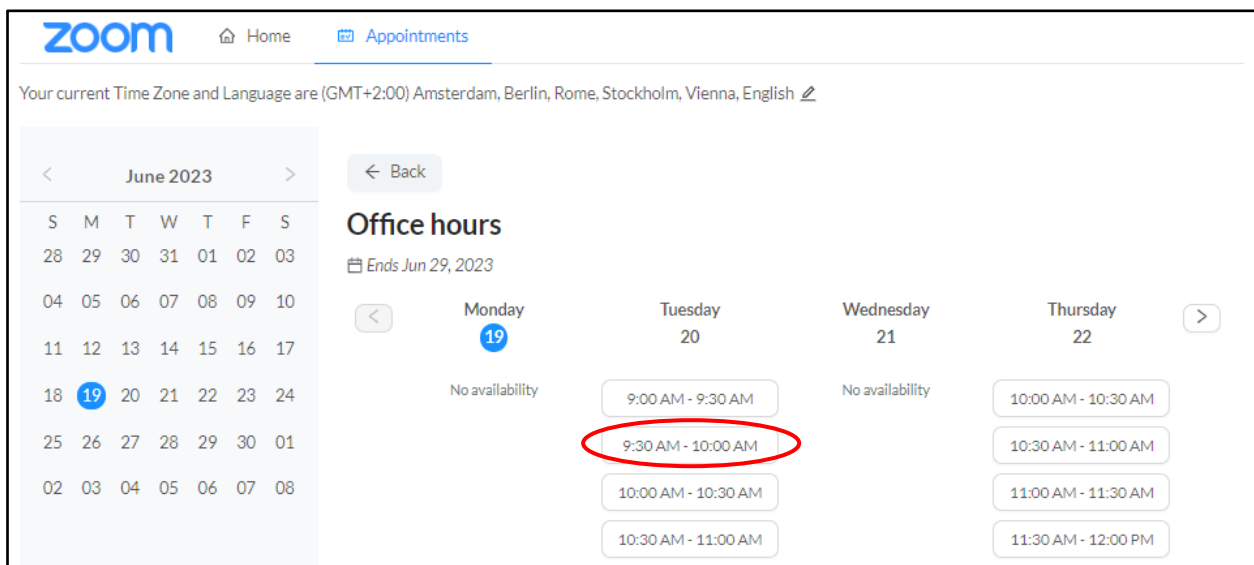
Tutors may now schedule appointments, for instance, *Office hours appointments*, via the *Zoom meetings manager* activity in the VLE.

Tutors should first [set up the Zoom meetings manager activity in the respective VLE area](#) [PDF]. Upon accessing the newly created activity, one will notice that in addition to the usual Zoom meetings scheduler, a new **Appointments** tab is displayed at the top.



Tutors can schedule 15-, 30-, 45- or 60-minutes appointments between a preferred time slot for any day of the week.

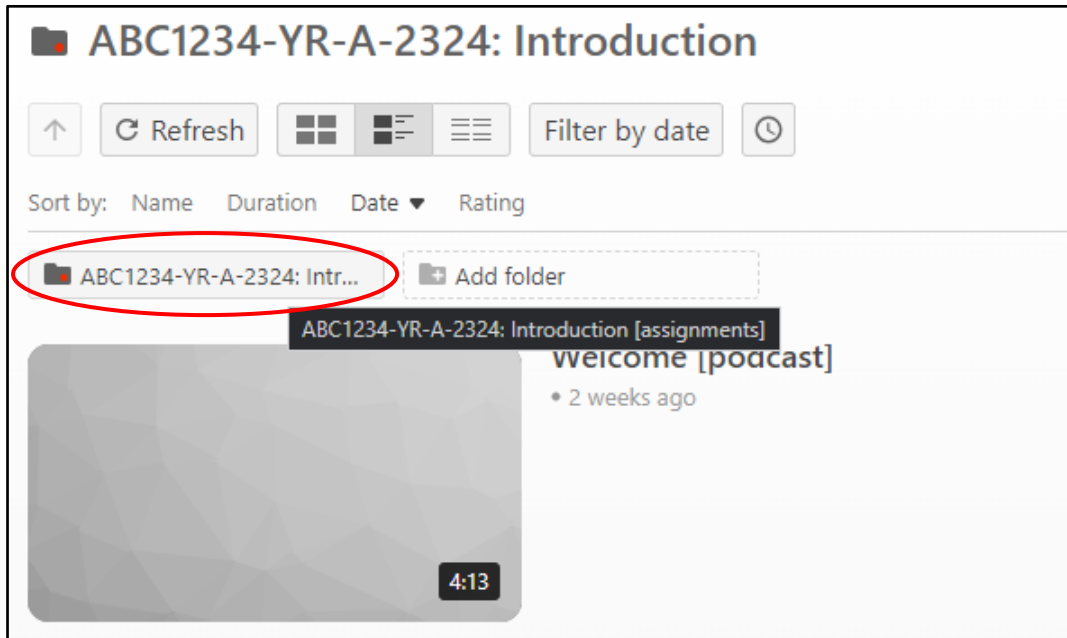
Subsequently, students may then access the *Appointments* tab to check the tutor's office hours availabilities, if any, and click on a preferred time slot to book it.



Both the respective tutor and the student will receive an email confirmation that a Zoom meeting has been scheduled.

Assignment (with Panopto) activity

Some taught study-unit assessments require students to submit multimedia files, such as podcasts or videos. Tutors should avoid requesting students to submit such files via the standard *Assignment* activity, since files uploaded to the *Assignment* activity cannot exceed 100MB, and multimedia files tend to be larger in size. Instead, tutors should use the new **Assignment (with Panopto)** activity which does not have this limitation. The new activity automatically creates a *Panopto Assignment folder* within the VLE area's Panopto folder (on the Panopto server), allowing students to create an audio / video file using Panopto, or to upload an audio / video file that they recorded using a third-party application.



Previously, tutors were required to set up the *Panopto Assignment folder* manually and students were required to access Panopto in order to submit. Now, students may seamlessly submit via the *Assignment (with Panopto)* activity via the respective VLE area.

Moreover, following the students' submissions, tutors can also provide feedback comments on the *Assignment (with Panopto)* activity itself.

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