Moodle Theme and Version Upgrade – The Mechanics

By now you will have noticed that your Moodle course sites have been updated with the new Moodle theme and version.

In this guide we focus on the mechanics of the new theme and Moodle version. For example, 'How do you set up flexible sections and sub-sections?' 'What functionality has changed and how might this be useful?'

If you haven't yet familiarised yourself with the new look Moodle, perhaps start with our first Teaching and Learning Guide in this series: Moodle Theme and Version Upgrade – Overview.

Then come back to this guide and discover some of the new functionality and how to use it. Once you are familiar with working in the new Moodle, our next guide – *Strategies for Effective Teaching,* will cover how you can use the technology to enhance your students online learning experience.

This guide explores the following features of the new look Moodle:

1. Flexible sections
2. Making navigation easier
3. Moodle Books
4. Activity Chooser
5. Blocks
6. Atto Editor
7. Further Support

1. Flexible sections

Flexible sections is the only available course format, so you will need to be familiar with using this layout effectively. When set up thoughtfully, it provides a logical format that can help support your students' learning (see the notes on chunking information in the *Overview* guide) and makes course navigation possible on mobile devices and tablets.
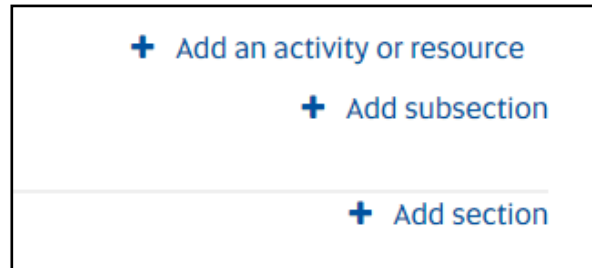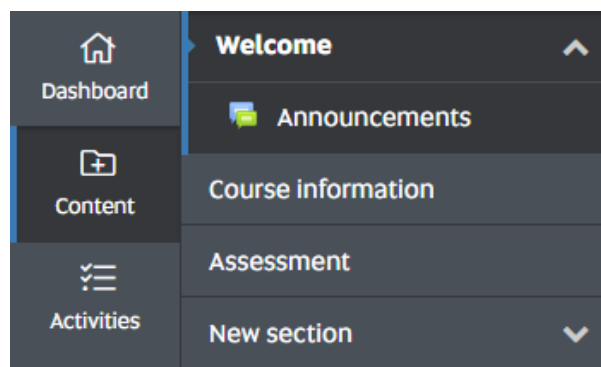
1. Select the '**Turn Editing On**' button to begin.

2. Select the **Content** icon from the *Persistent Left Hand menu,* then select the top section.
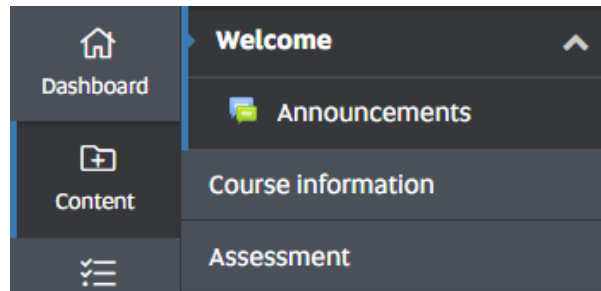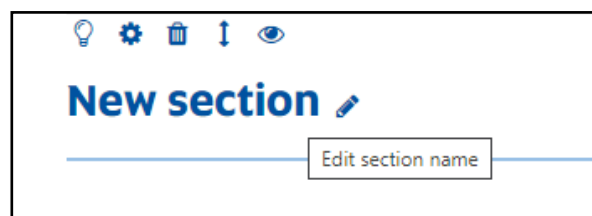

3. Scroll to the bottom of the page and select '**Add section**' at the bottom right.

4. The new section will appear on the *Expanded Left Hand Menu.*
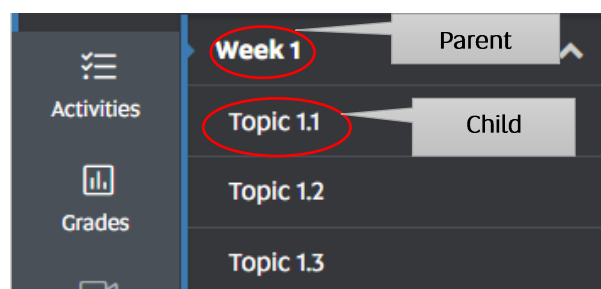

5. Click on the edit button next to the section name to assign a title.

6. To add additional sections, click on the first section and then repeat Step 3.
7. You can add subsections by selecting '**Add subsection**' at the bottom right of the section that is currently selected.
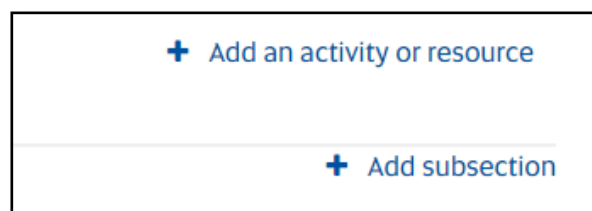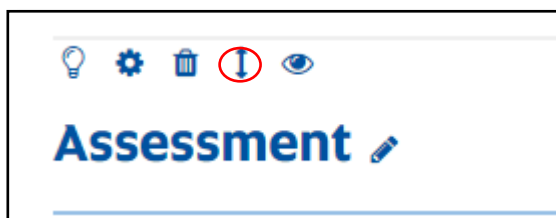

   Subsections will appear nested under the parent section on the menu, like bullet points in a list.
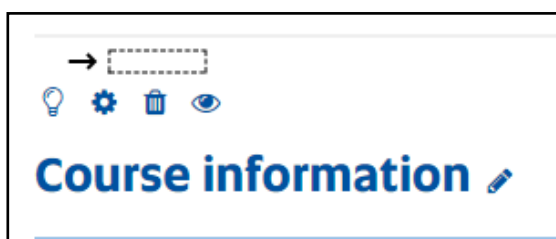
*Important Note: if you add a subsection without navigating back to the parent section you will create another layer of subsections; we recommend having only one layer!

8. You can move sections and subsections by clicking the arrow icon

Then click the rectangular icon above the section you want it to appear in

You can click on the yellow Cancel moving... icon if you change your mind

Once you have set up a logical structure for your course you can start adding your content.

*Important note: An important recommendation for working with flexible sections is to add descriptive text as a **Label** from the Activity Chooser (see section 4 in this Guide), rather than adding it to the Section summary. This way you are less likely to accidentally delete entire sections along with all your content while editing.

Resources

- Video: <u>Flexible sections</u>
- Learnonline guide: <u>Flexible sections</u>

2. Making navigation easier

One of the advantages of flexible sections is the ease of navigation. However, there is one quirk of the new Moodle theme, that if not adapted, can make navigating the site a little confusing. In the new theme, if you place an activity or resource within a section, it will appear in the navigation pane on the left. This will include any files such as PowerPoint or Word documents and any activities including all Moodle tools or H5P resources.

As you can see in the image below, depending on the number of activities or resources you add to a section, there is the potential to make the navigation pane long and cumbersome. In addition, students may navigate to these activities and resources using the navigation pane rather than accessing them in the section where you may have added contextual information to support students in using them.

To overcome this quirk, we suggest hiding the resource from the section but then making it available to students:

1. First turn Moodle editing on using the button in the top right corner of the screen.

2. Go to the resource and from the drop down 'Edit' menu, select 'Hide'.

3. Then go to the 'Edit' menu once more, for the same resource, and select 'Make available'.
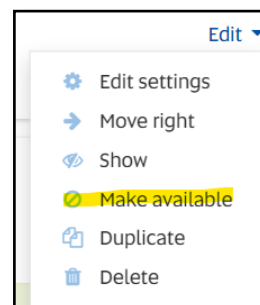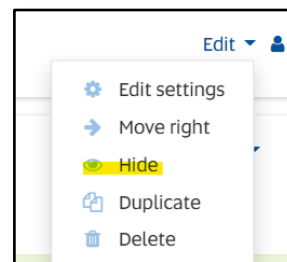
4. The resource is now 'Available' for students.
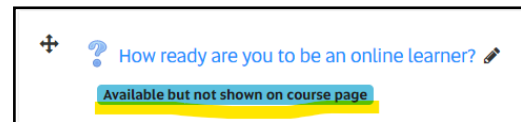
Providing access to the hidden but available resource (also known as Moodle Stealth activities)

You may be wondering how students can access the hidden but available resource. There are several ways you can navigate your students to the resource, and these include:

 a. Linking to the resource via a hyperlink
 b. Turning on auto-linking
 c. Embedding the content using an iframe

a. Linking to the resource or activity via a hyperlink.
In the image below, the bold underlined text of 'Choice' is a hyperlink to the tool.
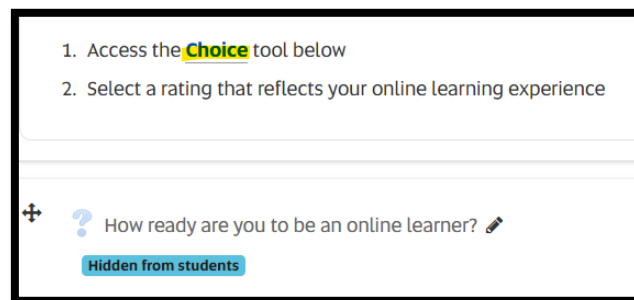
Important Note: If using this method, you need to right click on the resource and select 'Copy link address' rather than opening the item and copying the URL from your web browser. Doing it this way will ensure the link will not break when the course rolls over into the next offering.

b. Turning on auto-linking
Auto-linking is when Moodle recognises names of activities, resources, database or glossary entries and automatically hyperlinks to these when the correct words or phrases are entered as text on the site. For example, if auto-linking is turned on, and you have a discussion forum titled 'Challenges and Opportunities Forum', if you write Challenges and Opportunities Forum in text on the site, Moodle with automatically create a hyperlink to the forum. To turn auto-linking on, go to Administration > Course Administration > Filters and switch 'Activity names auto-linking' on.

Important Note: The title of the activity or resource needs to be written exactly as it is on the resource for Moodle to create the hyperlink.

c. Embedding the content using an iframe
Some activities or resources can be embedded using an iframe. For example, you may be familiar with how to embed YouTube videos using an iframe so they display directly on your course site. The image below provides an example of a

resource built using H5P (a plugin in for Moodle). H5P resources provide you with an embed code (see the bottom left of the image). You can use the embed code that the resource provides and paste the code into the html section of the Moodle editor. For more on this, you might find the Moodle iframes resource useful (see the Resources section below).
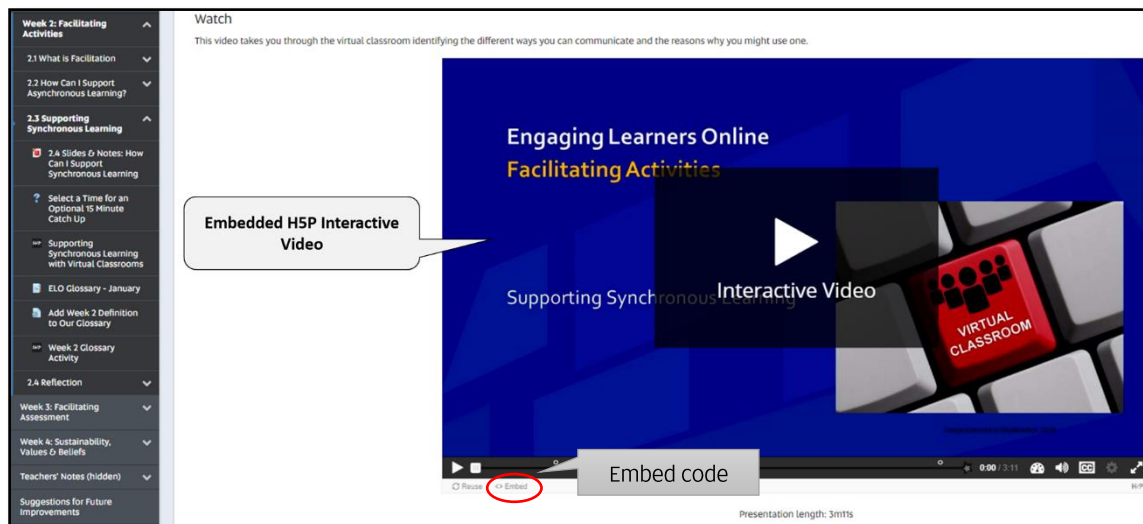
Previously, students would also be able to navigate to all activities and resources via the 'This course' drop down menu at the top of the screen.
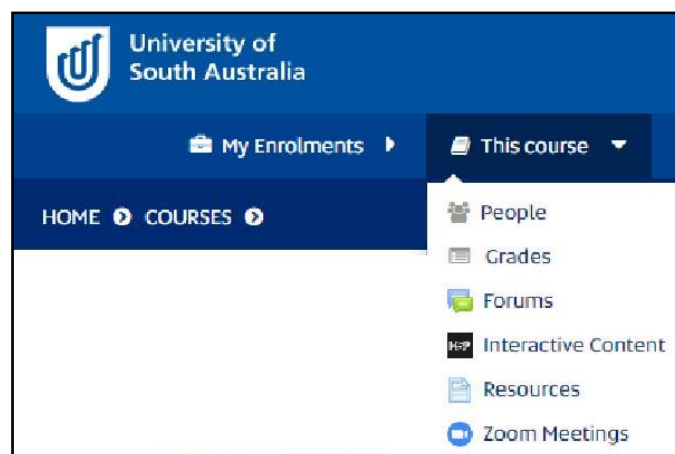
This function will no longer be available in the new theme. If needed, staff can access all the activities via Administration > Activities. However, students should navigate to the activity or resource in the context in which it sits. As the course coordinator, you can make this happen via any of the methods outlined above.

Resources:

- Moodle Stealth Activities
- Moodle iframes
- Video: Making Navigation Easier

3. Moodle Books

Moodle books will continue to work as they always have in the new theme. However, if you were using a Moodle book simply to provide an easy way to navigate through volumes of content, you may like to shift that content into a flexible section or sub-section.

Once again, this suggestion aims to ensure consistency in navigation across courses. As mentioned in the previous Moodle *Overview* guide, the Table of Contents for the book will provide navigation of the book on the left side of the screen. On mobile devices, the Table of Contents will appear at the bottom of the screen meaning students will need to find this menu to navigate rather than using the navigation pane that remains consistent and persistent on the left side of the screen.

If you were using a Moodle book as a simple way for students to access and print content in a useable format, then it might be important to keep the information as a book. Alternatively, you could save the book content as a PDF and make the content accessible to students in this way.
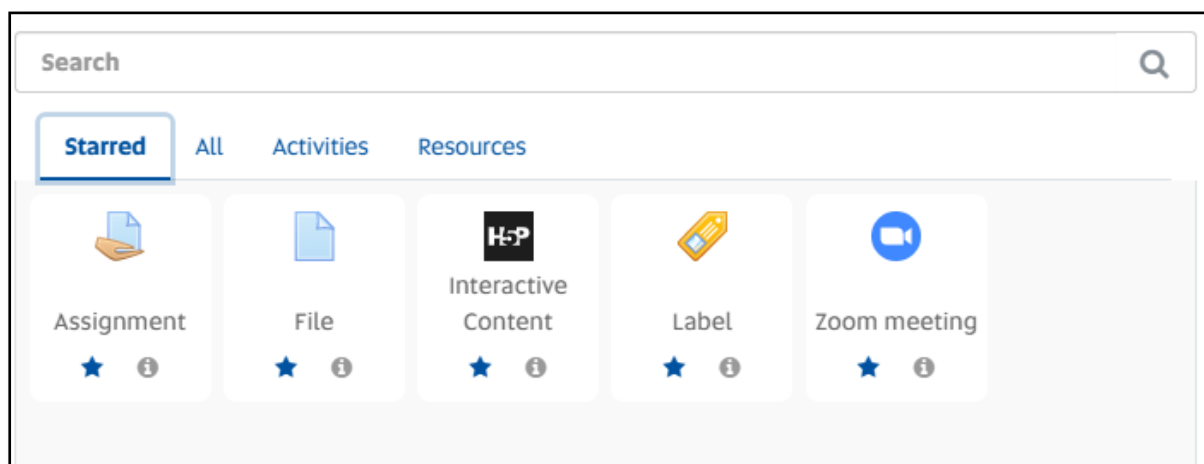
Resources

- [Using Books](). Follow these instructions to learn how to print a book. If you wish to save the content as a PDF, once you have chosen to print the content of the book, in the print window that appears, select 'Save as PDF'.

4. Activity Chooser

When adding an activity or resource, you will notice a change in the way the items are displayed.
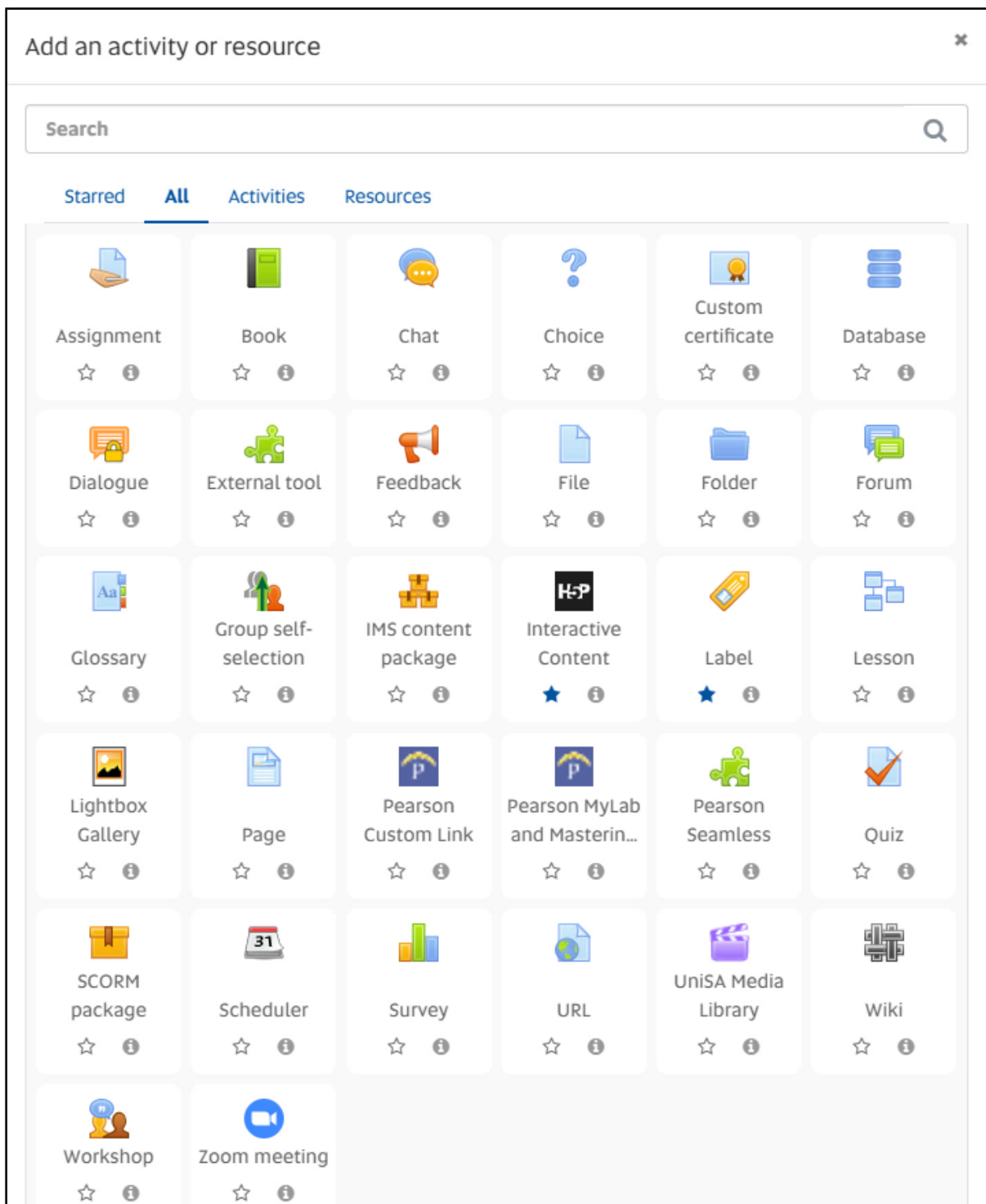
The benefit of this model is the ability to 'star' your favourite activities and resources, reducing the need to sort through infrequently used items when adding content to your site.

Once you have starred several items, this is the first menu that will appear when you click to add a resource or activity.

Another useful addition is the ability to **Search** for an item within the chooser.

5. Blocks

You may have used blocks in previous versions of Moodle to customise your course site or provide short cuts to important content. In the new version of Moodle, blocks will cease to exist. All content previously displayed on your site in blocks, will still be available on your course site, it just won't be displayed in a block.

Administration block

As blocks are gone, so is the administration block. You can find most of the content previously displayed in the administration block by clicking on the 'Administration' icon in the *Persistent Left Hand menu,* then 'Course Administration' in the *Expanded Left Hand Menu.*
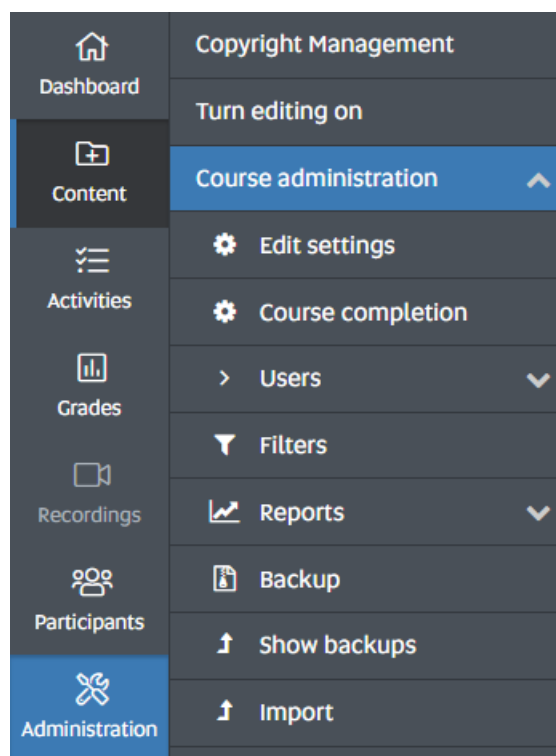
Navigation block

You guessed it! Blocks are gone and *ipso facto,* so is the navigation block. The *Expanded Left Hand menu* takes care of navigating within the course. For all other courses you are associated with, you can use the Dashboard icon in the *Persistent Left Hand menu.*
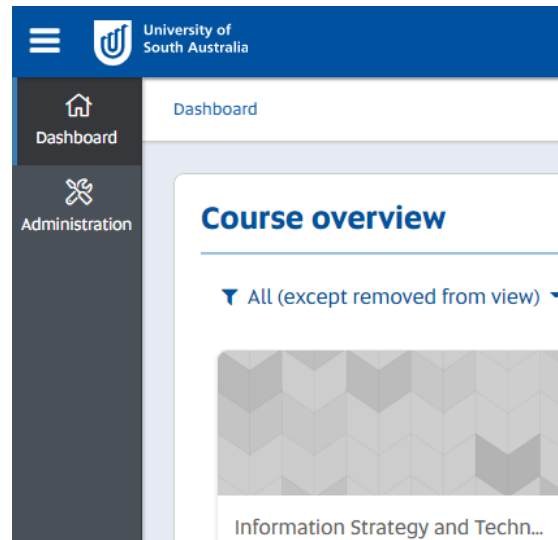
Course Essentials Block

The course essentials block pointed students at key course activities and resources and provided a few quick links for course coordinators. You can now find the items below fixed in the *Persistent Left Hand menu:*

- The Course Outline
- Grades
- Extensions
- Lecture recordings
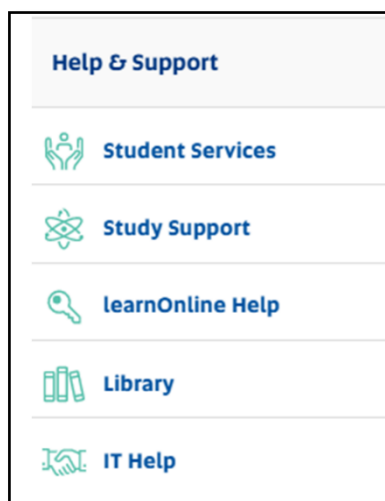- eReadings
- Course Administration
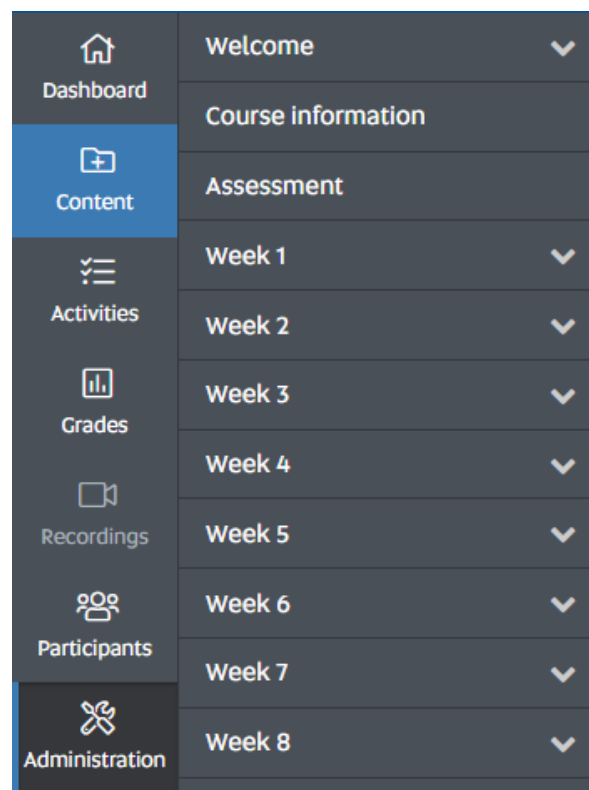
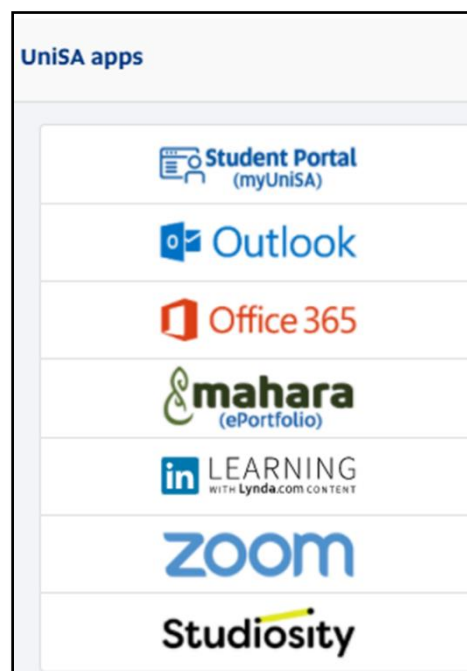## Student Help & Support Menu and UniSA Apps Menu in New Moodle

Students can find all other support and applications in the two drop down menus in the top right of the screen.
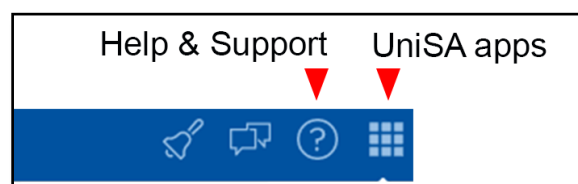
Detailed information for the Help & Support Menu

Detailed information for the UniSA Apps Menu

The removal of blocks helps to create a consistent look and feel across all courses. All navigation will appear in the persistent and expanded left navigation panels and all content in the content display panel.

6. Fixed Atto HTML Text Editor

Previously, you have had the opportunity to change your text editor preferences. However, in the new theme you will only be able to utilise one text editor, the Atto HTML editor. The Atto HTML editor is designed to streamline the editing process and ensure greater accessibility guidelines are met.
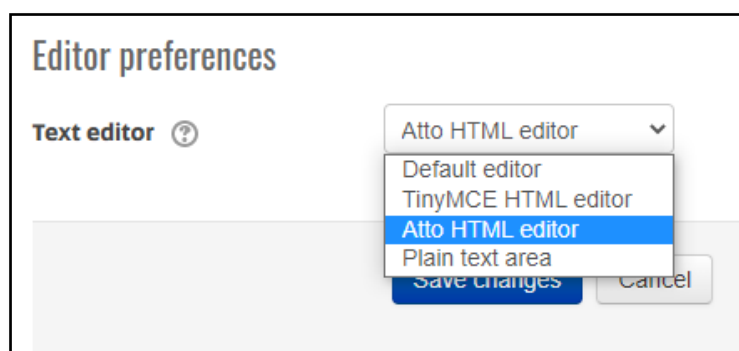
The text editor is a large field where you enter the content you wish to display in your course. This content can include text, links, videos or symbols to name a few. You use the text editor when you want to enter this content in forums, lessons, Moodle books, etc or within the course site itself.

There are several benefits that come with using the Atto HTML editor that we encourage you to utilise. The image below identifies several features.
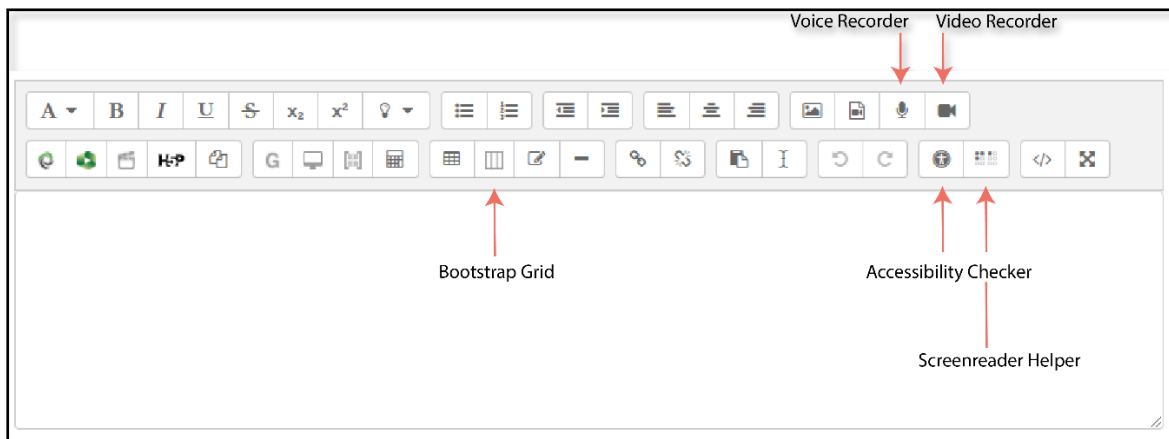
- **A video recorder**. You can record a video through the editor and when you finish recording, the video will embed directly in the course site. This can be useful if you would like to provide video feedback on assessments.
- **A voice recorder**. This could also be useful if you would like to record yourself providing feedback to students or if you would like to record your announcements or respond to student questions.
  - **Important Note**: We suggest only using the video or voice recorder for short announcements or quick feedback. If you wish to record something of considerable length it would be better to use Panopto for recording and storing. This will ensure that your Moodle course site is not slowed down by storing and retrieving large files.
- **Bootstrap grid columns**. Put simply, this is much like the table you have always been able to work with in Moodle but it is far more responsive and adaptable. So, if you had given up on using Moodle tables due to their rigidity you may want to try this new functionality.
- **Accessibility checker**. Identifies any accessibility issues that may be present for the user.
- **A screen reader helper**. Alerts screen readers to styles being used within the content.

Some of the old functionality you may have been using within the text editor of your preference, may no longer be available. The main item that will be missing is:

- **Text colour**: you will no longer be able to change the colour of text.
  Why has this been removed? Once again, it is to keep the sites consistent and provide a clean look that doesn't distract students. Further to this, the removal of this functionality ensures greater accessibility for all students.

Resources:

- Video: [Record audio and video using the Atto Editor](#)
- [Features of The Atto Text Editor](#)

7. Further Support

The Teaching Innovation Unit offers one-to-one (or small group) Online Educational Designer (OED) consultations and group workshops. See [Moodle Upgrade Support](#).

There is also a guide for staff on using the new upgrade and theme located on the [learnonline Help staff page](#).

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our [FAQs](#), write to [TIU@unisa.edu.au](#), have an online [consultation with a member of the TIU](#) or complete the online modules as part of [Introduction to Engaging Learners Online](#).

Resources

The TEL team have put together some [help resources](#) that are extremely useful.