Moodle Theme and Version Upgrade – Overview

UniSA is updating Moodle with a new version and theme for both UniSA Online (7 December 2020) and learnonline (15 December 2020).

The new theme controls the look and feel of course sites and can be thought of as a "skin" applied over the top of existing course content. The new theme gives Moodle a contemporary look and will ensure that navigating course sites is consistent for all UniSA students, by implementing a "flexible sections" approach to navigation.

While there should be minimal impact on your course's teaching and learning content, the upgrade is an excellent opportunity to review the way you use your course site and to potentially find new ways of conceiving your online teaching. The changes to Moodle will be minor for colleagues who operate in UniSA Online.

For learnonline users, this Guide, *Moodle theme and version upgrade – an overview,* introduces the new Moodle theme and its key features, points you at further help resources, and highlights how the new theme better supports our students in their online learning experiences.

This is the first in a series of Guides on the new theme and version upgrade in Moodle. Subsequent Guides will look at the mechanics of setting up and using flexible sections, and strategies for effective online teaching in the new theme. A final Guide will provide help with troubleshooting in the new Moodle theme.

Key features of the new theme

Flexible sections and navigation

The most notable difference in the new theme is the use of a flexible section format to structure course information and navigation. Previously in learnonline you had the ability to choose from a variety of formats (topics, tab topics, etc). With the new theme and version upgrade these are no longer available and a **flexible section** format will be applied consistently across all courses. UniSA Online has used the flexible section format since its inception with very positive student feedback.

The image below (Image 1) shows what navigation will look like in the new format. The titles previously used for your topics or tab topics will display as **section** headers in the expanded left hand navigation panel (e.g. *Week 1: Online Engagement and Presence*). Sections can split into **sub-sections**. This allows you to 'chunk' your information in a way that makes

scanning easier for students and can improve their ability to understand and remember content (e.g. *Topic 1.1 - What is Different About Online Teaching*).
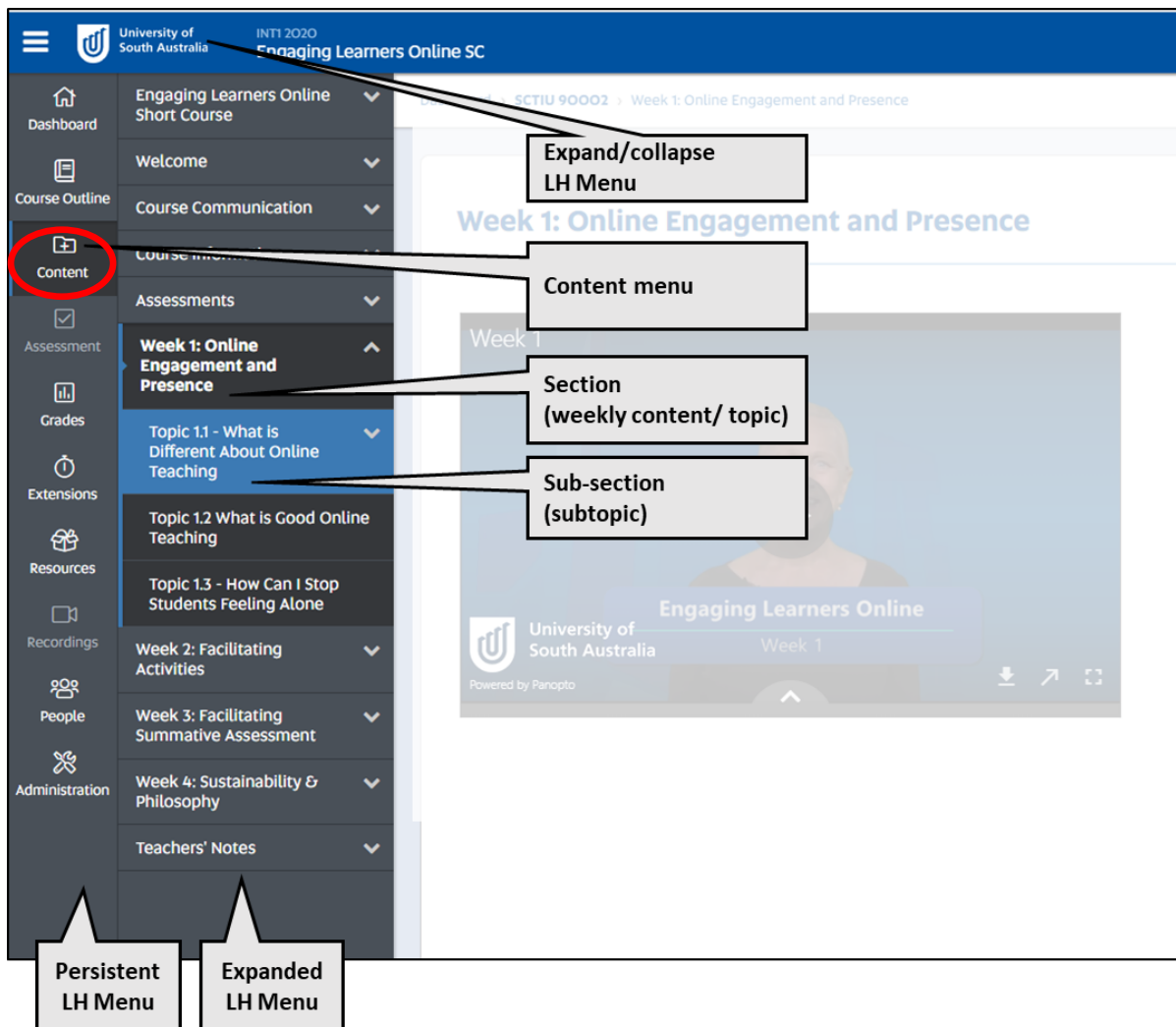

Image 1: *Content* **view screenshot**

- You can learn more about chunking information in a forthcoming Guide on teaching strategies in the new Moodle theme.
- Also refer to the **Teaching and Learning Guide on Key Concept Presentations** for ideas on chunking a weekly topic into subtopics.

Due to the format change, navigation of course sites will also change. Clicking the 'Content' icon in the persistent left hand menu will cause the sections and sub-sections of a course site to appear in the expanded navigation panel.

You can then navigate through the course content using this navigation menu or by using the **previous** and **next** buttons within each section to navigate forwards and backwards.

Image 2: Content navigation screenshot

Note: You will also find that links to the Student *Help & Support* and links to *University apps* windows have moved to the top right of the screen with the removal of the Course Essentials block.

- For support using **flexible sections** visit the **'Getting started with the new theme'** help guide.
- For further examples of what the new format and navigation will look like, visit the '**Program Site Examples'** help guide.

Administration

Note that Blocks will no longer be available in the new version of Moodle. This includes:

- any blocks you may have been using for navigation purposes; for short cuts to important content,
- Course Essentials block,
- Administration block, and
- Navigation block

In the persistent left hand menu, the Administration section contains many fields previously available to you via the Administration Block. These include a new Course administration menu, comprising:

- "Manage Blocks" for recovering HTML block content, and
- "This Course" menu for staff with editing access.

The removal of blocks ensures that students can always see and navigate through the entire course structure via the left side of course sites, and this navigation approach is consistent across all courses. The navigation panel also improves the ability to navigate course sites on mobile devices.

It is important to note that you will not lose content that you have placed in blocks when your site is rolled over to the new theme. Anything that was previously in an HTML block can be found by clicking on Administration and then Block Management (see Image 3). However, you will need to re-consider how you incorporate the block's content in the new course or navigate students to that content.
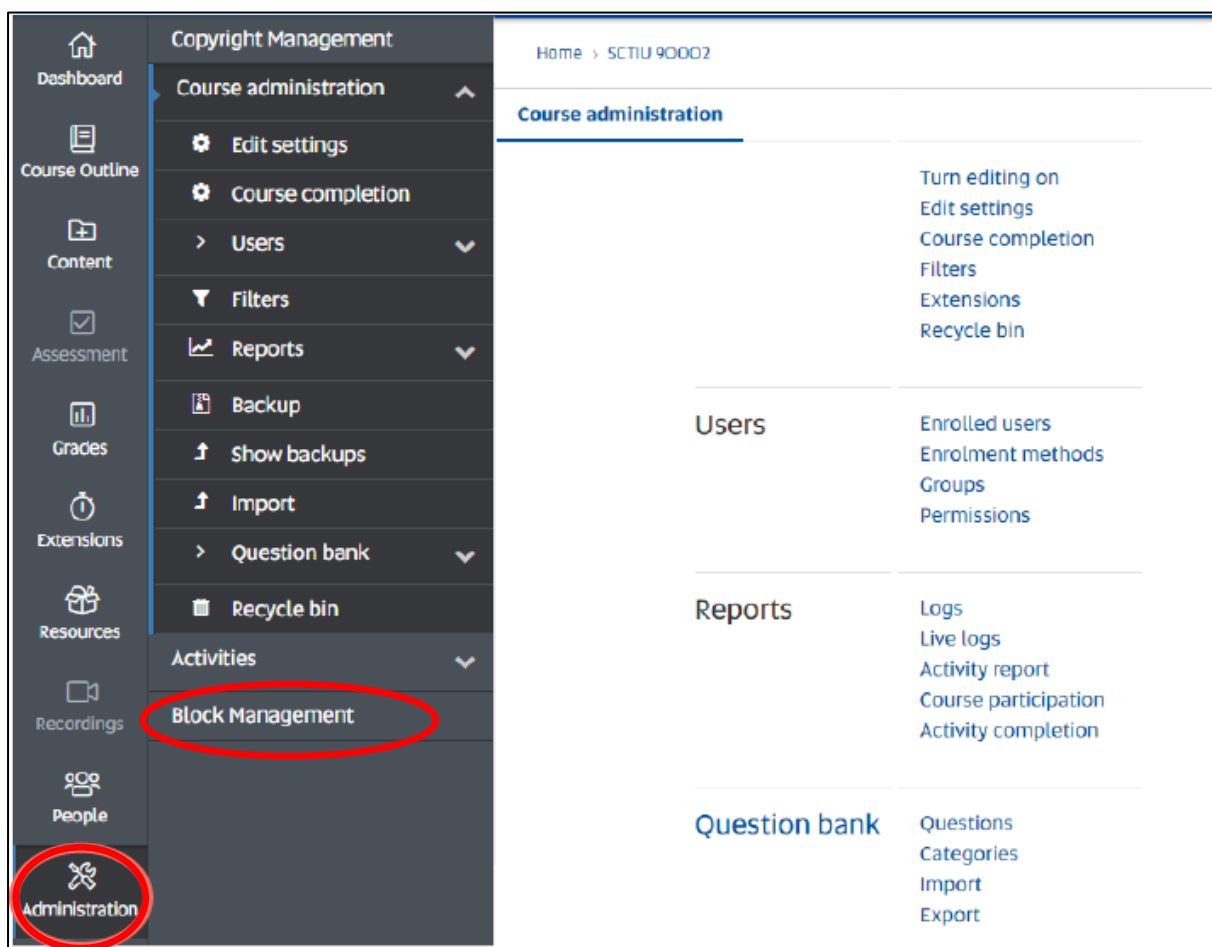

Image 3: *Administration* **view screenshot**

For more support on where to find everything in the new theme:

- Visit the **'Where can I find… in the new Theme'** help resource
- Watch the brief video on **'Navigating through the transition theme'**

Fixed Text Editor

The text editor is the place you add text, links, videos, resources, etc. to your course site in forums, books, or directly on the course site. The editor contains a panel of buttons that provide you with different functionality including the ability to format text, insert hyperlinks, etc...(see Image 4 below).

Previously, you had the ability to choose your text editor in Moodle. In the new version of Moodle, you will only be able to use the **Atto HTML** editor. This means some of the buttons may appear to have disappeared from within the editor and there may be some new ones that you are unfamiliar with. Some of the new features can be seen in the image below. (You will find more on using these features in a subsequent teaching and learning guide in this series, on the mechanics of the new Moodle.)

Take some time to familiarise yourself with the functionality available to you from within the new editor to ensure you take full advantage of it.
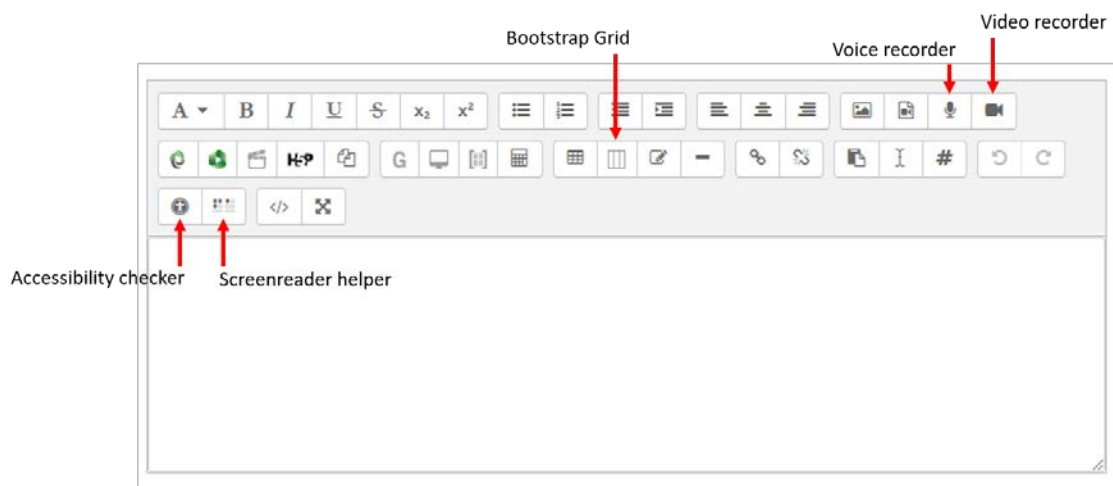

Image 4: Text editor

What you need to know

It is important to know that the change in version and theme merely controls the look and feel of the course site, you have not lost any functionality and can continue to use all the Moodle tools as you always have.

What the new theme does is ensure consistency for students in terms of the look, feel and navigation. This will reduce the cognitive load on students by making their transition between courses easier, allowing them to focus on their learning.

Who to contact if you need help

The Teaching Innovation Unit is offering one on one (or small group) Online Educational Developer 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*.