



Activity categories findings

Moppies Team

Research Report (March 2024)

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Overview

Background

With the 4.0 release, the Moodle community expressed their **frustration regarding the activity icons** being very similar in shape and color, **making harder the scannability, distinction and understanding** of them in the activity chooser and course page from both educators and students perspectives.

The current display of activities in the activity chooser **lacks a clear hierarchy or structure, relying solely on color coding to group activities by their similarity.**



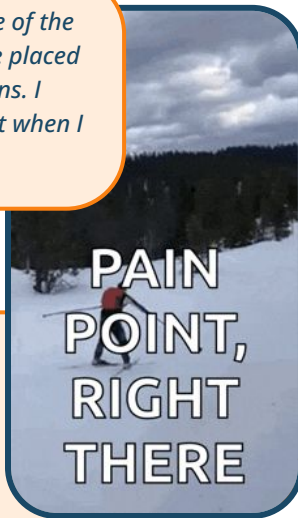
Challenges

- Difficulty differentiating among activity icons.
- Uncertainty about the icons color coding meaning.
- Decreased accessibility or findability when searching for specific activities.
- Reduced efficiency during course creation.
- Increased cognitive load

"I'm wondering what the colors mean. Quiz, assignments are all red, blue are resources. I guess red is stuff that the student provides"

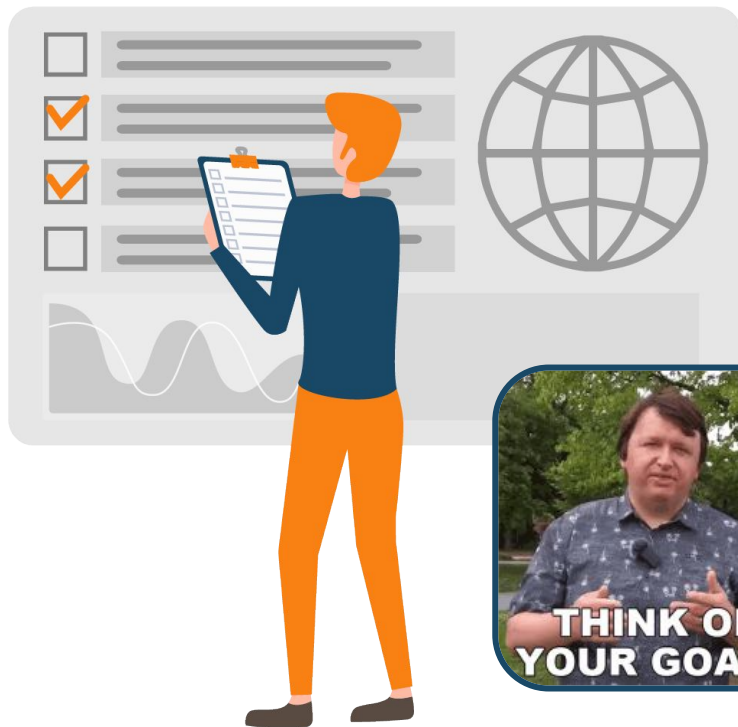
"The overall picture it's distracting because of the use of the colors and the way the icons are placed within the circle. I get distracted by the icons. I need to put extra energy in to read the text when I think it should be the other way around."

"So the color I guess is supposed to represent a type of activity. A book, a page and a folder to me would be very similar, so it makes sense they're all blue, because these are a way of delivering information to the students."



Objectives

- Optimize the design of activity icons to ensure they are easily scannable, recognizable and distinguishable for all users.
- Develop an appropriate and comprehensive categorization system mirroring our users' mental model of the Moodle activity catalog.
- Improve the course creation experience to support educators in quickly identifying and distinguishing activity icons.



Research goals

- Evaluate our users' mental model of how activities are grouped into different colors (activity icons).
- Understand how activities relate to each other in the users' mind.
- Uncover definitions, terms or ideas that might be missing from the current activity grouping.
- Identify what activity grouping approach makes sense for our users.



Method & Approach

We began the Research phase by conducting **secondary research, analyzing community feedback from Tracker issues and forums**. Based on the identified challenges and user needs, we then conducted various research activities to directly gather feedback from our community users.



Secondary research

Community feedback analysis:

- [MDL-74272](#)
- [MDL-53672](#)
- [Forum discussion](#)



Card-sorting exercise

- 21 Moodle Community participants
- Categorizing activities into groups based on similarity



Stakeholders workshop

- 24 Moodle HQ participants
- Categorizing activities into groups based on similarity



Design & Testing phase

HMWs AFFINITY MAPPING · WORKSPACE

10 min

Organize individual HMW stickies into cohesive categories or themes. Label each group with a generic HMW question that encompasses the individual HMWs within.

SOLUTION SKETCH

10 min

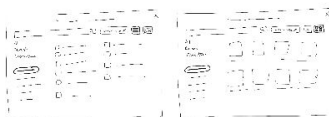
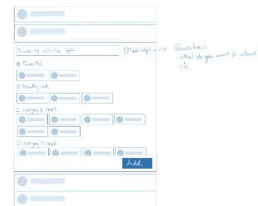
Take a photo of your sketches and add them to this frame. You can either use the Miro app for this, or send your pictures to zoe.rippon@moodle.com

 10 min

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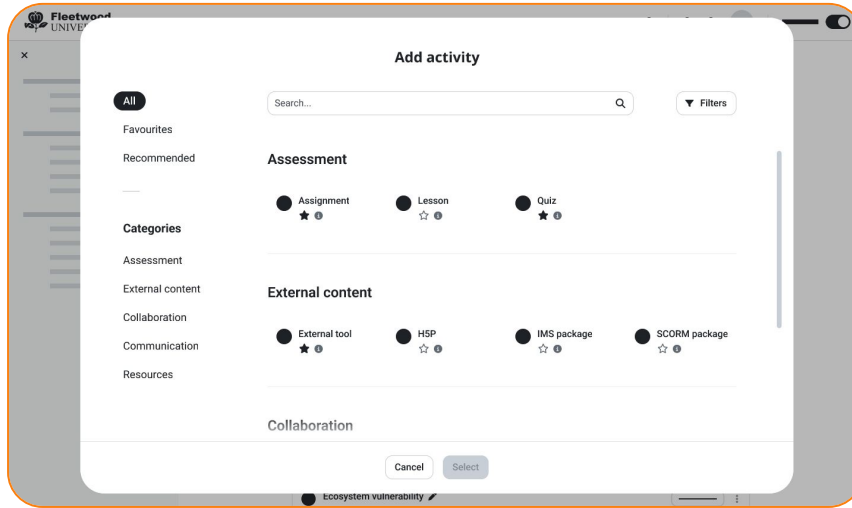
 10 min

Take a photo of your sketches and add them to this frame. You can either use the Miro app for this, or send your pictures to zoe.rippon@moodle.com

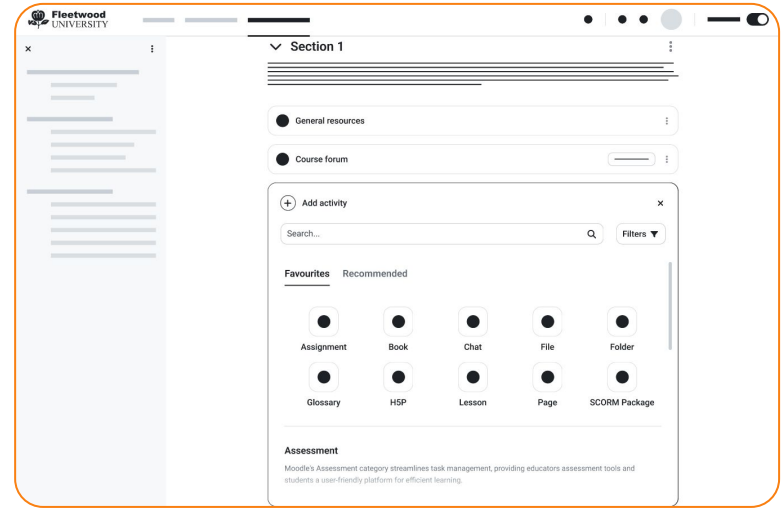


Design phase

The **Design Sprint Workshop** resulted in **two different proposals** that were transformed into **low-fidelity prototypes** and evaluated during the testing phase.



Design option A (Modal window)



Design option B (Inline dialog)

Testing phase

We engaged with a total of **19 participants**, conducting **unmoderated comparative tests** through User Zoom with both **Moodle** and **Non-Moodle users**. We aimed to **understand which of the two design options was working more effectively** for the majority of the participants involved.



Test approach

Unmoderated Comparative test in UserZoom (19 participants)



Participants (19)

Educators, Content creators, Admins and IT Support roles.



Moodle experience

None, 1-3 years, between 3-10 years and More than 10 years.



Location

Europe, Australia and North America.

Research Findings

Key takeaways

1

Users usually try to guess which category the activity would belong to before start looking for the activity.

2

Overall, the categorization approach is logical for the majority of users; however, there are specific activities that should be associated with two categories.

3

Category descriptions serve as effective aids, providing users with useful insights into how they can use activities within each category.

4

The existing activity description is insufficient and sometimes unclear. Providing concise guidance on how to set up activities would be highly beneficial.

Finding 1: Categories

Finding 1: Categories

Users usually try to guess which category the activity would belong to before start looking for the activity.

Theme 1

Design concept A (Modal) allows users to simultaneously view all categories, facilitating a more progressive and user-friendly absorption of information.

Theme 2

In Design concept B (Dialog), inline presentation aids users in understanding where they add content, but scrolling through the activity catalog can frustrate and confuse some users.

Theme 3

Users generally prefer clicking to navigate within the interface rather than scrolling, as this can be perceived as tedious and frustrating, especially for new or inexperienced users.

Finding 1: Categories

User feedback quotes:

"In a production Moodle you have more activities than the default ones that come pre installed. So if you have the custom activities, the first design, in which you just scroll through the different activities can be a bit overwhelming. If you have too many, there's gonna be too much scrolling, whereas the second design can scale much better"

"Design A for me was easier because I just need to click. There are categories and I can see all the categories at once and then click on the categories to know more"

"The design A would be better in that sense that it is more familiar. It was better because you didn't need to scroll from place to place, but all the categories went there visible all the time and it was easy to jump between the categories and activities"

"Design A was, in my opinion, far better. It's much easier to use not getting lost in scrolling within the activity chooser and within the course page"

Finding 2: Categorization approach

Finding 2: Categorization approach

Overall, the categorization approach is logical for the majority of users; however, there are specific activities that should be associated with two categories.

Theme 1

Choice, Forum, H5P, IMS package, Lesson, SCORM and Workshop activities should be listed under two categories due to their versatile nature, allowing them to seamlessly fit into different instructional contexts.

Theme 2

To ensure consistency, LTI tools and third-party activities should be categorized in alignment with the core categories approach to ensure a cohesive organization that matches the core platform structure.

Theme 3

4 participants expressed their desire for category customization, highlighting its effectiveness in addressing concerns about activities overlapping between categories.

Finding 2: Categorization approach

User feedback quotes:

"The categories make sense, yeah. I feel like some of the activities could fall into several categories, like Workshop, H5P, Forum...but there could be some exceptions in which the activity is listed under two categories"

"With those edge cases, I don't think it would take more than two guesses. I'm not going to look in Communication to find the URL activity"

"Maybe there could be some recommendation on interactivity of these categories"

"I still think some activities should be overlapped"

"Some of the external LTI integrations, the categorization of them should be driven by the concept not by the technology that powers them"

Finding 3: Categories descriptions

Finding 3: Categories descriptions

Category descriptions serve as effective aids, providing users with useful insights into how they can use activities within each category.

Theme 1

Including examples of the different applications of activities within each category proves highly beneficial for comprehending the overall structure of the Moodle activity catalog. This is particularly advantageous for new and non-experienced users.

Theme 2

The Recommended tab presented a challenge for the majority of the participants, as they struggled to comprehend the purpose behind the activities listed within it and how the Recommended content gets generated.

"I'm not sure if those correlate with the color icons that we saw in some previous Moodle versions, but having kind of an official explanation is helpful there"

"I don't know what is the Recommended section about. It'd be nice to have a description of how these activities get populated, because I can see that the activities listed here are also listed in their own category section"

Finding 4: Activity information

Finding 4: Categories descriptions

The existing activity description is insufficient and sometimes unclear. Providing concise guidance on how to set up activities would be highly beneficial.

Theme 1

Participants from the Moodle Community highlighted the potential benefit of including a link to a pre-set activity example on the Moodle demo site. This addition could significantly accelerate the learning curve, especially for new users.

Theme 2

Incorporating images of pre-existing activities and providing instructional videos on the setup process for each activity would streamline and expedite users' learning curves, reducing the need for external navigation to the activity documentation.

Theme 3

Including an indication or explicit mention of whether activities are gradable or non-gradable would be very helpful in providing users with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse functionalities associated with each activity.

Finding 4: Activity information

User feedback quotes:

"Maybe a link to some example, I mean, the orange school site has always been useful to go and explore, you know how an activity can be implemented"

"How it actually would look like on the page would be useful too for me."

"I think is more about the assessment of the workshop, about the grade they get at the end. So it doesn't help really much with the workshop setup itself or with the understanding of how the activity works. I expected information that helps me organizing the workshop activity, but it's more like give a grade for the workshop. This was a bit surprising for me"

"It'd be nice to have a little graphic here that would explain the process that students go through, not just text based"

UX Proposal

UX Proposal

Based on the research findings and the feedback collected during the usability testings, we started the final design phase. Here, we conducted the **last design iteration** to implement all research findings into each area where the Moodle activities are displayed to **accommodate the official new categories** and the **redesigned activity icons**. The deliverables of the project consisted in:



Moodle activity categories

- New accessible color palette
- LTI and Third-party activities categorization
- Categories color customization (Site level)



Redesigned activity icon set

- Improved icon shapes for better recognition and distinction.
- LTI and Third-party activities (Icon design guidelines).
- Activity icon customization (Site level)



Activity chooser improvements

- Comprehensive and isolated views of the official activity categories within the catalog.
- Improved activity information page with relevant details and setup process.

Activity icons redesign

Moodle core **activity icons are simple**, friendly, and meaningful, **stripped down to essential forms for better readability** and recognition. Outline icons provide a cleaner look, **reducing visual clutter** and noise, benefiting users, especially those with autism, by making information easier to process. These factors were crucial for the complex and intricate Moodle interface, aligning with our commitment to accessible, clean and user-friendly design.

 [LTI and Third-party activities · Icon design guidelines](#)



Moodle activity categories

We organise Moodle activities into **six categories, based on their main purpose**. Though activities can be versatile and have multiple purposes, this approach ensures each one is categorised appropriately.



Administration

*No core activities
in this category*



Assessment

Assignment
Quiz
Workshop



Communication

BigBlueButton
Chat
Choice
Feedback
Survey



Collaboration

Database
Forum
Glossary
Wiki



Interactive content

H5P
Lesson
IMS package
SCORM package



Resources

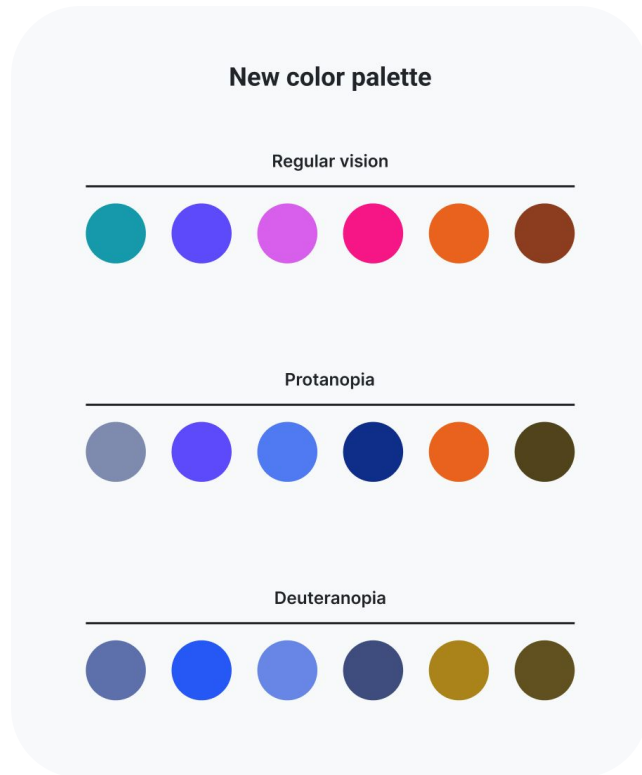
Book
File
Folder
Page
URL
Text and
Media area

Accessible color palette

Each activity category has its own unique colour, which is used for all the activity icons within that category.

We have designed an **accessible and inclusive color palette**, with colours that are easy to tell apart both from each other and from the background, ensuring a clear and comfortable experience for all users.

The color palette **underwent testing against the four most prevalent visual impairment conditions** (Protanopia and Deuteranopia represented in the example image) ensuring an improved experience for users with sight impairments.



Activity chooser improvements

In order to accommodate the official activity categories in a comprehensive and clear manner, we worked on a proposal to improve the current activity chooser, facilitating the findability, navigability and learning curve of our users, especially those who are new to the platform.

With this approach, the activities that fall under several categories would be displayed as 'Related activities' under each category.

Prototypes links



[Activity chooser improvements](#)



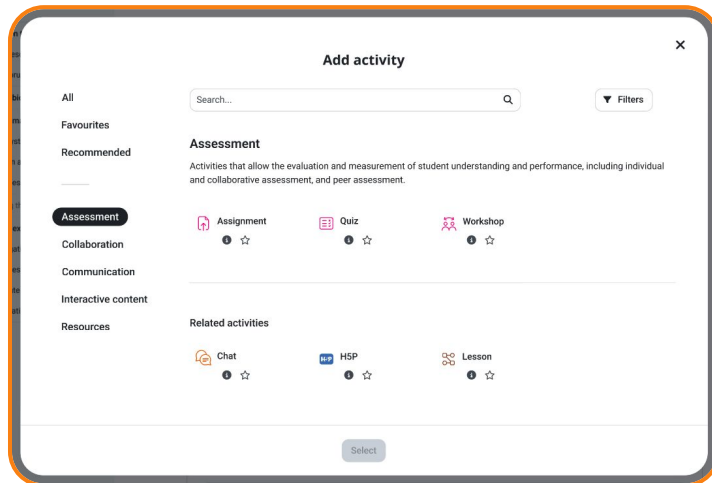
[Activity categories customization \(Site level\)](#)



[LTI Activity tools categorization \(Site level\)](#)



[Prototypes instructions](#)



Deliverables release plan

Given the expansive nature of this project, the deliverables had to be segmented into various phases to effectively address the challenges highlighted by the Community regarding the 4.0 activity icons in the short term.



4.4 Release

- Redesigned activity icon set
- Moodle activity categories



To be defined...

- Activity chooser improvements
- Category color customization
- Activity icon customization

** The designs are subject to changes and modifications as part of our ongoing efforts for continuous improvement.*

Want to participate in future research studies?



Join the **Moodle Experience Lab** to be the first to hear about **research opportunities**, and **contribute** to the **future of Moodle**.

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