

## MCCC in Certification Central Administration

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### Abstract

Moodle Course Creator Certificate is the official Moodle Certificate provided exclusively from Moodle Partners. Human Resource Development New Zealand Moodle Partner is the Certification Central Administration. This Certification is running since 2006. It started as Moodle Teacher Certificate and renamed to Course Creator's when Moodle development forced it. While Moodle is growing and becomes more and more complex the need for organized trainings and a reliable and effective certification scheme becomes imperative.

In this paper we will present the history of MCCC and its evolution during the years.

### Keywords

MCCC, Moodle Course Creator Certificate, Moodle, HRD, Human Resource Development International Limited, Moodle Partner, Certification Central Administration

## Introduction to the MCCC

Learning has been steadily growing in the past decade (Karr, 2002) across the globe. It is estimated that elearning platforms and courses are being delivered to almost every country with an increase in the number of available material, as well as a positive impact on the participants (Joseph, 2001). Online classrooms offer flexible learning for all people, regardless of position, occupation or age and it is gaining more ground year after year (Thompson, Winterfield, Flanders, 1998). With the rise of eLearning comes the need to ensure the quality of the material and services offered (Gilhooly, 2001) as well as cope with the growing numbers of e-dropouts through such measures as creating effective online communities (Jun, 2005).

The Moodle Course Creator Certificate - MCCC (former Moodle Teacher Certificate - MTC) is a way for everyone to demonstrate his/her skills in using Moodle as a teacher. It is actually an assessment scheme, that contains a course project, a short narrative document and an online exam. *"The MCCC is intended as a way of bench-marking staff skills."* (<http://moodle.org/course/view.php?id=48>). It is exclusively provided by Moodle Partners, while the content of the certification is designed and provided by the Moodle community at Moodle.org, where candidates can find all the information needed through the discussions, the documentation and the preparation guides provided.

## History of MCCC

Research has clearly shown the benefits of online learning (Ching & Cheng, 2000) and Moodle has been one of the leading Learning Management Systems since its early inception, offering a set of tools to help trainers develop and deliver quality material and training (Brandl, 2005). It was built on the premises of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), offering trainers and trainees the tools to interact with the content as well as form online communities with a great impact on learning (Scott & Johnson, 2005).

With the rise of the popularity of elearning courses, scientific evaluation techniques were created to ensure the quality of the content and the instruction (Winfrey, 1999). The European Commission (2003) has recognised the importance of online learning, and is investing heavily on ensuring that Europe will have a major role as far as elearning is concerned.

As a certification program, MCCC, has been created by and it is affiliated with Moodle community, in an effort to raise standards in the use of Moodle. The idea for a Moodle Certificate is credited to the Global

Certification Manager, Stuart Mealor and had been welcomed by Moodle Headquarters and Martin Dougiamas (Moodle Founder and Lead Developer) its self.

The development of the Certification program began sometime during 2004. In August 2005 the first draft scheme was ready thanks to the initial certification team constituted by Stuart Mealor (New Zealand), Frances Long (Canada), Alicia Wyatt (USA), Ralf Hilgenstock (Germany) and Ramesh KG (United Arab Emirates). This international team worked on creating the structure, identifying the skillsets, writing the documentation and developing the question banks. The first group of candidates began the pilot administration on 1st April 2006. The official low-key launch made on 1st May 2006, while Moodle Partners began the certification process officially in June 2006.

## The MCCC Scheme

MCCC scheme assess Moodle skills, which have been organized in 8 Skill Sets and consists of three parts: the project course, the narrative questions and the online exam.

The project will be set up as a shell course, in a Moodle Partner's site with standard Moodle installation. The course that candidate creates must demonstrate that he/she can use all of the various Moodle Skill Sets and no existing courses can be used by restoring or importing from other location. The narrative is a collection of essay type questions that evaluate candidate's ability to demonstrate that he/she can use Moodle not only technically, but that he/she understands the various situations and scenarios to appropriately select the correct tools and functions. The online exam is a one hour online quiz, with different type of questions, yes/no answers, short answers, matching and multiple choice. It is password protected and it is taken online in Moodle.org Certification area, utilising Moodle quiz activity. Candidates need to achieve the passing score in both project and narrative before they are allowed take the exam.

The passing mark is 80% and candidates must reach this score in every step. When someone passes the certification he/she is given a code that lets him/her -or anyone else who has the code- to download his/hers personalised certificate as a PDF.

## Moodle Partners

The certification process is administered exclusively by Moodle Partners to ensure the reliability of the process. It has been expected from the very beginning that Moodle Partners will offer the Certification and they will be the 'primary providers' of mentor-assessors and there are three reasons for that.

Firstly Moodle Partners are by definition experts in the application. The process to become a Moodle Partner and provide Moodle certification service is demanding and mandatory for Partners. Secondly Moodle Partners are local to their community and clients and thirdly, although certification has not been designed as a cost effective process, it is a source of revenue for Partners. MCCC costs (on 2012) between AU\$200-AU\$800 in the local currencies. Moodle Partners in each country set the local rate. Of course the fees are shared between Partners, Mentors and Moodle HQ.

## Mentors-Assessors

As candidates register and begin the certification process, they are provided with several mechanisms for support in the MCCC area at Moodle.org: resources, forums, the project wiki, the orientation quiz. Though the the most important supporting mechanism is the personal Mentor-Assessor.

As Bonk, Wisher and Lee suggest (2004), "*online instructors need to facilitate student generation and sharing of information, while assuming the role of learning coach or mentor to provide needed leadership and guidance*" and MCCC could not be a "self" case.

Although Mentor-Assessors are not expected to teach the candidate on how to use Moodle, they do provide information and encouragement if the candidate finds that they are under-prepared in a particular area. MCCC candidates are guided through this process from a Mentor-Assessor. Mentor-Assessors are assigned from the Moodle Partners and are qualified MCCC holders. After successfully completing the MCCC, the prospective Mentor-Assessor takes short training on coaching. The Mentor-Assessor is an important member of the certificate process. These individuals not only guide candidates and answer questions, but they score the project course and narrative responses when they are completed.

Requirements for an individual to become a Mentor-Assessor are specified to ensure the professional credibility and ongoing quality of the MCCC. Although Partners are given free choice in who they use, the following is the likely profile of Mentor-Assessors:

- Have extensive experience / background in education
- Have extensive knowledge of Moodle
- Have previously supported learners within a Moodle environment
- Have completed the MCCC themselves

## MCCC in Certification Central Administration

During the first years (2005 – 2008) of MTC's implementation a Mentor-Assessor should monitor candidate's work while he/she was building up the project and then evaluate it according to the Skillsets criteria. Then assess Narrative questions and if candidate completed the above with a score higher than 80%, Mentor-Assessor could provide the password for the final online exam.

While the above procedure was very effective with well prepared candidates, it proved too expensive specially for candidates who were not prepared or had over-estimated their own abilities. Although it was -and still is- clearly stated that MCCC is not a training course and that candidates must be experienced Moodle teachers in order to participate in Certification, people often expected to learn more than they already know by taking the MCCC. Moreover, although the Certification it is not meant to be a profit mechanism for Moodle or Moodle Partners, the cost of a Mentor-Assessor for them is always a reality.

The above considerations led Central Administration and Moodle Partners to find a more effective way to substantiate Certification: to combine it with a training course. Specially from 2009 in Central Administration MCCC has been merged with MoodleBites for Teachers training course series. MoodleBites used to be and still are training courses, where candidates can actually study, interact with peers and facilitators and learn about Moodle. In order to easily guide and assess candidates' knowledge Central Administration has also set up another course the MCCC course, where specific skillsets and narratives are assessed. This course is actually an examination course, organized in a weekly format and lasts of course eight weeks, like the MoodleBites courses. The successful completion of MoodleBites and MCCC courses equates with the completion of the project and narrative.

Moodle Certification is following Moodle's development by definition. Thus from January 2011 Central Administration along with a small team constituted by Ralf Hilgenstock (Germany), Kim Salinas (USA) and Maryel Mediola (Mexico) updated the Certification scheme to Moodle's new version. Some Skill Sets have been removed, some new added, some others just adjusted. Narratives have been checked and questions banks had been informed and updated with questions that addressed to the new version, while the same time questions referred to the old system have been deleted. New Moodle tools and facilities in the training and examination course have been also used, like conditional activities, progress tracking and rubrics to offer a more comprehensive experience of the new version to the candidates.

While the main structure of the scheme and the guiding principles of it remain the same, the new scheme that MCCC is provided by seems to be much more effective. Certification was always a candidate centred process but now evidences from candidate's feedback show that the whole process is more engaging, more interesting and enjoyable for candidates, maintaining the flexibility of e-learning.

From Mentor-Assessor's point of view things have been also improved. Candidates are taking the MCCC as an e-class and not as individuals which is much easier to manage. Candidates of low-interest can be early detected, progress can be forced and controlled and much better time management can be achieved.

## Conclusion

During the years there have been times that a question of necessity of Moodle's Certification has been arisen. Since Moodle Documentation is freely accessible and effective Moodle courses can be created using only the basics, what is the point of creating and maintaining Certification?

Well, the dialect is clear. Certification benefits individuals in several ways. First of all, it is an external and carefully planned validation of an individual's skills and therefore can be used to support hiring and promotion decisions. Secondly the process itself is challenging and stretches the candidate's knowledge of the system's

potentials. Thirdly, having combine Certification with training, individuals with low knowledge of the system can quickly -within eight weeks, expand significantly their expertise on Moodle. Fourthly it is a globally recognisable Certification. No matter the individual's location, his/her ability to work effectively with Moodle will be recognised from all over the world, providing him/her opportunities to work within or without of his/hers country frontiers.

From 2006 until now (31<sup>st</sup> of May 2012) there have been certified more than 550 Moodle Course Creators from all over the world, among them Moodle Developers too. The 30% of them has been certified during the period January 2011 to May 2012. Note here that from 2011 Certification is provided for Moodle version 2. This clearly states that the need for an organised training and valid Certificate on Moodle is increasing as Moodle is developing over the years.

Last but not least, Moodle Certification is a supporting to the Moodle process, not just because a portion of the certification fee goes back to Moodle and is used to underwrite continued development, but also because it increases awareness of Moodle as a leading course management system.

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