

External Moodle Hosting

If you are thinking of migrating your current VLE to Moodle, you may also be considering external Moodle hosting for your institution. Outsourcing with a hosting service provider off campus has its advantages, but there are some important considerations to take into account. This document offers a starting point to get you thinking about the sort of questions you should be ask any potential hosting vendor. There is no overall right or wrong solution and this is not a definitive or exhaustive list of questions, but we hope that it helps you to make a useful comparison of hosting providers.

Advantages to outsourcing your Moodle hosting service

- Reduced conflicting firewall configuration issues from campus IT dept with users having fewer barriers with home access as well and on campus access
- Experienced Moodle technical administrators who can assist you to manage your Moodle content
- Expert Moodle technical support available to give advice on tailoring and implementing your VLE
- Regular Moodle updates implemented outwith office hours minimising downtime
- No need for in-house Linux skills
- Linux platform maintained with up to date patches etc
- Out of office hours server maintenance without having to find staff willing to work overtime
- Use outsourcing allows in-house technical staff to work and learn from Moodle experts

Disadvantages to outsourcing your Moodle hosting service

- Loss of control
- Cost considerations
- Danger of enflaming technical staff resentment
- Danger of losing technical skills over time then becoming completely dependent on vendor
- May be seen as the 'thin edge of the wedge' leading to a complete IT outsourcing deal

Things to consider and questions to ask when sourcing a hosting service

- Are they re-selling the hosting service from a second provider, and who actually has the expertise for both moodle and server administration
- Look for a formal Service Level Agreement (SLA) contract (target service availability) check track record
- What platform do they support Linux & which flavour i.e. Fedora or Ubuntu etc
- What web applications do they support i.e. Apache, PHP, mysql etc
- Where is the physical location of the server i.e. London, Glasgow and is it near a Point of Presence
- What is the real time bandwidth of the link and is it a synchronous full duplex link
- Is there a data traffic through-put limit set per month, if so what is the penalty for exceeding it
- What provision of resilient data comms is available, what are the alternate route in case of comms failure
- Do they have a standby hot system in case of server failure
- What UPS provision in case of power failure
- What Preventive Maintenance scheme is in place for servers
- Is it a shared server, dedicated or part of a virtual server infrastructure
- What fire prevention measures are in place
- What Back up and restore provision is made and associated procedures
- What environmental monitoring & controls are in the server room and are they also on the UPS
- What other customers do they host and do they have academic experience
- Do they also host their own DNS & can you keep your own institutions domain for your VLE
- Are they members of the UK Access Management Federation do they support Shibboleth
- Are they registered with UK data protection and related legal obligations
- What physical security safeguards are in place i.e. night guard, secure entry to server room CCTV etc
- What system security are in place i.e. what firewall (CheckPoint, PIX etc)
- What technical support service to they have, is it available 24/7/365 what form of escalation
- What is their Moodle experience, what other Moodle academic customers do they serve
- Should the preferred hosting provider be a Moodle Partner and what does this mean <http://moodle.com/partners>

Where do I start looking for answers to my hosting questions?

A Google search for Moodle hosting will overwhelm you with responses! To kick start your search, we have compiled a small list of UK based Moodle hosting providers:



E-Learn Design Ltd, Glasgow

<http://www.e-learndesign.co.uk>

Derick Turner

Phone: 08454744512

Email: derick@e-learndesign.co.uk



pteppic.net, Oxfordshire

<http://www.pteppic.net>

Sean Keogh

Phone: 01295 722836

Email: sales@pteppic.net



JANET Service Desk

<http://www.ja.net/services>

Phone: 0870 850 2212 (UK)

Email (preferred): service@ja.net



ULCC Moodle, London

<http://moodle.ulcc.ac.uk/course>

Phil Butler

Phone: 020 7692 1362

Email: enquiries@ulcc.ac.uk

The New Curiosity Shop



The New Curiosity Shop, Midlothian

<http://newcurioshop.com>

Noel Chidwick

Phone: 0131 208 1900

Email: contact@newcurioshop.com