



.....with a twist of tartan!



A talk to the Scottish Moodle Community by Martin Dougiamas

Mr Moodle, Martin Dougiamas is best known as the big guy from Australia who created Moodle, the prize winning open source course management system that is used by thousands of institutions around the world.

Currently on a three week world tour of Moodle events, Martin came up to Glasgow to deliver two talks at Glasgow University. The morning session was a small group of academics involved in the Glasgow University Seminar Series. The afternoon talk was aimed at the wider Scottish Moodle community and over 300 people from all over Scotland registered for this event. This was the first time Martin has been to Scotland, but said he felt very at home, coming from “the other” Perth.

When the **UK MoodleMoot 07** in Milton Keynes ended on Thursday evening, Martin caught the overnight Caledonian Sleeper to Glasgow. He described the journey as a “psychedelic trip” and “surreal” because he spent the night in vivid dreams about being on a train, while travelling on one!

Restless night or otherwise, Martin was fresh faced, bright eyed and animated at the morning seminar, introducing himself as the “Lead Developer, centre and focal point of Moodle”. He posed the question to the Seminar group:

“Is Social Constructionism a good way to think about on line learning?”

- We are all teachers and learners and you have to move away from transmission only
- Learning by doing forces you to think
- You need to understand the context of others to allow you to teach transformationally and adapt your teaching accordingly, whether that is in the language or subject.
- Learning environment needs to be flexible and adaptable.

Martin developed Moodle through doing. He was “the IT guy” at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, W. Australia, responsible for working with their learning platform, WebCT. It was his frustration at WebCT’s limitations within education that prompted Martin to think about a better solution, which became “Martin’s Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment” or Moodle for short. By using the tools within Moodle, teachers and learners from around the world can share materials and add to their courses in innovative and dynamic ways. Moodle allows for reflective study that goes far deeper than chalk and talk courses could ever manage.

Normally asked to talk about the latest version changes in Moodle, Martin said it was refreshing for him to be able to speak about what brought him to create Moodle - his PhD thesis:

“An exploration of the use of an Open Source software called Moodle to support a social constructionist epistemology of teaching and learning within Internet-based communities of reflective inquiry”

Moodle, became popular beyond his wildest dreams, to the detriment of his final thesis-writing year. It is currently being used in 176 countries by 34,000 registered users. 74 of these Moodle installations have over 20,000 users. With some sadness, Martin announced in Glasgow that he no longer believes he will be able to find the time he needs to finish his thesis, but perhaps an honorary doctorate to add to all his burgeoning list of global awards prizes is a possibility for the future?

The Mr Moodle event was jointly organised by the Learning & Technology Unit at the Learning & Teaching Centre of the University of Glasgow and the two JISC Regional Support Centres for Scotland.