

**LEONARDO DA VINCI Project No (EL/01/BP LA 114443))**

**ORION: Development of Virtual Learning Environment in environmental science, with online re-usable interactive modules in marine pollution and ecology, with self-learning packages in English, Greek, Portuguese and Swedish**

**ORION TOOL USER MANUAL**

**WWW.ORIONNET.INFO**



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# User Manual

This is a quick guide to creating online courses using the ORION tool. It outlines the main functions you can use, as well as some of the main decisions you'll need to make as far as developing your online course and optimising its use.

## CONTENTS

- 1. Getting started**
- 2. Course settings**
- 3. Uploading files**
- 4. Setting up activities**
- 5. Running the course**

# 1. Getting started

The LEONARDO pilot project ORION has already developed a number of courses, and users are now able to create, develop and modify original material. But to do any of these, you have to log into the Academic Course Section, using your Teacher Account.

Please look at the following pages for a detailed guide, with exemplars from the ORION Academic Course User Instructions.

## First Step

Log in as indicated by the arrow on the Introductory Page (see next page). Look at all the courses which are online, and check out which language you want to work in.

## Second step

Using the password which you have been given by the course administrator, enter as a teacher. If you have forgotten your password, you can reset your password as shown over the page.

When you enter the site as a teacher, you will see three columns, two of which are active. The central column shows the courses that are available, and this page allows you to enter any of your own courses and alter /modify them as you wish. The Left Hand column, Administration, gives you a set of tools to enable you to set up your course online quickly and easily.

The first set of options (LHH in Administration) are:

- *Configure Variables*
- *Site Settings*
- *Site logs*
- *Choose Theme*
- *Check language*

The site administrator has already taken care of all these aspects for you in the ORION pilot project. (Photocopy p.6)

The second set of options(Centre) is the most important for you as a beginner.

- *Add a new course*
- *Course categories*
- *Assign teachers*
- *Delete a course*

To Add a Course, you will have to click on this option in the Administration Column. You then reach the Edit Course Settings page, which will construct your online course exactly as you have planned it.

You will be asked for the full name of the course, then for a short acronym, to be followed by a short summary (Photocopy p.7)


. This is where you will decide upon the Enrolment Key which your students will have to use, whether you will allow guest access, which format you will use, when the course is due to start, the number of topics it will cover, and so on.


The third set of options is vital for running the online course successfully, as this allows you to enter new students, to edit their accounts, to assign administrative tasks, etc.

- *Add a new user*
- *Edit user accounts*
- *Assign admin.*
- *Authentication admin*

All of these aspects are extremely important and will be dealt with later.

**Notice and use these little icons:**

 - the **edit icon** lets you edit whatever it is next to.

 the **help icon** will provide you with a popup help window

**Use the navigation bar at the top of each page**

This should help remind you where you are and prevent getting lost.

## 2. Course settings

The first thing you should do is look under the "Administration" on your course home page and click on "**Settings...**" (Note that this link, and in fact the whole Administration section is only available to you (and the site administrator). Students will not see these links).

On the Settings page you can change a number of settings about your course, ranging from its name to what day it starts. You have to remember to turn the Editing Function on. If you don't do this, you will not be able to do anything at all. Please use the HELP icon, which explains them all in detail. The most important of these is the **course format**.

ORION Version 1.0 has three formats.

Here are some screenshots of three sample courses in each of these three formats (ignore the different colours, which are set for a whole site by the site administrator):

### Weekly format



The screenshot displays a course home page with a weekly format. The page is divided into three main sections: People, Weekly outline, and Latest news. The People section on the left includes links for 'List of all people' and 'Edit profile'. The Weekly outline section in the center shows two weeks of content. The first week, '5 August - 11 August', includes a welcome message and a list of activities: 'A cartoon', 'Welcome to the demo', 'Outline of the course', 'Research Consent', 'Why am I here?', 'Survey 1 - Online Learning Environment', 'Survey 2 - Your attitudes to learning', and 'Forum 1 - Introductions'. The second week, '12 August - 18 August', includes a message about constructivism and a link to 'Journey into Constructivism'. The Latest news section on the right shows a list of recent discussions and a 'Recent activity' section indicating the user's last login.

People	Weekly outline	Latest news
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>List of all people</li><li>Edit profile</li></ul>	<p>1 5 August - 11 August</p> <p>Hi! In this first week we'll explore some of the different types of activities, and get to know each other a little. Just work your way through the links below, in order. &lt;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A cartoon x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Welcome to the demo x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Outline of the course x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>? Research Consent x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Why am I here? x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Survey 1 - Online Learning Environment x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Survey 2 - Your attitudes to learning x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Forum 1 - Introductions x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li></ul>	<p>Add a new discussion topic...</p> <p>6 Aug, 13:18 - Martin Finally, updates to Demo 101 more...</p> <p>10 Jun, 12:44 - Martin Guest user is read-only more...</p> <p>31 May, 21:38 - Martin Some new features more...</p> <p>Older discussions ...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Settings...</li><li>Logs...</li><li>Files...</li><li>Teacher forum</li><li>Turn editing off</li></ul>	<p>2 12 August - 18 August</p> <p>OK, this week we'll explore the many faces of constructivism, and particularly social constructionism. Here are a couple of my papers that are relevant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Journey into Constructivism x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li><li>Interactive analysis of a Moodle course x ↑ ↓ &lt;</li></ul>	<p>Recent activity</p> <p>Your last login was: Sunday, 18 Aug 2002, 11:19</p> <p>Nothing new since your last login</p>

## Topics format:

The screenshot shows the 'SMEC 706 - Constructivism' course page. The page is organized into several sections:

- People:** Includes links for 'List of all people' and 'Edit profile'.
- Activities:** Lists various activities such as 'Assignments', 'Choices', 'Forums', 'Journals', 'Readings', and 'Surveys'.
- Search:** A search bar with the text 'Search forums'.
- Administration:** Includes links for 'Settings...', 'Logr...', 'Files...', and 'Teacher forum'.
- Topic outline:** The main content area, divided into two numbered topics:
  - Topic 1:** 'Starting Up. Let's get acquainted with the web site and with each other during the first week of semester (22-26 Jul). Please click on the Instructions link below...'. It lists sub-topics like 'Instructions (please start here)', 'Rationale of 706 Online', 'Research content', 'Survey 1A - Attitude Towards Online Learning', 'Survey 1B - Online Learning Environment', 'Reading 1 - Connected Knowing', 'Journal 1 - SMEC706 online and me', and 'Forum 1 - Introductory discussion'.
  - Topic 2:** 'Radical Constructivism. Please read the two EvG papers in the week 29 Jul-2 Aug, recording your thoughts in Journal 2A. We shall discuss the papers in the week 5-9 Aug...'. It lists sub-topics like 'Reading 2A - A Constructivist Approach to Teaching - von Glasersfeld (1995)', 'Reading 2B - Why Some Like It Radical - von Glasersfeld (1990)', 'Journal 2A - Reflection on readings', 'Forum 2 - Radical constructivism', 'Survey 2 - Online Learning Environment', and 'Journal 2B - Reflections on my own learning'.
- Latest news:** A section for recent updates, including 'Add a new discussion topic', '16 Aug, 00:21 - Peter: Journal 3A more...', '8 Aug, 11:56 - Peter: Additional Journal Entries in', '6 Aug, 12:46 - Martin: Peer-assessment in Forum 2 more...', and '21 Jul, 23:06 - Martin: Some work has been done or web site more...'. It includes a link for 'Older threads'.
- Recent activity:** Shows 'Your last login was: Saturday, 17 Aug 2002, 21:02' and 'Nothing new since your login'.

## Social format:

The screenshot shows the 'SMEC Postgrad Colloquium' course page. The page is organized into several sections:

- People:** Includes links for 'List of all people' and 'Edit profile'.
- Resources:** Lists resources such as 'Welcome to the Colloquium', 'Structure of a research thesis', 'Scholarly Writing', 'Campus timetable 2002-51', and 'PLTA Survey (Chris Reed)'. It includes a link to 'Subscribe from this forum'.
- Recent activity:** Shows 'Your last login was: Saturday, 17 Aug 2002, 21:02' and 'Nothing new since your last login'.
- Search:** A search bar with the text 'Search forums'.
- Administration:** Includes links for 'Settings...' and 'Logr...'.
- Social forum - latest topics:** The main content area, displaying two discussion topics:
  - Topic 1:** 'On-campus colloquium' by Martin Skelton, Tuesday, 30 July 2002, 11:32 AM. The text reads: 'Wow, I have been so immersed in my own study lately! Have the on-campus colloquiums started again? Is there one tonight?'. It has 2 replies so far.
  - Topic 2:** 'need a few volunteers' by Kathy Skelton, Wednesday, 24 July 2002, 06:45 AM. The text reads: 'Hi all, I need your help! I need a little practice in conducting qualitative research. I have a quick down and dirty that I would like to do as a precursor for one that I need to do for a paper I am planning to do for publication. The topic is one that I hope is of interest to at least a few of you.' It has 3 replies so far.

Note that the weekly and topics formats are very similar in structure. The main difference is that each box in the weekly format covers exactly one week, whereas in the topic format each box can cover whatever you like. The social format doesn't use much content at all and is based around just one forum - this is displayed on the main page.

See the help buttons on the Course Settings page for more details.

The following screen shows the settings page: This has already been explained and shown in full size photocopy form.

**Edit course settings**

Full name:  ⓘ

Short name:  ⓘ

Summary:  ⓘ

Enrolment key:  ⓘ

Guest access:  ⓘ

Category:  ⓘ

Format:  ⓘ

News items to show:  ⓘ

Course start date:    ⓘ

Number of weeks/topics:  ⓘ

Show recent activity:  ⓘ

Your word for Teacher:  (eg Teacher, Tutor, Facilitator etc)

Your word for Teachers:  (eg Teachers, Tutors, Facilitators etc)

Your word for Student:  (eg Student, Participant etc)

Your word for Students:  (eg Students, Participants etc)

**Full name:**

The full name of the course is displayed at the top of the screen and in the course listings.

**Short name:**

Many institutions have a shorthand way of referring to a course, such as BP102 or COMMS. Even you don't already have such a name for your course, make one up here. It will be used in several places where the long name isn't appropriate (such as in the subject line of email).

**Summary:**

Writing text works pretty much the way you would expect, but you also have the ability to include "URL addresses" and some HTML tags in your text.

**URLs**

Any "word" starting with [www.](http://) or <http://> will automatically be turned into a clickable link.  
For example: [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) or <http://curtin.edu>

## HTML tags

You can use a limited subset of HTML tags to add emphasis to your texts.

HTML tags	Produces
<B> bold </B>	<b>bold text</b>
<I> italic </I>	<i>italic text</i>
<U> underline </U>	<u>underlined text</u>
<FONT SIZE=1> small </FONT>	small
<FONT SIZE=4> large </FONT>	large
<FONT COLOR=green> example </FONT>	example
<UL><LI>one <LI>two </UL>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ one</li><li>○ two</li></ul>

## Enrolment Key

A course enrolment key is what keeps unwanted people out of your course.

If you leave this blank, then anyone who has created a username on this site will be able to enrol in your course simply by going in to it.

If you put something here, then students who are trying to get in for the FIRST TIME ONLY will be asked to supply this word or phrase.

The idea is that you will supply the key to authorised people using another means like private email, snail mail, on the phone or even verbally in a face to face class.

If this password "gets out" and you have unwanted people enrolling, you can unenrol them (see their user profile page) and change this key. Any legitimate students who have already enrolled will not be affected, but the unwanted people won't be able to get back in.

## Guest Access

You have the choice of allowing "guests" into your course.

People can log in as guests using the "Login as a guest" button on the login screen.

Guests ALWAYS have "read-only" access - meaning they can't leave any posts or otherwise mess up the course for real students.

This can be handy when you want to let a colleague in to look around at your work, or to let students see a course before they have decided to enrol.

Note that you have a choice between two types of guest access: with the enrolment key or without. If you choose to allow guests who have the key, then the guest will need to provide the current enrolment key EVERY TIME they log in (unlike students who only need to do it once). This lets you restrict your guests. If you choose to allow guests without a key, then anyone can get straight into your course.

**Category:**

Your administrator may have set up several course categories, for example, "Biology", "Mathematics". Choose the one most applicable for your course. This choice will affect where your course is displayed on the course listing and may make it easier for students to find your course in the future, when there will be more ORION users..

**Format:***Weekly format*

The course is organised week by week, with a clear start date and a finish date. Each week consists of activities. Some of them, like journals, may have "open windows" of, say, two weeks after which they become unavailable.

*Topics format*

Very similar to the weekly format, except that each "week" is called a topic. A "topic" is not restricted to any time limit. You don't need to specify any dates.

*Social format*

This format is oriented around one main forum, the Social forum, which appears listed on the main page. It is useful for situations that are more freeform. They may not even be courses. For example, it could be used as a departmental notice board.

**News Items to show:**

A special forum called "News" appears in the "weekly" and "topics" course formats. It's a good place to post notices for all students to see. (By default, all students are subscribed to this forum, and will receive your notices by email.)

This setting determines how many recent items appear on your course home page, in a news box down the right-hand side.

If you set it to "0 news items" then the news box won't appear.

**Course Start Date:**

This is where you specify the starting time of the course (in your own timezone).

If you are using a 'weekly' course format, this will affect the display of the weeks. The first week will start on the date you set here. This setting will not affect courses using the 'social' or 'topics' formats.

However, one place this setting will be affect is the display of logs, which use this date as the earliest possible date you can display.

In general, if your course does have a real starting date then it makes sense to set this date to that, no matter what course formats you are using.

**Number of Weeks/Topics:**

This setting is only used by the 'weekly' and 'topics' course formats.

In the 'weekly' format, it specifies the number of weeks that the course will run for, starting from the course starting date.

In the 'topics' format, it specifies the number of topics in the course.

Both of these translate to the number of "boxes" down the middle of the course page.

### **Show Recent Activity:**

The system can display "recent activity" on the course home page.

This shows the everything that has happened in the course since the last time the viewer logged in to the course, including new posts, new users, submitted journals etc.

It is highly recommended you leave this feature enabled in your courses, as it helps give a sense of activity in the course. Knowing what everyone else is doing also helps to promote a collaborative atmosphere in the class.

You might want to disable this feature for extremely large or heavily used courses, as it may slow down the display of the course page.

### 3. Uploading files

You may have existing content that you want to add to your course, such as web pages, audio files, video files, word documents, or flash animations. Any type of file that exists can be uploaded into your course and stored on the server. While your files are on the server you can move, rename, edit or delete them.

All of this is achieved through the **Files** link in your Administration menu. The Files section looks like this:



This interface is only available to teachers - it is not accessible by students. Individual files are made available to students later on (as "Resources" - see the next section).

As you can see in the screenshot, files are listed alongside subdirectories. You can create any number of subdirectories to organise your files and move your files from one to the other.

Uploading files via the web is currently restricted to one file at a time. If you want to upload a lot of files at once (for example a whole web site), it can be a lot easier to use a **zip program** to compress them into a single file, upload the zip file and then unzip them again on the server (you will see an "unzip" link next to zip archives).

To preview any file you have uploaded just click on its name. Your web browser will take care of either displaying it or downloading it to your computer.

HTML and text files can be edited in-place online. Other files will need to be edited on your local computer and uploaded again. If you upload a file with the same name as an existing file it will automatically be overwritten.

A final note: if your content resides out on the web then you don't need to upload the files at all - you can link directly to them from inside the course (see the Resources module and the next section).

## 4. Setting up activities

Building a course involves adding course activity modules to the main page in the order that students will be using them. You can shuffle the order any time you like.

To turn on editing, click "Turn on editing" under Administration. This toggle switch shows or hides the extra controls that allow you to manipulate your main course page. Note in the first screenshot above (of the Weekly format course) that the editing controls are turned on.

To add a new activity, simply go to the week or topic or section of the screen where you want to add it, and select the type of activity from the popup menu. Here is a summary of all the standard activities:



### Resource

Resources are the content of your course. Each resource can be any file you have uploaded or can point to using a URL. You can also maintain simple text-based pages by typing them directly into a form.

At present, the ORION tool makes most use of this feature, although this may change in the future.



### Assignment

Assignments allow the teacher to specify a task that requires students to prepare digital content (any format) and submit it by uploading it to the server. Typical assignments include essays, projects, reports and so on. This module includes grading facilities.

Students will be able to upload one file to satisfy the requirements. The date they upload their file is recorded. Afterwards, you will have a single page on which you can view each file (and how late or early it is), and then record a grade and a comment. Half an hour after you grade any particular student, the system will automatically email that student a notification.



### Choice

A choice activity is very simple - you ask a question and specify a choice of responses. Students can make their choice, and you have a report screen where you can see the results. I use it to gather research consent from my students, but you could use it for quick polls or class votes.



### Forum

This activity can be the most important - it is here that most discussion takes place. Forums can be structured in different ways, and can include peer rating of each posting. The postings can be viewed in a variety of formats, and can include attachments. By subscribing to a forum, participants will receive copies of each new posting in their email. A teacher can impose subscription on everyone if they want to.



## Journal

This module is a very important reflective activity. The teacher asks the student to reflect on a particular topic, and the student can edit and refine their answer over time. This answer is private and can only be seen by the teacher, who can offer feedback and a grade on each journal entry. It's usually a good idea to have about one Journal activity per week.

Each journal activity is an entry in the whole course journal. For each one you can specify an open-ended question that guides what students write, as well as a window of time in which the journal is open (weekly course format only). Encourage students to write reflectively and critically in these journals, as they are only available to them and you. Afterwards, you will be able to grade and comment all the entries for that week or topic, and students will receive an automatic email informing them of your feedback.



## Resource

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## Quiz

This module allows you to design and set quiz tests, consisting of multiple choice, true-false, and short answer questions. These questions are kept in a categorised database, and can be re-used within courses and even between courses. Quizzes can allow multiple attempts. Each attempt is automatically marked, and the teacher can choose whether to give feedback or to show correct answers. This module includes grading facilities.



## Survey

The survey module provides a number of predefined survey instruments that are useful in evaluating and understanding your class. Currently they include the COLLES and the ATTLS instruments. They can be given to students early in the course as a diagnostic tool and at the end of the course as an evaluation tool (I use one every week in my courses).

After adding your activities you can move them up and down in your course layout by clicking on the little arrow icons (↑↓) next to each one. You can also delete them using the cross icon ✕, and re-edit them using the edit icon ✎.

## 5. Running the course

Here are just a few quick tips from: the programmers. I would be very grateful if you could all add some more if you have them.

Subscribe yourself to all the forums.

Encourage all the students fill out their user profile (including photos) and read them all - this will help provide some context to their later writings.

Keep notes to yourself in the private "**Teacher's Forum**" (under Administration). This is especially useful when team teaching.

Use the "**Logs**" link (under Administration) to get access to complete, raw logs. In there you'll see a link to a popup window that updates every sixty seconds and shows the last hour of activity. This is useful to keep open on your desktop all day so you can feel in touch with what's going on in the course.

Use the "**Activity Reports**" (next to each name in the list of all people, or from any user profile page). These provide a great way to see what any particular person has been up to in the course.

Respond quickly to students. Don't leave it for later - do it right away. Not only is it easy to become overwhelmed with the volume that can be generated, but it's a crucial part of building and maintaining a community feel in your course.

## **Teachers**

This page shows the list of people who are assigned to be "teachers" in this course (by the system administrator).

You can use this form to assign a role (title) to each person such as "Professor", "Tutor", "Assistant" and so on. These will appear on the site's course listing and also on the list of participants for your course. If you leave the role empty then the default word for teacher will be used (the one you set in the Course Settings page).

You can also order this list (to put the main teacher at the top, for example). Simply select numbers from the menus in the "Order" column. After pressing "Save changes" you will see the new order.