

# Fall 2008 woodle Usage Report

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# Introduction and Methods

## Introduction

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are rapidly becoming a near-ubiquitous feature in the technological landscape of higher academic institutions. By providing collaborative and pedagogical tools to instructors in a digital setting, instruction is more readily extended beyond the classroom by an LMS in that they provide access to materials and instruments anywhere that a student or teacher has access to a networked computer. In order to develop a better understanding of how The College of Wooster's LMS, woodle, is being used, an analysis of the amount and type of use of woodle by every course on campus was undertaken. Out of the three hundred and forty-two courses offered during the Fall 2008 semester, one hundred and fifty-eight courses maintained a course page in woodle, resulting in a forty-six percent usage rate on campus. Findings in regard to typical course utilization reveal that the majority of woodle pages are used as a repository for course files, articles, and reading assignments while other woodle modules such as forums, wikis, and quizzes are used sparingly.

## Methods

Data on woodle use was generated by accessing each course's page and evaluating the presence or absence of use. Courses that were determined to be eligible for being considered to have a woodle presence were required to be worth at least 1.0 credits and were not a Senior I.S. tutorial. Where woodle use was present for a course, an evaluation of the 'strength' of the use of each available woodle module<sup>1</sup> was conducted by rating use on a scale of 0-4, where a score of

Strength	Module Usage
0	No use of module.
1	Extremely limited use of module.
2	Limited to moderate usage of module.
3	Moderate to strong usage of module.
4	Very strong usage of module.

zero indicates no use whatsoever and a score of four indicates the highest amount of use possible. Instead of each strength score representing an actual numeric value, these valuations are instead relative to one another. This inter-subjectivity was necessary due to the differing appropriateness of the use of certain modules for certain courses. For example, an Art & Art History course might find a wiki module to be appropriate whereas a Philosophy class might not. Additionally, the numeric values assigned to the strength of use for each module are of an inherently subjective nature due to an evaluative process divorced from corresponding actual

numeric values. In this study, a total of one hundred and fifty-eight courses were determined to have a woodle presence and were subsequently analyzed for their usage of woodle modules.

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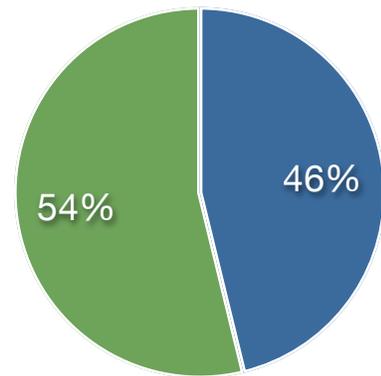
<sup>1</sup> The term 'woodle module' is here understood to refer to any single tool present in the woodle LMS, such as Forums, Assignments, Wikis, etc. For information on specific woodle modules, please consult the glossary.

# Results and Discussion

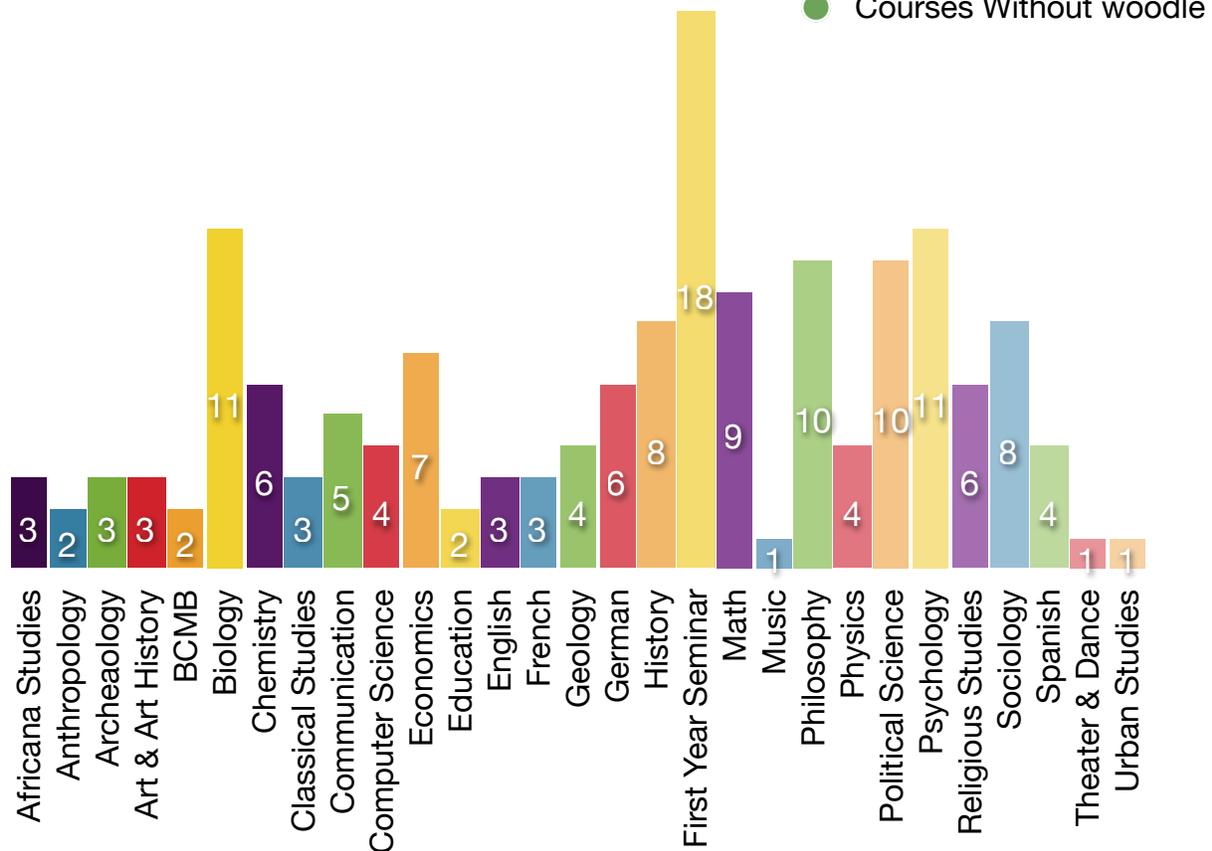
## General Usage Results

Of the 342 courses at The College of Wooster during the Fall 2008 semester determined to be eligible for consideration as having an active woodle presence, 158 courses were determined to actually have demonstrable use, or 46.1% of the courses available. This represents 29 departments and programs out of 36, or 81% of all departments and programs with at least one course with a corresponding woodle page. Most strongly represented are FYS, Biology, Psychology, Philosophy, and Political Science with 18, 11, 11, 10, and 10 woodle courses, respectively. Of the 29 departments and programs with demonstrable

Percentage Of Total woodle Use

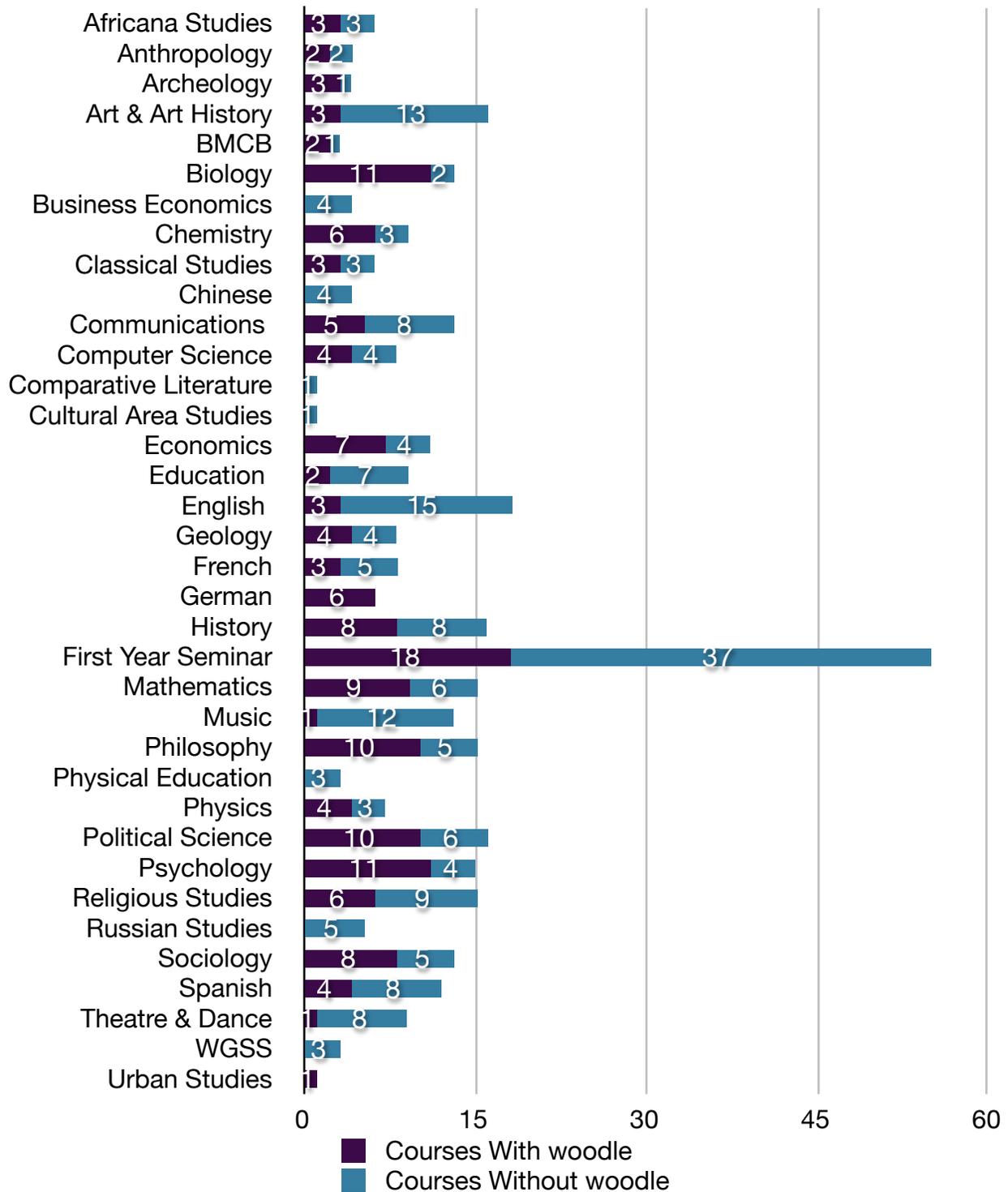


Number of woodle Courses by Department



woodle usage, 19 have achieved at least 50% curriculum-wide utilization rates, determined by the number of courses offered for the Fall 2008 semester with a woodle presence versus those without. Of these departments and programs, 13 achieve at least a 60% utilization rate, 4 achieve at least a 75% utilization rate, and two achieve a 100% utilization rate. Simple utilization rates such as these, however, do not adequately represent the relationship between the actual number of courses using woodle within a department or program and the number of courses being offered. For example,

Ratio of Courses With woodle to Courses Without woodle

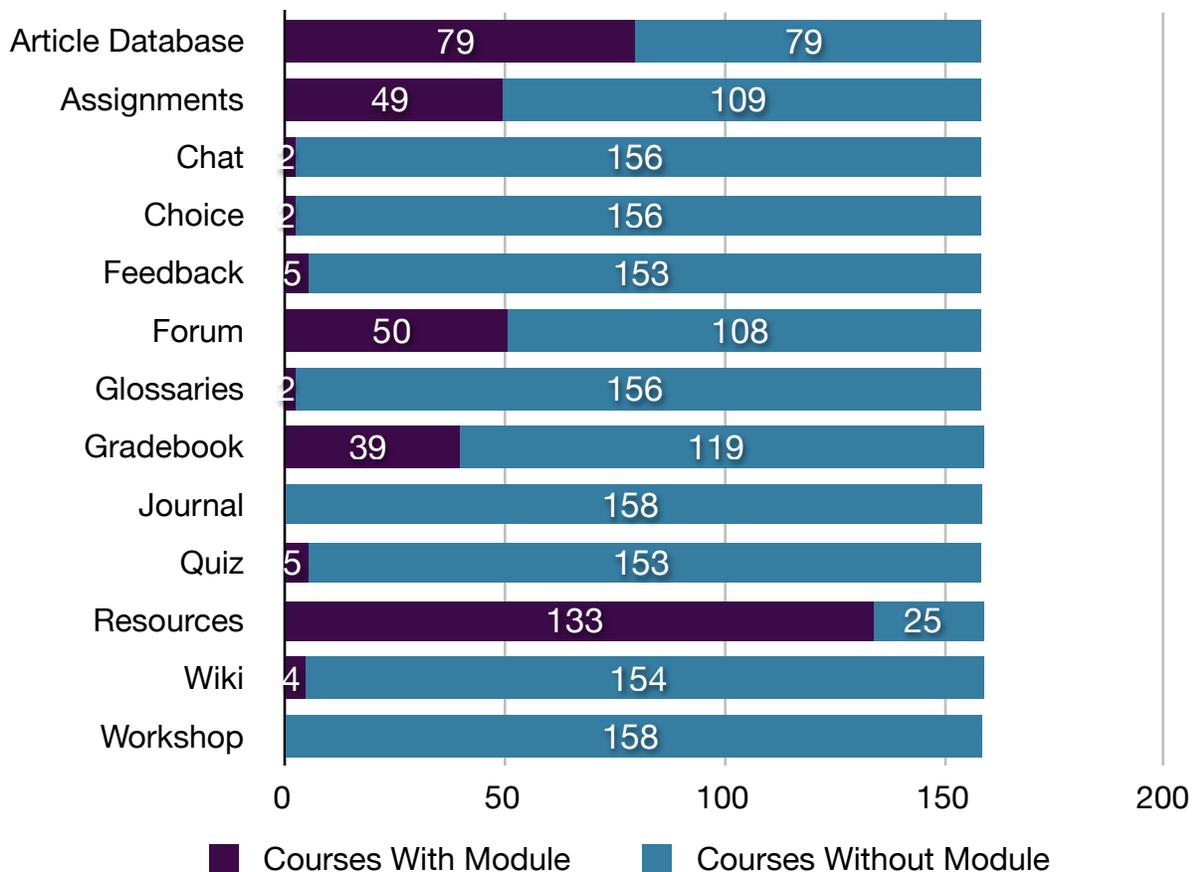


while the German department achieves a 100% woodle utilization rate by its courses, only six courses in all actually have a woodle presence whereas the Biology department, which enjoys an 85% utilization rate, has a total of 11 courses with a woodle presence and only two without. Overall, the Biology and Psychology departments demonstrate the highest ratio of courses using woodle to those that are not with 11:2 and 11:4, respectively. Russian Studies, Chinese, Business Economics, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, demonstrate the lowest ratio of courses using woodle to those without with 0:5, 0:4, 0:4, and 0:3, respectively. On average, 41.6% of courses in any given department or program utilize woodle to augment their courses. Unfortunately, woodle presence does not indicate the *use* for which woodle is *employed* within a given course. For this reason, an investigation of the *type* of woodle use was undertaken, as discussed in the methods section of this report.

## Module Usage Results

As discussed in the Methods Section, each woodle course determined to have demonstrable use was subsequently analyzed to ascertain the types of use present there. This involved evaluating the 'strength' of the use of any woodle modules and rating that use on a five-point scale from zero to five. In order to generate data regarding the strength of use of each module, however, an assessment of the *frequency* of module use was established. Of the modules available, Resources, Article Database, Forums, and Assignments were the most *frequently* used, with 133, 79, 50, and 49 courses implementing them, respectively. Chat, Choice, Glossaries, Journal, and Workshop were the least implemented, with less than five courses making use of each.

Ratio of Courses With a woodle Module to Those Without

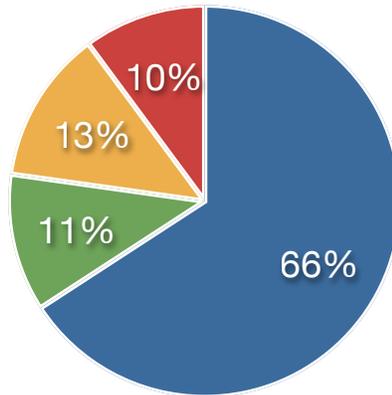


Such data suggests that woodle utilization is characteristically that of a space where files, documents, etc. may be uploaded and downloaded by students and faculty. The frequency with which the Assignment and Forum modules are implemented indicate that woodle also provides a space within which course-related activity might take place outside of the classroom by encouraging the discussion of learning materials and allowing course-related work to be assigned and completed online.

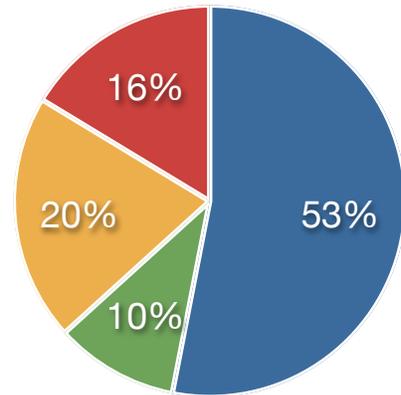
Frequency, however, does not indicate the strength of use, but instead merely that an individual module was used in some fashion at least once in a woodle course. In order to develop a more substantive understanding of woodle module utilization, frequency of use must be examined in conjunction with the strength of use of each module. Of the courses utilizing woodle modules as an Article Database, 52 demonstrated a very strong use, nine courses achieved a moderate strength of use, ten courses were assigned a value of limited use, and eight courses had an extremely limited strength of use, indicating that where Article Database use was present, it was also prevalent, on average. This correlation is also present in the use of the Assignment module, where 26 courses demonstrated a very strong use, five courses achieved a moderate strength of use, ten courses were assigned a value of limited use, and eight courses had an extremely limited strength of use. Even in courses typified by lower frequency utilization rates such as the Gradebook module, the majority of use still falls within the highest strength bracket.

The correlation between the most frequently used woodle modules also enjoying the strongest usage style is interrupted by the Forum module, however. Unlike in the three other most popular modules in which at least 50% of use is typified by

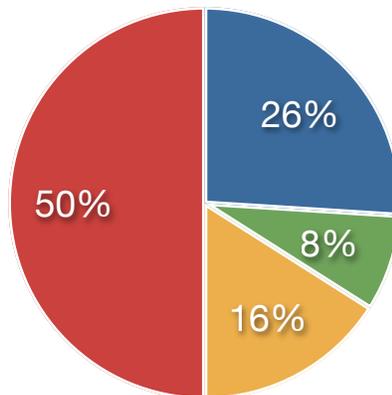
Strength of Article Database



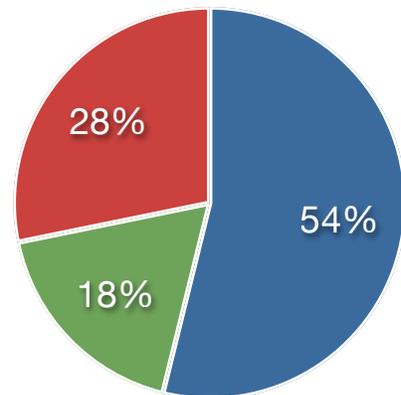
Strength of Assignment



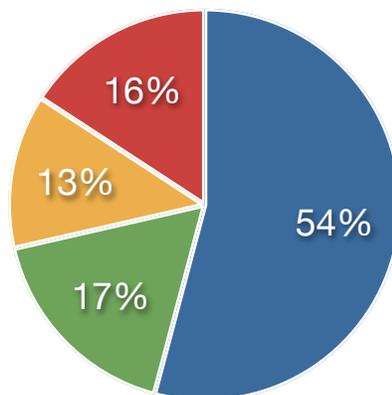
Strength of Forum Use



Strength of Gradebook Use



Strength of Resource Use



- 4 - Strong
- 3 - Moderate
- 2 - Limited
- 1 - Very Limited

very strong module usage, Forum use strength is concentrated at the weakest strength rating. Although it is impossible to develop an assessment with such limited data, conjecture leads one arrive at the supposition that while modules that require only minimal interaction receive both higher frequency and stronger usage rates, those modules that involve protracted engagement are less likely to be used and are used with less strength.

## Discussion

As the first semester for which data has been generated in the assessment of woodle usage on campus, it is difficult to analyze usage statistics in the hopes of recognizing trends or common characteristics of its use. Until further assessment is conducted at the end of the Spring 2009 semester, a full academic year's worth of material does not yet even exist. It would therefore be unreasonable to proffer any recommendations regarding the future role of woodle as an LMS for The College of Wooster, nor would it be prudent to consider this report as an exhaustive survey of the application's role on campus. Although this study considered the frequency and strength of use of woodle, other aspects of the LMS remain unstudied such as perceived ease of use for faculty and students, the cost and amount of resources required to maintain and support woodle, and whether or not the use of woodle for a course enhances learning in some definite fashion. Additional aspects that ought to be taken into consideration are how woodle compares to alternative, competing LMS solutions, the cost effectiveness of woodle, and whether woodle might be rendered superfluous if separate but robust systems such as wikis, forums, and drop boxes were implemented on campus. Once more data has been collected and assessed, a more substantive understanding of what the role of an LMS system on campus is and what it ought to be will be more easily developed.

To that end, Instructional Technology intends to duplicate this study at the close of the Spring 2009 semester in order to gather an entire academic year's worth of usage data. Additionally, this study will be repeated for the 2009-2010 academic year in order to generate two year's worth of data from which a more holistic understanding of woodle use on campus might be developed. In conjunction with these studies, The Office of Information Technology intends to conduct a study by the end of the Spring 2009 semester, portions of which will deal explicitly with the perceived ease of use of woodle by faculty and staff.

# Appendix

## Glossary

### **Article Database**

Article Database is the most nebulous term used by this report in the respect that it is not an actual module, but rather a type of use. For courses in which the resource module was utilized to upload articles and reading assignments, this useage-type was deemed to be deserving of its own category to facilitate a richer understanding of woodle utilization upon data analysis.

### **Assignment**

The Assignment module is used by instructors that affords a variety of capabilities, such as making reading assignments accessible, requiring students to upload a file towards the completion of an assignment, or simply to post information regarding the course work expected by the faculty member of the students.

### **Chat**

The Chat module allows students and faculty to communicate via text in real time in a fashion similar to a chat client or chat room.

### **Choice**

The Choice module allows faculty members to poll students on any number of variables.

### **Feedback**

The Feedback module allows faculty members to survey students in a course with customized questions.

### **Forums**

The Forums module allows faculty to create a space where all course members may post and reply to content in a collaborative setting.

### **Glossary**

The Glossary module allows students and faculty to create a searchable index of terms and entries related to course materials. They may be generated collaboratively or created solely by the teacher.

### **Gradebook**

The Gradebook module provides instructors with a space to manage students' grades and also allows students to view an up to date report on their class and assignment grades.

### **Quiz**

The Quiz activity module allows instructors to create and maintain quizzes from a set of self-generated questions, such as multiple choice, true-false, short answer, etc. These questions are then saved in a question bank and may be reused by the instructor at a later date.

### **Resource**

The Resource module is used by instructors for uploading various types of content, such as articles, audio and video files, links to web-pages, text pages, etc. It is through this module that instructors make course materials available to students.

### **Wiki**

The Wiki module creates a collaborative space within which the course instructor and students may create and modify content, files, etc.

## **Report Data**

For a full report of the information gathered for this study, please contact Instructional Technology.