

Open source software and the VLE

Randy Metcalfe

OSS Watch

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Key messages...

Open source
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- open source is more than just a copyright licensing paradigm
- universities and colleges across the UK use open source software regularly
- institutional engagement with open source means more than just *using* it

OSS Watch: the UK open source software advisory service

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- unbiased advice and guidance on free and open source software for UK higher and further education
- funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and based within the Research Technologies Service at the University of Oxford
- promotes awareness and understanding of the legal, social, technical and economic issues that arise when educational institutions engage with free and open source software

<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/>

Open source is...

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- a copyright licensing paradigm
- a marketing term for *free software*
- a software development methodology
- all about community
- a business model

Open source is also...a warm puppy

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Do universities and colleges in the UK use open source software?

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YES

How do they use it?

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- part of the IT strategy of the institution
- a cost-cutting measure for cash strapped departments
- individual preference

Policy versus Practice

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2006 - OSS Watch survey of IT Directors

- Procurement
- Deployment
- Support

Will your technical staff be able to contribute patches and small chunks of code to the larger open source project?

- Stay focused on the technical and end-user requirements
- Explore the development and user communities
- Consider the *Business Readiness Rating* (BRR) of the software
- Choose the best solution for your needs

The BRR is a proposed open standard to facilitate the assessment and adoption of open source software.

<http://www.openbrr.org/>

Open Source Maturity model

<http://www.navicasoft.com/pages/osmm.htm>

Top Tips for Selecting Open Source Software

<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/tips.xml>

Strathclyde study: investing in software and services

http://www.insight.strath.ac.uk/projects/sw_service

All deployments of software demand serious planning for their roll-out and take-up.

If you do not have a plan fully backed by senior management yet, **stop now** and get your home team behind you.

Most VLE deployment failures have little to do with whether the software is open source or proprietary.

Serious businesses (IBM, Sun Microsystems, Redhat, etc.) build their business models around open source software.

These businesses are **not** making money by selling you a licence to use their software.

They make money by selling you *support contracts*, bespoke implementations, special feature development, etc.

Open source VLEs often do not have huge marketing departments for their commercial service support businesses. But support, in a variety of forms including service contracts, is usually available.

Case Study: The Open University VLE procurement exercise

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- institutional requirements
- user requirements
- **evidence based decision-making**

Business Readiness Rating <http://www.openbrr.org/>

And the result?

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The screenshot shows the Moodle 1.6 website interface. The browser title is "Moodle - A Free, Open Source Course Management System for Online Learning - Mozilla Firefox". The address bar shows "http://moodle.org/". The main header features the Moodle logo and the text "1.6 ready for use!".

Main Menu:

- Free Support
- Documentation
- Donations
- Download Moodle
- Modules and plugins
- Themes
- Moodle Buzz
- Moodle Sites
- Moodle Statistics
- Moodle News

Latest News:

- 20 Jun, 03:39: Martin Douglamas: Moodle 1.6 goes gold! [more...](#)
- 15 Jun, 20:52: Martin Douglamas: Moodle.org is now running Moodle 1.6 on a new server [more...](#)
- 12 Jun, 11:25: Martin Douglamas: [more...](#)

Welcome to Moodle!

Moodle is a course management system (CMS) - a free, [Open Source](#) software package designed using sound [pedagogical principles](#), to help educators create effective online learning communities. You can download and use it on any computer you have handy (including webhosts), yet it can scale from a single-teacher site to a 50,000-student University. This site itself is created using Moodle, so check out the [Moodle Demonstration Courses](#) or read the latest [Moodle Buzz](#).

Moodle Community

Moodle has a large and diverse user community with [over](#) 

Search: Search this site

Login: Username: Password: [Create new account](#) [Lost password?](#)

Official Moodle Partner:  **moodle partner Italia:**

- installazione
- supporto
- hosting
- sviluppo
- consulenza
- realizzazione corsi

Course categories: [Community Discussion](#)

October 2003 no significant evidence of use in UK FE colleges

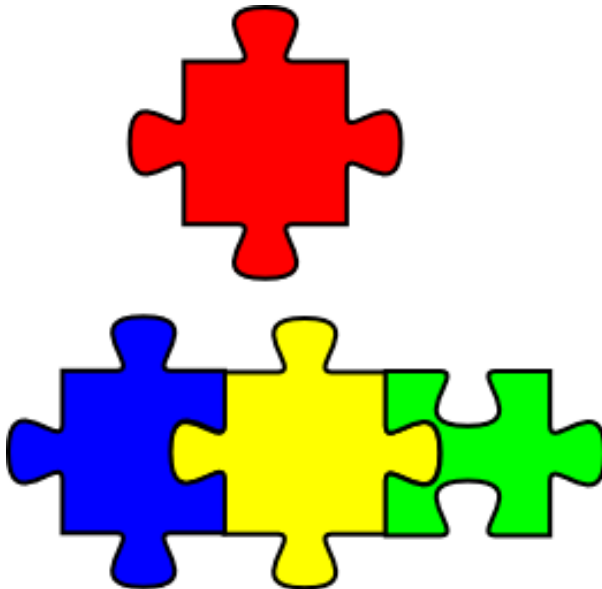
March 2006 56% of further education colleges report they are using Moodle

OSS Watch surveys of IT Directors 2003 and 2006

Institutional engagement: what does it mean?

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Engagement entails commitment

- The Open University has committed to a GBP 4 million project of direct development of **core** Moodle components.
- This is in addition to the money earmarked for internal development (e.g. OU styling), training, support, and roll-out to all staff.

Open Source Software: Use within UK Government

<http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/policydocs/>

JISC Policy on Open Source Software for JISC Projects and Services

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=about_policy

Issued in October 2004:

- UK Government will consider OSS solutions alongside proprietary ones in IT procurements. Contracts will be awarded on a value for money basis.
- UK Government will only use products for interoperability that support open standards and specifications in all future IT developments.
- UK Government will seek to avoid lock-in to proprietary IT products and services.

UK Government open source policy (2)

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- UK Government will consider obtaining full rights to bespoke software code or customisations of COTS(Commercial Off The Shelf) software it procures wherever this achieves best value for money.
- Publicly funded Research and Development projects which aim to produce software outputs shall specify a proposed software exploitation route at the start of the project. At the completion of the project, the software shall be exploited either commercially or within an academic community or as OSS.

Issued in September 2005 as an implementation of the UK government policy.

- Advice and guidance must be neutral and unbiased.
- Project funding process must not discriminate between open source and closed source software, unless the purpose of the projects or services specifically requires it.
- Value for money over the expected lifetime of the system must be compared.

JISC open source policy (2): software development

- Projects must maintain an IPR register.
- Ownership of code in joint projects must be established before work begins.
- Source code must be released under an OSI-approved open source licence, unless the bid explicitly argues why this should not be the case and proposes an alternative licence.

JISC open source policy (3): engaging the community

- Projects must state in their bid ... whom they see participating in the project.
- Projects should engage with end users and other parties to encourage and build self-sustaining communities.
- Projects should accept bug reports, patches, translations and feedback from contributors outside the project.

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And don't forget the warm puppy

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For more information on open source software development and deployment, visit <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/> or write to info@oss-watch.ac.uk

warm puppy photo Steve Starer, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/21044097@N00/129340743/>,
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