

THE APPLICATION FOR CREATING ASSIGNMENT AND ESSAY TEST FORMS FOR GENERAL ENGLISH COURSES AT SAI GON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: Since the COVID-19 pandemic happened globally, Viet Nam has been severely affected in all aspects, especially in the economy and education. Therefore, digital transformation and the application of modern science and technology to all activities in Vietnam are inevitable. Due to the limitation of articles, our topic will only discuss "The application to creating assignments and essay test forms for General English courses at Sai Gon University" to help lecturers and students to be more adaptable to new challenging situations in Vietnam during the period of modern technological transformation. In this article, we use the method of listing, describing and synthesizing techniques and tricks in teaching in the modern era of science and technology, specifically, the application to creating assignments and essay test forms for General English courses via on the Moodle system at Sai Gon University. The content of the article contributes to creating not only the assignments and other tests for students, but a healthy learning environment, meeting the output standards prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Training in the integration period of Vietnam. And then, we draw conclusions as a reference and support for lecturers and researchers in Vietnam education during the science and technology transformation period.

Keywords: assignments, essay test forms, the Moodle system, general English course, Sai Gon University

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced adverse impacts on the economic well-being and Vietnamese inhabitants' life in which education field is also severely affected. Faced with that situation, Decision No.749/QĐ-TTg dated June 3rd, 2020, the Prime Minister approved the National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, orientation to 2030 with the goal of digital transformation in the future. Education plays an indispensable role in many countries all around the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. The content of the Decision emphasizes: 100% of education institutions deploy distant learning and teaching platform. This is a pilot program that allows students to study online at least 20% of the program content. Henceforth, it is necessary to exploit digital technology fully to assign students to homework, further practices, and online tests as well as grading their performance in the English learning process.

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In particular, Sai Gon University is one of the higher education institutions that uses 90% information technology in teaching and 100% digital transformation in management and operation activities to be able to adapt to the new changing situation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Content

Learning Management System Moodle

Moodle - a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), is an open-source learning system allowing the creation of online courses. Moodle founded by Martin Dougianmas in 1999 is an acronym for “Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment”. Moodle is mainly designed for providing educators, administrators and learners with a robust online learning platform to organize online teaching and learning activities, conceptualize various distance courses and personalized virtual learning environments. Online learning with an easy-to-use intuitive interface and features can be more effectively applied when lecturers combine online classes with traditional ones, smart, flexible and convenient management.

Moodle courses can be self-designed and controlled by the user’s multiple roles. For example, for each activity on the Moodle system, teachers and students can interact and respond to each other through notifications. Likewise, users can edit their personal profiles, create groups, announce course contents, enroll students in courses, post lectures, use chat tools with students via online chatting directory, classroom code scan, transmission of students’ codes, image management and audio functions. Teachers can assign homework, further exercises, mid-term tests, test scores and results which are obviously displayed on the chart system. Students can easily exchange and discuss or edit discussion content, announcement and through learning resources such as the Chat module, interact with each other like on social networking platforms through the Forum module, and use the module Lesson, Quiz, Resource,...

A brief introduction to General English courses at Sai Gon University

Sai Gon University

Sai Gon University is a public university and scientific research institution. Sai Gon university trains high-quality human resources in multi-disciplinary, multi-field from college, university to graduate levels to meet the requirements of economic and social development of Ho Chi Minh City in particular and Vietnam in general.

Sai Gon University has always actively implemented innovation, applied science and technology to educational activities, and contributed to the development of higher education in Vietnam. Currently, Sai Gon University is organizing training for 11 graduate training majors, 03 international training majors, 39 regular university majors, 03 regular college majors, 07-second degree majors (training majors in the form of work-by-study (full), 19 forms of training by working and studying (joint university), 21 types of short-term training. In addition, Sai Gon University is also allowed to train, grant certificates of Information Technology Application and Foreign Languages, grant certificates of pedagogy level I, level II and other professions.

With a large number of students, Sai Gon University's management staff, experts and lecturers are constantly striving to 2035, Sai Gon University develops into training research-oriented human resources, meeting international standards. And the lecturers of the General English subject are constantly improving their quality, gradually improving and gaining experience in teaching and learning the modules of this subject through the application of science and technology into their teaching.

General English courses

General English I, II and III courses are the non-specialized English course, which is compulsory subjects at Sai Gon University. Students can be equipped with English functional knowledge of lexis and grammatical structures through learning four English skills after learning these courses. Simultaneously, students can also gain cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries. It is essential for lecturers to facilitate students' autonomous learning ability through appropriate teaching methods and practical lessons.

Lecturers teaching General English courses should regularly participate in trainer courses. Currently, the General English staff at Sai Gon University uses Cambridge English Empower, Student's Book & Workbook were compiled by Cambridge University Press in conjunction with experts Cambridge Assessment English, which provides learners with vocabulary, phrases and structures with four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) with 6 levels (A1 - C2) which based on real situations. Learning outcomes are assessed according to the European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Learners can self-assess their work, as well as teachers can monitor and manage the teaching and learning process face-to-face or online versions for classroom learning

We use modern and consistent methods of teaching and learning curriculum: follow towards natural language acquisition, associated with practical activities.

The requirements for students to achieve in these courses include:

- The ability to listen to and understand radio programs, interviews and talks in English.
- The competence in knowing how to deal with listening question types such as word completion, information completion, true or false information, MCQ's, short answers, and filling in the blanks with missing information.

The ability to describe and talk about important events in life, work, how to use technology devices, dream in life, travel experiences... and so on.

- Knowing how to ask and answer questions to get information and directions
- The improvement of reading skills such as MCQ's, matching paragraphs and titles, sentence completion
- The competency in written English such as email writing, CV, project and biography.

In addition, students can fluently answer interview questions related to themselves; exchange information with classmates; express opinions in group discussions, and use appropriate language in real-life contexts.

Last but not least, students can practice and perform exercises as well as English proficiency tests (Linguaskill, IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, APTIS, B1 (CEFR), or B1 (Vstep)).

Application to creating assignments and essay test forms for General English courses on the Moodle System

Due to the limitation of this article, the application of Moodle system software in online General English courses at Sai Gon University will be depicted in detail. In terms of writing assignments, the lecturer will score directly student's submitted work and then enter the score into the automatic system. In order to create writing assignments, the lecturer needs to click on the gear to the right of the Announcement of each course class, then select Turn editing off and perform the following steps:

Step 1: Select the add an activity or resource command.

Step 2: Click Assignment → add.

Step 3: Fill in the information in the General Information section:

- Fill in the Assignment or test name box. For example, the midterm test - writing.
- Fill in the Description box: the lecturer can enter the requirements of the assignment in this section, such as time to do the test, the form of the assignment, some specific rules, etc.
- Show description on the course page: If you want the description to be displayed in the course, then click this option.
- Add files (Additional files): If the lecturer wants students to download the exercise file.

Step 4: Customize the submission deadline

The screenshot shows the 'Availability' section of a Moodle assignment configuration. It includes four rows of date and time pickers, each with an 'Enable' checkbox and a help icon. The 'Always show description' checkbox is also checked.

Setting	Day	Month	Year	Hour	Minute	Enable
Allow submissions from	28	August	2022	00	00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Due date	4	September	2022	00	00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cut-off date	28	August	2022	22	31	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remind me to grade by	11	September	2022	00	00	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Always show description

E1 (example 1). The submission deadline

- Allow submission from: The time students can start submitting papers.
- Deadline: Deadline for submissions.

- Cut-off date: Extension time for students to submit assignments or tests: lecturers can allow students to submit papers later than the time set in the deadline.
- Remind me to grade by: The system will remind the lecturer about the time to enter grades and return the results to the students.

Note: These settings only take effect when the lecturer clicks the Open button.

Step 5: Customize the submission form.

Submission types

Submission types Online text File submissions

Word limit Enable

Maximum number of uploaded files

Maximum submission size

Accepted file types No selection

E2. The submission form

- Submission types: The lecturer can ask students to submit assignments or tests through online text or file submission, or both.
- Online text: Students will enter text content into the text input box.
- File submissions: Students will submit one or more files of their work.
- Word limit: If you choose the online text submission method, the lecturer enters the word limit of the student's work.
- Maximum number of uploaded files: Specify the maximum of files that students can submit.
- Maximum submission size: Specify the maximum size of the work file to be uploaded.
- Accepted file types: In some cases, lecturers may require students to only submit their work files in one/several categories, such as: only text files or image files, etc.

Step 6: Customize the form of feedback (Feedback types)

Feedback types

Feedback types Feedback comments Annotate PDF Offline grading worksheet Feedback files

Comment inline

E3. The form of feedback

- Feedback comments: lecturers can leave feedback for each assignment submitted.

- Offline grading worksheet: lecturers can download or upload the transcript file when conducting the assessment.
- Feedback files: lecturers can upload feedback files to evaluate results for students.

Step 7: Customize settings when students submit papers

▼ **Submission settings**

Require students to click the submit button	?	Yes ▾
Require that students accept the submission statement	?	No ▾
Attempts reopened	?	Never ▾
Maximum attempts	?	Unlimited ▾

E4. The submission settings

- Require students to click the submit button: Require students to click the submit button before submitting the work to the lecturer.
- Attempts reopened: Allows students to re-submit their work or not, the default is Never (students can not re-submit their work).

Step 8: Customize the setting to allow students to submit assignments or tests in groups.

▼ **Group submission settings**

Students submit in groups	?	No ▾
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E5. The group submission settings

- Students submit in groups: Students can submit their work in groups or not, the default is set to No. If the lecturer wants students to submit their work in groups, then in the section Enrolling students in the class, the lecturer must divide students into groups.

Step 9: The grade settings

The screenshot shows the Moodle grade settings interface. On the left, a sidebar lists settings: Grade, Grading method, Grade category, Grade to pass, Blind marking, Use marking workflow, and Use marking allocation. The 'Grade' section is expanded, showing a form with the following fields: 'Type' (dropdown menu set to 'Point'), 'Scale' (dropdown menu set to 'Default competence scale'), 'Maximum grade' (text input field containing '10'), 'Grading method' (dropdown menu set to 'Simple direct grading'), 'Grade category' (dropdown menu set to 'Uncategorised'), 'Grade to pass' (empty text input field), 'Blind marking' (dropdown menu set to 'No'), 'Use marking workflow' (dropdown menu set to 'No'), and 'Use marking allocation' (dropdown menu set to 'No').

E6. The grade settings

Grade type: the default is Score (meaning the lecturer gives a score based on the score).

The maximum number of points: the lecturer prescribes the highest score that the student can achieve, for example: with a 100-point scale, the lecturer prescribes the maximum score is 100 or with a 10-point scale, the maximum score is 10.

Grading method: the default is Simple Direct Scoring (meaning that the lecturer scores himself, then enters his score text into the Moodle system).

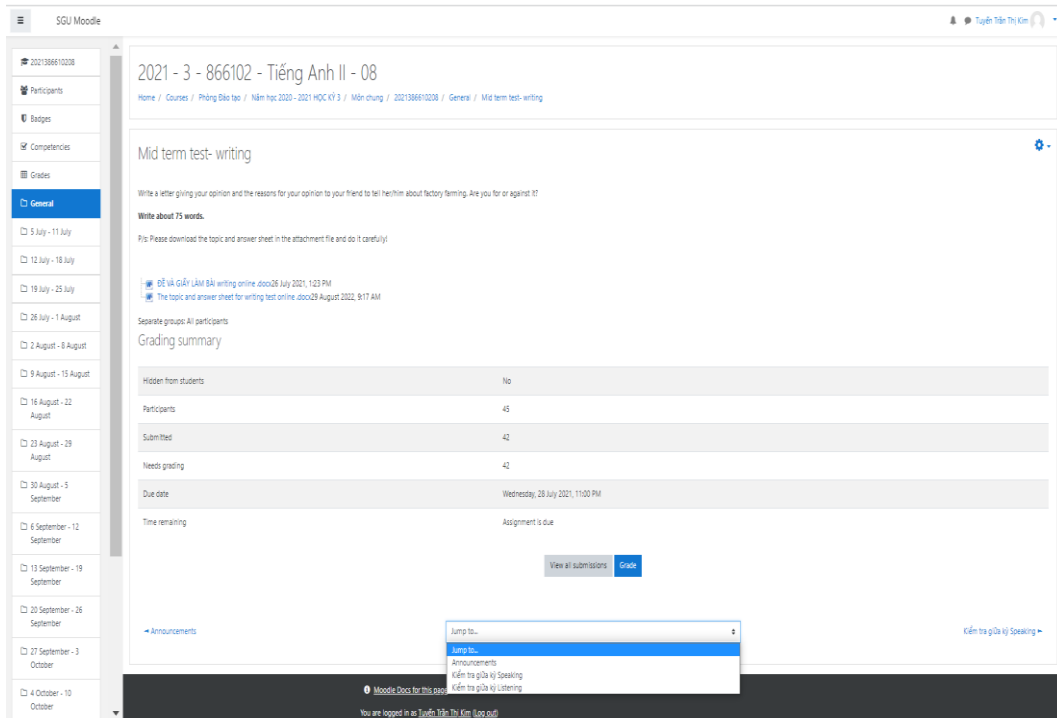
Score to pass: the lecturer prescribes the lowest score that students need to achieve.

Step 10: Click Save and return to the course to save the settings.

- Grade Type: the default is Score (meaning the lecturer gives a score).
- The maximum number of points: the lecturer prescribes the highest score that the student can achieve, for example, with a 10-point scale, the maximum score is 10.
- Grading method: the default is Simple Direct Scoring (meaning that the lecturer scores himself, then enters the score into the system).
- Score to pass: the lecturer prescribes the lowest score that students need to achieve.

Interactive communication

- Feedback from students

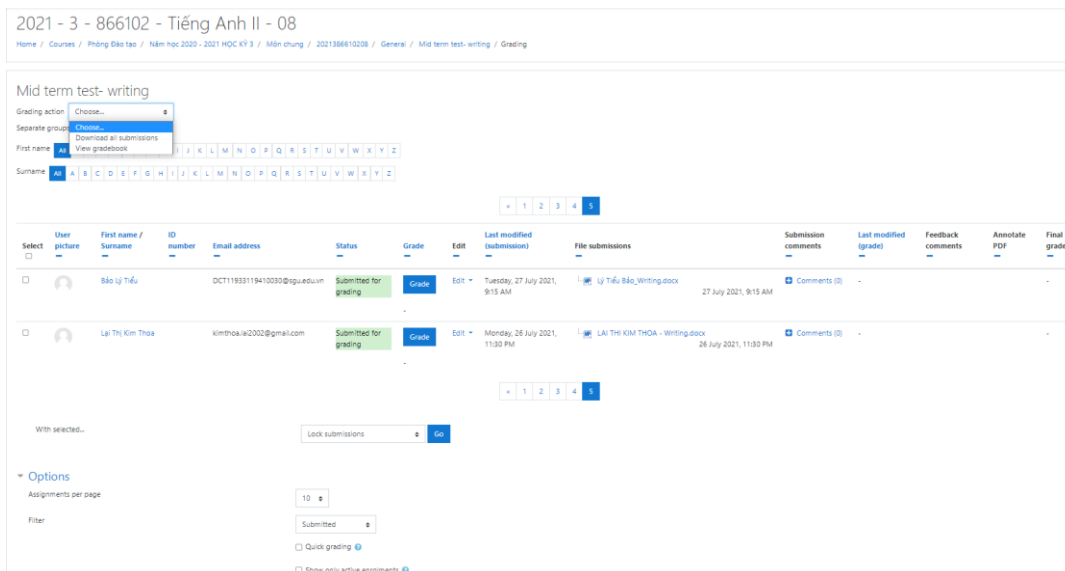


E7. The view of all submissions

There were 45 students (participants) in this course, but only 42 students submitted assignments on the Due date. Three students were absent and did not submit their answer sheets.

The teacher clicks on View all submissions to check students' feedback or grade online.

Finally, the teacher clicks on choose button to download all submissions for grade with comment feedback.



E8. Grade action

Discussion

This E-learning is a virtual learning method with the connection with computers, laptops, or any smart devices to the Internet. And this is also the most optimal method in teaching and learning in the replacement of the face-to-face traditional teaching mode during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And how can the Moodle system help to enhance General English courses effectively?

Lecturers and students participate in training on how to use the Moodle system to understand clearly and practice it easily.

Lecturers and all students themselves should improve their using information technology skills, exploiting skills and effectively using applications for teaching and learning and also information security skills.

Lecturers and students need to interact more with each other by via webcams and images to understand each other's activities in the teaching and learning process.

Lecturers should create a friendly learning environment of E-learning through games, and funny video clips to attract students.

Lecturers should not put pressure on students' time so as to create students' feelings of comfort and excitement in learning.

Conclusion

The application of science and technology to teaching and learning activities is very demanding. The use of Moodle system related to creating essay exercises and test forms or online grading of lecturers on Moodle system or other software applications is one of the urgent issues in the new situation of Viet Nam nowadays.

From the above issues, we hope that our article can contribute to assessing students' learning ability online faster, more accurately, and clearly in the essay assignments and other test forms for non-specialist English learners. In addition, the article also contributes to creating a flexible and active learning environment for learners who can meet the output standards prescribed by the Viet Nam Ministry of Education and Training on the development and integration period of Viet Nam.

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