



**unitar**

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

# UNITAR Virtual Learning Environment User Guide



**Knowledge to lead**

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**Who is this User Guide designed for?**

This guide has been designed for new users of the UNITAR's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) [www.learnatunitar.org](http://www.learnatunitar.org) . Users are advised to read it thoroughly at the start of a course and to, thereafter, refer to it when they come across a tool they have not used before or for the purpose of refreshing their memory.

**Course Information and Support:**

For questions regarding your course materials or any technical issues encountered while accessing UNITAR's VLE, please contact UNITAR staff at [envgov@unitar.org](mailto:envgov@unitar.org).

## **UNITAR's Virtual Learning Environment**

### **I. Accessing the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**

To access UNITAR's VLE:

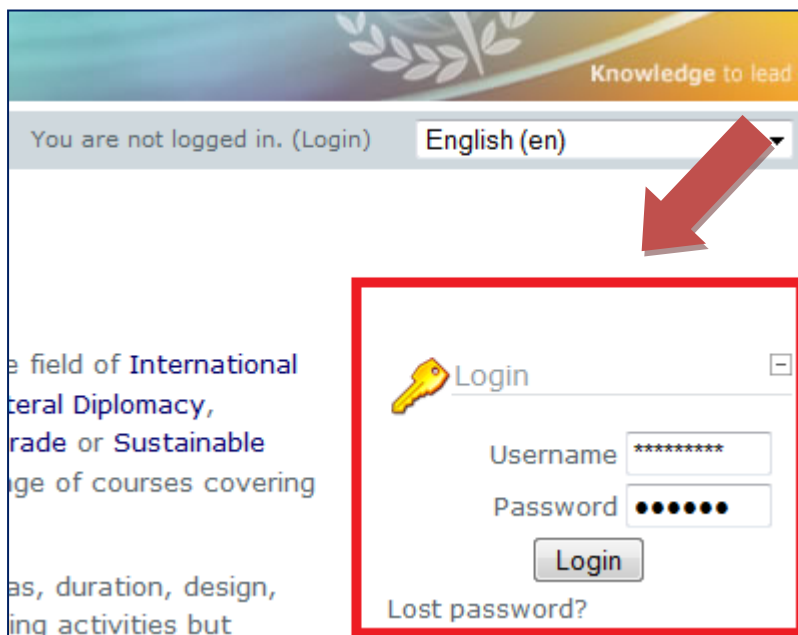
- Open your browser (note that the preferred browser is Mozilla Firefox).
- Type the address: [www.learnatunitar.org](http://www.learnatunitar.org)



#### **i. Logging In**

To log into the VLE:

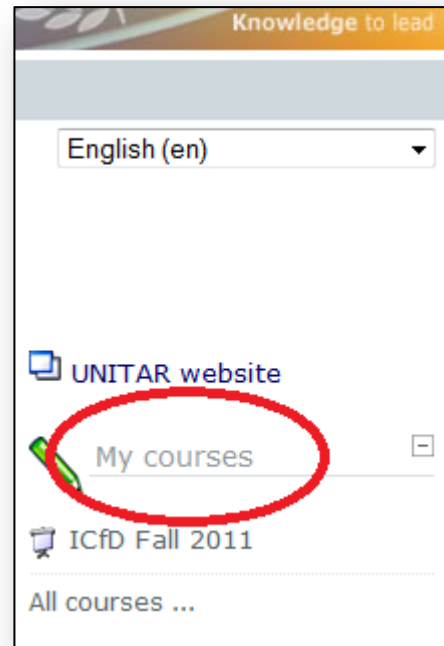
- For you to access your account on the VLE, a username and password will be emailed to you by your course administrators before the starting date of your course.
- Enter your login details in the Login block on the right side of the page.



## ii. Accessing your Course

To access your course:

- Once you have logged into the VLE, check the "My courses" block on the right hand side of the screen.
- You will be able to view the course(s) you are enrolled in.
- To access a course, click on its title.



## iii. Navigation Bar

The Navigation Bar indicates the path you followed to reach the page you are currently viewing. This bar is called *Breadcrumbs* and allows you to navigate through the course pages. Clicking on the <<Course Name>> will always bring you back to the course interface.



## II. Course Interface

Once you access your course by following the instructions in the previous section, you will be able to view the course contents and participate in the course activities.

Depending on the default layout of your course, the page will have either a two-column or three-column display (*see below*):

- The central column grants you access to all the course materials and activities.
- The side column(s) provide quick access to course activities like forums and quizzes, and to additional information like a list of participants, users' profiles and grades.



## i. Columns

- ✚ From the central column in the course page, learners can access the main course materials.

A course is typically structured into *Modules* and, depending on the course requirements, a Module may contain some of the following elements<sup>1</sup>:

- **Study materials** provided in different formats such as: flash files, web pages, PDFs
- **Glossaries** and **Additional readings**
- **Interactive Activities** such as: Discussion Forums and Peer Reviews
- **Assessment Activities** such as: Quizzes and Case Studies
- **Evaluations**

- ✚ From the side column(s) in the course page, learners have quick access to course activities and materials, as well as additional resources like a list of participants and a calendar.

Below is a list of the most common elements available in the side column(s)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that this list is an illustrative example only. The types and number of activities vary from course to course.

<sup>2</sup> Whether you see some or all of these elements will depend on the particular course you are enrolled in.

<b>People</b>	Here you find the list of the participants in the course. The names of the participants are clickable links. By following these links, you can view their profiles and contact details if available.
<b>Online Users</b>	This block provides a list of participants who were online in the last 5 minutes.
<b>Activities</b>	This menu provides a shortcut to all the activities contained in a course (lessons, forum, quizzes, assignments etc.)
<b>Administration</b>	This block provides access to your grades and to your own profile.
<b>Welcome Messages</b>	Some courses present an introductory message posted by the course administrators.
<b>Latest News</b>	This block presents the most recent news that was posted in the Announcements Forum.
<b>Calendar</b>	The calendar shows the most important dates related to the course, e.g. starting and closing dates of modules and dates when you will receive feedback on your submissions.
<b>Recent Activities</b>	This block provides a list of all the activities (forum posts, assignments submissions etc.) that took place in the platform since your last login.
<b>Disclaimer</b>	UNITAR's disclaimer in relation to materials available in the course and to the discussions and activities that take place therein.

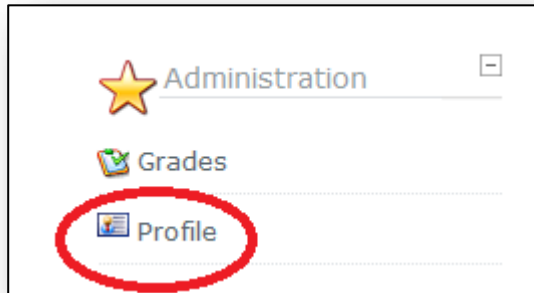
## ii. Updating your Profile

Each participant enrolled in a course has a personal profile which allows them to:

- Share personal information such as their geographic location.
- Modify user settings such as whether their email address should be visible to everyone on the VLE or only to their course members.

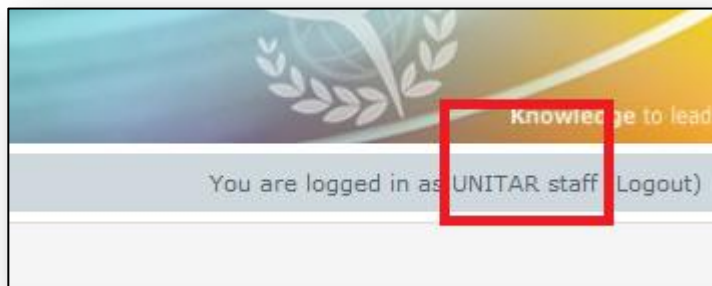
To access your profile, you have two options:

1. From the Administration block on the front page of the course, click on *Profile*



**OR**

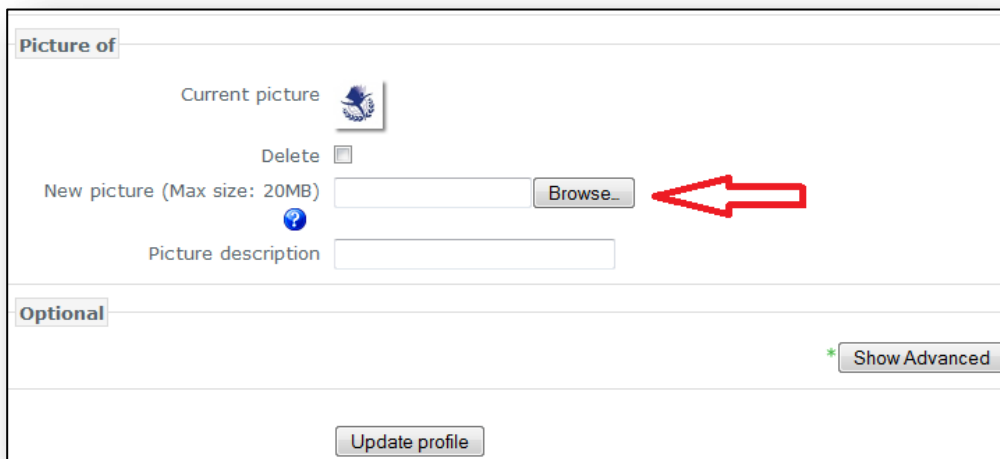
Click on *your name* displayed on the top right of the screen




2. In both cases, click on *Edit profile*



3. Once you click on *Edit Profile*, you can update your personal information such as:
  - i. Change your personal details such as name, surname, city and country.
  - ii. Complete the description field by writing a few lines about yourself.
  - iii. Add your contact details such as email address and Skype ID.
  - iv. Choose who will be allowed to view your email address. By default, your email is only visible to your fellow course members.
    - ✚ You can modify this setting from the **Email display** tab, by choosing between:
      - *Allow everyone to see my email address* (everyone being all the users of UNITAR's VLE, or
      - *Hide my email address from everyone*
  - v. Upload your picture:
    - Click on *Browse*




**Picture of**

Current picture 

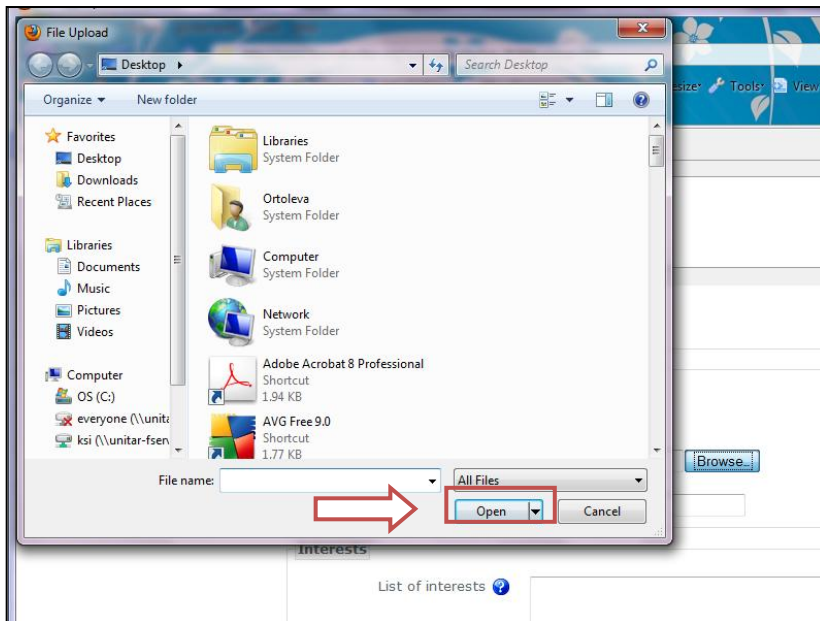
Delete

New picture (Max size: 20MB)

 Picture description

**Optional**

- Select the picture from your hard disk and click on *Open*



- Finally, click on *Update Profile* at the end of the page

### iii. Modifying User Settings

- If you click on *Edit Profile* and then on **Show Advanced**, you have several additional options.

Some of the options you might wish to modify are:

- Email Digest
- Forum Tracking

Profile Edit profile Forum posts Blog Activity reports

**General**


\* Show Advanced

First name\* UNITAR

Surname\* staff


1. Email digest: This option allows you to receive an email for each message posted in the **News/Announcements Forum**- and in any other forum you have chosen to **subscribe** to- or to receive a daily digest.
  - ✚ By default, this is set to *No digest (single email per forum post)*: this setting implies that you will receive one email alert for each new forum posting.
  - ✚ You may consider changing it to:
    - *Complete* – this lets you receive a daily email with the complete posts
    - *Subjects* – this lets you receive a daily email with only the subjects of each post
2. Forum tracking: This option allows you to easily view any unread posts in a forum.
  - ✚ By selecting the option *Yes, highlight new posts for me*, you will be able to view an additional column in the forum entry page which highlights the number of unread posts for each discussion topic.

Don't track unread posts



Do you have any questions regarding module 4?  
Is there something you would like to share with other course participants and facilitators?  
Speak up! Ask & Talk - right here, right now!


[Add a new discussion topic](#)

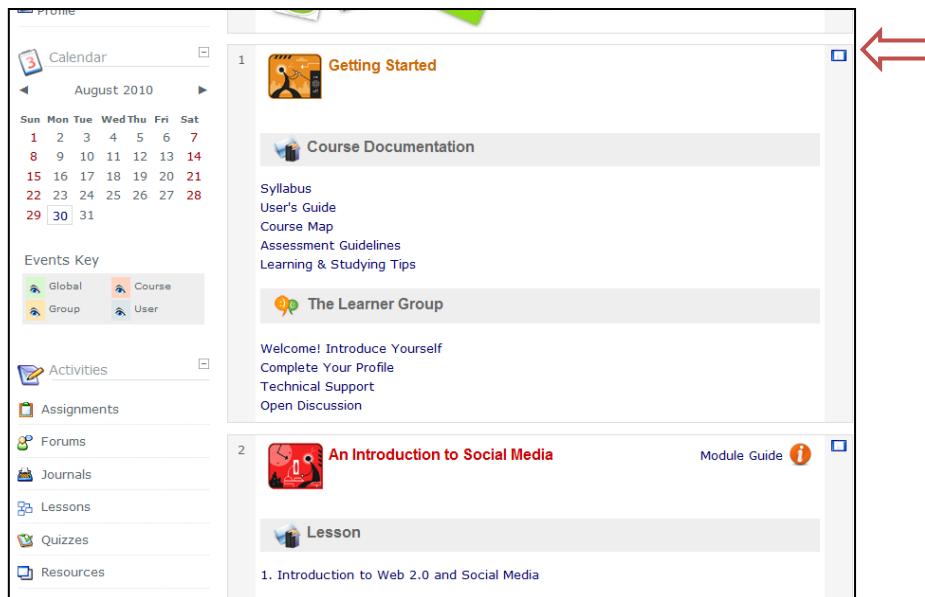
DISCUSSION	STARTED BY	REPLIES	UNREAD ✓	LAST POST
new discussion topic	 Giulia Ortoleva	2	3 ✓	Giulia Ortoleva Wed, 1 Sep 2010, 05:19 PM

#### iv. Changing the Display of the Course Interface


In the course front page, you can choose to either view all the modules of the course or only focus on the module that you are currently working on, which implies temporarily hiding the others.

1. Go to the module you are studying ;

2. Click on the  icon in the top-right corner of the module frame;



3. Only the module selected by you will display now;

4. To go back to the full view of the modules, click on  .

### III. Discussion Forums

#### i. How do Discussion Forums Work?

A forum is a space that allows participants and facilitators to discuss course-related topics, exchange questions and answers and focus on specific aspects of the course material.

There are two types of forums:

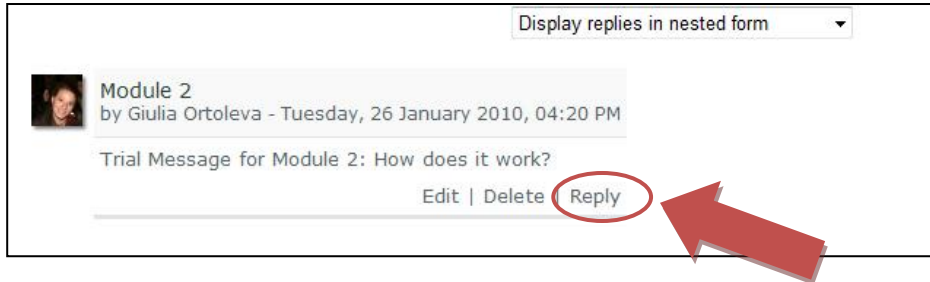
1. **Single Discussion:** This forum includes only a single (continuing) discussion which is displayed on one page. This means that users are restricted to replying to one of the previous posts. For doing so:

- i. Locate the precise message you want to reply to

**Note:** Make sure you click the **Reply** button that appears underneath the post you want to comment on. For example, if you are referring to the first post in the forum,

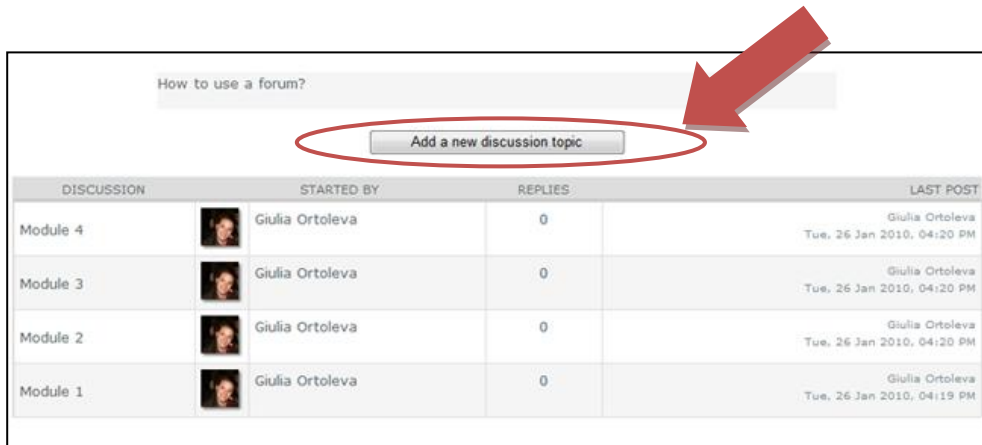
you should click on the button **Reply** that appears below that post, regardless of any other responses that might have been made to the same post. This helps in creating a hierarchy among the forum posts and organizing the discussion clearly.

- ii. Click on the *Reply* link located at the bottom of the message



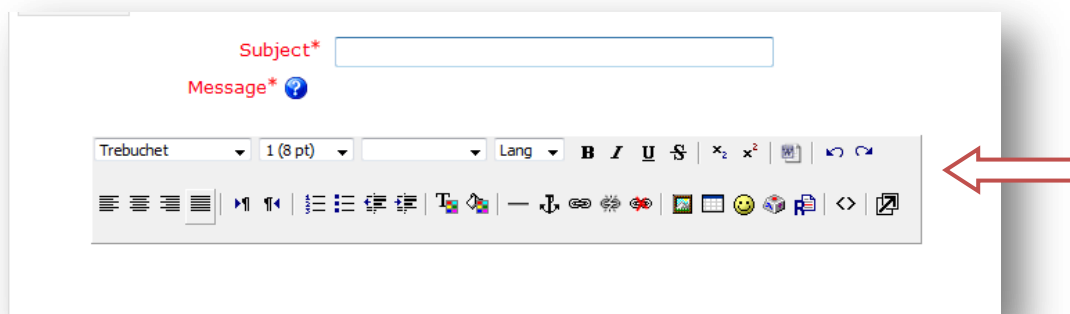
**2. Open Forum:** This forum allows anyone to start a new discussion and all existing discussion topics are displayed in a table format. If you want to add a new discussion topic, you will need to:

- i. Click on the *Add a new discussion topic* button located on the top of the page



ii. In

the window that appears:



- ✚ Provide a specific and clear *Subject* for your discussion topic so that everyone can easily understand what issue is being discussed.
- ✚ In the *Message* section, use the in-built Text Editor to enter your text and format it using the editing tools available on the top.





If you prefer to write your message using Microsoft Word, for instance, and then paste it into the in-built Text Editor, follow these instructions:

- First, write your text using the software package you prefer;
  - Then, copy and paste it into Notepad (*please ensure you complete this step*);
  - Finally, copy and paste the text into the in-built Text Editor in the forum.
- ✚ Click on the *Post to forum* button. The message will become available to participants through the forum's main page. Note that you have 5 minutes to edit your post in case of any changes.

iii. If you wish to *Reply* to an existing discussion in the Open Forum:

- ✚ Click on the title of the discussion

How to use a forum?

DISCUSSION	STARTED BY	REPLIES	LAST POST
Module 4	 Giulia Ortoleva	0	Giulia Ortoleva Tue, 26 Jan 2010, 04:20 PM
Module 3	 Giulia Ortoleva	0	Giulia Ortoleva Tue, 26 Jan 2010, 04:20 PM
Module 2	 Giulia Ortoleva	0	Giulia Ortoleva Tue, 26 Jan 2010, 04:20 PM
Module 1	 Giulia Ortoleva	0	Giulia Ortoleva Tue, 26 Jan 2010, 04:19 PM

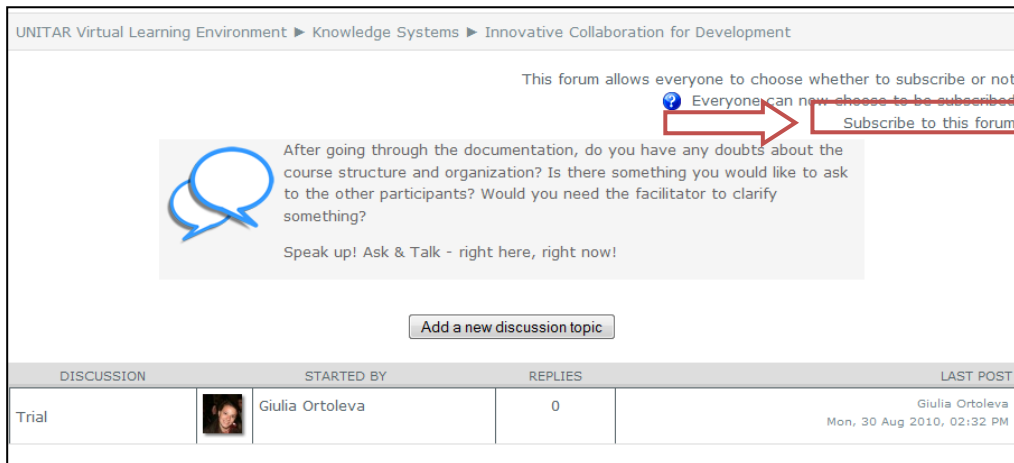
- ✚ Follow the same instructions provided for posting replies in the Single Discussion forum (in Section 1.i) on the previous page.

## ii. **Subscribing to Discussion Forums**

If you wish to receive email notifications for all new postings made in the discussion forums, you can do so by selecting the *Subscribe to forum* option. To do so:

1. From the course front page, access the forum you want to subscribe to;

2. Click on the **Subscribe to this forum** option in the top-right corner of the screen.



3. You will now start receiving email messages every time a post is added to a forum (or a daily digest, according to the setting selected by you in your profile).

**Note:** Subscribing does not in any way affect accessing, or participating in, a forum. It is only related to receiving email alerts for new forum posts.

### iii. What is the Announcement Forum?

The announcement forum is a specific forum where important course announcements **are posted by course administrators and facilitators only**. In this forum, participants are not allowed to reply to messages or add new discussion topics.

Whenever a new item is posted in this particular forum, you will receive an automatic email notification by default. This means that you do not need to subscribe separately to this forum.

### iv. Conditions of use for Discussion Forums

Users of the VLE are advised to keep the following in mind:

- (a) While accessing mailing lists, discussion boards, or other messages or communication facilities (collectively, "Forums"), participants agree to use the Forums only to send and receive messages and materials that are appropriate and related to that Forum. By way of example, and not as a limitation, participants agree that when using the Forums, they shall not do any of the following:

- i. Defame, discriminate, abuse, harass, stalk, threaten or otherwise violate the legal rights (such as rights of privacy and publicity) of others;
- ii. Publish, post, distribute or disseminate any defamatory, infringing, obscene, indecent or unlawful material or information;
- iii. Upload or attach files that contain software or other material protected by intellectual property laws (or by rights of privacy and publicity) unless the User owns or controls the rights thereto or has received all consents there for as may be required by law;
- iv. Upload or attach files that contain viruses, corrupted files or any other similar software or programs that may damage the operation of another's computer;
- v. Delete any author attributions, legal notices or proprietary designations or labels in any file that is uploaded;
- vi. Falsify the origin or source of software or other material contained in a file that is uploaded;
- vii. Advertise or offer to sell any goods or services, or conduct or forward surveys, contests or chain letters, or download any file posted by another user of a Forum that the User knows, or reasonably should know, cannot be legally distributed in such manner.

(b) Participants acknowledge that all Forums and discussion groups are public and not private communications. Further, Users acknowledge that chats, postings, conferences, e-mails and other communications by other Users are not endorsed by UNITAR or the United Nations, and that such communications shall not be considered to have been reviewed, screened or approved by UNITAR or the United Nations.

## **IV. Assessments and Evaluations**

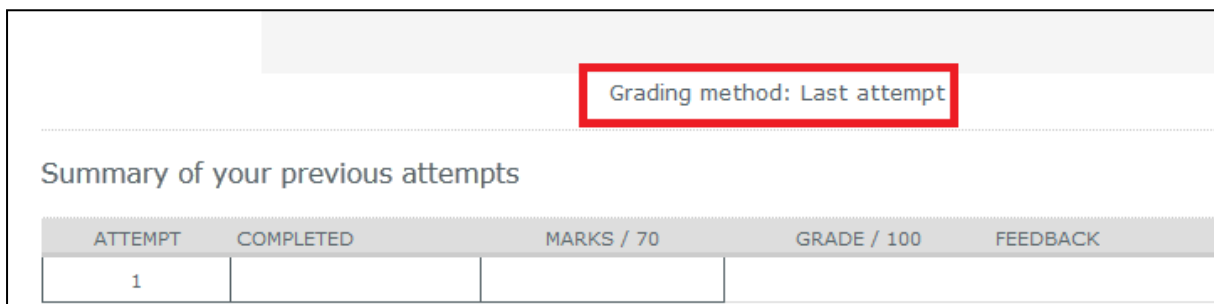
### **i. Quiz**

One form of assessment used in your course may be a Quiz. Should this be the case, you will find specific instructions in the course Syllabus related to the grading of the quiz and the number of attempts allowed. You are advised to read these instructions carefully. Given below is some basic information related to a quiz.

- **Attempting a Quiz**

1. Click on the link to the quiz in the course main page. Take note of the **grading method** applied to the quiz by your course administrators.

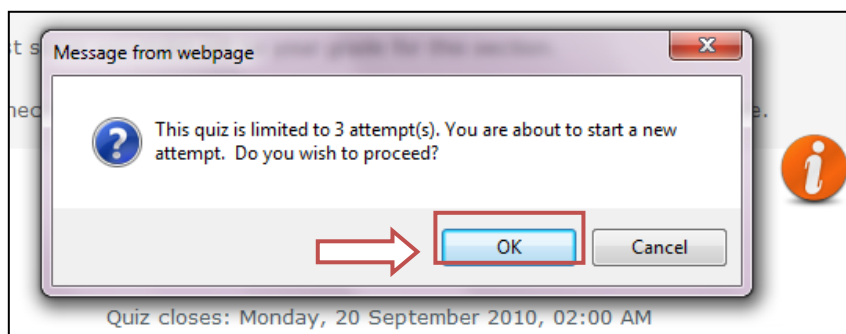
The type of grading method used for a quiz is highlighted in the page that opens when you click on the quiz link from the course front page. The grade assigned to you can either be the mark for your <<*first attempt*<sup>3</sup>, *last attempt*<sup>4</sup>, *average grade*<sup>5</sup> or *highest*<sup>6</sup> *grade*>>; therefore, please attempt the quiz after reviewing this information carefully.



The screenshot shows a quiz interface. At the top, a box highlights the text "Grading method: Last attempt". Below this is a section titled "Summary of your previous attempts" which contains a table with the following columns: ATTEMPT, COMPLETED, MARKS / 70, GRADE / 100, and FEEDBACK. The first row of the table shows the attempt number "1".

ATTEMPT	COMPLETED	MARKS / 70	GRADE / 100	FEEDBACK
1				

2. Furthermore, in case your course administrators have set a limit on the number of attempts allowed in a quiz, a pop-up window will be displayed to inform you about the number of attempts allowed. Click *OK* to proceed.



3. Complete the quiz by answering the questions.

<sup>3</sup> Grade received on the first attempt only

<sup>4</sup> Grade received on the latest attempt only

<sup>5</sup> Average calculated from all attempts

<sup>6</sup> Highest mark of all attempts

4. If you want to save the answers you have provided and return to the quiz at a later time, click on *Save without submitting*.
5. Once you are satisfied with your answers, click on *Submit all and finish*.

- **Checking your Grade**

1. After making your quiz submission, you are sent back to the entry page of the quiz.
2. At the bottom of the page there is a section called *Summary of your previous attempts* containing a table with the list of attempts (if more than one attempt is allowed) and the respective grades assigned.

Note that when you are able to **view your grade** in this table depends on the particular quiz setting chosen by your course administrators; therefore, your result may be visible: *<<immediately after your quiz attempt, before the closing date of the quiz, or after the closing date of the quiz>>*.

You can check the answers to the questions after the closing date for this module.

Attempts allowed: 3

Grading method: Highest grade

Quiz opens: Tuesday, 11 May 2010, 02:00 AM

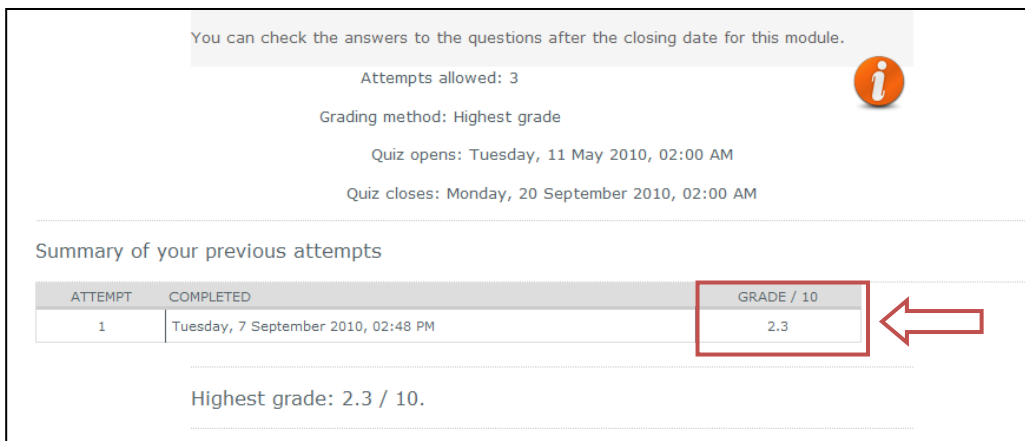
Quiz closes: Monday, 20 September 2010, 02:00 AM

---

Summary of your previous attempts

ATTEMPT	COMPLETED	GRADE / 10
1	Tuesday, 7 September 2010, 02:48 PM	2.3

Highest grade: 2.3 / 10.

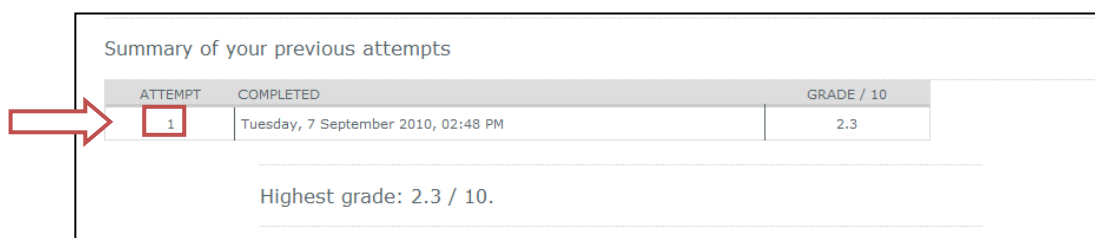


3. You are also able to view the **correct responses** to any quiz questions you got wrong. When you can see the correct responses depends again on the quiz settings chosen by your course administrators, ranging from: *<<immediately after your quiz attempt, before the closing date of the quiz, or after the closing date of the quiz>>*.

Summary of your previous attempts

ATTEMPT	COMPLETED	GRADE / 10
1	Tuesday, 7 September 2010, 02:48 PM	2.3

Highest grade: 2.3 / 10.

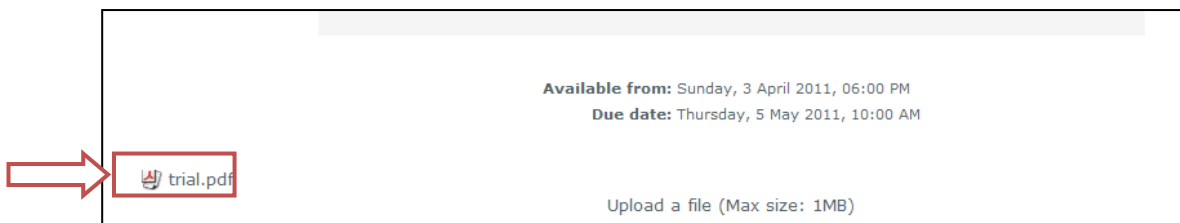


To view the correct answers, once they are available, in the *Summary of your previous attempts* table you need to: click on the attempt number in the first column of the table. A new page will open indicating the correct answer(s) to any question(s) that you answered incorrectly.

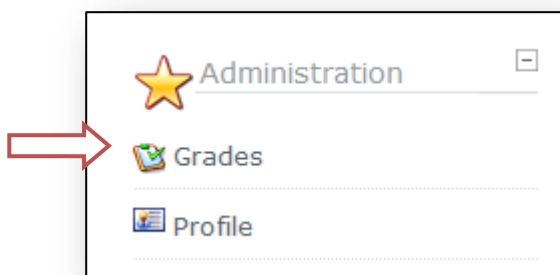
## ii. Assignments

As part of your course, you may be required to upload Assignments (such as essays and reports). To do so:

1. Access the Assignment link from the course front page;
2. At the bottom of the page in the *Upload a file* section, click on *Browse*;
3. Select the file you wish to upload and click on *Open*;
4. Click on *Upload this file*;
5. Once the file is uploaded, you will see it displaying at the bottom of the page as below:



- Once your assignment has been graded by the Facilitator (which will be after the closing date for submissions), you will be able to see your grade and the feedback on your assignment by clicking on the **Grades** link in the Administration block on the course front page.



### iii. Module/Course Evaluations

Depending on your course, there may be an Evaluation to be completed at the end of each Module or only at the end of the Course. The Evaluation is in the form of a survey allowing you to share your impressions of the modules/course with UNITAR. Receiving user feedback greatly assists UNITAR in making improvements in its courses. To complete the Evaluation(s), click on the link(s) in the course interface.

## V. Technical Specifications

Please pay attention to the minimum hardware and software requirements to participate in a course on UNITAR's VLE:

- Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or superior; MacOS 9 or MacOS X.
  - Hardware: 64 MB of RAM, 1 GB of free disk space.
  - Software:
    - Adobe Acrobat Reader (download for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>).
    - Adobe Flash Player (download for free at <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer>)  
If you face problems viewing the videos consult this link:  
<http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/answer.py?hl=en-uk&answer=56115> )
  - Microsoft Office (Windows or Apple version) or Open Office (download for free at <http://www.openoffice.org> )
  - Browser: Internet Explorer 8 (download for free at <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/worldwide-sites.aspx> ); works better with Firefox 3.6 or higher (download for free at <http://www.mozilla-europe.org/en/firefox>).
- Note:** JavaScript & Cookies must be enabled and pop-ups must be allowed.
- Modem: 56 K.



**unitar**

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