



Knowledge Exchange Initiative Laboratory

OPENSOURCE ELEARNING PLATFORMS EVALUATION CRITERIA

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1. Overview

This document defines the criteria that KEILab will use to evaluate and compare opensource e-learning platforms. Questions and categories take into account the creation of KEIXpert, an expert system to facilitate platform selection that the laboratory is realizing.

These criteria are supported by additional studies and research in the field of pedagogical and evaluation models in e-learning. Methodologies and criteria used by initiatives similar to KEILab have been taken into account.

2. Questionnaire structure

The evaluation questionnaire is divided into 10 main categories:

- 1. Content Management**
- 2. Standards compliance**
- 3. Asynchronous communication tools**
- 4. Synchronous communication tools**
- 5. Customization - Flexibility**
- 6. Usability Accessibility Support**
- 7. Language management tools**
- 8. User management tools**
- 9. Assessment Tools**
- 10. Monitoring tools**

Technical specifications such as required server platform and hardware/software specific requirements are stored separately in a technical sheet. The structure of this technical sheet can be found at the end of this document.

Every possible answer presents points that the platform will score. Different points try to stress the different “weight” of different questions and answers.

1 Content management

1. Is it possible to import complete courses into the platform?

Yes, but just from another instance of the platform

Yes, other formats are supported too

No

2. Is it possible to manage multiple courses?

Yes

No

3. Does the system allow to organize contents in multiple learning units?

Yes

No

4. Does the system allow to create new content within?

Yes, with a WYSISWYG interface

Yes but you have to use html or similar

No

5. Can the contents be tagged with metadata?

Yes

No

6. Is it allowed to export the contents?

Yes, in a standard-compliant format

Yes, in a platform-specific format

No

7. Is it allowed to categorize the contents?

Yes, using keywords

Yes, using an internal category system

No

8. Are audio-video formats supported?

Yes, both audio and video

Yes, but only audio

No

Does the system allow to define in which period the contents are available for viewing?

Yes

No

9. Is it possible to define “learning paths” for the learners to follow?

Yes

No

10. Are there glossary – writing tools?

Yes, at course level

Yes, at platform level

No

11. Which roles are allowed to create courses?

Administrators

Teachers

No

2 Standards compliance

Content Importing and deploying

12. The system allows to import:

SCORM-compatible objects

IMS-compatible objects

Learning Objects

None of the above

13. Is it possible to import QTI questions and tests?

Yes

No

Content Exporting

14. The system allows to export

SCORM-compatible objects

IMS-compatible objects

Learning Objects

None of the above

15. Is it possible to export QTI questions and tests?

Yes

No

3 Asynchronous communication tools

Forum

16. Does the system include a Forum/Discussion board tool?

Yes, an advanced one

Yes a basic one

No

17. Who is allowed to manage the forum tools?

Administrators

Teachers

18. Is it possible to assign multiple discussion boards to a single course?

Yes

No

19. Is it allowed to assign moderator roles in the forum?

Yes

No

20. Is it possible to reply to a single message in the forum?

Yes

No

21. Is it possible to subscribe to a topic and be notified by email when new posts are made?

Yes

No

22. Does the system include a feature to QUOTE other participants' post or part of them?

Yes

No

23. Is it possible to lock a topic or a forum?

Yes

No

24. Is it possible to create multiple levels of forums and topics?

Yes

No

25. Does the forum display info about the user on each post? (number of messages, role, etc?)

Yes

No

26. Is it possible to choose between visualization methods in viewing topics? (plain, threaded)?

Yes

No

27. Is it possible to format the input text? (color, fonts...)

Yes

No

28. Can the user attach files to a single post?

Yes

No

29. Is it allowed to associate pictures to users (avatars)?

Yes

No

Message Board / Calendar

30. Is a Message Board tool included?

Yes, an advanced one

Yes a basic one

No

31. Who is allowed to manage the message board tool?

Administrators

Teachers

32.Can files be attached to entries in the message board?

Yes

No

33.Is a Calendar tool included?

Yes

No

34.Does the calendar tool support different views based on day-week-month?

Yes

No

35.Can message board posts be linked with calendar events?

Yes

No

36.Can learning content be associated with calendar events?

Yes

No

37.Can services / communication tools be linked with calendar events?

Yes

No

More Asynchronous communication tools

38.Is an internal E-mail tool available?

Yes, email messages can be sent inside the system

No, but email addresses are stored and shown as link associated with the users

No

39.Is an internal message exchange service available?

Yes, the system keeps track of received messages

Yes, the system keeps track of both sent and received messages

No

40.Is it possible to create and manage personal notes – blogs?

Yes, using a blogging engine and rss export functions

Yes, but with platform-specific tools and no Rss Export

No

41. Is it possible to create and manage wikis inside the system?

Yes

No

42. Is it possible to manage a "mailing list" inside the system?

Yes

No

4 Synchronous communication tools

43. Is it possible to see a list of online users?

Yes

No

44. Is a chat system available?

Yes, an advanced one

Yes, a basic one

No

45. Who is allowed to manage the chat tool?

Administrators

Teachers

46. Is it possible to save chat transcripts?

Yes

No

47. Is an audio-video conferencing system available?

Yes, both audio and video

Yes, but just audio

No

48. Is a Whiteboard system available?

Yes

No

49. Who is allowed to manage the whiteboard tool?

Administrators

Teachers

50. Is a "shoutbox" service available?

Yes

No

51. Is it possible to use instant messaging accounts?

Yes, messages can be sent from within the platform

Yes, but users can only display their accounts

No

5 Customization / Flexibility

Graphical – Interface personalization

52. Is it possible to modify and personalize the interface inside the platform? (expand – contract menus...)

Yes, many items can be customized

Yes, but just few items can be customized

No you have to work at Skin/CSS level

53. Does the system use Cascading Style Sheets?

Yes

No

54. Does the system support a skin changing system?

Yes, skins can be chosen by the user

Yes, skins are chosen by the admin

No

55. Is it possible to assign different skins to particular courses?

Yes

No

56. Is it possible to import pre-made skins?

Yes

No

57.Are pre-made skins available?

- Yes
- No

58.Is it possible to customize the login page (without touching the code?)

- Yes
- No

Functionality – and code customization

59.Does the system use a core – modules architecture ?

- Yes
- No

60.How clear is the source code?

- The code appears to be written clearly and it is well commented
- The code appears to be written clearly but comments are not included
- No

61.Is it possible to find plugins to add features to the system?

- Yes, the project's homepage keeps track of all the plugins
- Yes, but they are scattered across the web
- No

6 Language Management Tools

62.How many languages is the system's interface translated in?

- More than 15
- 10 – 15
- 5 – 10
- 2-5
- 1

63.Is it possible to modify a language translation inside the platform?

- Yes
- No

64.How can you select the interface language in the system?

At a course level

The browser's language settings are automatically recognized

The user can choose the preferred language in the preferences

A link provides translation in every page

65.Does the system allow to write content in multiple languages? (eg. A link to different language versions of the same page)?

Yes

No

7 Usability – accessibility – support

66.The system's front end complies with:

W3c specifications

W3c specifications (partly)

Section 508 specifications

Section 508 specifications (partly)

CSS specifications

CSS specifications (partly)

XHTML 1.0

XHTML 1.0 (partly)

67.Is an internal validation systems for created contents included?

Yes

No

68.How easy is the system to navigate?

Very easy

Quite easy

Not easy at all

69.Is there an internal help / support system?

Yes, a contextual help service is provided

Yes, a not-contextual help section is available

No

70.Are there external help resources available (forums, mailing lists)?

Yes, extensive and complete ones

Yes, overall good ones

Yes, basic ones

Not at all

71.Is there support documentation for users?

Yes, in multiple languages

Yes, but it is only available in the project's base language

No

72.How complete is the user support documentation?

Very complete

Quite complete

Not really complete

Absent

73.Is there support documentation for administrators?

Yes, in multiple languages

Yes, but it is only available in the project's base language

No

74.How complete is the administrator support documentation?

Very complete

Quite complete

Not really complete

Absent

75.Is there support documentation for teachers?

Yes, in multiple languages

Yes, but it is only available in the project's base language

No

76.How complete is the teacher support documentation?

Very complete

Quite complete

Not really complete

Absent

8 User Management Tools

77.Who is allowed to register new users?

Students (self-registration)

Tutors

Teachers

Administrators

78.Does the system allow to approve / deny new registrations? (in case of self-register)

Yes

No

79.Does the system support validation e-mail messages for new registrations?

Yes

No

80.Does the system support mass registration of users?

Yes, using a text file or similar (Xml, Csv)

Yes, using LDAP or similar

No

81.Is it possible to create and manage groups of users?

Yes

No

82.Which course - registration methods are supported?

Self -registrations

Admins assign students to a course

Teachers assign students to a course

Teachers approve students' selft registrations to a course

83.How are user permissions managed?

Roles (student, teacher, admin...) are preset and cannot be changed.

Preset roles can be modified

The system does not include a permission system

84.How detailed is the permission system, regarding the system tools? (system granularity)

Very granular: detailed permissions can be set for every tool

Not very granular: permissions are set according to preset roles

The system does not include a permission system

85.How can the users access courses?

Free access

Access is limited to registered users

Access is granted to invited users only, invites done by the teacher

Access is granted to invited users only, invites done by the administrators

86.Can the users maintain a personal profile page?

Yes

No

9 Assessment tools

87.Is it possible to create and run tests within the platform?

Yes

No

88.Are test results stored and associated with the users?

Yes

No

89.Which kind of questions are supported?

Multiple answer

Open answers

Fill the blanks

Element association

Element ordering

Other

Other

Other

90.Is it possible to run self assessment tests?

Yes

No

91.Can tests be built using a question database?

Yes, questions can be chosen randomly

Yes, questions can be chosen manually

No

92.Is it possible to associate hints and comments in event of a wrong answer?

Yes

No

93. Is it possible to include tests within the course material?

Yes

No, tests are in a separate section

94. Is a “drop box” tool available for users? (to send papers, assignments to the teacher?)

Yes

No

10 Monitoring tools

95. Does the platform keep track of the users entering and exiting the system?

?

Yes

No

96. Does the platform give information about the time spent in the system for users in each session?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

97. Does the system give information about on-line activities?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

98. Does the system allow to specify the timeframe of the monitoring data and analysis?

Yes

No

99. Does the system give information about the “passive” use of asynchronous communication tools?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

100. Does the system give information about the “active” use of asynchronous communication tools?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

101. Does the system allow to keep track of the quantity of material that the user uploads?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

102. Does the system allow to keep track of the quantity of material that the user uploads?

Yes

No

103. Does the system keep track of user test results?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

104. Does the system provide graphical data reports?

Yes

No

105. Does the system provide structured reports for teachers?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

106. Does the system provide structured reports for learners?

Yes (evaluate from 1 to 4)

No

107. Does the system allow to export data?

Yes

No

3. Technical sheet

Every platform will be correlated with an exhaustive technical sheet using this structure:

Platform Name:

Version:;

Supported operating systems:

These are the supported operating systems, server side. Minimum version required are reported.

Supported server software:

Here we specify which kind of server software the platform is certified to run under. Examples: Apache, Zope, IIS, Tomcat ...

Database requirements:

Type of database and minimum version requirements are reported.

Programming language used:

Example (php, asp, python)
Minimum version requirements are reported

Other requirements:

Plugins, add-ons and other special requirements are reported here.