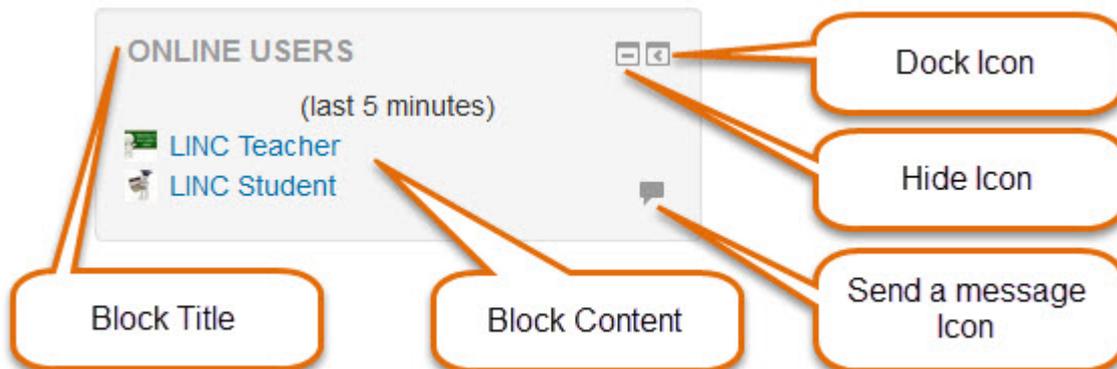# Overview of Blocks
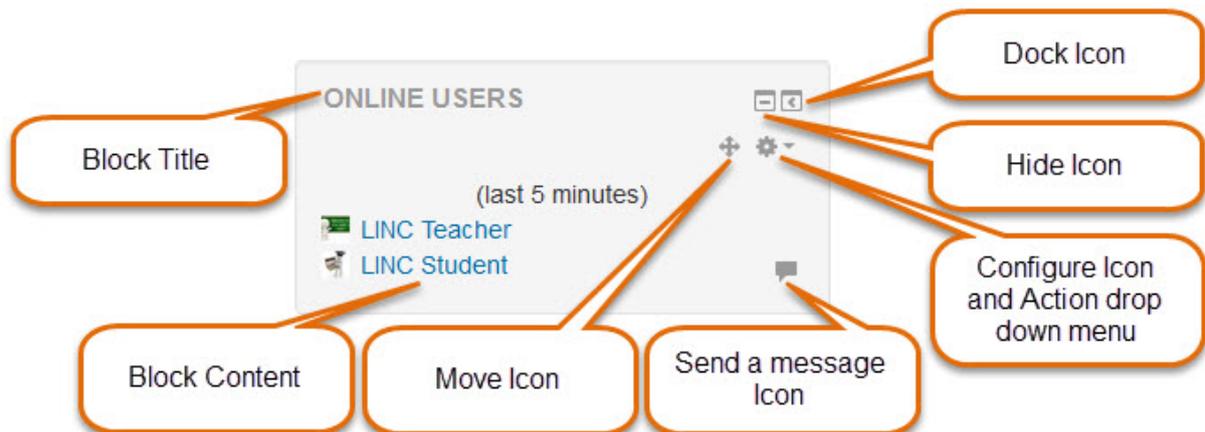
Parts of a Block
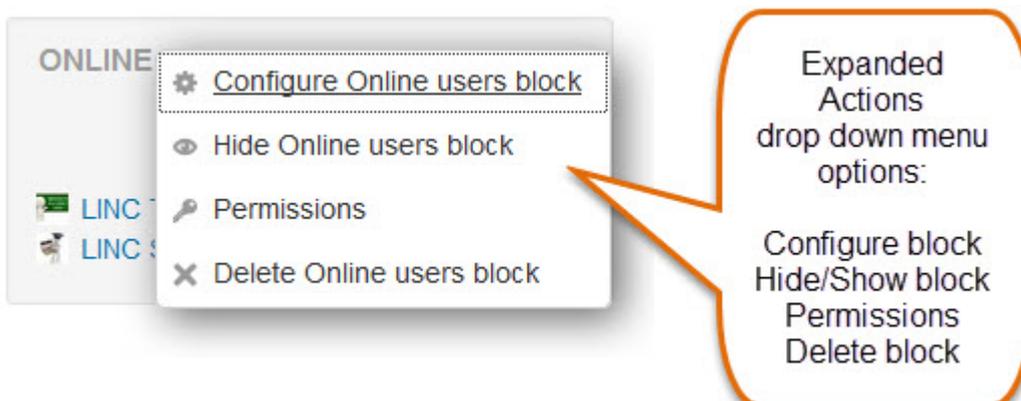
With Editing turned off:

With Editing turned on:

**Block with Editing turned on and drop-down visible:**

Adding and Placing blocks on a Course Page

- Blocks can be added to the course page using the *Turn editing on* button and the *Add a block* block.
- Blocks are moved around the page using drag and drop.
- When a block appears on multiple pages, its global location can be set using the *Where this block appears* settings on that block's *Configuration* page. (See the *Where the block appears* section.) This global setting is bypassed when the block is moved on a page using drag and drop.
- Although Moodle allows placement of blocks anywhere in the columns, it is advised to follow web design conventions and place navigation blocks in the top left side of the page, and news or dynamic items, such as the calendar, on the right side.
- We also suggest the removal of any blocks that will not be used as they clutter the screen and may confuse learners, especially those at lower CLB levels.

Using the Where this block appears Settings
Follow these steps to specify the pages *Where this block appears* in the course.
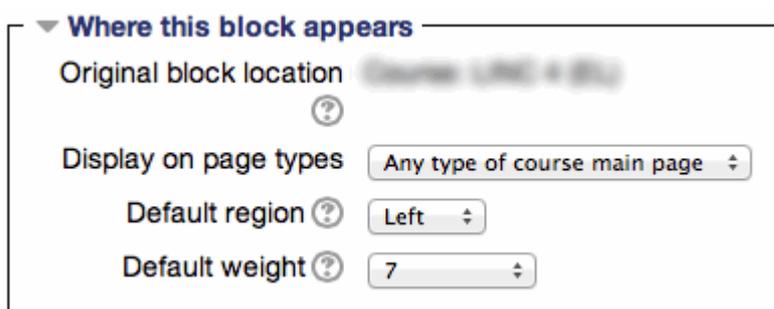
1. Go to the course home page and click *the Turn editing on* button.

2. Click the *Configure block* icon � in the drop-down menu for the target block.
3. To specify the pages where the block should appear, use the *Display on page types* drop-down menu.

   The *Display on page types* drop-down menu provides the option to display the block on *Any page*, on *Any course page* (including activities and resource pages) or on *Any type of course main page* (i.e. the course home page, or topic or section pages).

4. Use the *Default Region* drop-down menu to display the blocks on the left or right column.

5. Using the *Default Weight* setting, which ranges from -10 to 10, the location of a block can be specified in the column. Select -10 to set the block at the top; select 10 to set it at the bottom. A zero is neutral.

Types of blocks

- There are many types of blocks available within Moodle. (A summary of some blocks is provided below.)
- We have carefully selected and provided documentation for the blocks that we believe can add significant value to a language training course.
- Choose the blocks that best fit the learners' and course needs.
- To add a block for which we have not already provided documentation, search Google, where there is wealth of information available about all Moodle blocks.

The following is a list and description of all available.

Blocks marked with an * asterisk are pre-installed in the courseware (and are referenced in the Stage 2 course content).
Blocks marked with a green plus sign [+] are suitable for the courseware and supported by Stage 3 documentation.
Blocks marked with a red x [x] are not recommended for the courseware.

Activities

The *Activities* block creates links to all types of activities in a course, i.e. if there are at least two quizzes listed, it creates a link called *Quizzes*. When clicked, it will show a page which details all quizzes in the course and within their relevant topics. A *Summary* is also displayed here for an activity/resource and is the same screen if the user clicks the *Quiz* text in the breadcrumb trail when viewing, for example, a quiz.

Activity results

The *Activity results* block displays the results from activities in the course that are graded or rated.

Administration *

The *Administration* block provides context-sensitive links to settings pages. The content that appears in the *Administration* block depends on the Context (i.e. the course page being shown and user's permissions). **[Stage 2 course content - referenced in various documents]**

Blog menu *

The *Blog menu* block appears throughout the courseware, providing easy access to blogs for learners. The first three links on the *Blog menu* block are contextualized to the page/activity they are displayed on. The learner blog tasks in the courseware are displayed on *Pages*. If an instructor visits a Page with a blog writing task and clicks, for example, the first link (see below), only those blog entries associated with the writing task on this *Page* are displayed, (i.e. entries that were added to a blog by users who clicked the third link below while they were on this *Page*). **[Stage 2 course content - see Managing Blogs]**

- View all entries about this *Page*

- View my entries about this *Page*

- Add an entry about this *Page*

- View all of my entries

- Add a new entry

Blog tags [x]

The *Blog tags* block displays a list of blog tags (keywords describing a blog entry) for which the font size visually indicates how many blogs are tagged with that keyword. The most frequently-used blog tags appear in a larger font size, while the least-used appear in a smaller font size. This format is sometimes called a "tag cloud". **[Not recommended for Edulinc.org users as it collates tags from students across all courses.]**

Calendar * [Stage 2]

The *Calendar* block helps instructors stay organized, and learners manage their time. It displays the following events:

- *Site* (event viewable in all courses - created by admin users)
- *Course* (event viewable only to course members - created by instructors)
- *Groups* (event viewable only by members of a group - created by instructors)
- *User* (personal event a learner user can create - viewable only by the user)

    Note: Adding closing dates to assignments, forums, quizzes etc. will cause them to display in the calendar block. **[Stage 2 course content - see Calendar Management]**

Comments [+]

The *Comments* block allows comments in a course within the sidebar navigation. Both learners and instructors can use it to comment back and forth; postings are time stamped and display the identity of the person who posted the comment. Comments can also be deleted by the instructor. The *Comments* block can be added to the course home page or to all activities pages. (Adding this block to all pages, however, makes it difficult for the instructor to track all comments.) **[Stage 3 content]**

Community finder

The *Community finder* block allows learners to search for and access other public hubs that are available to them.

Courseware help * [Stage 2]

The *Courseware Help* block is a customized HTML block that links to a section of the edulinc site with help files for learners. **[Stage 3 content]**

Course completion status

The course completion status block shows everything that has been finished in order to complete the course. The students and teacher can both see this block. There is a "More information" link that will open a more detailed report.

Course/site summary

The *Course/site summary* block provides a summary and/or description for the course as contained in the summary text of the course settings. The text can be edited by clicking *Settings* in the *Administration* block.

Courses [x]

The *Courses* block allows a user to navigate between all of the courses in which he/she is a participant. The block title displays as *My courses* and allows one-click access to a course's home page. It is similar to the *My Courses* block, except that a course category cannot be shown or collapsed. The *All courses...* link at the bottom of this block lists all the course categories and courses within the Moodle site. There is a *Search courses* box at the bottom of this page. **[Not recommended for Edulinc.org users as it is better suited for students enrolled in multiple courses, such as in post-secondary studies.]**

HTML [+]

The *HTML* block is a standard block used to add text or images on a site or course page. The title bar can be left blank. The block is very flexible and can be used for a variety of purposes. It uses the standard Moodle HTML editor for formatting text, adding images or creating links, switching to code view and allows any valid HTML markup to be used. This enables the embedding of video, sounds, Flash, and other files, which can add unique elements to a course or site page. Multiple HTML blocks can be added to the page. **[Stage 3 content]**

Latest announcements *

The *Latest announcements* block displays recent posts as listed items. It also contains a link to older archived news. By default, the *Latest announcements* block displays three news items. This setting may be changed in the Course Administration block>Settings>News items to show. **[Pre-Stage 2 course content - see Training Module 4, slide 25]**

Latest badges
The *Latest badges* block displays the badges earned by a particular user.

Learning plans
The *Learning plans* block displays any learning plans that learners have and allows them to access them.

Logged in user

The *Logged in user* block displays certain information about any user who is currently logged in to a Moodle course. The course instructor can select which information is displayed in the block by clicking the *Configure* icon of the block. A number of drop-down boxes then appear for the instructor to choose which pieces of information will appear.

Mentees
The Mentees block displays quick access to a mentors mentees if these are employed in your course.

Messages [+]

The *Messages* block displays a list of newly-received messages, with a link to the Messages window. **[Stage 3 content]**

My private files

The *My private files* block enables access to a user's private files area. This is an online storage area for course-related materials. Files uploaded into the *My private files* area can

be accessed throughout any Moodle site where the *My Private files* block is available **[Stage 2 course content - see File Handling]**

Navigation *

The *Navigation* block appears on every page of the site. It contains an expanding tree menu which includes *My Home*, *Site Pages*, *My Profile*, and *Courses*. The content that appears in the navigation block depends on the role of the user, which section of the Moodle site they are in and any settings that have been applied globally. This block is required to access certain areas of a course, e.g. individual blogs. See the *Managing Blogs* document for more information.

Online users

The *Online users* block shows which users are currently logged into the course, this can be an invaluable way to contact learners when you see them, or for learners to contact you or classmates when they are online as well.

People *

The *People* block provides quick access to a list of course participants. This list provides user information such as learners' email addresses and when they last accessed the course. It can also be used to send Moodle messages/email and to access an individual participant's reports, blog, notes and profile. **[Stage 2 course content - see People Block - Messaging]**

Quiz results

The *Quiz results* block displays the highest and/or lowest grades achieved on a quiz within a course. There must be a quiz set up in the course to correctly configure this block.

Random glossary entry [+]

The *Random glossary entry* block can be used to display random entries from a glossary, which usually take the form of dictionary-style definitions. However the flexibility of Moodle's HTML editor allows users to adapt this block for other purposes such as 'Quote of the Day', student profiles or a random picture gallery that changes each time the page is refreshed. The block becomes social if it links to a glossary that allows student contributions. **[Stage 3 content]**

Recent activity

The *Recent activity* block lists course activity such as updated resources and activities, forum posts and assignment submissions since the user last accessed the course.

Recent blog entries [x]

The *Recent blog entries* block displays the most recent number of blog entries, which is configured and filtered by context. For example, if viewing an assignment activity, this block displays the recent blog entries associated with that assignment. **[Not recommended for Edulinc.org users]**

Remote RSS feeds [+]

The *Remote RSS feeds* block displays feeds from external websites. As the information on the external site (for example, news headlines or recently-added documents) changes, the *Remote RSS feeds* block updates to show the latest information. One or more RSS feeds can be added to a course. **[Stage 3 content]**

Search forums

The *Search forums* block allows searches for a word or phrase in the course forums. Enter the desired word or phrase by typing in the text box. To conduct a basic search of one or more words anywhere in the text, type in the word, or words, separated by spaces. All words longer than two characters are used. To use advanced search options, click the *Advanced Search* link.

Section links [x]

The *Section links* block helps a learner or instructor to quickly navigate to a particular topic/week section of the course (depending on whether the course uses the "Topics" or "Weekly" format). The numbered links displayed within the block are the numbers assigned to the course topic/week sections. **[Not recommended for Edulinc.org users unless the Course layout is changed to show all sections on one page.]**

Upcoming events * [Stage 2]

The *Upcoming events* block displays future events in a summarized list. Events are generated directly from the calendar and/or activity deadlines, providing a link to full details or directly to the activity. There are also links to *Go to calendar...* and *add a New Event....* If a date is clicked, the day-view calendar for that day is displayed. If the title of the event is a link and it is clicked, the event displays.