



7 STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOU CHOOSE AN LMS

The Learning Management System (LMS) has become an essential tool for universities to report and analyse data, collaborate, and personalise learning while helping students stay engaged and take ownership of their education.

However, there may come a time when your LMS is no longer meeting expectations in functionality, usability or simply isn't in alignment with your institutional goals anymore.

Making the decision to switch your LMS isn't an easy one, so we've provided this guide to help you think through the process before you actually commit.



1

Define your goals

Before delving into any migration, it's important to define why you're considering migrating in the first place. This will help you better understand all of the options available by weighing them against your stated goals.



I would like to use the platform for organising and delivering Professional Development for our staff.

I'm looking for a more secure and organised online learning environment for our students.

I need a more effective way to manage and align curriculum and assessments and to bring content together from various sources.

You may even choose to migrate because your current LMS vendor has discontinued its product, or you're unhappy with the vendor relationship.

Whatever your reasons, be sure:

- ✓ they've been documented
- ✓ you've gotten approval and support from the top
- ✓ these goals guide everything you do from this point forward

2 Assemble the team

As with any major project, you'll want to start by gathering the resources you need to make the migration successful. This includes forming a team of champions and leaders from a variety of areas to support the project, including IT, SIS, pedagogic experts, project managers, database administrators, and a vendor partner to help guide you through the entire process.

When evaluating your LMS vendor, check to be sure they have strong project management processes in place and are prepared to work closely with your institution's leadership team to ensure the best possible outcomes.



3

Review current course design and document the improvements needed

You'll save yourself and your colleagues a lot of headaches if you take the time to review your department's resources and make improvements before you begin the migration process. Making improvements begins with understanding what the new platform can do above and beyond your current platform.

For example, are there more effective ways to distribute curriculum and ensure that lecturers are teaching aligned with the learning objectives for their courses? If your new LMS allows content and resources to be aligned with these objectives, be sure to map those now.

Another area to pay attention to includes the types of assessments offered. If the new platform incorporates ways to track offline activities or ePortfolios, these should be considered in design improvements. Also, determine how the platform can allow students to work on the Four C's: creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

Review existing layouts and course design and compare them to the specs of the new LMS. This will allow you to troubleshoot any incompatibilities between the way the current and the new LMS store courses, making the transition smoother for everyone.

Take advantage of this time to clean house, removing content that no longer meets the pedagogical direction you are taking. This might include purging outdated courses, old data and other more traditional materials.





What are our policies regarding security, and the setup of our user profiles and permissions?

Which types of users need to have access to certain features or interfaces?

Can we restrict certain users from creating courses, or modifying the master calendar?

4 Review your IT policies

To ensure that the new LMS will stand the test of time in your environment, you'll need to revisit your IT policies and ensure that the platform is in compliance with those policies.



Can we have guidelines in place for dashboard design to ensure consistency and maximum usability?

Can we integrate with our current SIS for the creation and synchronisation of users, groups and courses?

Can we utilise single sign on (SSO) to authenticate our users so they don't have to memorise yet another username and password?

For instance, do you typically provide a testing environment (or a sandbox) to give users early access to any new systems?

A sandbox allows teachers to get a better sense of what's possible, feel more comfortable with the platform, and help them give valuable input into critical phases of the project, including the course review process.

5

Determine the scope and plan for data, content and course migration

Making sure all of your data, content and courses come through to the new platform in the format you require, and with no loss, is probably one of the most critical pieces to consider when switching to a new platform.

The key is to find the most efficient way to migrate materials that also fits in with the way your institution chooses to manage its curriculum. Taking advantage of LMS features such as course templates, course planners and sandbox courses will help facilitate the migration process and provide a solid starting point and guidance for staff.



Possible Migration Scenarios

Mass Migration	Crowdsourced	Best Practice Focused	Teaching Strategy Focused
Import courses as templates, including curriculum guides	Pre-populate library with resources created by teachers and curriculum staff	Create best practice course templates	Create sandbox courses
Make use of LMS course planner, align units to standards	Sandbox courses created by teachers	Use of curriculum-aligned planner	Focus on a specific strategy (i.e. Universal Design for Learning)
Import publisher content into library	Extensive professional development and university level support	Focus on student-centered learning	Courses designed for teacher collaboration and to ensure lectures reach the broadest range of students

Real-World Migrations

Challenge Focused:

BAU was the first university in Turkey to integrate digital content into a learning platform for courses with over 1,000 students. The Coordinator of BAU's Distance Education says, "We wanted to offer students and teachers one platform to provide content and monitor student performance. The introduction of the Learning Tool Interoperability standard (LTI) made this possible. Now we can access digital content within our platform, instead of going to a separate website with separate logins."



Bahçeşehir University (BAU)
(Istanbul, Turkey)

Mass Migration:

Houston West Herts College was guided through a thorough implementation planning process to identify their goals and priorities, design a training model and set out the project's time-line. During the first year of implementation, the college wanted to ease staff gradually into the new VLE, investing in training and enough time to create new courses in the platform before migrating from Moodle. Teaching and Learning Leaders received a programme of training sessions on a 'train the trainer' model, to lead their faculties and develop staff use of a more blended approach to teaching and learning.



West Herts Further Education College
(Hertfordshire, UK)



VIA University College
(Aarhus, Denmark)

Efficient implementation:

According to VIA University College's experience, 80% of teachers like to use technology in their teaching, especially in their own professional field. By lowering the threshold and setting clear expectations to teachers, universities can achieve a rapid and efficient implementation of a new LMS for their entire organisation. This in consequence can save organisations big time and money.

Extensive LMS Testing:

In order to prepare for their LMS migration, a group of lecturers and students from Arcada tested four major learning platforms. The university's E-learning Coordinator gave them simple tasks such as uploading files and creating a course. Eye-tracking technology was used to analyse how much they searched around the screen. The less eye movement, the more user-friendly the platform was. The platform that took less time to do the tasks than with the other learning platforms showed them how intuitive it was.



Arcada University of Applied Sciences
(Helsinki, Finland)

“When University College Copenhagen (KP) chose itslearning, our goal was to find an LMS that provided a hub for users to find what they need, a unified look & feel, and seamless integration with other learning tools.”

Lasse Højer-Pedersen, IT Project Manager



6 **Develop communications and professional development plans**

In order to help prepare your organisation for the changes that come with the switch to a new LMS, you'll need to develop communication and professional development plans for all stakeholders, including administration, leadership, teachers and support staff.



You should also consider recruiting champions and peer mentors for the new LMS in order to create a grassroots effort to help increase adoption and success.

When creating a professional development plan, keep in mind that giving teachers ample time to collaborate and providing university-level support are two ways to ensure a successful professional development program.

You should also consider managing and delivering your program using the LMS your staff will be using. This not only allows you to model what you expect them to do with the platform, but gets users more comfortable with the environment, increases adoption and encourages collaboration in course development.

At minimum, the communication plan should:

- ✓ identify who will deliver which message, and to which audiences
- ✓ specify the type, approach and format of the message
- ✓ include a communications schedule
- ✓ define required resources
- ✓ describe how to measure the effectiveness of communications via feedback tracking and other metrics



7 Test and troubleshoot to ensure go-live readiness

Once you have all of these elements in place, you'll want to make sure that the new LMS is ready for prime time, which includes testing your platform and repairing any bugs that may be found.

LMS Migration Checklist



ACTIONS

COMPLETE?

1 *DEFINE YOUR GOALS*

2 *ASSEMBLE THE TEAM*

3 *REVIEW CURRENT COURSE DESIGN, AND DOCUMENT IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED*

4 *REVIEW YOUR IT POLICIES*

5 *DETERMINE THE SCOPE AND PLAN FOR DATA, CONTENT AND COURSE MIGRATION*

6 *DEVELOP COMMUNICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS*

7 *TEST AND TROUBLESHOOT TO ENSURE GO-LIVE READINESS*

Where to go from here

If you're confident that your new LMS is up to the challenge and you're ready to take on the migration process yourself, then it's time to move forward with the switch.

However, if you prefer to have the guidance of a partner with years of instructional expertise and a proven platform in the Higher Ed LMS space, contact an itslearning education consultant today.

With extensive experience in large migrations, a dedicated implementation team, and pedagogical experts to help guide the transition, we can help you manage your migration project from beginning to end using our specially developed processes. We'll be with you every step of the way to ensure that you get the most value and highest return on learning.

www.itslearning.com/global

itslearning is a cloud-based learning platform used by millions of people around the world. It can be found at all levels of education, from primary schools to universities, helping teachers make education more inspiring and valuable for today's students.

We provide a full range of services, from simple training sessions to full-scale implementation projects. Established in 1999, we have our headquarters in Bergen, Norway, and have offices in Milton Keynes, Copenhagen, Berlin, Paris, Malmö, Helsinki, Enschede and Boston.

itslearning AS
Solheimsgaten 7D
Bergen, Norway 5054

email: marketing.ne@itslearning.com