Provision of information and communication in ILIAS

Overview

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Information distribution in virtual spaces is a form of communication between teachers and students. The aim is, for example, to control processes, formulate expectations or make agreements. Virtual communication differs in essential ways from communication in which all participants are present in the same place. Time sequences, which otherwise result from the pure attendance time in a course, must be defined in virtual rooms, e.g. in writing. Misunderstandings, e.g. about certain work processes, cannot be resolved directly or only with a time delay and usually too late. Basically, one should simply keep in mind here,

- You don't see your attendees and vice versa.
- Communication usually takes place asynchronously.

Therefore, define all the information about your "virtual" course:

- complete
- precise
- contextual

ILIAS offers numerous possibilities for information distribution, i.e. where, when and how information can be provided in a course room.

Information about active elements

Information via bulletin board

The ILIAS Forum can be used in a variety of ways. In terms of information distribution, it is a good idea to use a forum, e.g. as a "bulletin board" for important information. The forum differs from a standard discussion forum, in which two-way communication takes place, especially in its rights settings.

Bulletin board

In general, the Forum item is created using the "Add new item" option.

A bulletin board offers the opportunity to provide information to all students of a course promptly and reliably. Posted information is automatically sent to all course participants. The posting of student contributions as well as the replying to existing contributions is deactivated in a bulletin board.

First, you create a forum of the same name.
After the forum has been created, the input mask for a first post opens. However, the next step is to open the “Settings” of the forum via the tab bar and use the “Notifications” sub-tab to specify that posted posts are also sent to all participants. With this setting, shown in the figure, it can be ensured that information reliably reaches its addressees. Participants (referred to here as members) cannot deactivate the notification themselves. However, this also means using this tool for only a few, but important, pieces of information. On the other hand, it presupposes that no discussion takes place within this forum. Only teachers should be able to create contributions. Therefore, in a final step, the permissions for members are restricted accordingly. To do this, switch to the rights settings via the tab bar.
The rights within the forum, as in all objects under ILIAS, are defined by roles. Students always have the role of "course member". By default, they also have the right to create topics and answers, just like administrators and tutors. By removing the checkmarks, this right is restricted and thus the possibility of discussion is restricted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Administrator</th>
<th>Course Tutor</th>
<th>Course Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Visible</td>
<td>✅ Visible</td>
<td>✅ Visible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Read</td>
<td>✅ Read</td>
<td>✅ Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Add Reply</td>
<td>✅ Add Reply</td>
<td>✏️ Add Reply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Add Thread</td>
<td>✅ Add Thread</td>
<td>✏️ Add Thread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5 Changing the rights of course members*

**Information about the News section of the home page**

You can activate a block for all news directly on the home page, in which all activities are automatically displayed. To do this, activate the "What's New" option in the "Additional Information" section of the course settings. After initially saving the settings, the function "Open settings of News Block and Timeline" is now displayed in the gray text line (see figure 6) is active.

*Figure 6 Enable News*
This will open the further settings. You now have the option to activate the "What's New" block on the home page.

You can decide who can see this news. By default, the news is only displayed to the Authenticated users of the course. By selecting a defined start date, the topicality of the news can be narrowed down to the start of the course. This means that news about activities that took place during the course creation are left out.

**Information about a timeline**

It consists of: Another Possibility to receive the latest news and information present. As a Called Timeline In addition to the automatic activity hints, individually designed information can be provided Presenter. Automated information, such as whether a file has been posted, can also be deactivated in the timeline. This can be viewed via the "Timeline" entry, which in this case is newly displayed in the tab bar.

To add a timeline to the classroom, activate As for the What's new already described, in the course settings, in the "Additional Features" section, select the option "News". When the timeline is activated, the entry "Timeline" is automatically entered in the menu bar of the start page. Automatically created news must be explicitly allowed. The timeline can also be activated as a start page. This option leads to the fact
that not the usual content page with all materials acts as the primary home page, but the timeline. The period from the new posts within the timeline is freely selectable.

![Figure 9 Activate a News Timeline](image)

To create new posts, open the timeline and select the option "Add News".

![Figure 10 Add News to Timeline](image)

The posts can then be easily created and formatted using a text editor. How access to the individual contributions should take place can also be selected. Access for "Authenticated Users" restricts the view of a post to the group of registered students. Public means that the contributions are visible to all authorized users of the KIT-ILIAS. In addition to text, media files can also be added to the posts.

![Figure 11 Writing Timeline Posts](image)
Information in file form

An easy way to place specific information is to make it available as files for direct viewing or downloading. In principle, non-editable (or difficult) file formats should be chosen for such information. For example, it is better to set PDF files instead of Word or similar.

For PDF files and graphics, ILIAS offers a preview function, i.e. content can be viewed directly to a certain extent.

General event information

In order to illustrate the course of a (virtual) event, it can, for example, be set up as a file for download. This ensures that all appointments and activities are available to the participants. The same applies to formal requirements, such as the expected performance to obtain all credit points, e.g. in a seminar.
For a quick overview, a simple graphical representation is often sufficient, as the following example shows.

![Figure 13 Graphical Schedule](image)

In principle, such central information should be offered compactly in a correspondingly visible course area.

**Information about page elements.**

The general conditions of a course, such as regular dates, concrete work instructions or performance requirements for students, can be displayed prominently as page design elements. Depending on the objective, this can be realized within different areas of activity.

In the following three (ILIAS) areas, you have the option "Customize Page" to generate information in a contextual manner.

- Content page (home page) of the course room
- Folder
- Group

These areas can be assigned corresponding target groups and settings of the information content. These can be roughly outlined as follows.

**Course room content page**

On the content page, you can place all the information that ...

- ... affect all students of the course
- ... Information that remains valid for the entire period
  - ... Course Schedule
  - ... Dates
  - ... Requirements
Folder
Within a folder, you can place all the information that...
- ... affect all students who have access to the folder
- ... the materials contained relate to:
- ... explain the subject area delimited by the folder

Group
Within a group, all the information that...
- ... which concern group members
- ... Information about
  - ... Working methods of the group
  - ... Dates

Page design elements
You can find comprehensive information about page design in the "Page Design" tutorial.

Insert texts
Important information can be inserted directly as text on the content page. Different styles offer the possibility, for example, to emphasize the importance by marking them appropriately. In the example, the note to start setting up the typesetting system immediately is highlighted. Predefined processes can be displayed as a list. This results in a comprehensive overview of everything important as soon as you enter the ILIAS room.

Welcome to the virtual course room "Introduction to $\LaTeX$".
The module is divided into three blocks:
1. "Installation and configuration"
2. "The Basics of $\LaTeX$"
3. "The math mode in $\LaTeX$"
You can access all the materials in the respective block using the categories below this text block.
The exercises and examples provided are usually case studies of the various options and functionalities of the system.

Figure 15 Course Schedule Information

Carousel
Important information such as appointment dates, notes can be displayed on a page (content, folder or group) as a kind of continuous ticker.
The registers are changed automatically. The interval in which the individual registers are displayed can be specified in the settings. On touchscreens, but also via mouse, viewers can move the individual registers and thus move through the entries.

Page structuring as an information tool

A page can be divided into areas that reflect the context by providing materials and/or activities for an event’s history. This results in a structure that is largely self-explanatory. In the following example, the areas of course information, lecture (materials) and exercises are shown as separate areas.

The individual areas contain the corresponding materials and active objects. These are grouped together using the "Object Blocks" object. This makes it possible to combine different object types such as forums, files, etc. in a common block and title it accordingly.
In the overall view, the three lower blocks have also been inserted into three columns via the page design: This serves to save space. Of course, the areas can also simply remain one after the other in a list-like manner. The following is a step-by-step explanation of the procedure:

1. First of all, you create the majority of the required objects. This means that you upload files, create forums, exercises, etc. as desired.
2. Now you create as many item groups as are needed. Under “Add new object” you give the item a title, representing the content.
2. The first thing to do is to give the object block a title and create it.
3. From the list (opens automatically) of available objects, you assign the desired objects via Save. New objects can also be created in this dialog (see top right).

4. Via the “Settings” option you can now define how the behavior of the block should be, i.e. open or closed.
Thus, the areas are set up. So far, these are still available as a list. In order to insert a column structure and explanatory texts for the areas, you have to transfer all generated elements into the page design. To do this, proceed as follows.

1. Open the page editor via "Design page"

2. Creation of a so-called "Resource List" for each object block.

3. As a resource, you call the desired object block (Figure 26).

---

**Figure 24 Customizing the Page**

![Customizing the Page](image)

**Figure 25 Inserting a Resource List**

![Inserting a Resource List](image)

**Figure 26 Assigning a item group**

![Assigning a item group](image)
4. For the division into columns, select the column layout (see Figure 27) as the page element. In the left-hand slate, it is possible to select one of the predefined column sets, or to create the layout individually.

5. In the case of individual creation, you first define the number of columns. The column width can be defined for display devices of different sizes (e.g. smartphones, tablets or normal screens). A grid of 12 applies to the window width. 12/12 corresponds to a column width of the entire display window, 4/12 e.g. one third of the display window. In the example, the three columns are shown on a small display one below the other on a full page. Otherwise as three-columns.

6. The text blocks above the material lists can now be inserted into the columns.

![Figure 27 Selection of Column Layouts](image)

![Figure 28 Editing the Column Width](image)

![Figure 29 Inserting the Elements](image)
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Last updated: 19.09.2023

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