



LAMS Activities and Features

A brief guide to the authoring tools in LAMS

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At a Glance: Most Useful LAMS Learning Activities for creating Application Exercises (as Recommended by eLearning)

1. Assessment

What can you use this for?

- Multiple Choice Questions
- Matching Pairs
- Short Answer Questions
- Numerical Questions
- True/False Questions
- Ordering (i.e. putting a list of things into order, creating a timeline etc.)

(You can combine any of the above into one application exercise).

2. Submit Files

What can you use this for?

Using this tool you can ask students to upload any file (e.g. an Excel spreadsheet, a PowerPoint etc). that they've created themselves or that they've modified from a template you've provided them with).

3. doKu

What can you use this for?

Any question that requires a simply formatted text-based response. You need to supply a set of information to guide the creation of the document. This can be for example simple instructions, a case study, or a series of question/prompts for consideration. A rich text editor is available for this, so you can easily include mixed media, links to external content, and any complex formatting you may need. However, students will only have access to a basic text editor for their response.

4. Whiteboard

What can you use this for?

The whiteboard can be used for simple drawing or labelling activities. Students can either be provided with a blank whiteboard to work on or they can work on figures you've already added (e.g. an image that needs to be labelled)

5. Image Gallery

What can you use this for?

Here students can submit images and then undertake an optional Image Gallery Walk of each other's responses. This would work well for asking students to take and upload images of any paper-based activities you set (e.g. crosswords, arranging cards in order, drawing activities) or upload images saved and produced on platforms external to LAMS (e.g. a cartoon produced in MS Paint)

6. Noticeboard

What can you use this for?

The noticeboard has a rich-text editor that allows you to provide students with mixed media, links to external content (such as Mentimeter polls, for instance). There is no option for student input on the noticeboard, however. It can only be used to *provide* context/links.

7. Mindmap

What can you use this for?

The mindmap activity is a brainstorming tool. When creating it, you need to decide on the starting point of the mindmap, but this can be as simple as a single item

8. Q&A

What can you use this for?

The Q&A section allows students to provide answers to questions you pose. This is the only tool where students have a Rich Text Editor available to them within LAMS. They can engage in relatively complex formatting, create tables, embed videos, and provide hyperlinks to external context.

This document lists the activities and tools that can be found in the LAMS authoring system. Each has different affordances and can be used to support different types of activity. Supporting this outline document is LAMS's own online documentation, which includes much more detail and has guidance on settings, student experience etc. This documentation is linked throughout, and can also be found here: <https://docs.lamsfoundation.org/lams/-MUrmtaM5HBj8866BnGu/>. Please note however that the LAMS document is still in-progress. As such, the link should not be shared, and not every tool currently has an entry. Tools are presented here in the same order as they appear in the LAMS authoring tool.

Flow tools

Grouping

The Grouping activity is a tool that can affect how other activities work. Including a Grouping activity in a lesson plan allows you to divide your learners into groups, and then apply those groups to later activities for collaborative work. This is especially important in TBL sessions, where a Grouping activity is placed after the iRAT to allow students to work together.

There are several options for groupings. You can have random allocation, learner's choice, or you can specify the groups in the monitor view for the lesson. If you use the latter, you will have the chance to apply any pre-defined course groupings you have uploaded to LAMS.

Gate

Gates are used to control progress through a lesson. Students are not able to pass through a gate until it opens. Although the most common method is to manually open a gate, there are other options including passwords, schedules, and meeting conditions such as a score on a test. Please note that schedule gates work on a countdown system, rather than being able to specify a time and date.

Further links: [Create](#)

Branch

Branches allow you to set alternate paths through your lesson design in order to personalise learning. A common method for this is to use an assessment to determine which path a student should go down; a remedial path for those who score poorly, a supplementary path for those who do well, or a challenging path for those who excel. You can also set branches by group, your choice, or student choice. You can also create nested layers of branches.

Further links: Branches set by [Teacher choice](#), [Group](#), [Activity output](#), [Student selection](#)

Optional

The Optional tool lets you give students a choice about how to complete an activity. You may wish to offer a choice between a Forum or a Chat to support asynchronous and synchronous discussion. Or you may let students to choose whether to complete a collaborative document or an image gallery.

Further link: [Optionals](#)

Support

The Support activity is more of an organisational tool than it is an activity in itself. You use Support to group together content that is supplementary to a lesson, such as mindmaps, glossaries, notebooks, forums and so on. You can group up to 5 activities of any sort within a Support activity.

These then do **not** appear within the main lesson flow, but are accessible at any time as additional materials to consult alongside the lesson.

Further link: [Support](#)

Assessment tools

Assessment

The assessment tool allows you to present a series of questions of different types to your students. These include many common question types, such as MCQ, matching pairs, ordering, short answer, and so on. You can create questions within the tool, add them from a question bank on LAMS, or import from Word (though not all question types can be imported from Word as yet).

Some of the more important settings available include allowing only team leaders to answer the questions, setting time limits, choosing when feedback should be made visible, and enabling justifications and confidence levels.

Please note, the Multiple Choice activity type is a variation of the Assessment tool that only allows the use of MCQs.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Multiple choice

See Assessment above. The Multiple choice activity is a version of that tool that only allows MCQ Questions.

Peer evaluation

This activity allows for both peer and (with the right settings) self-evaluation. As the instructor, you can specify the rating criteria to be used, and the modality for those criteria. Options include star ratings, free text comments, and rubrics. You can choose to allow students to see anonymised feedback left for them, and feedback left for other members of the team.

Experience has shown that some students will rate only a single member of their team before completing the activity, as they do not realise that this is not a sequential activity where each member of the team is rated in turn. This is best managed through clear instructions rather than allowing students to return to the activity and revise their ratings, as some may choose to revise their peer evaluations in response to the feedback that they have themselves received.

Scratchie

A Scratchie is a form of multiple choice question where students see immediately whether their answer was correct or not. The appearance is, as the name suggested, similar to a scratch card, where users click on a silver rectangle which scratches away to reveal a tick or cross. These activities are commonly used for team-based tests, are employed in the tRAT phase of TBL, and have several affordances to support this use. You can, for example, import answers and confidence levels from an earlier individual test (eg the iRAT in TBL). You can also anonymise the imported answers to ease any apprehension on the parts of individual team members. During TBL, it is also typical to include the use of burning questions whereby students can raise queries about a specific question or the assessment or lesson as a whole. At Manchester, we also have the ability to mandate that all questions are answered before the activity can be completed.

In the monitor, you will see answers to the Scratchie in a table, which shows at a glance which questions required more attempts to get right, and how each team did per question. This is very

useful for guiding discussions after the test, as it allows you to focus in on areas that caused most confusion.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Submit files

The Submit files activity is an assessment tool which requires students to upload one or more files as their response. You can specify maximum and minimum numbers of files required, and where you have groups with leaders, you can choose to allow only the leader to submit on behalf of the group. The upload process itself is simple, allowing both drag and drop submissions from a file explorer, and file browsing options.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Collaboration tools

Chat

Chat gives you a way to include text-based, synchronous discussions within your lessons. This may be most useful if your students are spread across several locations, but you may also find it useful if you have students who find noisy discussions overwhelming, or simply to provide an alternative to verbal discussions.

As a facilitator, you can send private messages to individual students, and edit or hide messages that are inappropriate. You can also filter specific words out in advance by specifying a list of words that you consider inappropriate.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

doKu

A doKu is a collaborative document that your learners can work on together, synchronously, and be able to see each other's contributions in real time. You need to supply a set of information to guide the creation of the document. This can be for example simple instructions, a case study, or a series of prompts for consideration. A rich text editor is available for this, so you can easily include mixed media, links to external content, and any complex formatting you may need.

Students are presented with a working space that has much simpler formatting options, so they can only really use basic text. You can, if you wish, add content to the working document in advance to provide structure (though be aware that anything you add to the document can be edited and/or deleted by the students). You can also access the documents while they're in use to add comments or contribute yourself.

You can choose to only allow a team leader to contribute to the document, making them into a team scribe. You can also allow all team leaders to contribute to a single document, allowing them to summarise their teams' ideas into a single space. You can also reuse a single doKu across several activities, allowing learners to revise their original document in response to new information. A gallery walk option is also included so that the groups can see each other's documents at the end of the activity and add comments or ratings to them.

Further links: [Create](#), [Monitor](#)

Forum

The forum tool is used for asynchronous discussions between your students, in much the same way as other discussion board tools. You create a forum with general instructions, and then specify one or more threads for students to use. Depending on the settings you choose, students can edit their posts, add attachments, or use a rich text editor to create their posts. As a facilitator, you can see posts grouped by individual or forum, and can hide or edit posts if needed.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Leader selection

For some team-based activities, you may prefer to get contributions from only one person in the team acting as a scribe. In these cases, you will need to supplement the Grouping activity with a Leader selection activity, though these do not have to be immediately sequential in the lesson design.

Students choose for themselves who should be leader, but if a group cannot reach a decision, it is possible for a facilitator to decide who will be the team leader.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Scribe

The Scribe tool allows one person in a team to write a summary of their group's discussion. You provide a series of prompts for the discussion, and the scribe writes a response to each in turn. The other members of the group can click an Agree button to signal their approval of the content, and the scribe has a Force Completion button they can use for submission (whether the group has all agreed or not). The identity of the scribe is determined either within the lesson monitor or is granted to the first learner to access the activity.

Whiteboard

Whiteboard activities provide a canvas for your learners to draw on and add text to. You can include as much or as little content to the whiteboard as you wish in advance, and if you add any images you can choose for these to be editable or to form a background to the whiteboard which can be drawn over, but not deleted. A range of drawing tools are available, including simple shapes, lines, scribbles and text tools. Users can also upload their own images and save the whiteboard as an image at any point.

Should you wish to, it is possible to restrict editing to only group leaders. You can also enable a gallery walk feature to allow students to review the boards produced by other teams.

Early testing at UoM showed that this tool performed very poorly on mobile devices. Since then, we have worked closely with LAMS to implement several improvements which have significantly improved the functionality of this tool on phones and tablets.

Wiki

The wiki tool allows you to create a series of interlinked pages that are editable by both you and your learners. You have options to permit or deny the learners the option to add external links, new pages, and attach images, and you can set maximum and minimum numbers of times that learners can edit a page. To start, you need to create the basic structure and content of the wiki using a rich text editor. If you choose to prevent your learners making new pages, you will need to be more careful about the structure you create. You and the students will also have access to the history of each page, so you can see how the content was produced, and who was responsible for each part.

Content tools

Common cartridge

This activity allows you to bring in externally authored learning resources that have been published in the common cartridge format. This is commonly used for transferring entire courses between LMS, and so is not something we recommend using inside LAMS.

Image gallery

The image gallery is used to present a series of images that can be rated and commented on by your learners and, if you choose, allows your learners to upload their own images to create a collaboratively curated selection. Uploads can be made direct from a device's camera, which can be useful if your learners are using phones or tablets.

You can allow your learners to choose a favourite image or allow them to rate images. If you choose the latter, you can specify the criteria they rate against, and can permit free text comments. From the monitor view, you can see all the images in the gallery, their average ratings, and any comments they have received. You can also hide any images you consider inappropriate.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Noticeboard

Noticeboards are a simple way of presenting mainly read-only content to students. There is little if any interaction with the content presented in a noticeboard, but the range of content that can be presented is significant. You can include embedded videos, links to external content, images, and author content directly into the noticeboard using a rich text editor. If you want to present instructions or notices to the students at any point in a lesson, or provide a link for them to follow to a survey or external tool, a noticeboard is a good choice.

Share resources

The Share resources activity allows for file sharing in LAMS. You can share with your students, and you can also allow students to share files, and optionally rate and comment on shared resources. This is useful for allowing students to easily compare different sources of information, and to allow them to share things they have discovered with their peers.

Shared resources are classified as URLs or files, and you can allow students to share either or both categories independently of each other. You may, for example, share a file with students, but only allow them to share related URLs rather than files of their own.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Spreadsheet

Spreadsheet activities allow students to work with tabulated data in the same way as other common spreadsheet programmes. You can either allow students to create their own calculations and functions, or provide them with a read-only version where the model is fixed and they provide their own data to investigate the results. The latter is referred to as the "Play only" option. The interface for the spreadsheet itself is not very intuitive and can be confusing without clear instructions and the chance to experiment.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Task list

Task lists provide a set of instructions for students, who optionally can add their own tasks to the list. This can be used for detailing the steps in an experiment, guide students through operating a piece of equipment, or provide a sequence of actions. Individual tasks can be labelled as required or optional, and students can be allowed to add comments to tasks and upload files to evidence completion. The tasks can be set to be completed in a sequential order, or they can be independent. During the activity, students tick a box in each task to confirm they have completed it. From the monitor view of the activity, you can see which learners have marked which tasks as complete.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Reflective tools

Data collection

The data collection activity provides a place for students to pull a range of sources together into one place. This can include many different formats such as text, links, files etc. This is very helpful for group work, as it gives a group a single place to store useful references, experimental data, and so on.

You can include a set of prompts for the student to use to guide their collection process, such as asking them to supply a free text response, numeric data, or upload a file. You can specify both minimum and maximum numbers of entries, and can export the database for storage or later review.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Mindmap

The mindmap activity is a brainstorming tool that can be used for individual learners or groups. When creating it, you need to create the starting point of the mindmap, but this can be as simple as a single item. If you want to have groups working together, you will need to enable the multi-user mode option. If you do not, each learner will create their own map in isolation.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Notebook

Notebooks are used to give students space to reflect on a question that you ask. These reflections are visible to you but are not visible to other students (if you want them to be shared with the class, use the Q&A tool instead). You are also able to comment on notebooks should you wish to, and this can be used to create a one-to-one discussion between yourself and a student.

When creating this activity, you can require a response before the activity can be completed, and you can choose to allow the students to use a rich text editor. From the monitor, you can review all notebook entries, comment, and choose whether you want any comments to trigger an email notification to the student.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Q&A

Q&A activities are similar to a public Notebook. Students are presented with one or more questions to reflect upon, and when they have submitted their answers, they can see all the other answers

that have been submitted. You can also set the activity to allow students to comment and rate those other answers.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Survey

The LAMS Survey tool allows you to gather responses from your students to a set of questions outside an assessment context. Several question types are available, including multiple choice, Likert scales, and free-text responses. Questions can be made compulsory if you wish, and you choose to allow students to see the results of the survey after they submit their own response. You can also export the data to Excel for further analysis.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Voting

The Voting activity is a way of quickly gathering information from students outside a formal assessment or survey. You provide a description of what the students are voting on, provide a set of options and, if you wish, choose how many votes each student can have, and allow them to add their own options to your list. If you are using groups with leaders, you can also allow only the leaders to place a vote on behalf of their group.

Further links: [Create](#), [Student view](#), [Monitor](#)

Combined tools

Chat & Scribe

This is a combination activity, where a Chat window and a Scribe activity are displayed side by side. This allows a group to communicate synchronously through Chat, whilst one of the groups completes an associated Scribe activity.

Forum & Scribe

This is a combined activity where a Forum window and a Scribe activity are displayed side by side. This allows a group to communicate asynchronously through the Forum, whilst one of the groups completes an associated Scribe activity.

Resources & Forum

This is a combined activity where a Forum window and a Share Resources activity are displayed side by side. This allows a group to communicate asynchronously through a Forum, whilst reviewing a set of resources provided to support the discussion.