

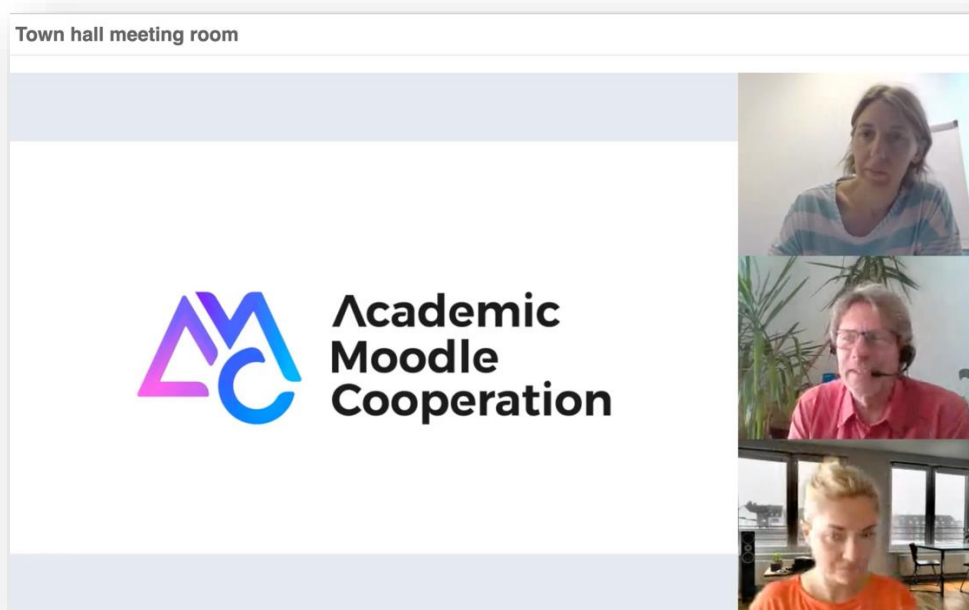
# Model of a National, Language-based PAG

Presentation Topic:  
“**Academic Moodle Cooperation**”

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Katarzyna Potocka (Technical University of Vienna)  
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Town Hall Hosts: Harald Schnurbusch (Moodle Users Association Committee Member)  
Don Hinkelman (Moodle Users Association Committee Member)

On July 4th (08:00am UTC), three core members of an Austrian collaborative development group, known as the “**Academic Moodle Cooperation**” presented on their organization and accomplishments over the past ten years. Thomas Niedermaier works at the Medical University of Vienna as a teacher-trainer, as well as an administrator/developer of school’s LMS, and deputy in the AMC. Katarzyna Potocka works at the Technical University of Vienna, while Eva Karall works at the University of Vienna as the lead LMS administrator, holding various roles in the AMC. The Academic Moodle Cooperation is a not-for-profit association that has no full-time staff, relying on the time donated by each member staff as part of their job. This association was started in 2014 and became a silver member of the MUA since 2021. This Town Hall topic is continuation on the theme of the design of national associations (Germany and Japan) which was held in December 2021.. During the past two years, AMC has made 11 project proposals to MUA and two of them have won the voting and were implemented into Moodle core (Enhanced handling of group assignments and Bulk edit activities in course view page).



View the full recording of Thomas, Eva, and Katarzyna's presentation along with community discussion (57 minutes—July 4th) in [Town Hall recordings](#). Or continue reading this summary with key screenshots and forum excerpts for a five-minute overview.

## Who are the partners in the AMC association?



There are six partners, five in Vienna and one in Graz, who have:

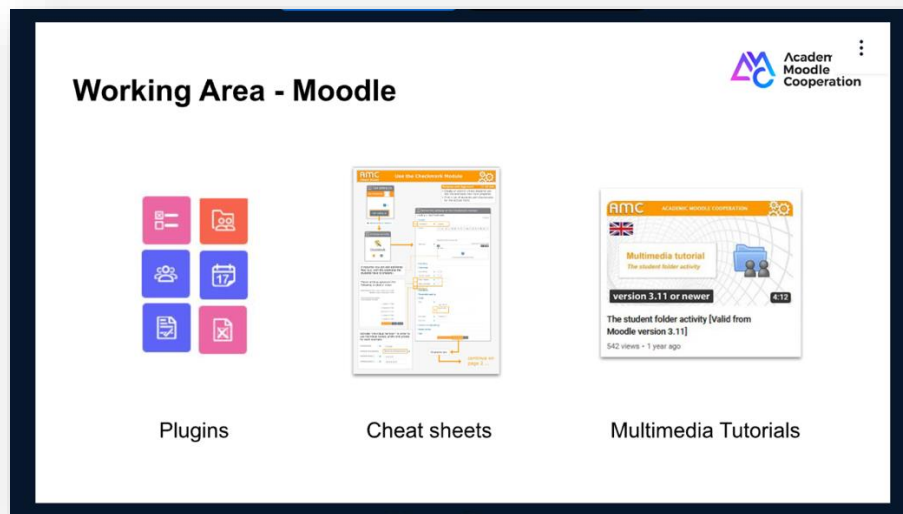
1. Created a common technological basis, support structures, and
2. Developed strategies for harmonised solutions, and
3. Embedded the Cooperation into the universities for the long run

This is a remarkable achievement as most universities see themselves as competitors in their local environment, and these six schools have decided to cooperate on infrastructure to not only save costs but also to enhance the educational quality of their neighboring institutions. In a previous Town Hall, another Austrian university, TU Graz, developed a comprehensive learning analytics package for students and teachers, and it will be interesting to see whether that learning analytics tool and dashboard gets integrated with the plugins of this consortium. The AMC group is very open to new members, so it would be important to include nearby institutions in the collaboration.

## What is the purpose of the Academic Moodle Cooperation?

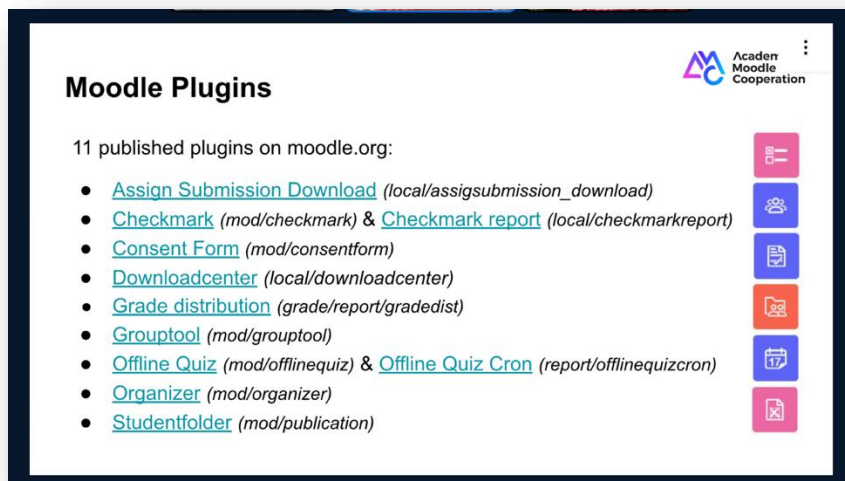
The initial need for starting this organization was the time-consuming upgrade of patches from Moodle 1.x to 2.0, so universities in Vienna began sharing the patch-rewriting work in 2011, and followed with a formal organization and more members in 2014. The AMC's purpose. Is not just for Moodle development, but also to serve other open source projects relevant to member needs such as OpenCast, a video-management application. It is interesting question to consider that as Moodle integrates more and more outside tools such as BBB into its ecosystem, whether national associations will need to financially support those integrations as well. This model of AMC may benefit the tight needs of the members of the Asian Association of Open Universities, who are currently considering forming a similar technological consortium.

The three working areas that AMC does with the Moodle learning management system are: 1) Plugin development and maintenance, 2) 'Cheatsheet' guides for teachers, and 3) Multi-media tutorials both in English and German. The following screenshot shows the three working areas within the Moodle domain.



## What plugins have AMC created and maintained?

These eleven plugins were created and continuously maintained by AMC and posted for sharing on the Moodle.org Plugins Database. There are other plugins that AMC maintains, which are either not ready for public use, or reserved for members' use. For more details, Kataryzna describes each one of these from 25:00-33:30 minutes in the Town Hall recording.



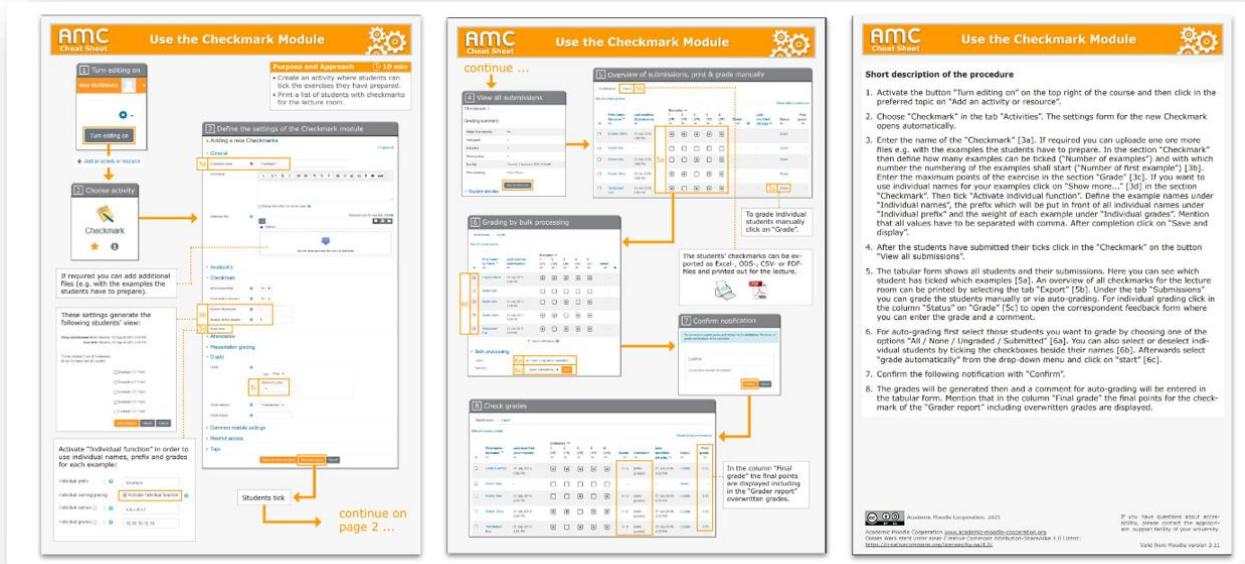
All of these plugins are available free and open source from the Moodle Plugins Database/Github. Download from here:

Code from Moodle.org: <https://moodle.org/plugins/browse.php?list=contributor&id=1765078>

Code from Github: <https://github.com/academic-moodle-cooperation>

# What is a Moodle 'cheatsheet' and how can it help teachers?

A cheatsheet is a simple diagram with step-by-step instructions on one to three pages. These are very popular for introducing all teachers, new and old, to intricacies of a particular plugin, both standard and custom. Obviously, interface and feature changes in Moodle require these to be rewritten or updated every year—so the AMC documentation team is quite busy. The following screenshot illustrates one cheatsheet which has two main pages with diagrams in a flow chart.



## What kinds of multi-media tutorials have been created?

Numerous multi-media tutorials have been created, both for standard Moodle modules, and custom AWC modules, with important ones in English. A video repository is available here:

<https://youtube.com/c/AMCAcademicMoodleCooperation>

Updating these tutorials and cheat sheets to 4.x is large effort and in process now.

## How does the association fund these projects?

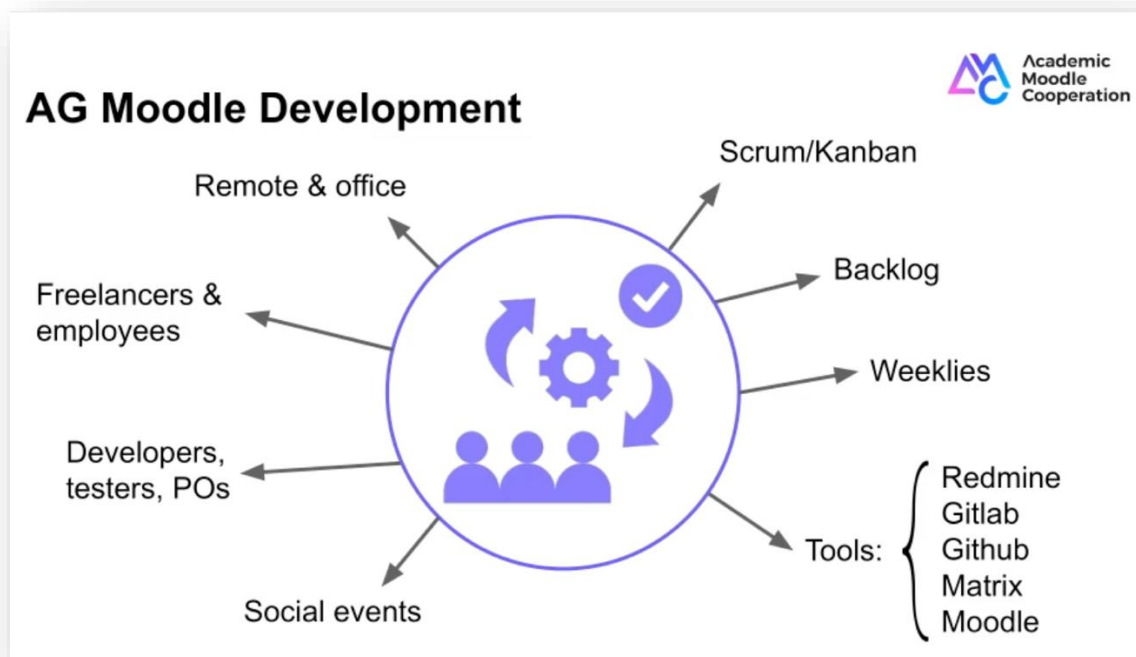
The association funds these projects primarily by time contributions of the key administrators at each university who do these plugin, cheatsheet and multi-media projects as part of their job. The Cooperation work has been 'harmonised' into all the institutions with presumed top administration support. Other contract work, such as plugin programming, is contracted to companies and freelance workers. These costs are shared by the members by a formula decided by the members—which range from student bodies of 7000 - 90,000 learners. The annual budget of the AMC is spent primarily on this contract work as well as membership in the MUA. The AMC has a Cooperation Agreement which governs the amount of fund and person-hours to the projects. For example, the largest university, University of Vienna, commits 1500 hours of staff time to the AMC each year. Other national associations, such as the Moodle Association of Japan, have much more modest goals, with no joint plugins to maintain. It is more focused on conference management and gives annual reports which are published online for public viewing.

## How does the Cooperation grow in the future?

The name, Academic Moodle Cooperation (AMC), intentionally does not include the word, 'Austria', as the members did not want to limit membership to just one nation. Currently, there are six universities and higher education institutions in Austria using the eleven Moodle LMS plugins maintained in the long term by AMC. There is potentially a significant number of Moodle-using schools who could become part of this cooperation. The benefits for them include the exchange of know-how, the increased ability to solve problems together and share resources that would be difficult to develop by themselves. Also, the Cooperation has flexible policies for contributions, depending on the size and needs of each university. For example, only three universities participate in Opencast development, using a separate budget than for Moodle development. Currently, there are five teams in the Moodle work area (listed below) as well as activities shown in the diagram below:

1. Development Team
2. Didactics Team
3. Accessibility Team
4. Community Management Team
5. Documentation & Training Team

Team meetings tend to be every Wednesday at 1pm online and 40-person parties twice a year.



In addition to plugin development, AMC members participate in the German-speaking MoodleMoot called MoodleMoot Dach.

## What are the implications for the Moodle community?

At the next Town Hall, the MUA will discuss its future with opportunities as part of the new Moodle.org community. One of the questions on the table is how do institutions share knowledge and development of the Moodle LMS, and grow as learning organizations. AMC has shown that institutions, when engaged in a common plugin/resource development, will commit greater funding and time to the Moodle community even beyond the level of a MUA 'Gold' membership. Like AMC, the recent Question Engine consortium is great example of how major sources of human energy and funds can be devoted to significant Moodle development.

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For more information about this presentation, contact:

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