Participating in LN4LD

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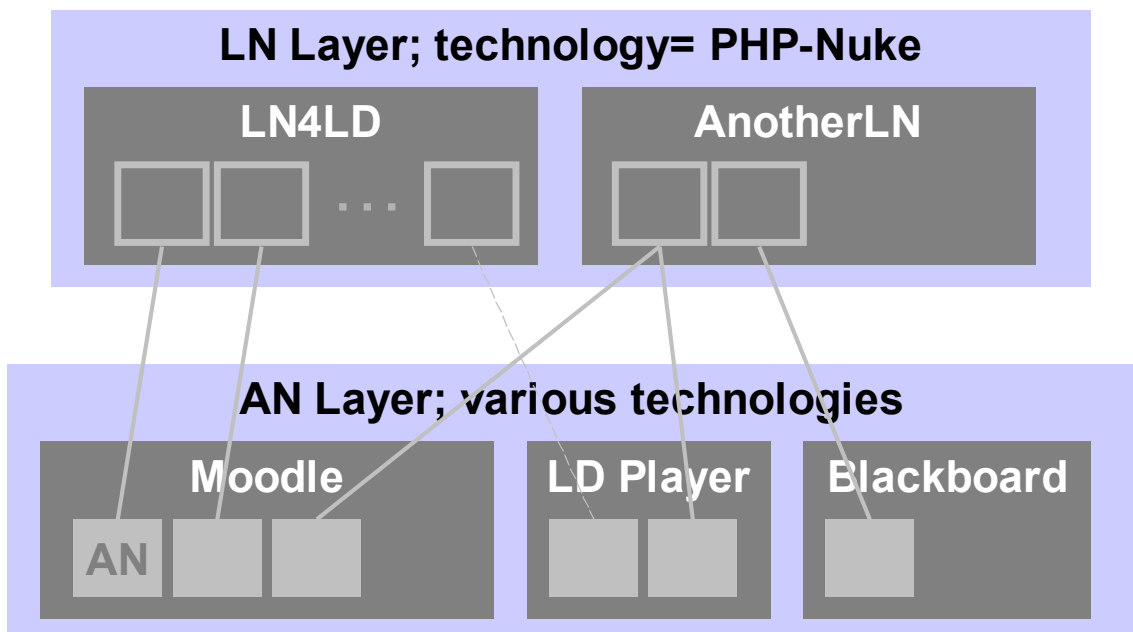   Netherlands

Introduction

- This short document is a guide to LN4LD, the Learning Network for Learning Design, designed to provide the infrastructure for the Learning Designers Community of Practice (CoP) in EU UNFOLD project.

- LN4LD can be found at http://ln4ld.learningnetworks.org/.

- LN4LD has been set up as part of the Learning Networks programme being carried out at the Educational Technology Expertise Centre of The Open University of The Netherlands. For background reading on the objectives and approach of the programme, please read the overview document which can be found at http://learningnetworks.org/downloads/LTD%20Programme%20Learning%20Networks%202020 03-2008.pdf

- LN4LD is a pilot learning network for those interested in finding, applying and exchanging information about the IMS Learning Design specification (IMS LD).

- We have created LN4LD to gain early feedback on functional, technical and organisational aspects of creating and maintaining a learning network and to help meet the demand for further information on IMS Learning Design. Moreover, we are planning to use LN4LD investigate mechanisms which stimulate learners to move beyond mere consumption of learning material towards active participation in the creation of learning experiences (one of the ambitions of the overall learning networks programme);

- LN4LD is an R&D concept. It is not yet a production level system, and we ask those interested in participating to approach LN4LD with this in mind. As a participant, you will be required to deal with various technologies and you will be faced with multiple logons, different user interfaces and an evolving set of functionality and content. We aim to avoid centralised development of LN4LD and we will encourage participants to improve and extend the learning network, not only in the role of reviewer but preferably as co-creator. The (initial) mechanisms through which active participation will be stimulated are described below. Additional functionality will be introduced as we go.

Two important concepts

- A **Learning Network** (LN) is a distributed set of people who interact to create and share learning events while developing their competence in a particular discipline.

- A learning event, which we refer to as an **Activity Node** (AN), can be anything that is available to support learning, such as a course, a workshop, a conference, a lesson, an internet learning resource, etc. All participants can create new ANs, can adapt existing ANs or can delete ANs, subject to the constraints of the policies which are operation for the learning network.

The overall architecture of a learning network

- LN4LD is built upon the second generation of IT support we have developed for learning networks (for a description of the first generation, see http://hdl.handle.net/1820/32).

- The following figure shows the overall architecture and technological choices used in LN4LD:

LN Layer; technology= PHP-Nuke

LN4LD

AnotherLN

. . .

AN Layer; various technologies

Moodle

AN

LD Player

Blackboard

- We distinguish between the Learning Network layer and an underlying Activity Node Layer.

- The former, realised using PHP-Nuke (see www.phpnuke.org), offers access to different learning networks. Currently, we are running one learning network, LN4LD – others will be launched in due course. Each learning network is realised as a separate PHP-Nuke site.

- A Learning Network contains information about each of its associated Activity Nodes, together with a link to the actual activity node.

- In the Activity Node layer, various types of technology can be used to create learning events. The above diagram shows three possibilities:

  o Moodle (www.moodle.org), an open source learning environment;

  o LD Player, which represents an abstract software component capable of running Units of Learning created according to rules of the IMS LD specification. In the future we hope to be able to make this abstraction a reality.

  o Blackboard, a commercial learning environment.

- However, any technology can be used to realise an activity node, and a link can be made from the Learning Network layer
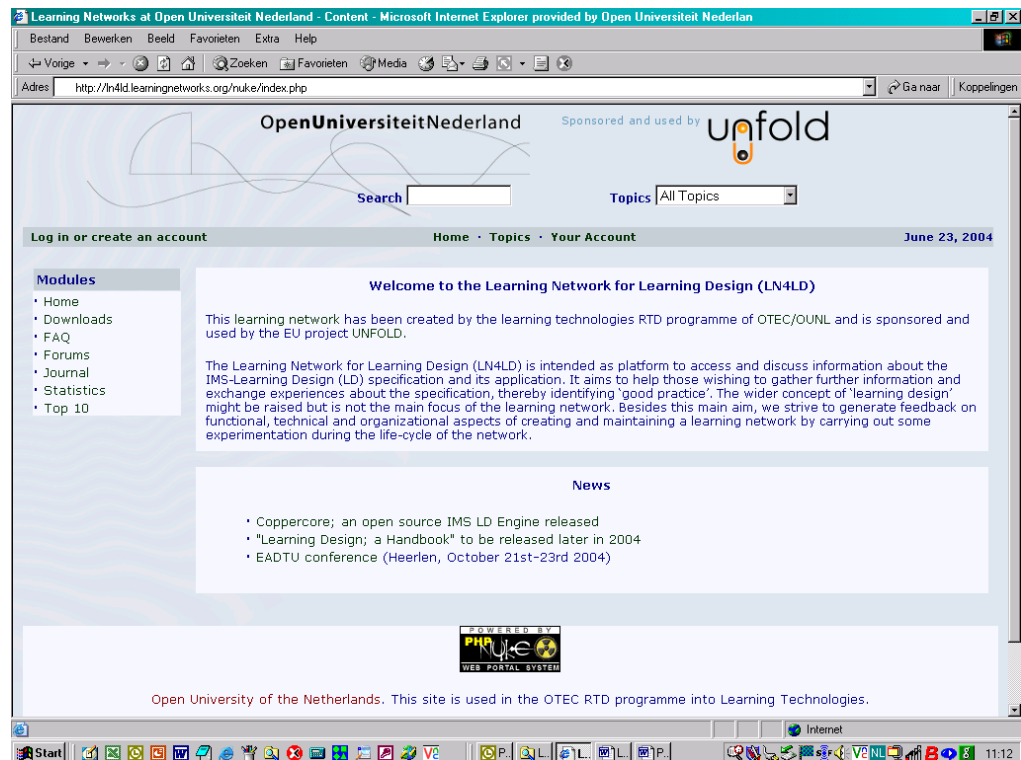
- We have seeded LN4LD with some activity nodes created using Moodle. During the lifetime of LN4LD we will create new activity nodes using Moodle, and perhaps also other technologies, to address IMS LD topics as they arise. Moreover, we encourage other participants to contribute Activity Nodes, in the spirit of a learning network.

- We support two different levels of participation in LN4LD, and an understanding of these levels will help you get the most out of LN4LD.
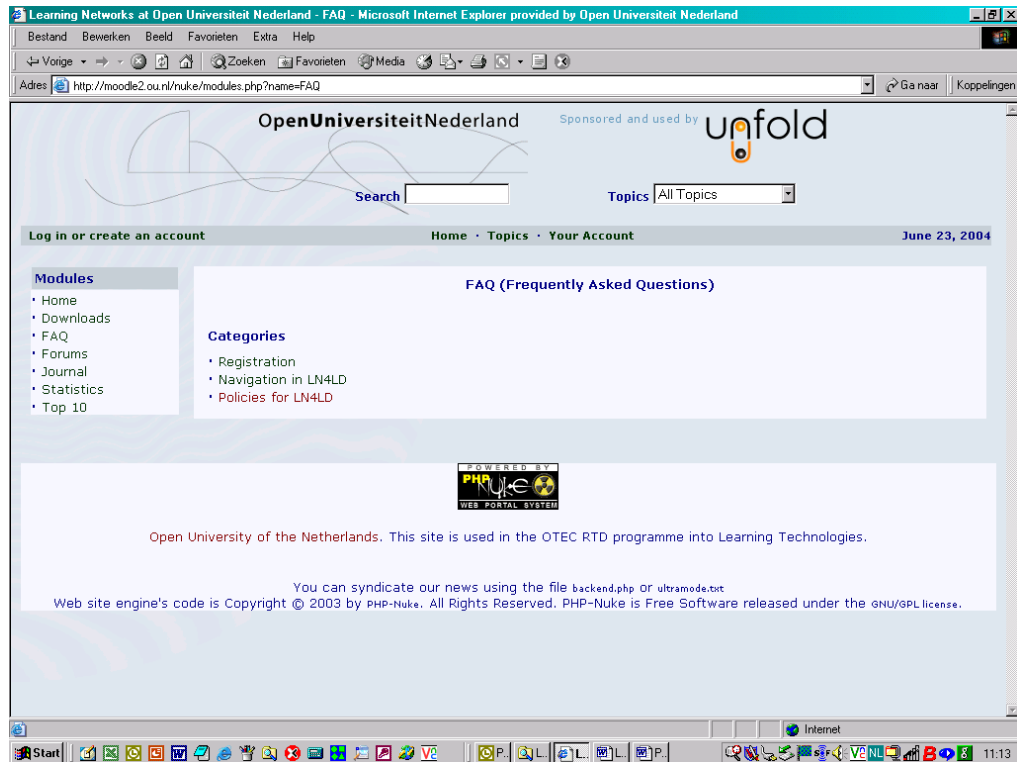
Levels of participation in LN4LD

- We distinguish between two types of participants in LN4LD:
    - Unregistered users
    - Registered users

- These types of participant are linked to increasing levels of access and functionality, and progress between the types revolves around increasing levels of participation in the community
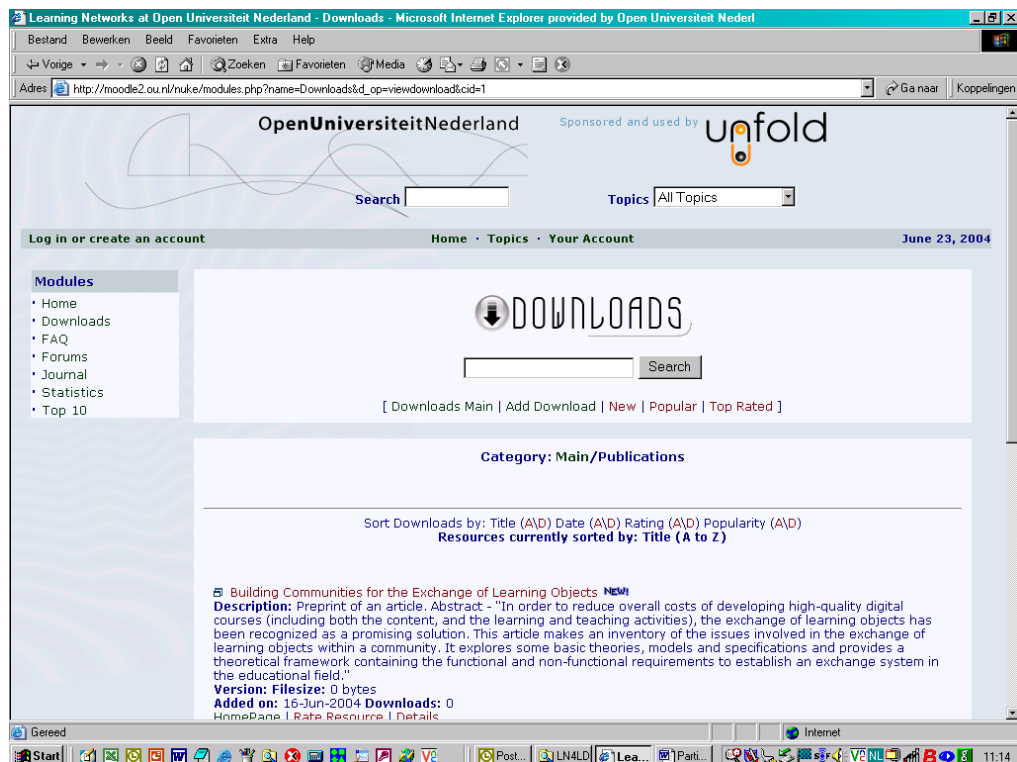
Facilities for unregistered users

- Unregistered users are those who access the LN4LD anonymously, that is, without logging in. For these users, LN4LD offers read-only access to content and forums in which topics involving the spec are discussed.

- The functionality available to unregistered users is shown in the following sequence of screenshots:
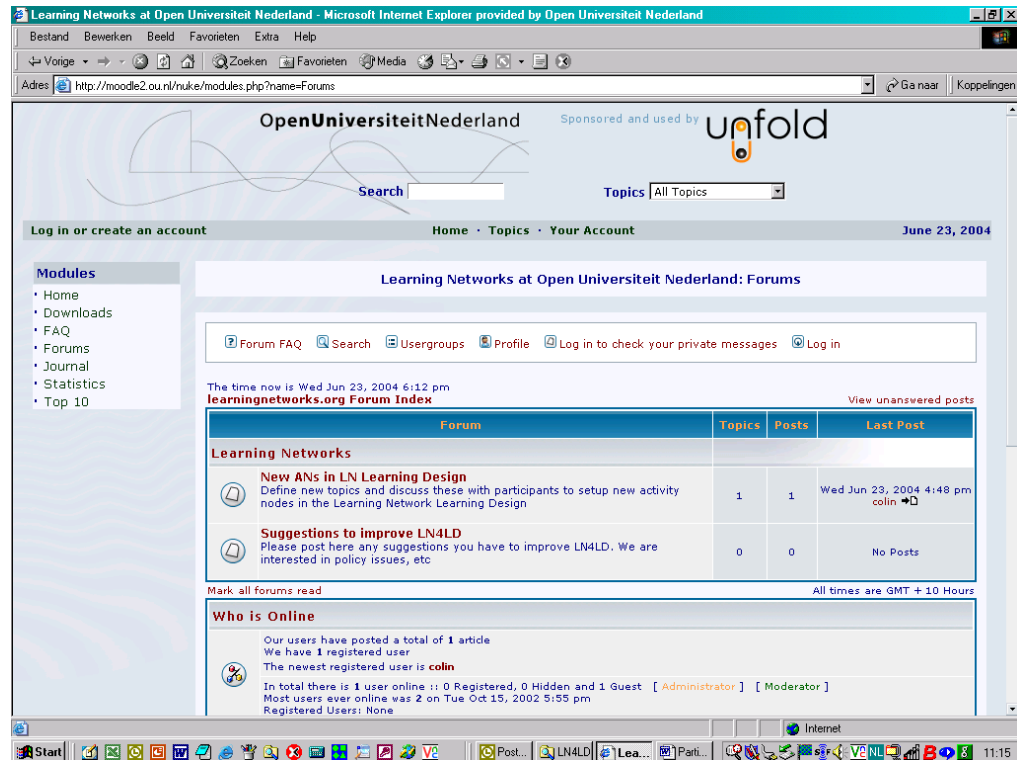   - Browsing the home page with news items:

o Accessing the LN4LD Frequently Asked Questions list:

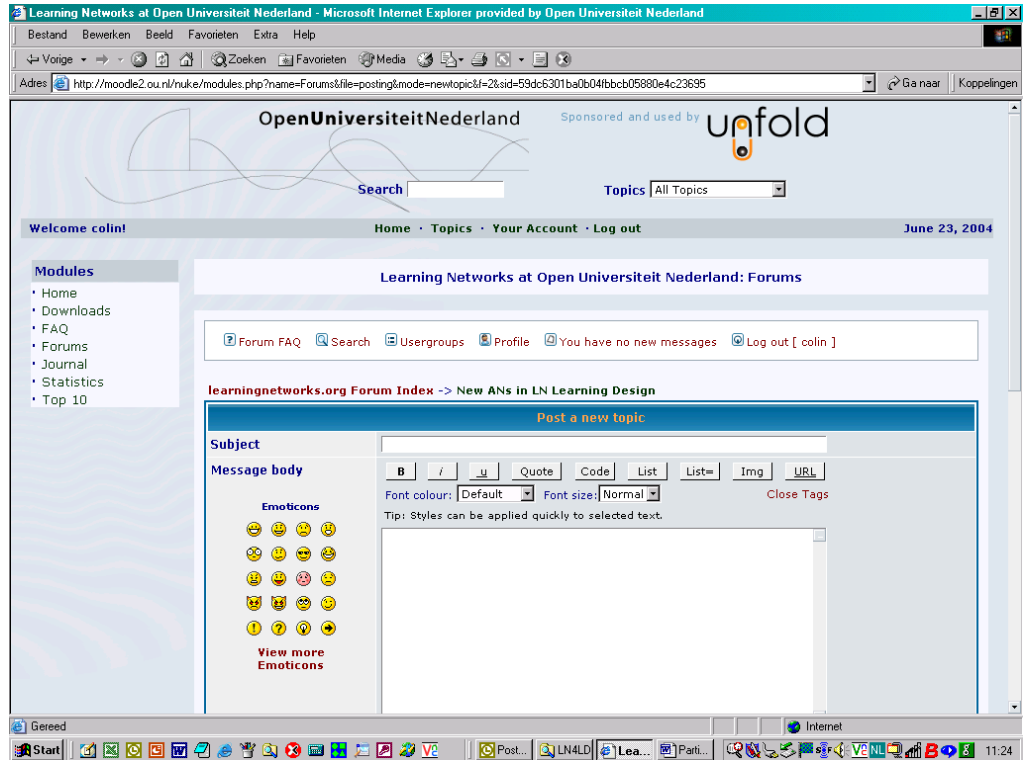o Viewing the Downloads area:

o (Read-only) Access to the forums

o   Furthermore, unregistered users are able to view site statistics and various "Top 10" lists (although access to the items in the lists will require your registration).
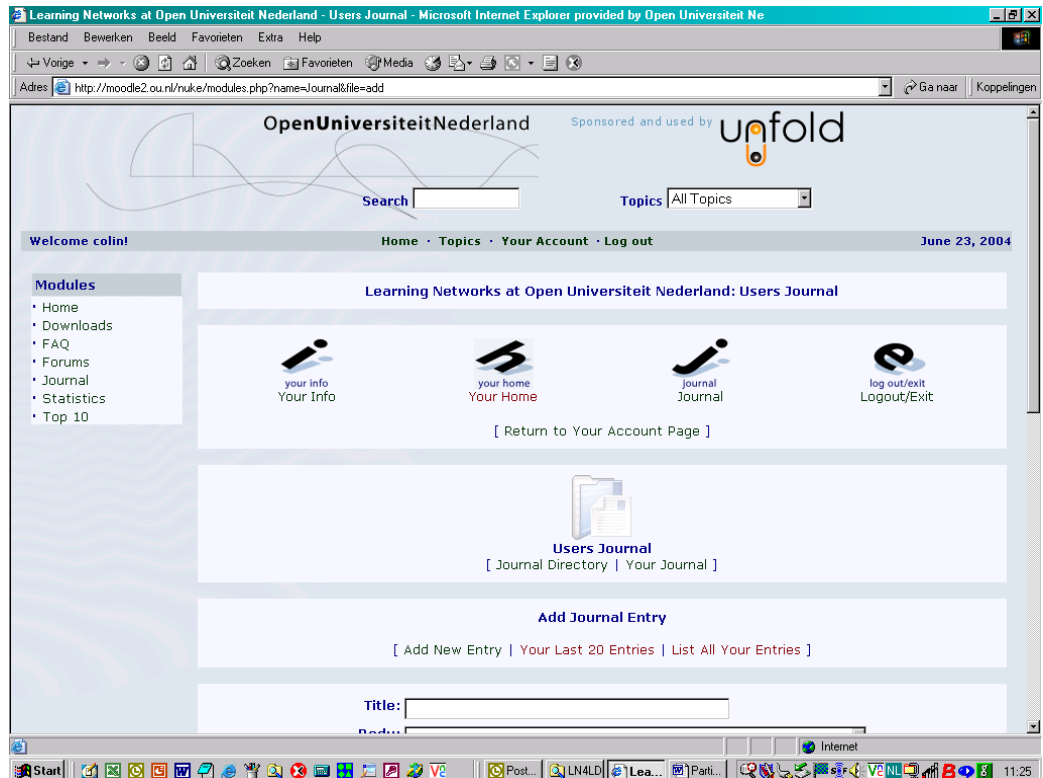
Facilities for registered users

- Access to the UNFOLD Learning Designers Community of Practice (CoP) comes with self-registration. Registering for the site is done through standard PHP-Nuke functionality and requires email confirmation.

- Once registered, participants are able to place new postings in the LN4LD forums and reply to existing ones. This comes in addition to the functionality available as an unregistered user. Furthermore, registered users can cooperate on solving problems and answering questions concerning IMD Learning Design. Activity Nodes are dedicated to IMS LD topics (for example "IMS LD and meta-data" or "IMS LD and SCORM"), and groups of interested parties investigate issues in the area and develop learning activities and materials.

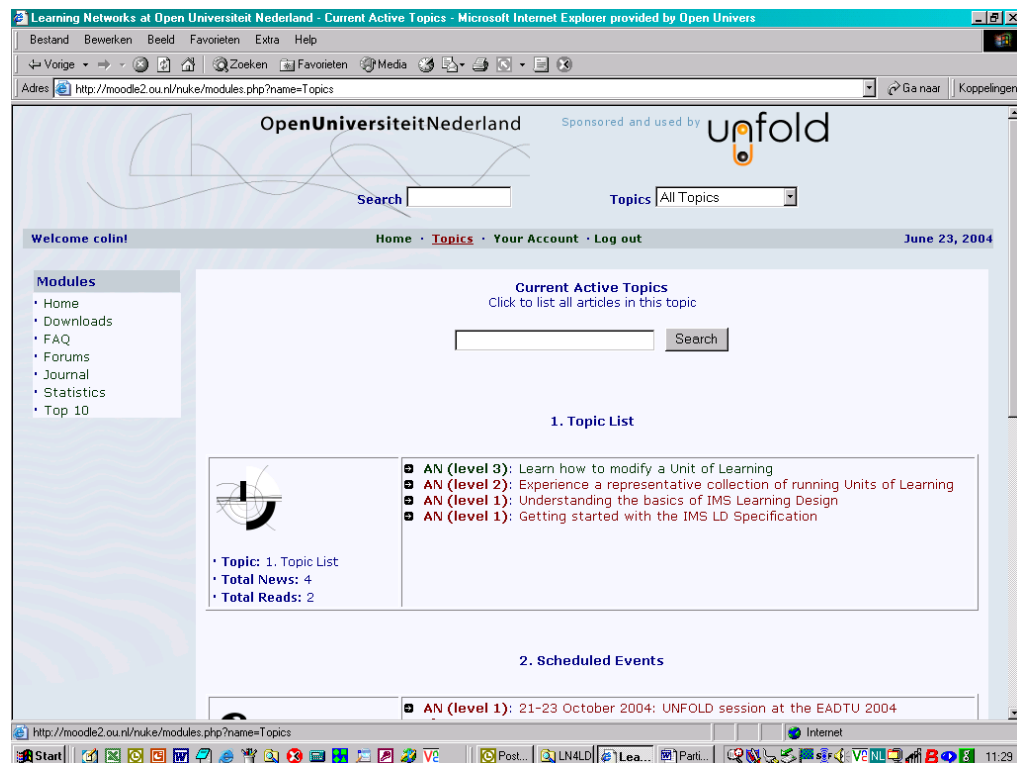- The following screenshots show the additional functionality available to registered users:

o Posting to LN4LD forums:

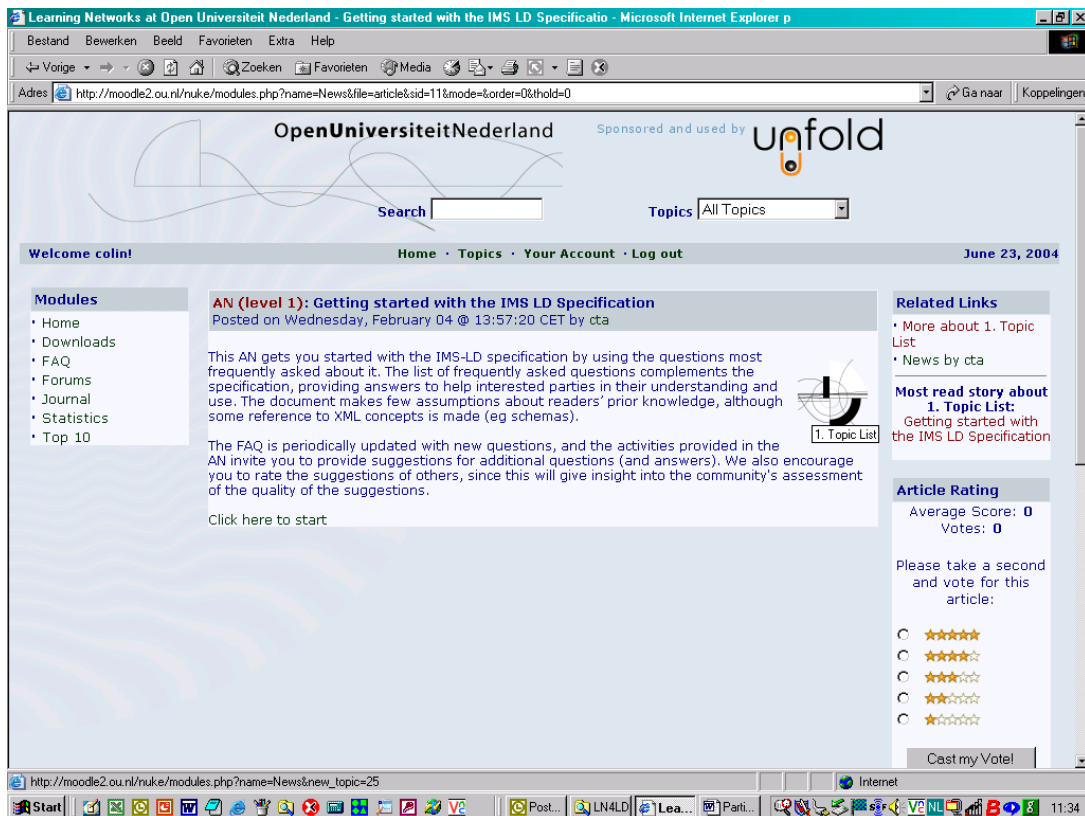o Using the PHP-Nuke journal functionality:

o Accessing the topic list:

- We anticipate that shared topics will emerge through multiple postings in the dedicated forum. When interest in a topic has crystallised, an Activity Node will be created (by those in the appropriate role) and a link to the AN will be posted in the forum to direct ongoing collaboration towards the new AN. At the launch of LN4LD, the creation of ANs is being handled by a few members of OUNL staff. However, access to this role will be extended as participation in the learning network grows.
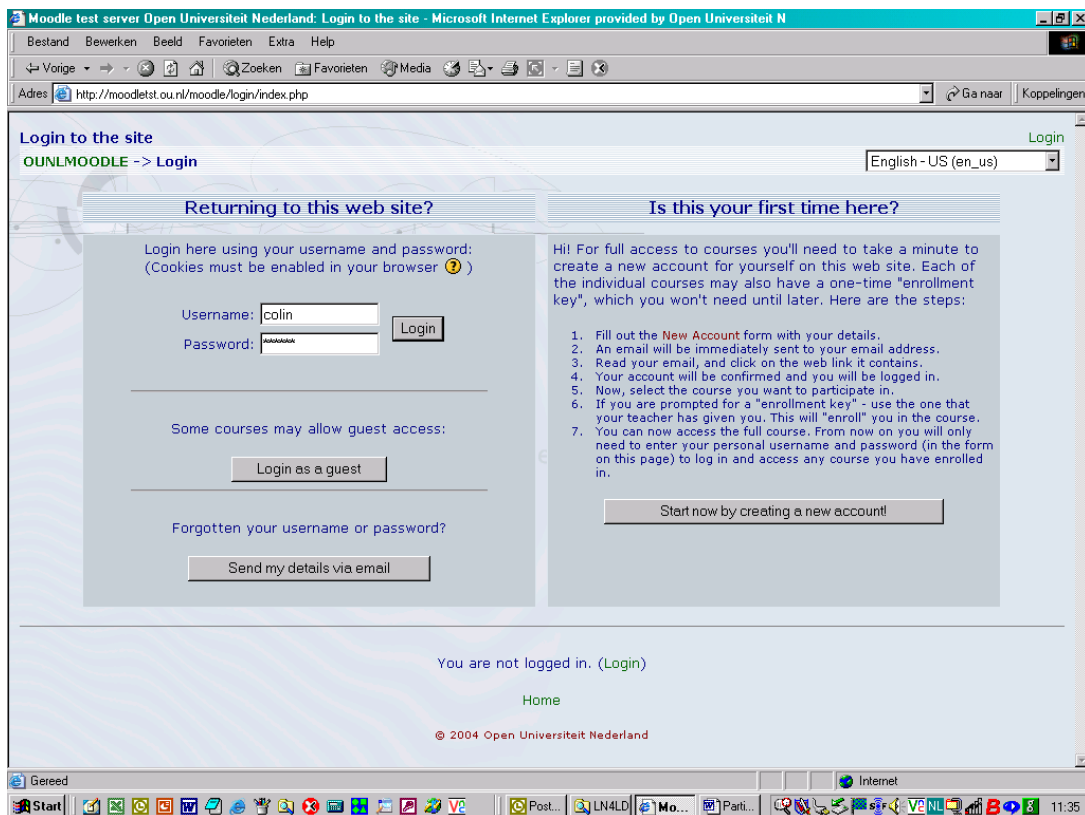
The seed Activity Nodes

- Four seed Activity Nodes are available at the launch of LN4LD:

  o Getting started with the IMS LD Specification

  o Understanding the basics of IMS Learning Design

  o Experience a representative collection of running Units of Learning

  o Learn how to modify a Unit of Learning

- Clicking on the title one of the ANs in the LN4LD topic list will reveal some descriptive information about it, together with a hyperlink to the actual Activity Node and a rating capability:
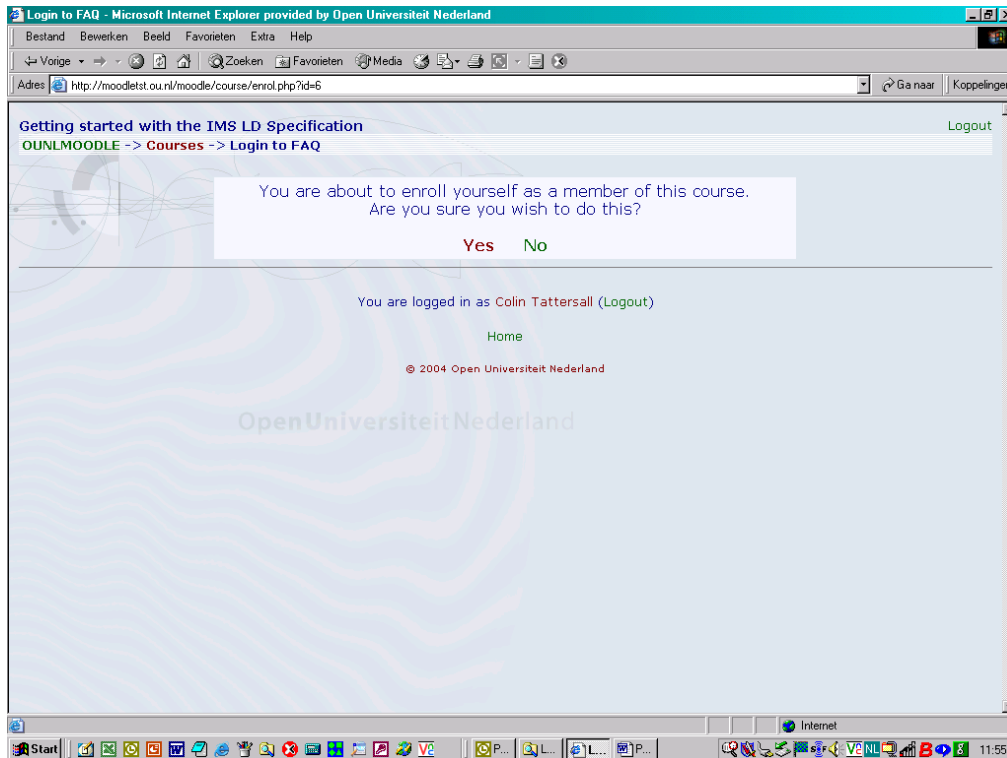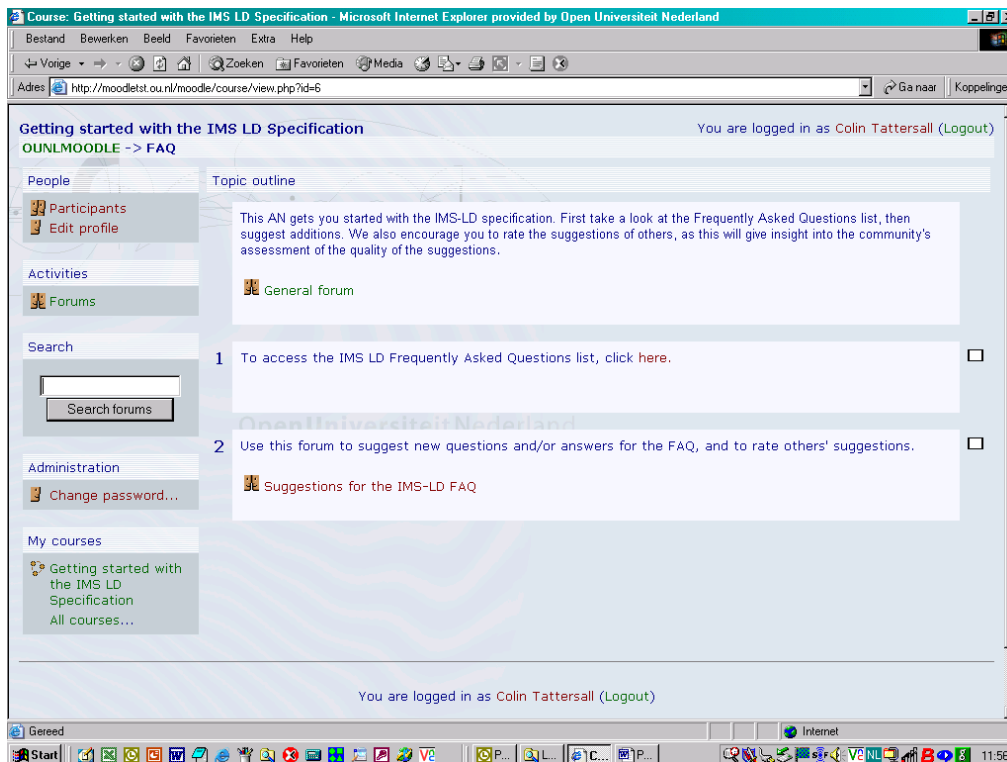
- Clicking on the hyperlink moves the participant to Moodle, which may require logging in:

- … and may also require enrolling for the course:

- Once enrolled, you will see various learning activities and (collaborative) facilities:

We hope LN4LD helps you in understanding and using IMS Learning Design. Please participate and help us extend and improve the learning network.