

The cover features an abstract design with three blue circles of varying sizes, each composed of concentric layers of different shades of blue. Two thin, light blue lines intersect at the top left, forming a large 'V' shape that frames the circles. The circles are positioned in the upper right and lower right areas of the page.

Release Manual

Release your potential

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Introduction

What is it?

Release is a storage area for e-learning and related materials. It aims to provide a simple to use, flexible medium for delivering video, audio, & related files via the web in a way that will be compatible with most computers.

Why use it?

There are a vast array of different audio & video formats in use today each requiring special software to run. This causes a lot of problems when viewing the material as there is no way of ensuring the user will be able to access it or how it will look when they do.

When uploading an audio or vide file to *Release* the file is automatically converted into a more compatible format suitable for viewing online. The file will then be viewed using the built in player so that user will always see the same thing that you do.

The player can be seamlessly used in any other web based service such as Blackboard either as an individual learning object (weblink) or embedded into existing material.

By 'releasing' material from the existing learning environments you can more easily share content not only with the user, but also between different learning environments saving your time and space. *Release* also helps solve some of the problems giving access to your material by removing it's reliance on a VLE's login system. Content can be released to as few or many people as you require.

Creating content for Release

Uploading a new object

You must be logged in as a member of staff to create a new learning object.

Click on Create new object

Select the type of object you want to create

Confirm that you have permission to use any material you upload and click Continue

Type in the name of the learning object and click Next

Click the Click here to upload file button.

Select the file(s) you wish to upload and click OPEN

Click the button to view your learning object

*If you are uploading a video or audio file the file will be converted before it becomes available.
Depending upon the size & length of file this may take some time, possibly several hours.*

Using a Learning Object

The main purpose of Release is to store learning objects so that they can be used within other learning environments & resources (eg. Blackboard). To achieve this the learning object needs to be embedded into the place you want it to go.

If you are the owner of a learning object you should see a Links section to the right of the page. Using the code provided in this section you can choose how you want the learning object to appear. The three link types are:

Simple link: This is a simple URL that can be used anywhere you can link to a webpage. This can often be the easiest to use as it doesn't need to be used within an existing webpage. Using this link will also allow access to any additional information you assign to the learning object.

Embed: This code can be used within an existing webpage to enable placement of the learning object directly within the page itself, for example to display a video followed by a series of questions. To use this code you must have access to change the html code of the page, simply paste this code into the place you want the video to appear. Please contact your e-learning advisor if you have difficulties.

Popup Code: This is similar to the Embed code link in that it can only be used within a webpage by altering the html code. However rather than displaying the video this code will make a clickable link that will open the video in a small pop up window.

Learning objects are intended to be re-used and updated over time. If you use an object to store a recording of a lecture then next semester you can simply update the object with the newer recording instead of creating a new object.

Types of learning object

Audio file

A single audio file for playback. Any audio file you upload will be converted to MP3 format and displayed within the webpage as a small play bar.

Video File

Any video file you upload to this object will be converted to a compatible Flash 7 format. This is the recommended format for web based video as it provides greatest compatibility.

High quality/Downloadable video

Any video file you upload to this object will be converted to the latest h264 video format. This format provides better quality video in a format that can be downloaded & played locally on your computer. Additional software may need to be installed in order to play this file.

Flash object

Use this object to display an interactive Flash object (.swf). These are often included on interactive CD's or created using software such as Camtasia or Articulate.

Photo Album

This object can be used to display a series of photos or pictures on a webpage. The photos are displayed one at a time, cycling randomly through the list of available ones. Although not very useful as learning material it can be used as a banner on web pages to liven them up.

File Store

This object can be used as a file sharing area. The owner of the object can upload multiple files of any type and allow people to download them. This is an easy way to share documents and files with a lot of people. The files are displayed as a simple clickable list of files and directories that can be navigated as you would your own computer.

Website

This object is used to store a webpage or an entire website. By uploading a compressed (zip) file you can quickly store html documents along with all related images & files and have them displayed anywhere you want them. Using Release you can display the website within other VLE's (eg. Blackboard) that often have problems handling the links between files.

Playlist

This object can be used to group together several video or audio files. The files themselves need to be uploaded to *Release* as individual learning objects

Restricting access to learning object

The default settings for a new object will not allow other users to use the search facility to find your content. The only way users can access your content is if you give them the link or embed it into another learning environment (eg. Blackboard). The link is randomly generated making it impossible to find accidentally and therefore this should provide enough security for most material.

If you require greater levels of protection for your learning object then you can require users to login before they can view the object.

To change edit a learning object:

- Use the Search or View my files link to open the learning object
- Click on the Edit button on the right
- Click on the down arrow next to Access rights to display available options
- By selecting the drop down menus you can choose the level of security you need

Access Rights

Open Access (*default*) : anyone can view the object

Require Login : Students & Staff can view the object

Staff only : Only users with a staff login

User List : Only specified users (click the [Edit user list] button to add/remove users)

Owner access only : only you can view the object

Off Site Access

Yes (*default*) : Users can view the content offsite

No : Users can only view content when on campus or in halls of residence

Search

Not searchable (*default*) : Content can not be searched

Searchable when logged in : Content is only searchable by students & staff

Publicly Searchable : Anyone can find your content (if this option is chosen the content must be approved before it is made available)

Adding additional information to Learning Object

File Details

Name: This is the only required information for a learning object. The name of the learning object is displayed above the object itself as well as on the search page

Artist: This should reflect who is featured in the video

Tags: Add your own tags to the object to make it easier to find.

Preview screen (video only): By default a video object will display a blank screen until a user presses play. It is often useful to replace this blank screen with a screen that indicates the content of the video clip (eg. Opening titles). You can either upload a picture of your own, or use the [Grab preview image] link to capture a frame of the video to use.

Additional Resources

Upload any related files (eg, word/powerpoint) to this section and they will be displayed as downloadable resources below your learning object

Access Rights

Access rights; Offsite; Search: As described earlier you can use these options to restrict access to your learning object.

Allow Comments: By choosing YES you can allow people to leave comments about your learning object. Comments will be viewable by all users.

Allow Download: If the learning object is either an Audio file or HQ Video file then you can allow students to have the option of downloading the object rather than viewing online. This can be useful if they need more flexibility in how they use it (eg. They could copy it to iPod and play it at their leisure)

Category/Sub category: There are a few pre defined categories for learning objects. If you want to allow general access to your object and it's use fits into one of these categories then feel free to select one.

Further information details

If entered, these text fields are displayed under your object and can be useful for displaying copyright information.

The Description text field also gets displayed when the object is used in a Playlist, providing a short description of the video without needing to click on it.

Accessibility

Release has the option of adding Subtitles or Audio descriptions to a video.

Audio descriptions can be added by uploading any MP3 file.

Subtitles need to be in a specific TT format, please contact eos@worc.ac.uk for help if you need to create these.

Using your learning object

Although Release can be used as a searchable repository it's main focus is for using the learning objects within existing VLE's and applications (eg. Blackboard).

Using the various link options for a learning object you can embed a video or audio clip seamlessly into any webpage. This includes Multiple choice assessments & quizzes, learning objects, & html pages.

Please contact your e-Learning advisor to discuss possible uses.

Problems & Frequently asked questions

Why not just upload files straight to Blackboard?

Blackboard is designed as a VLE to serve dynamic objects such as quizzes and discussions, because of this it does not handle large files very well. By moving video & audio files onto a dedicated server we assign the resources needed to cope with lots of people downloading lots of large files at once.

How do I delete an object?

Click on the object to view it. Click on the [EDIT] button on the right. Click the DELETE button at the bottom to mark it as deleted.

My work is precious. How do I stop people accessing it?

A Learning Object is hidden by default and so can not be accessed by anyone unless you give them the link. If you require greater security you can force people to login or restrict to certain users by changing the settings in the Access area when editing an object. You can also restrict access to on site only for greater security.

I've uploaded a video but it does not display, where is it?

After a video or audio file is uploaded it will automatically get converted to a new format. This can take some time (at least as long as the clip itself) and as only one file can be converted at a time it may have to wait for other files in the queue to finish first.

How do I change the order of a play list?

When you click on [Edit] for a playlist item you should see a section called Playlist Items. You can add objects to the playlist by clicking the [Add object] button and selecting which object you want to add. Once added you can simply drag the list of playlist objects into the desired order.

I've got too many objects, how do I arrange them in directories?

Release does not use directories as you might on your computer, instead it uses tags to group objects together. By adding a tag to an object you will see that tag listed on the left in My Tags. You can then click on one of your tags to display all objects that use that tag.

I need to change an object, do I have to delete the old one and create another?

You do not need to delete an object to change it's contents. Simply edit the video or audio object and click the New File button to replace the video. This way a link to the object in Blackboard can remain the same whilst the content (eg. aA podcast) is updated each semester.

The video is too big, how do I make it smaller?

You can adjust the size of the displayed video by entering new values in the Width & Height boxes on the right. Once changed the video will display at the desired size and if you embed the video into an external page (eg. Blackboard) it will also display at this size.

I have lots of videos, it's going to take me ages!

Uploading a file to Release only takes a few seconds and you don't have to wait for one to finish encoding before uploading the next.

My video shows Error Encoding, help!

As there are a great number of video & audio formats you may find some things do not encode. Please contact eos@worc.ac.uk who will be able to advise you.

Can I see how many people have viewed my learning object?

Yes, the creator of an object can view how many people have looked at the object over on the right.

What's my password to login?

This will be the same password that you use to log onto your computer

How do I allow others to edit one of my learning objects?

Please contact eos@worc.ac.uk who can change ownership of an object

What quality setting should I choose for audio & video objects?

For most objects the default setting of Standard is fine.

If you need to view a video full screen in a lecture theatre you may choose the higher setting, however please note that this will make the file quite a bit bigger and so take much longer to download.

Should I be using Flash video or HQ video?

Flash video is the most compatible and easiest to work with (it's the one You Tube uses). HQ video can be used if you want to allow people to download your video or need it to be viewed full screen in better quality.