



conneX Instructor Overview

What is conneX?

conneX (<https://connex.csc.uvic.ca>) is collaboration and course management system that allows researchers, instructors and students to interactively create and participate in shared websites. ConneX has been deployed using Sakai Software which is developed by the Sakai Project. The Sakai Project is an open source development project maintained by a collaboration of Universities to develop specialized software for instructors, students and researchers (<http://www.sakaiproject.org>).

Here are some examples of websites possible to create using conneX:

- A researcher can create a collaboration website to make announcements, discuss with colleagues, share resources, or create shared documents.
- An instructor can create a course website that serves as an online discussion board for students to collaborate on an assignment.
- A student can create a website to work on a group project with classmates and submit assignments electronically.

Connecting to conneX

- Server URL: <https://connex.csc.uvic.ca>
- Log in Information: ConneX supports authentication using either a CS or CSc teaching or research account. External guest users can be added as participants to any worksite by the websites owner.

Detailed Online Help

A complete searchable online help is available for conneX. The online help is context sensitive when users are logged into conneX by clicking the "?" in any of the conneX tool bars. The help pages are also available from a searchable main index page:

<https://connex.csc.uvic.ca/portal/help/main>

My Workspace

Every user who logs into conneX starts their visit from their personal "My Workspace". Other conneX websites/worksites of which you are a participant of will show up as separate tabs at the top of your web browser - e.g. students will see a separate tab for each course they are registered in.

"My Workspace" is a consolidated messaging space for all announcements, events, and notices that are directed to you. It consists of 3 communications panels:

- Message of the Day: CSc Department wide messages directed to everyone in the Department - these messages are created by the CSc Department office (Jane, Sharon and Wendy).
- Announcements: is a consolidated display of all Announcements from any Worksite which you are a participant of. For most students, this will consist of the announcements from instructors on assignments and quizzes. For collaborating researchers, this could be internal discussions about a particular research topic.
- Calendar: The calendar panel is a consolidated display of all scheduled events for all worksites you participate in. Students will see due dates for assignments, and exam dates. Research groups could schedule meetings and special events.

Please note: "My Workspace" is not a customizable website - it is your personal communications portal to all conneX worksites you participate in. To create a new worksite, please see the information in the following section.

The screenshot shows the conneX web application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the University of Victoria logo, Department of Computer Science, the conneX logo, and a Logout button. Below the navigation bar are tabs for My Workspace, Faculty Page, Labs Page, and Outreach/Inreach. The main content area is divided into three panels: Message of the Day, Calendar, and Recent Announcements. The Message of the Day panel contains a message about ConneX online for Faculty & Staff. The Calendar panel shows a calendar for April 2009 with the 7th highlighted. The Recent Announcements panel shows a dropdown menu for View set to All and a message stating there are currently no announcements at this location.

University of Victoria | Department of Computer Science | conneX | Logout

My Workspace | Faculty Page | Labs Page | Outreach/Inreach

Home
Csc Events
Profile
Membership
Schedule
Resources
Announcements
Worksite Setup
Preferences
Account
Help
Users present:
Robert Taylor

Message of the Day ?
[Options](#)

ConneX online for Faculty & Staff

ConneX is now available for faculty & staff to begin preparing course material for the May term. All May term course registration information has been uploaded, and "unpublished" course workspaces have been initially created for all instructors. A private collaborative workspace has also been pre-loaded which is accessible to all faculty & staff members.

Instructors who would like further assistance or would like a demonstration of some of conneX's more advanced features should contact itsupport.

--Robert

Calendar ?
[Options](#)

April, 2009 < Today >

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

Recent Announcements ?

Announcements

View

There are currently no announcements at this location.

Creating New Worksites in conneX

conneX allows **any researcher, student, or instructor** to create and maintain their websites using Web 2.0 technologies (note: the Sakai project uses the terms "worksites", "workspaces", and "websites" interchangeably). Updates and changes can be made interactively, live and online without the need to edit or upload source code to a web server. Updates are typically made through a GUI web editor that supports standard creation of web documents with most standard web tags, javascript or flash includes.

conneX users can create websites of the following different categories:

- **Official Course Sites** - official course sites can only be created by the registered course instructor for a particular term. All participants are automatically enrolled in these course sites based on University student registration data. Students who log into conneX will automatically see each course site for any courses they are registered in that are available in conneX, as a unique "tab".
- **Project Sites** - project sites provide all of the same functionality as course sites, except that the creator of the website is responsible for manually specifying the site participants. Instructors, researchers or students can create project sites and collaborate together using the extensive suite of web tools available within the Sakai software. Project sites do not expire, and are not bound by the academic calendar or student registration data.
- **Portfolio Sites** - are categorized as personal websites for individual participants. Instructors, researchers and students can create portfolio sites to host an online resume, post personal research interests, list publications, etc. to the general conneX community.

Open Public Internet Access to conneX Websites

By default, access to conneX requires login privileges with either a CSc Teaching, CS Research, or a guest account. Any instructor or researcher can create their own guest accounts for their sites if they wish to add an external user and still restrict access to the site from the general Internet. Open public Internet access to a conneX website without a login is possible, but the security privileges must be assigned by ITSupport. If you require your new website to be accessible without logging into conneX, please contact itsupport@csc.uvic.ca.

To create a new Worksite, log in to conneX with your teaching or research ID and select the "Worksite Setup" tool from the side menu of your personal "My Workspace" website, then click the link "New" to create a new website. The specific tools available to add to a new website will be discussed in greater depth in the next section.

The screenshot displays the conneX interface for the University of Victoria, Department of Computer Science. The top navigation bar includes the university logo, department name, the conneX logo, and a Logout link. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with tabs for My Workspace, Faculty Page, Labs Page, and Outreach/Inreach. A left sidebar contains a menu with options like Home, Csc Events, Profile, Membership, Schedule, Resources, Announcements, Worksite Setup, Preferences, Account, and Help. The main content area is titled 'Worksite Setup' and features a 'New Edit Delete' toolbar, a 'View: All My Sites' dropdown, and a search box. Below this is a table of existing worksites with columns for Worksite Title, Type, Creator, Term, Status, and Creation Date. The table lists several sites, including 'Administration Workspace', 'Citations Admin', 'CSc TA Site', 'CSC110 LAB 200905 1 SN', 'CSWizards', and 'Faculty Page'. At the bottom of the screenshot, a 'Creating a new site' dialog is open, prompting the user to choose between 'course website', 'project website', and 'portfolio website'. The 'Academic term' is set to '200905 1'. 'Continue' and 'Cancel' buttons are at the bottom of the dialog.

Worksite Title	Type	Creator	Term	Status	Creation Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Administration Workspace		admin		Published	Mar 10, 2009 8:48 am
<input type="checkbox"/> Citations Admin	project	admin		Published	Mar 10, 2009 8:49 am
<input type="checkbox"/> CSc TA Site	project	bgorman		Published	Apr 3, 2009 2:37 pm
<input type="checkbox"/> CSC110 LAB 200905 1 SN	course	bgorman	200905 1	Published	Apr 2, 2009 4:26 pm
<input type="checkbox"/> CSWizards	project	rgtaylor		Published	Mar 10, 2009 2:58 pm
<input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Page	course	rgtaylor	AdminOnly	Published	Apr 1, 2009 1:27 pm

conneX Worksite Tools

In conneX/Sakai terminology, “Tools” are defined as the menu options which appear on the grey menu bar on the left hand side of the conneX interface. When a new worksite is created, a full list of available “Tools” is generated as a checklist that allows you to add menu options to the left hand menu bar. If you wish to change a worksites’ menu bar, you can change the list of available menu options using the “Site Info” tool.

Primary Tools

Most instructors or researchers will most likely want to have the following tools added to their worksites as a minimum:

Home

Home is the default tool that is automatically created to display the official “Site Information Display” description panel which will act as the “home page” for the workspace. The content can be customized by the site owner by clicking the “Options” link in the Site Information panel. It supports a word processor like Web 2.0 GUI editor that allows the owner to automatically format the site and generate HTML tags. It also allows the insertion of flash, javascript, and raw HTML source. The default home page will be automatically generated as either 1 or 2 columns, depending on what other tools are included in the workspace. **The Home page can include content that is hosted from an external website - e.g. an instructors personal webhome directory, or even be replaced with an alternate web page from the Resources folder or a Wiki page.** Any web URL entered into the “Site Info URL” using the “Options” link will be dynamically included into the workspace Home page. Instructors who wish, can then update their site in their personal directory, but still have it automatically visible to any students taking their course.

Announcements

Announcements are used to inform all site participants of items of interest. Announcements can include attachments, URL's or text information. They can be set to start or expire at a particular interval. Each participant will receive a copy of an announcement in the announcement panel of the personal “My Workspace”. All announcements for each workspace will also appear in the worksites Announcement tool. Site owner or instructors can choose to have Announcements emailed to individual participants as well.

Schedule

The Schedule tool allows instructors to post items in a shared calendar format. It supports the creation of scheduled events with attachments, text and URL's. Each participant will automatically receive a copy of any calendar posting in their personal calendar in “My Workspace”.

Resources

The Resources tool allows worksite owners to share documents online with all site participants. Word processor documents, PDF's, spreadsheets, slide presentations, multi-media files, HTML and text documents can be posted in a file folder directory tree for each individual workspace. Files and folders can be automatically sorted by Name, Creation Date, Last Modified, file size or the order can be manually assigned by the site owner through use the “Actions->reorder” pull-down (this may be useful if files need to be sorted based on scheduled activities like assignment due dates). The Resource folder for any site can also be accessed as a network file share using WebDAV web file sharing protocol.

Site Info

Site Info is a mandatory tool that is added automatically to any created worksite. The Site Info tool allows the worksite owner to edit and customize or update all of a worksites components. New tools menu options can be

added to a site, participants can be added or removed, security can be changed, and entire sites can be uploaded, or copied to new sites.

Secondary Tools

The tools below can be added and removed from the menu bar using the workspaces Site Info tool.

Assignments

Allows instructors to create, distribute, collect and grade online electronic assignments. Students will be informed of new assignments using the Announcement Tool. Assignments are private and other students cannot see submissions by other students. Students can complete online web forms, or submit attachments (PDF's, text, etc..). Submitted assignments can be graded, marked with instructor comments and returned to students. The instructor can choose to allow students to resubmit a marked or commented assignment. *Once a student has submitted an assignment for grading, they cannot alter their submitted assignment unless the instructor returns the assignment to them.* A student can save an electronic draft of their assignment without submitting it to the instructor. **Important:** electronic submission using the assignment tool may not be appropriate for all varieties of student assignments. conneX provides multiple tools to accommodate different types of electronic submissions (see Drop Boxes, and Tests & Quizzes). Please see known issues at the end of this document regarding "Session Timeouts".

Blogger

A multi-member blogging tool that allows site participants to create an online journal in a blog format. Comments and blog entries are indexed by blog owner. Participants can choose to allow other members to view, update or comment on their blogs.

Chat Room

A real-time unstructured conversation between participants who are logged in at the same time as one another. Logged in users are displayed in the "Users Present" window and can interact with one another. History of ongoing chat discussions is displayed in the chat room for up to 3 days, so it is possible to leave a message for the group to discuss later.

Drop Box

A submission drop box tool that provides each participant with a private personal file folder where they can upload files of any type, such as compiled code, word processor documents, PDF's, etc. Students can only see their personal folder, instructors can see all folders. The folder structure can be accessed as a WebDAV network file share, or accessed through a web browser.

Email Archive

Used in combination with the "Mail Tool" mailing list tool described below. ConneX can act as a mailing list server for all participants of a workspace. Any email messages sent to the mailing list can be viewed using the Email Archive tool.

Forums

A structured category based conversation tool. It allows participants to discuss topics in the format of "threaded" conversations. The site owner can choose to allow participants to create their own topics for discussion. The forum tool can also collect statistics on participation rates of individuals within forums.

Gradebook

The Gradebook allows instructors to distribute student scores and grades to individual students. Students can only view their own grades after they have been released by the instructor. Student grades can be posted to the Gradebook from the "Assignment" Tool and the "Tests & Quizzes" tool. Instructors can also choose to manually upload grades using an Excel spreadsheet for distribution to students.

Mail Tool

ConneX can act as a mailing list server to all the participants of a worksite. The Mail tool provides an online web form for generating an email message to distribute to participants. When the tool is initially activated, it allows the instructor to create an email alias @connex.csc.uvic.ca that can be used to post email messages to all participants.

Important: student and instructor email addresses have been loaded into conneX using "preferred email address" records created at the time of CSc/CS account creation. It is possible that these email addresses are expired or no longer valid - students and instructors are encouraged to update their "preferred email address" using the "conneX email address update" hyper link on their personal "My Workspace" webpage.

News

A tool for displaying RSS syndicated web news feeds in a worksite. Site owners can include URL's to external RSS news feeds on the tool menu and the content of the Internet news feeds will be displayed in conneX.

Podcasts

A tool for distributing syndicated web podcasts and vodcasts (video podcasts). Multi-media presentations can be uploaded into the podcast tool and it will automatically generate the syndication wrappers necessary allow participants to subscribe to the podcast stream as new episodes as they become available. Site owners must also enable the "Resources Too" to be able to use the Podcast tool. Participants will need to have "podcatcher" software to be able to subscribe to the episodes - iTunes is the most widely known commercial version of this type of software, however Miro (Open Internet HD-TV) is an open source alternative that is available on all platforms: <http://www.getmiro.com/>

Presentations

A slide show presentation tool that will display image collections stored in a workspaces' Resource tool. Images stored in a Presentation folder in workspaces Resource tool can be dynamically displayed in a workspace.

Roster

The Roster tool allows the instructor to display the list of participants to the members of the worksite. At the option of the site owner, the Roster tool can also allow participants to upload pictures of themselves or display information directly from the participants My Workspace Profile.

Section Info

The Section Info tool is used only on Official Course Workspaces. The tool allows instructors to assign a Teaching Assistant to their course site from a pool of available TA's, view or download a list of students for the course, or even the instructor to over-ride automatic registration of students into their Course Site.

Syllabus

A Tool to display an official course outline for an academic course. The Syllabus tool includes a URL redirect option that can be pointed to the Department's Official Course Outline system.

Tests & Quizzes

Allows instructors to distribute, create, and grade online Tests and Quizzes that can be submitted by students electronically. The tool supports automated marking of some question formats such as multiple choice. Submissions can also be anonymous, or ungraded to be used for questionnaires or polls. The tool also allows results to be exported for statistical analysis to Excel. Released grades can be posted to the Gradebook where the results can be weighted against other results.

Web Content

The Web Content tool allows instructors to add external web URL links to the menu bar of their workspace. The external websites will be opened up as an IFRAME include in the existing conneX webpage, and will appear wrapped in the standard conneX headers, footers, and menu bar.

Wiki

The Wiki tool is a collaborative documentation tool that allows all participants to create and modify shared web documents using a simple standardized markup language. The tool supports revision control so changes can be audited or rolled back. Document changes can be “watched” for updates. **Important:** to specifically provide greater support for researchers, we have installed an optional javascript Math module that will render LaTeX math formulas natively in the Wiki Tool. *All Wiki users must install LaTeX fonts locally on their PC to be able to correctly render Wiki pages.* Instructions on how-to install LaTeX fonts are included in the Wiki itself, or they can be accessed and downloaded using the following URL: <http://www.math.union.edu/~dpvc/jsMath/download/jsMath-fonts.html>

Advanced Features

Multi-media Streaming with Embedded Flash

The Web 2.0 GUI HTML editor included in conneX supports the embedding of flash multi-media content. Researchers and instructors can embed multi-media content within their workspaces using the Adobe’s Flash Player embedded in most web browsers. Embedded Flash Player content is the method used for generating “uTube-like” video streaming content. MP4 multimedia files uploaded into the Resources tool with a .flv extension can be embedded with the embedded Flash tool within conneX.

Known Issues

Web Browser Compatibility

Certain features in conneX are not supported in all web browsers. Users of conneX on should access the website with either Firefox or Internet Explorer. The Firefox browser is available for all three major platform types (Windows, Apple, and Linux). Safari, Chrome and Opera are not supported and users will experience problems attempting online submission or Web 2.0 updates with these browsers.

Web Session Timeouts and Online Submissions

The Web 2.0 GUI editor in conneX is a browser side javascript editor. When the editor is enabled, no updates in the editor are passed back to the server until the user clicks the “Save” or “Submit” button. **Users should save their edits regularly as conneX does not have an auto-save function.** conneX is configured with a 1 hour idle session timeout and browser side updates are not registered with the server until the edits are saved. If a session of the editor is kept open for more than an hour, the session will be lost and so will all the users edits.

For student electronic assignments, or instructor online marking, this means that if a student or instructor keeps the same submission open for more than an hour without saving they will lose their updates.

Preferred Email Address

Student and instructors preferred email addresses have been uploaded from our historic records of when their accounts were initially created. It is possible that these email accounts are no longer valid or expired. Please encourage your students to update their preferred email address to ensure their messages are delivered to them.