SLATE: Learning And Teaching Environment

User Guide

Version 1.3
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Prepared by James A. Shepherd
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[0.1] Abstract

SLATE stands for SLATE: Learning And Teaching Environment. Primarily its purpose is to replace individual websites for statistical courses with a framework that makes creating and maintaining teaching materials easy. In this way SLATE is a web publishing system.

In addition SLATE has a fully functional quiz component that allows course designers to write a quiz in LaTeX, and students to take the quizzes on-line.

The bedrock of SLATE is a database that contains not only everything that makes up the website, but also all the datasets: quiz questions, quiz responses, datasets for use with interactive tools.

The SLATE framework includes full security and user profiling.

[0.2] What's in this User Guide?

This User Guide contains information for users of SLATE. If you need help on installing SLATE then see the System Guide. There may also be a Local Guide for your particular installation.
1: Logging In to SLATE

[1.1] Logging In

There are several ways to get a user name and password for SLATE:

- You are provided with a user name and password
- You are to self-register using your Student Number
- You use an existing user name and password for another system that SLATE can also use, such as your email password.

If you know your user name and password, then you can go to the SLATE website and log in!

If you have to self-register then you will be given a guest user name and password. This guest information may be on the log on page of the SLATE website. You must log on to SLATE using this guest account in order to self-register.

[1.2] Using Self-Register

To self-register, log on using the guest password, and click on 'self-register'.
Choose a password (at least 8 characters) and enter your email address. Click Register. If there are any problems then go back and enter your Student Number again. Otherwise, your new user name will be displayed for you. Logout using the link at the top of the screen, and log in using your new user name and password.

[1.3] Password Changer

By default on the SLATE Welcome page there is a facility to change your password.
Make sure to enter your current password correctly, and that your new password is at least 8 characters long.

[1.4] Registration Manager

If you have sufficient privileges in SLATE you can use the Registration Manager tool.

The Registration Manager has two options:
- Register User by Student ID
- Register Users from Student Number File
If you have just one student to register then select *Register User by Student ID*. 
Fill in the form to register the Student. Note that the email and user name fields are optional – the student can enter their email address and by default the student number is used as the user name.

The roles give privileges to the user to use particular pages and resources. To learn more about roles, see the section in this guide on Roles and Permissions. Usually roles reflect the courses a Student is taking.

[1.5] Registering From a File

Alternatively, you can import users en masse from a spreadsheet file. You may have a Student Information System that allows you to download class lists as an Excel file. This file can be uploaded to populate a group by clicking on the Register Users From Student-Number File. Make sure you select the correct default group.

![Registration Manager](image-url)
User Manager

If you have sufficient privileges in SLATE you can use the *User Manager* tool.

[1.5.a] List Users by Role

Clicking on 'list users by role' lets you see which users are in at least one of a selected set of roles.
In the above screen shot you can select roles. The users that are in at least one of the selected roles will be displayed.

[1.5.b] Add User

Clicking on 'add user' lets you add a user to SLATE.
Any details that are not required are marked optional. Currently it is not possible to change a user name once the user has been created.

[1.5.c] Edit User

Clicking on ‘add user’ lets you add a user to SLATE.
To find the user you want to edit you can enter criteria in the form in the screen shot above. Any blank field will not influence the search.

You can then choose from the users that matched your search criteria, clicking on the user name to edit the user profile.

[1.5.d] Add Role, Delete User and Delete Role

These are self-explanatory, however, one should remember the principle of data integrity: you cannot delete an object in SLATE that is referenced
by another object. Therefore, if you try to delete a user that has data in SLATE, such as grades in a grade book, then the delete will fail. Also, if you try to delete a role that is referenced by a component in SLATE as having privileges to do something, the delete will fail.

[1.5.e] Edit Users’ Roles

This is a useful tool for doing bulk edits of users' roles. For example in the screen shot below we are going to remove the user guest and all users in the AdminToolsUser role from the guestUserRole.
2: Editing in SLATE

[2.1] Entering edit mode

If you have sufficient privileges to edit something in SLATE, then editing is easy. To start editing, just click on Start Editing.

You will only be able to edit things that you have sufficient privileges to be able to edit. If you think you should be able to edit something, but cannot, ask the person that created it to give you access. See the Roles and Permissions section for more details.

[2.2] Components

Everything in SLATE is a component, for example

- A piece of text is a component
- An image is a component
- A page is a component
- The Registration Manager is a component
- A Pigeonhole is a component.

Each component has permissions set on it that give privileges to a particular group of users. For example, there is a permission on the Registration Manager that lets everyone in the AdminToolsUser group use the Registration Manager.

For more on privileges see the Roles and Permissions section of this guide.

For now we will assume that you have edit privileges on the page you are viewing.
If you enter edit mode by clicking on Start Editing, the page should look something like the figure below.

Looking at the screen shot below you can see that this page has two Text components, followed by a File component.

Each component is contained in a box that shows the extent of the component. At the top of the box are buttons that let you edit, delete and cut and paste the component.

Also, at the top of the box is a view privileges link that allows you to see who has what privileges on the component.
[2.2.a] Delete, Cut and Paste

When in editing mode you can delete a component by clicking on Delete above a component. There is NO UNDELETE function, so make sure you really want to delete!
To cut something to the clipboard, just click on *Cut*. You can cut many items at a time, and then paste them all in one go. If you need to clear the clipboard, then use click on *Clear Clipboard* at the top of the page.

![Image of clipboard interface](image)

Note that when something is cut to the clipboard it is not deleted – it is just hidden from your view. If you clear the clipboard, or log out, then any cut items return to their original position. Only when you paste a component does it get moved to the new location.

**[2.2.b] Inserting a Component**

To insert a component use the insert tool in edit mode.

![Image of insert tool](image)

Clicking on *here* will create (immediately) the selected component at that place on the page. You will be taken straight to the edit screen for the
new component. If you want to create a new page, or a component that takes up a whole page, then use insert page at the top of the screen.

[2.3] Text

Above you can see the first components on the page is a Text component that has text beginning 'Robustness...'. We will edit this piece of text. Clicking on Edit in the Text box will take us to an edit screen.
From the edit screen you can edit the piece of text. To get things like headings, tables and lists there is 'mark up' you can put in the text. What is available can be seen by clicking on the View Help link.

For example, to display the heading *Robustness*, all we have to do is enter

\texttt{\subsubsection{Robustness}}

To get an unordered list we just have put (+) at the beginning of each line (remembering to no leave an empty line if items are part of the same list)

\begin{itemize}
\item (+) First list item 1
\item (+) First list item 2
\item (+) Second list item 1
\end{itemize}
Also some mathematical symbols are available. See the section Advanced Text for more information on adding things like links, tables, and raw HTML.

Clicking on Update will take you back to the web page so you can see your changes.

Clicking on Cancel will forget all the changes you have made on the screen.

**[2.4] Pages**

When you are in edit mode you can add pages by clicking on the Insert Page button at the top of the page.

Enter the title for the new page, and also the filename for the page. This is used in the URL for the page.

You can return to edit these properties later by clicking on Edit Page Properties at the top of the page.
[2.4.a] Moving Pages

If you need to move a page then you can cut and paste, just like with any other component. You can also change the order of pages in this way.

Pages appear as small components as below:
[2.4.b] Embedded Pages

Sometimes you will want to link to a website and make it appear to be inside SLATE, or you may want an entire page given over to displaying an embedded file, perhaps a .pdf. This can be done with an Embedded Page.

To create an Embedded Page, first create a new empty Page, then change the page type to an Embedded Page.

Click Update, then navigate to this new page and click on Edit Page Properties.

You can now enter the URL of the web page or file you want to display on the page.
[2.5] Advanced Text

[2.5.a] Links

When editing a Text component in SLATE you can make links in the way suggested in the on-line help.

To make a link to http://www.google.com/ just include the text:

http://www.google.com/

and it will automatically be turned into a link. The same applies with email addresses.

If you want to change the text you click on, try:

[http://www.google.com/ Search Google]

This will make a link to Google with the text you click on being ‘Search Google’.

Using two sets of brackets [[htt ... Google]] will make the link open in a new browser window.

[2.5.b] Relative Links

Links within SLATE can be made in the following way, so that if SLATE is moved to a new server, or a set of pages are copied and pasted as a whole, the links will still work.

1. We are editing text on page slate.mydomain/slate/Slate/Introduction/Chapter1.

2. We want to link to the page slate.mydomain/slate/Slate/Introduction/Chapter2.

3. We use the text [://../Chapter2 see Chapter2] to make a relative link to Chapter 2.

Note that relative links are not updated in this version when pages are moved by copy and paste.

The rest of the text editing features are explained by the on-line help. If something doesn’t work as you expected it to, then make sure you haven’t got an extra blank line, or a missing blank line.
[2.6] Files and Images

There are several ways that SLATE can put a file on the web for you.

1. **FILE**: The file is uploaded and a link is provided on the web page to download the file.

2. **EMBEDDED FILE**: Similar to File, but instead of a link, space on the web page is given to the browser to display the file. A good example is when a .pdf file is displayed on a web page.

3. **IMAGE**: An image is uploaded, scaled if necessary, and displayed as images usually are on web pages.

[2.6.a] File and Embedded File

After inserting a File or Embedded File component you are presented with the File edit page.

Simply click on the *Browse* button and find the file you want to upload. If you want to, you can change the file name that the file will have on the server in the *Filename* box. If a file has already been uploaded, then it's file name will be shown.

Then click *Update*.

If you want an embedded file that takes up a whole page, see the Embedded Page section.

[2.6.b] Images

To upload images insert an Image component.
The File and Filename boxes work in exactly the same way as the ones for a File.

The Title and Caption boxes allow text to be put above and below the image respectively.

The Alignment option controls where the image will be placed on the page.

If you enter values in the Width and Height boxes, then the image will be scaled to fit inside the width and height (pixels) that you give. Note that the scaling is done before the image is saved, so the original image is lost. This means that once an image is uploaded it cannot be made larger.

**[2.7] LaTeX**

One of the powerful features in SLATE is the ability to be able to quickly put pieces of LaTeX on a web page. To do this insert a LaTeX component.
In the main box shown you can type any LaTeX commands. These are inserted into the ‘body’ of the LaTeX document. There is a limit on the amount of LaTeX that can be displayed in a LaTeX component.

There is a special LaTeX package is used to compile the LaTeX inside a standard article document class. This package reports an error when the generated output is longer than SLATE is configured for.

If you want to insert things into the ‘preamble’ then expand the Preamble link and another box will appear that can take such input.
If you need to include files, such as graphics and LaTeX input files, then these can be uploaded by expanding the *Includes* link.
Currently there is a limit of 5 include files in each \LaTeX{} component.

Note than any graphics, such as JPEGS, that are uploaded, are automatically turned into .eps files. Therefore, you can use \texttt{\usepackage{my.jpg}} rather than having to first create the .eps file.

After clicking on update, the results of compiling the \LaTeX{} are shown.
Any problems with the compilation can be read from the LaTeX output.
[2.8] Index

An index component lists the pages that are below the given page. This is a useful component for introduction pages. The index is updated automatically when you add or remove a page, or change the order of the pages.
3: Roles and Privileges

SLATE has a simple, yet powerful system of Roles and Privileges.

[3.1] Privileges

Each component in SLATE is controlled by allowing a user access by the way of four standard privileges:

[3.1.a] Read
Generally this allows the user to read the component, that is to see it on a web page and to download it.

[3.1.b] Use
Generally this allows the user to use the component, such as use the User Manager. For most components, such as Text, this has no meaning.

[3.1.c] Edit
This allows the user to edit the component. For Text this would allow changing the Text, for a Quiz this would be allowing uploading a replacement Quiz.

[3.1.d] Delete
This allows the user to delete the object COMPLETELY from SLATE.

[3.2] Viewing Privileges

When in editing mode, on the right of every component is a link to View privileges. Clicking on this lists every role, and the privileges that each role has for that component.
You need to have *edit* privilege on a component in order to see the privileges of a component.

In the above screen shot only the *guestUser* and *wheel* roles have *read* privileges on the piece of *TEXT*. The *wheel* role also has all other privileges.
[3.3] Roles

The privileges above are not assigned on a per user basis, but are assigned to Roles. These are similar to groups in UNIX or Windows NT. There are a few default roles that are created in SLATE during installation.

[3.3.a] wheel

This is the 'Super User' role that has full read, use, edit, delete privileges on everything. This role is a protected role. A protected role always has full privileges on all components in SLATE. Also, the protected role is the only role that can create reserved components.

[3.3.b] guestUser

This is the role that the guest user has. Usually you will just want the guestUser role to have access to the Self-Registration tool. You may also want guestUser to have access to 'public' parts of the website.

[3.3.c] slateUser

This is a special role that controls the ability to log in to SLATE. If a user does not have the slateUser role then they will not be able to log in to SLATE. This role is automatically given to any users created in slate. You should not use it to give 'public access' to things – use the guestUser role instead. Note that if you want to stop a particular user from logging in to SLATE, then all you have to do is remove them from the slateUser role.

[3.3.d] AdminToolsUser

By default this role has the ability to use the User Manager and Registration Manager on the Admin Tools page.

[3.4] Changing Permissions

Which privileges different users have on a particular component can be changed when a user has edit and delete privileges on the component. The following section demonstrates how to change permissions on components in SLATE.
[3.4.a] Privilege Inheritance

By default, if you set a privilege on a component, then all components below it inherit all the privileges.

For example, consider the page layout below.

```
Welcome
  \-----\-----
    |     |    |
  Admin Tools
    \-----\-----
          |     |    |
STAT 101
          \-----\-----
             |     |    |
Lecture 1 Lecture 2 Slides
```

Now suppose that we have three roles: guestUser, AdminToolsUser, TA. Suppose we have three users: guest, teaching, admin. We place each user in the following roles, and only in the following roles.

**guest**: guestUser.

**teaching**: guestUser; TA.

**admin**: guestUser; AdminToolsUser.

Now suppose we want the following users to only have access to the following pages:

**guest**: Welcome; STAT 101; Lecture 1; Lecture 2.

**teaching**: All the pages guest can read, and also Slides.
admin: All pages except Slides.
To do this we first GRANT read access to guestUser on Welcome. To do this we Edit Page Properties of Welcome and expand the View Privileges link.
Note that the *wheel* role is the **protected role** that always has all privileges, and the *slateUser* role is a special role that a user must have to be able to log in to SLATE.

We set the privileges to **Don't Inherit Privileges** so that *Welcome* only has privileges dictated by what we set on *Welcome*.

After clicking on *Update*, we return to the page editing view and create the *STAT 101 page*. Returning to the *Welcome* page in editing mode we can click on *View Privileges* and see that the *guestUser* read privilege has been inherited by *STAT 101*.

Therefore, we do not have to set any privileges on *STAT 101*, inheritance has done this for us.

Similarly, we can create the *Lecture 1* and *Lecture 2* pages, and inheritance will ensure that the privileges are set correctly.

When we create the *Slides* page, we have two options:

- **DENY** the *AdminToolsUser* role and the *guestUser* role, and **GRANT** the *TA* role.
- *Don't Inherit Privileges*, and *GRANT* the *TA* role.

The latter is the preferred method, as it is the most robust. The former would mean that if we *GRAN*Ted, say, the *slateUser* role at the *STAT 101* page, then any user with the *slateUser* role would gain access to *Slides*, as privileges would be inherited. The second option stops this.

For the *Admin Tools* we do a similar thing.

To find out the meaning of the *use* privilege for a particular component, look at the component's section of this manual.
### Privileges Table

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<th>Delete</th>
<th>Edit</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AdminToolsUser</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guestUser</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slateUser</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wheel</td>
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<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
<td>GRANT DENY INHERIT</td>
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</table>
4: Reserved Components

There are some components that can only be created by a member of the protected role. These are currently:

- User Manager
- Registration Manager
- Grade Manager
- Self-Register
- Password Changer

These components are reserved as they can be used to raise a user's privilege level.

5: Advanced Components

SLATE allows grades for student to be entered, edited and published to students. Instructors can use Excel spreadsheets to import and export grades.

[5.1] Tasks and Grades

We must first explain how SLATE knows which students should have a grade for what. In SLATE, something that can be graded is called a Task. A Task may be a piece of work that is submitted on-line using SLATE, or a perhaps a mid-term done in class that the instructor wants to publish grades using SLATE.

SLATE needs to know which students can do, and have grades for, which Tasks. Therefore, each Task has one or more roles associated with it. A student must have one of these roles to do the Task, to be graded in that Task.

A Grade in SLATE is associated with a Task and a student. A Grade may have more than one value, ordered by their date of entry. Grades may have any textual representation, that is an combination of numbers or letters.
We will now introduce the components that allow students to do Tasks, then we will finally describe how to publish grades in a Grade Book, and edit grades using the Grade Manager.

[5.2] Quiz

SLATE includes a Java applet that enables students to complete on-line quizzes.

Quizzes are written in LaTeX using the SlateQuiz package. This package is available for download when you edit a Quiz in SLATE. There is also a demo latex file available when editing a Quiz that gives the best introduction to using the package.

To use the demo, download demoSlateQuiz.tex and slatequiz.sty into the same directory. Run latex demoSlateQuiz.
As with LaTeX components you can use include files when compiling a quiz.

Once you have compiled your quiz, you can upload the .xml file that LaTeX generates for you together with any include files using the form above.

Note that it may take some time to compile the LaTeX for the quiz. In the current version there is no indication of the progress that is being made on the compilation. However, there is plenty of output when the page finally loads to find any errors.
[5.3] Pigeonhole

A PIGEONHOLE is the component that is used to allow students to submit work on-line. As an example we will set up SLATE so students in the STAT101Students role can submit a file to be graded.

Firstly, when creating a PIGEONHOLE, make sure that the students' role has the Use privilege, as above.

Next, we have to choose a name for the Task, which will also label the Grades, and use the description to leave a note for students on what the format of the file should be. Also see Tasks and Grades.

We must also select the role or roles that the students must be in, in order to be able to upload a file.
Also, we can set the times between which the pigeonhole will be open, that is when students in the selected roles are allowed to upload a file.

Pigeonhole: STAT101 Assignment 1

OPEN (Open: Feb 16, 2006 9:00 AM to Feb 17, 2006 6:00 PM)

Please upload a .doc or .pdf file as your work for Assignment 1.

- List Submissions
Once students have submitted files, the instructor can click on 'view submissions', to download the students submissions.

[5.4] Assignment

An Assignment is similar to a Pigeonhole, but it has extra functionality. One of the shortcomings of a Pigeonhole is that the marker still needs to print off the students work to annotate it. With the Assignment component, one can set up a marking scheme on-line, and mark the submissions without needing to print out anything. After grades are published, a student can see the marks and comments on their submission.

To create an Assignment, first create a new page, then change its kind to an Assignment. Check the privileges and make sure that the student's role has Use privilege.

Click Update, then go to the new Assignment page and click on Edit Page Properties.

Setting up an Assignment begins in exactly the same way as for a Pigeonhole.

Also see Tasks and Grades.
After setting up as before, we move on to setting the marking scheme.
The marking scheme is divided into parts. Any number of parts may be added. A part may correspond to grading a particular question, part of a question, or perhaps a skill, such as use of English. Click on Add to add another part. The order of the parts may be changed by clicking on Swap.

As you can see from the above screen shot, you need to enter a description for the part. There are two descriptions, one is visible only by the student – markers can see both descriptions when marking.

The markers of the assignment must have Edit and Use privileges. Make sure that a role that all the markers have, has these privileges. In this example all the markers will have to have the TA role.

A student gets the same view as for a PIGEONHOLE. A marker gets a similar view as the instructor view for a PIGEONHOLE, but there are two more options.

In order to mark the work there are two options.

- 'List Submissions', then choose from the list which to mark
- Click on 'Start Marking', which takes you to the next unmarked submission.
Whichever you choose, you will be presented with the marking screen.

From here you can fill in the marking form on the right, while viewing the submitted work on the left.

When you have finished marking the piece of work, you can check the box to publish the grade to the Grade Book straight immediately. Alternatively, you can delay publishing the grade and click on 'publish all grades' on the previous screen later.

Click 'Save and goto next' or 'Save and finish' to save the marks.

Students can see the marks for each part, and the comments. These are available after the grade has been published.
Note that once you have started marking work you cannot delete any parts of the marking scheme that have had marks saved. You can change the descriptions, max score, and the order of the parts.

[5.5] Grade Manager

The Grade Manager lets you edit grades directly, including importing and exporting as Excel spreadsheets. A Grade Manager is a reserved component, so can only be created by the protected role. Also see Tasks and Grades.

When you create (or edit) a Grade Manager you choose the roles for which Grade Manager manages the grades for. You must also give the roles that
are to use the Grade Manager Use privilege. For safety, it is recommended that you select Don't inherit privileges, so that only the roles selected on the Grade Manager have Use privilege.

Recall that in SLATE grades are entered for tasks that a student does, and a task is associated to a role, or roles. The students in the associated roles can have grades for the task.

[5.5.a] Edit Task

To edit the description, name and the roles a task is for select a task and click on Edit Task.

[5.5.b] Delete Task

To delete a task select a task to edit, then click on task. You cannot delete tasks which are associated with another component, such as a PIGEONHOLE, or where there are grades for the task.

[5.5.c] Create a New Task

To create a task you must enter a name and select the roles a student must have at least one of, in order to record a grade. Task names must
be unique, so it is a good idea to include the course code, year and semester in the task name.

[5.6] Grade Book

In SLATE, you can set up a Grade Book anywhere. On editing a Grade Book you can choose which roles have their grades displayed. Note that in SLATE a Grade Book is really a view of the grades in SLATE.

Also see Tasks and Grades.

Students need Read and Use privileges. They need Use to be able to see the history of a grade. Someone that is able to see all the grades needs Edit privileges.

In particular, this means that deleting a Grade Book does not delete any grades. In fact, there is no way to delete grades from SLATE.
The above screen short shows a Grade Book that will display all grades for students with the role STAT101STUDENTS. This means that all tasks that are associated to the role STAT101STUDENTS will be displayed.
Grade History

**STAT101 Assignment 1**

*Brat Stimpson*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Date Entered</th>
<th>Entered By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feb 20, 2006 12:07 PM</td>
<td>Super User</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>