

External tool

The external tool activity in Totara Learn lets you incorporate content from external LTI tool providers.

LTI stands for Learning Tools Interoperability, which is a standard for developing and integrating external learning applications with a learning platform, such as Totara Learn. Using LTI, external learning applications can receive data from and send data to your Totara Learn site.

Content creators can add an external tool directly to a course. Alternatively, a Site Administrator can add one at the system level, so that Course Creators can reuse it throughout the site, which is great for shared applications.

Totara Learn supports LTI 1.0, LTI 1.1, LTI 1.3, LTI 2.0 and the [LTI Advantage](#) extensions, the latter of which adds:

- **Names and Role Provisioning Services:** Securely sends details for course participants and groups
- **Deep Linking:** A better way of adding links and content from an external tool
- **Assignment and Grade Services:** Transmits grades and comments left by a Trainer between Totara Learn and the external tool



All activities and resources are also available in the [Totara Mobile app](#). Please note that [activities and resources](#) may work slightly differently in the Mobile app compared to on a desktop site.

Add an external tool (to a course)

To add an external tool to your course page:

1. Click **Turn editing on**.
2. Select **External Tool** from the **Add an activity/ resource** menu.
3. Enter the activity name, this is the name that appears on the course page for Learners.
4. Customise the available settings, see [External tool settings](#) to learn more.
5. Click **Save and display** (or **Save and return to course**).

External tool settings

Setting	Description	Notes
Activity name	Give the title you wish the Learners to see on the course page.	-
Activity description	Give a short description here.	-
Display description on course page	Choose to show the description along with the activity name.	-
Display activity name when launched	Have this appear when the Learner clicks the link.	-
Display activity description when launched	Have this appear when the Learner clicks the link.	-
Preconfigured tool	This is how Totara communicates with the tool provider. If in doubt, leave as default.	-
Select content	If enabled, this button allows you to configured any tool specific settings, whereas previously you would have had to launch the tool to do this.	-
Tool URL	This is the URL of the external tool you are connecting to.	-
Secure launch URL	Similar to Launch URL , but used instead of the launch URL if high security is required. Totara will use the secure launch URL instead of the launch URL if the Totara site is accessed through SSL, or if the tool configuration is set to always launch through SSL. The Launch URL may also be set to an https address to force launching through SSL, and this field may be left blank.	-

Launch container	This is how the external tool will be displayed. The options are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Default: If in doubt; leave as default • Embed: The external tool will be embedded in the Totara course page with blocks and navigation bar • Embed without blocks: The external tool will be embedded in the Totara course page, but without blocks • New Window: The external tool will open in a new window 	-
Consumer key	The consumer key must be provided by the tool provider. The method of obtaining a consumer key varies between tool providers. It may be an automated process, or it may require a dialogue with the tool provider. Tools which do not require secure communication from Totara and do not provide additional services (such as grade reporting) may not require a resource key.	-
Shared secret	For pre-configured tools, it is not necessary to enter a shared secret here, as the shared secret will be provided as part of the configuration process. This field should be entered if creating a link to a tool provider which is not already configured. If the tool provider is to be used more than once in this course, adding a course tool configuration is a good idea.	-
Custom parameters	Custom parameters are settings used by the tool provider. For example, a custom parameter may be used to display a specific resource from the provider. Each parameter should be entered on a separate line using a format of "name=value"; for example, "chapter=3". It is safe to leave this field unchanged unless directed by the tool provider.	See more in the Custom parameters section below.
Icon URL	The icon URL allows the icon that shows up in the course listing for this activity to be modified. Instead of using the default LTI icon, an icon which conveys the type of activity may be specified. If Totara is accessing Totara through SSL then use the secure icon URL field.	-
Share launcher's name with the tool	Specify whether the full name of the user launching the tool should be shared with the tool provider. The tool provider may need launchers' names to show meaningful information within the tool.	This setting may be overridden in the tool configuration.
Share launcher's email with the tool	Specify whether the email address of the user launching the tool will be shared with the tool provider. The tool provider may need launcher's email addresses to distinguish users with the same name, or send emails to users based on actions within the tool.	This setting may be overridden in the tool configuration.
Accept grades from the tool	Specify whether the tool provider can add, update, read, and delete grades associated only with this external tool instance. Some tool providers support reporting grades back to Totara based on actions taken within the tool, creating a more integrated experience.	This setting may be overridden in the tool configuration.
Common module settings	See Common module settings to learn more.	-
Activity completion	See Activity completion to learn more.	-
Restrict access	See Restrict access to learn more.	-
Tags	See Tags to learn more.	-

Custom parameters

Variable	Source
\$Context.id	Course id (system generated)
\$Context.title	Course fullname
\$Context.label	Course shortname
\$Context.sourcedId	Course idnumber
\$Context.longDescription	Course summary
\$Context.timeFrame.begin	Course start date

\$CourseSection.title	Course fullname
\$CourseSection.label	Course shortname
\$CourseSection.sourcedId	Course idnumber
\$CourseSection.longDescription	Course summary
\$CourseSection.timeFrame.begin	Course start date
\$User.id	User id (system generated)
\$User.username	User profile username
\$Person.name.full	User profile first name + surname
\$Person.name.given	User profile first name
\$Person.name.family	User profile surname
\$Person.email.primary	User profile email address
\$Person.sourcedId	User profile idnumber
\$Person.name.middle	User profile middle name
\$Person.address.street1	User profile street
\$Person.address.locality	User profile city
\$Person.address.country	User profile country
\$Person.address.timezone	User profile timezone
\$Person.phone.primary	User profile phone 1
\$Person.phone.mobile	User profile phone 2
\$Person.webaddress	User profile URL
\$Membership.role	Comma separated list of roles. If the user has the capability mod/lti:manage in the activity, then Instructor is returned. Otherwise, Learner is returned. Also, if the user is a Site Administrator, then full URN or URI values are added to the list, depending on the version of LTI tool used.

As an example you could have three parameters like this:

```
acme_tool_user_fullname = $Person.name.full
acme_tool_course_id = $Context.sourcedId
acme_tool_user_roles = $Membership.role
```

Managing external tools

As a Site Administrator you can add and manage site-wide external tools, that is tools that will be made available for everyone to use. To access these settings from the quick-access menu go to *Plugins > Activity modules > External tool > Manage tools*.

On the **Manage tools** page you can do several important things. You can add a tool at the system/site level by adding the tool URL or by selecting the **configure a tool manually** link. You can also select **Manage preconfigured tools** to add preconfigured tools, or select **Manage external tool registrations** to configure new registrations.

Additionally, you can see a list of configured tools under the **Tools** heading.

Add a new tool (system level)

You can add and configure tools at the system level by following these steps:

1. Log in as **Site Administrator** or **Site Manager**.
2. Go to *Quick-access menu > Plugins > Activity modules > External tool > Manage tools*.
3. On the **Manage tools** page, either enter the tool URL and select **Add**, or select the link **configure a tool manually**.

The screenshot shows the TotaraLearn interface. At the top is a dark navigation bar with the TotaraLearn logo and menu items: Home, Dashboard, Record of Learning, Performance, Team, and Find Learning. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: Home / Site administration / Plugins / Activity modules / External tool / Manage tools. On the left is a 'PLUGINS' sidebar menu with a search icon and a list of categories: Plugins overview, Activity modules (expanded), and External tool (expanded). Under 'Activity modules' are items like Manage activities, Common activity settings, Assignment, Book, Certificate, Chat, Database, Seminar, Feedback, Folder, Forum, Glossary, IMS content package, Label, Lesson, Page, Quiz, File, and SCORM package. Under 'External tool' is 'Manage tools', which is highlighted. The main content area has a heading 'Manage tools'. Below it is an 'Add tool' section with a text input field labeled 'Tool URL...' and a green 'Add' button. Below the button is the text 'Alternatively, you can configure a tool manually.' and two links: 'Manage preconfigured tools' and 'Manage external tool registrations'. Below this is a 'Tools' section with the text 'There are no external tools configured.'

If you have an LTI cartridge then you can enter that URL (as in the first option of step 3 above) and all the required information will be automatically configured for you.

When adding a new tool there are a number of configuration options, most of which are the same as when setting up an external course on a course (see above). However, there are some that differ such as:

Setting	Description	Notes
Tool configuration usage	This allows you to determine if a preconfigured tool is available as an option when adding an External Tool on a course, or if it appears as a separate item in the activity chooser. If you decide to list it as a separate item then it will also display any description you have entered for the tool, in the activity chooser.	-

Content-Item Message	Enabling this option will mean the Select content button is active when this preconfigured tool is added to a course. The button will enable the trainer who is setting up the tool to access any specific configuration within Totara, rather than having to launch the tool to access additional configurations (as was previously the case). This helps ensure that learners do not end up being confronted with unconfigured tools (where the Trainer had not realised additional configurations were required within the tool itself).	-
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You will need to complete the two mandatory fields (**Tool name** and **Tool URL**), but it is recommended that you configure each setting as required.

External tool configuration

There are required fields in this form marked *.

▼ Tool settings

Tool name* ⓘ	<input type="text"/>
Tool URL* ⓘ	<input type="text"/>
Tool description ⓘ	<input type="text"/>
Consumer key ⓘ	<input type="text"/>
Shared secret ⓘ	<input type="text"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Unmask
Custom parameters ⓘ	<input type="text"/>
Tool configuration usage ⓘ	Show as preconfigured tool when adding ▼
Default launch container ⓘ	Embed, without blocks ▼
Content-Item Message * ⓘ	<input type="checkbox"/>
Icon URL * ⓘ	<input type="text"/>
Secure icon URL * ⓘ	<input type="text"/>

Show less...

▼ Privacy

Share launcher's name with tool ⓘ	Delegate to trainer ▼
Share launcher's email with tool ⓘ	Delegate to trainer ▼
Accept grades from the tool ⓘ	Delegate to trainer ▼
<input type="checkbox"/> Force SSL ⓘ	

▼ Miscellaneous

Organization ID ⓘ

Organization URL ⓘ

Save changes

Cancel

Manage preconfigured tools

Both **Manage preconfigured tools** and **Manage external tool registrations** allow you to see which tools have been successfully configured, which ones are pending, and which ones have been rejected.

Once you have added tools you will also be able to come into this section to register them (tick icon), edit their settings (cog icon) and delete them (cross icon).

Manage external tool registrations

External tool registrations ⓘ

CONFIGURED

PENDING

ACCEPTED

REJECTED

[Configure a new external tool registration](#)

There are no unregistered external tool registrations configured.

LTI (Experimental)

By using the **LTI** authentication plugin, together with the **Publish as LTI tool** enrolment plugin, you can allow remote users to access selected courses and activities. In other words, Totara functions as an LTI tool provider. Find out more (including setup) in the **Publish as LTI tool** section of the [enrolment help page](#).