

# GAC Corporate Academy, Moodle and ISO: Partnering for Corporate Learning Excellence

## The GAC Corporate Academy Story



*“The journey from GCA’s start just seven years ago to where we are today has been an incredible one... In that time we have seen both the learning culture of GAC as a multinational organisation Our ISO 29990 certification is important to us because it sets where we have reached today as a benchmark of quality standards from which to continually innovate and improve over the coming years in order to continue to fulfil our commitment to deliver the learning strategies of our customers.”*

*Damien O’Donoghue, General Manager, GAC Corporate Academy*

The GAC Group is a global shipping, logistics and marine service provider, based in the UAE and serving customers in more than 300 offices and 40 countries around the world.

Bengt Lindwall, the Group founder, established GAC in 1956 on the basis of what he called the “GAC Spirit”. This was, and continues to be, a corporate culture focusing on excellence in our relationships between partners, employees and customers. The GAC Spirit establishes that the biggest asset of the company is its people, but with a workforce of more than 10,000 people spread around the world, GAC was presented with a unique set of learning and development opportunities.

GAC Corporate Academy (GCA) was established in 2007 to achieve the company’s learning and growth objectives.

In seven years, GCA has come a long way. As a pioneer in eLearning-based corporate academies, GCA was faced with the challenge of developing an effective corporate learning programme from scratch. This included:

- Aligning and continuously evolving the learning and development programme with Group strategy.
- Measuring the contribution of learning programmes to improved work performance.
- The use of social constructivism in a corporate environment to establish an effective learning organisation culture.



- Establishment of course design and development processes that gain senior stakeholder buy-in and support while enabling rapid course development.
- Building learning programmes based on a solid learning management system that is flexible enough to evolve with us.

Moodle has provided a strong foundation for GCA's courses since 2007 and its flexibility, support and continuous development have meant that it remains as useful and relevant to our learning requirements as ever.

Today, GCA has reached a new level of maturity. The challenges have been met head-on, and have resulted in a stronger sense of identity than ever before. GCA has become an integral part of the Group HR culture with strategic support at all levels of the organisation. GCA's tagline 'Delivering your learning strategy' operates in alignment with the Group tagline of 'Delivering your strategy', emphasising our strong sense of customer-focus.

GCA's recent ISO 29990 certification is a clear symbol of this maturity. It demonstrates that GCA is operating at an international standard and with just 30+ other organisations in the world with this level of accreditation, it demonstrates our commitment to delivering robust, richly set up courses with a focus on quality, measurement and accountability.



## GCA and Moodle: Leading the Way in Corporate Learning

### Corporate eLearning statistics:

In 1995, only 4% of US companies offered eLearning in their professional development programs – today it is 77%.

The market for corporate eLearning is expected to grow 13% per year up through 2017.

*Source: Corporate Learning Goes Digital (Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, May 2014)*

The future of corporate eLearning is based on programmes that offer quality, flexibility of delivery based on the needs of the learners and measurement of impact. In partnership with Moodle, GCA continues to be at the forefront of corporate learning innovation.

The recent 'Corporate Learning Goes Digital' paper points out that online corporate learning is changing the rules of play in each of the four stages of the value chain of corporate learning:

- Defining what needs to be learned by understanding the competencies that need to be learned to achieve strategic goals.
- Designing courses in a way that understands who should learn what and how, with technology as the tool rather than the focus.
- Disseminating knowledge and enabling in a way that changes mindset and behavior in the workplace.
- Measuring knowledge and behavioural change to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of learning programmes.

GCA's focus has always been on developing GAC-specific courses with a high level of buy-in from senior management in line with Group strategy and the needs of our learners. It makes use of the latest in Moodle technology for course delivery and places strong emphasis on the measurement of impact of our courses to continually assess the effectiveness and relevance of our courses.

Moodle has worked particularly well at supporting GCA's corporate courses for a number of important reasons.



## **Course Development by GAC for GAC**

One of the advantages of the Moodle for GCA is the ability to create courses quickly and in direct response to an identified strategic need. The process of developing a course has been streamlined to take between just 4 weeks and 3 months, which makes it a powerful tool for availing timely learning opportunities.

Unlike generic off-the-shelf courses, GCA courses are written with the specific GAC context as the basis, including our strategic management system, GAC TIME.

## **Creating Communities of Professional Practice**

Moodle provides the ability to create communities of professional practice across international offices and work areas. GAC Group employees from locations as diverse as India, China, Dubai, UK and US can come together to share their best practice experiences and learn together. This way ongoing support can also continue long after the course is over. The Moodle eLearning courses allow the company strategies and processes to be standardised and integrated across the entire GAC World.

## **Social Constructivism at the Heart of eLearning**

The social constructivist model at the heart of Moodle forms the ideal platform for GCA courses, because the courses themselves are rooted in real world practical knowledge and experience rather than purely theoretical learning.

Social Constructivism is based on the idea that when people come together to collaborate and construct knowledge around a meaningful context, real learning takes place. Martin Nystrand, a leader in the social constructivist field, points out that “it promotes retention and in-depth processing associated with the cognitive manipulation of information”.

In GCA, this model translates in the form of interactive courses that are activity and discussion-based and relate directly to the participants’ experience in the workplace. Throughout eLearning courses, participants post their activities to the forums and discuss real solutions together alongside their own jobs.

## GCA and ISO: Achieving International Learning Standards



*"Congratulations to GAC for the certification of their Learning Services under ISO 29990! It's the first such certification that I've heard of to be given to a learning organisation using Moodle. It's been a pleasure watching GCA's progress over recent years and I'm happy that Moodle can contribute to their success."*

**Martin Dougiamas, founder and CEO of Moodle Pty Ltd**

### *ISO 29990 - "Learning services for non-formal education and training".*

The objective of this International Standard is to provide a generic model for quality professional practice and performance, and a common reference for learning service providers (LSPs) and their clients in the design, development and delivery of non-formal education, training and development. This International Standard uses the term "learning services" rather than "training" in order to encourage a focus on the learner and the results of the process, and to emphasize the full range of options available for delivering learning services.

This International Standard focuses on the competency of LSPs. It is intended to assist organisations and individuals to select an LSP who will meet the organization's needs and expectations for competency and capability development and can be used to certify LSPs.



The ISO 29990 certification brings a whole new level of quality standard, accountability and measurement to the GCA table. There are currently only around 30 learning organisations in the world with this level of ISO accreditation. GCA is now one of the first organisations to be accredited in the Middle East and Africa, the first in Shipping, Marine and Logistics and believed to be the first Moodle user globally.

Achieving ISO certification has involved setting up a comprehensive set of operating procedures in line with the ISO 29990 standard. ISO provides GCA with a high level of measurement by establishing the baseline from which we work in order to continually evolve our ability to deliver the learning strategy of our customers.



For GCA's internal customers ie. the operating companies of the GAC Group, this accreditation gives our customers the assurance that GCA is delivering international standard courses that comply with recognised quality standards for learning service providers. The benefits reach not only the participants, but all those who are impacted by GAC becoming a better learning organisation including HR managers, team managers etc.



## GCA in Partnership With Moodle and ISO: Delivering Learning Excellence

Since 2007, Moodle has supported GCA to create and deploy our quality online courses. The Moodle LMS has provided both the flexibility to suit different course types, as well as the adaptability to allow for evolution in our course design as required.

### Course Portfolio

GCA's courses cover a wide range of subject areas and our portfolio continues to evolve to meet Group needs. Courses fall under the following key groupings, aligned with the GAC Group's strategic objectives.

#### GCA Course Portfolio

**New Employee Orientation courses** (including Introduction to the GAC World, HSE and Compliance and Ethics courses)

**Business English courses** (including the Global English Programme)

**Business Operations courses** (including Freight Forwarding Fundamentals, GAC Ship Agency, Air Freight Operations, Ocean Freight Operations, Oil Tanker Operations and Dry Cargo Operations)

**Commercial courses** (including Fundamental Selling Skills, GAC Sales Handbook, Profitable Customer Relationships, Key Account Management, Customer Relationship Management, Tender and Bid Management)

**Professional Development and Leadership courses** (including Personal and Professional Development, Team-based Leadership, Effective Business Writing, Effective Presentation Skills)

**Business Performance** (including GAC Finance Essentials, GAC TIME)

## Course Design and Development



*“What sets us apart in our approach to course design at GCA is the rigor we put into our processes. We are set up to be a financially self-sustaining business, so every dollar spent and earned is important. It means we are directly accountable to the GAC Group for the quality of our courses and our ability to respond to the needs of the many different business units who effectively make up our customer base. This makes it extremely important that we have a clear set of processes that gain senior management buy-in and involve relevant stakeholders like Business Experts and Course Ambassadors in the*

*development of every course.”*

*Waleed Jameel, Business Manager, GCA*

The GCA Course Design approach is a step by step process that is followed in the development of every course. This is formalised in our ISO Chapter **GCA Learning Management System (GAClearn)** as part of our Rapid Course Development process.

Our course design process starts with the involvement of Course Ambassadors and Course Owners from within the Group Senior Management and then uses the instructional design support of Business Experts for the development of our business-specific courses. The approval process for each course goes back to the Course Owners and Ambassadors to ensure it aligns with their expectations.

Once course design documents have been created and approved, the courses are uploaded to GAClearn, our Moodle-based LMS and a pilot course is launched. This is reviewed on completion by the GCA team and Course Owners, and updates made. Only then do we add the course to our Course Portfolio for nominations. All courses go through a regular 6-monthly review process to ensure they remain up to date and relevant to learning needs.

## Course Format



*"Watching GCA courses evolving all those years I can't but say that Moodle has been utilised very cleverly. The first years when eLearning was introduced in GAC employees the courses were set in a simple way utilising just the basics of Moodle. Year after year, eLearning became part of GAC's culture and courses evolved accordingly to meet participants and Group's strategy. GCA now follows Moodle's biannual releases and has developed the strength and the ability to quickly adopt Moodle's new features as soon as they are available on a site of 6000+ users. Moodle's stability among with the expertise of our Moodle Partner Pukunui, provide the security and stability a Corporate Academy needs."*

***Anna Krassa, GCA Learning Developer and Lead Mentor-Assessor for HRDNZ - Certification Central Administration***

GCA offers a number of different course formats depending on the learning requirements and these are also described in our ISO chapter on **GCA Learning Management System (GAClearn)**.

- . eLearning 6 week courses (facilitated)
- . eLearning 4 week courses (facilitated)
- . eLearning self-paced courses (non-facilitated)
- . 2-day workshops (facilitated)

The eLearning 4 and 6 week courses are all 20 hours programmes that require respectively 5 or 3.5 hours weekly from participants. In each weekly module, these courses include a Welcome video from a senior stakeholder, module learning outcomes, self-assessed content provided through Moodle lessons or lesson activity, a forum-based activity and sometimes an additional activity like an assignment, questionnaire, quiz or crossword. Forums are asynchronous learning experiences where participants complete practical activities relevant to that week's topic. These often include interviews with management on specific topics or discussing specific work-related experiences. Points are awarded each week for both the participant submission as well interaction with other participants in these forums as an incentive to ask questions and expand the learning experience.

The end of each course is either a Mastery Quiz based on questions from the weekly self assessment lessons, or a major project.

In the last year, GCA has found an increasing role for self-paced eLearning courses where a specific knowledge set is required to be taught and then tested to verify the learning. This includes our recent Compliance and Ethics course which was compulsory for the entire Group to

complete. This learning model also applies to GAC's in-house software training where instructional videos and quizzes based on the content are working well to ensure a baseline of knowledge.

Other important Moodle features that are used extensively in GCA courses include:

- Gradebook organising weighted items in weeks or modules,
- Activity completion tracks that help participants and facilitators to easily monitor their progress,
- All kinds of reports (activity report, complete report, outline report etc) that are utilised not only to monitor performance but also as evidence circulated within the company when needed,
- Advanced grading, mostly rubrics for accuracy and transparency in assessment,
- Conditionals to force a sequential and scaffolding path specially in self-paced courses,
- Questionnaire used for course evaluation feedback (this will be discussed further in the Measurement section).



*“Pukunui have partnered with GCA since 2009. Over this time we have seen GCA take their Learning Management System into new and uncharted waters in delivering exceptional corporate training. We were not surprised to hear that GCA has achieved the ISO 29990 Certification as it reflects their commitment to excellence in delivering world class training. We wish to congratulate the GCA Team on their achievement and look forward to working with them as they continue to expand the quality of training services they offer.”*

***Dom Seneque, Business Manager, Pukunui Technology***

## Facilitator Training



*“An important part of the ISO certification has been to standardise the processes that the facilitators use in our eLearning courses to ensure a consistently high quality of delivery. It is also essential that our facilitator community themselves continue to grow and develop in their ability to work with the ever-evolving tools and techniques that become available as Moodle itself grows. Working with our facilitator community to achieve both of these aims is a high priority for GCA since they are the face of GCA that our customers see when they undertake courses.”*

### Danielle Ali Shah, Facilitator Team Leader, GCA

The GCA Facilitator team consists of personnel employed by the GAC Group or GAC Operating Companies, Contract Facilitators on an outsourced basis and GAC Subject Matter Experts. The processes involved in managing facilitators fall under our ISO chapters for **Facilitators** and **Course Facilitation**.

The role of the facilitators is to act as the central resource for course operations, and is the point-of-contact with participants and the GCA Team. The course facilitator manages each course and guides participants to desired outcomes, and is responsible for:

- Day to day facilitation
- Course administration
- Course assessment/grading
- Voyage Reports
- Course Feedback/Evaluation

Because of the unique nature of facilitation in GCA courses that requires both subject matter expertise and competence in facilitating social constructivist courses through the Moodle LMS, a facilitator training process is in place to ensure facilitators have access to the content and the learning processes.

A train-the-trainer method is in place for new facilitators, and includes a three phase process starting with undergoing our foundation course ‘Introduction to the GAC World’ (IGW) as a participant to ensure a base level of knowledge of the GAC business and course processes.

In the second phase the Facilitator Trainee operates as a Co-Facilitator on a live course and actively assists in managing and running the course. Finally, the Facilitator Trainee is given charge of a full course where the Training Facilitator is a silent observer and provides on-demand support. At the end of this phase, the new facilitator is “type-certified” for a particular course, meaning they are assessed as being able to competently manage facilitation of the course.



Every two years the GAC Facilitation Course (GFC) is run as an accreditation process for all facilitators. GFC operates as an eLearning course in itself, introducing and reinforcing facilitator best practice processes as well as developing an excellent understanding of the pedagogical background of our courses and what is required of facilitators.

The GCA Facilitator Forum (GFF) is a GAClearn-based course that provides an area/ field for facilitators to exchange experiences, discuss issues, learn new skills, and for the GCA team to have a regular communication channel with the external facilitators. All facilitators are encouraged to be involved in GFF discussions on a regular basis to remain an active member of the GCA team.

## Measurement and Evaluation

One of the most important questions in corporate learning these days is; “What measurable successes – in business-speak: returns on investment – can be achieved by investing in continuing education for employees?” (Corporate Learning Goes Digital).

As a corporate learning academy that remains directly accountable to the GAC Group, GCA is acutely aware of the importance of this question and has a multi-level approach to the measurement of our learning programmes. These are formalised in our ISO chapter **Course Evaluation**.

- One of the **GAC Group’s key Critical Success Factors (CSFs)** relates to the development of ‘Trained and Motivated Personnel’. The current KPI is the number of training hours per company within the Group, and GCA provides annual results to each company for their own reporting.
- A two-stage **course evaluation process** is in place for all courses, based on Kirkpatrick’s four-level process. This process measures the reaction of the participants (what they thought and felt about the training), learning (the increase in knowledge or capability), behaviour (the extent of behaviour change and capability improvement) and results (the effects on the business or environment as a result of the training).

End of course evaluations take place in the last week of the eLearning courses. The focus of these questions is on how well the learning outcomes of the course have been met and in particular evaluate both the learning and the learning service.

The second phase of evaluation measures changes that have taken place as a result of the training and in GCA this is achieved through a Three-Month Post Course Evaluation. It questions the extent to which the knowledge and skills have been applied in work practices, changes in job performance and support received.



- The **Annual Group Employee Engagement Survey (EES)** measures Group-wide attitudes to a number of indicators, including GCA's learning and development programmes. The results of this survey play a key role in setting the strategic direction for GCA each year.



## In Conclusion

GAC Corporate Academy has a long-term commitment to being at the forefront of best practice in corporate eLearning. As the corporate learning organisation of the global GAC Group, GCA has worked in partnership with Moodle since its establishment to create tailored learning solutions that can continually grow and optimise the use of latest Moodle developments as well evolve with the Group Strategy.

ISO 29990 certification adds yet another dimension to the GCA picture, allowing us to align our processes to international quality standards and bringing added rigor in measuring both our processes and the results of our learning programmes.

Thanks to our close and ongoing partnership with Moodle and now ISO, GCA continues to position itself amongst the elite of corporate learning organisations for its high level of innovation and strategic vision.