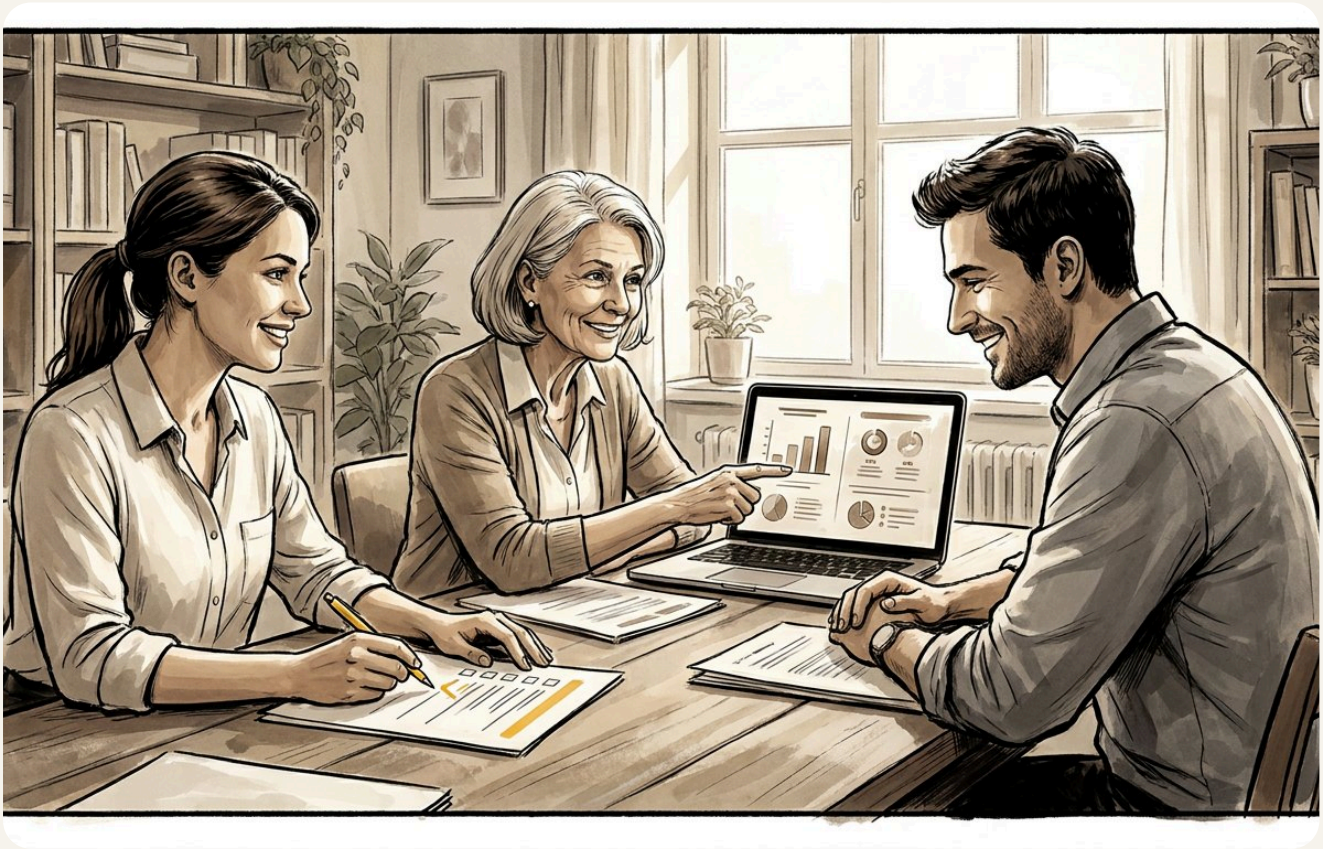
Choose the right online course platform

Five must-haves, a full buyer's checklist and a scoring table for comparing platforms side by side. Written for small Australian organisations choosing their first learning platform.



The right platform depends on who you train and whether you sell your courses. Settle those two questions first. Then use this guide to compare two or three platforms on the five things a small organisation needs most.

A learning platform is the website where learners log in, do your courses and get their certificates. You may also hear it called a learning management system, or LMS. This guide uses "platform" for both.

Must-have 1: it fits your learners and your sales plans

Platforms are built for different jobs. A selling platform gives you sales pages and payments for courses you sell to the public. A training platform gives you groups, managers and reports for your own staff, volunteers or members.

If you mainly	Look for
Train your own staff or volunteers	Groups or branches, manager reports, automatic enrolment, due dates and reminders
Train members of an association	Member log-in, a course catalogue, certificates with CPD points and member-only pricing
Train your customers or client companies	Separate areas for each client, your branding, bulk enrolment and reports each client can see
Sell courses to the public	Sales pages, a checkout, coupons, bundles, payment options and email marketing links

> **The quick rule we use**
>
> Choose LearnWorlds if you sell courses. Choose TalentLMS if you train your own people. Use the rest of this guide to test that rule against your needs.

Must-have 2: it is easy to use on a phone

Many staff and volunteers will open your course on a phone, often between other tasks. A platform designed for laptops can still frustrate a phone user.

- [ ] Log-in is simple, and learners can reset their own password
- [ ] Course pages, videos and quizzes work on a phone without zooming
- [ ] Learners can stop and pick up where they left off
- [ ] The platform has an app, or the mobile website is good enough without one
- [ ] Buttons and text meet accessibility guidelines, and the vendor can show you its accessibility statement

You can test this yourself during the free trial. Sign up as a learner on your own phone and complete a short course from start to finish.

Must-have 3: it tracks and reports what you need

Work out what your board, funders, regulator or clients will ask you to show. Then check that the platform can produce it without hours of spreadsheet work.

- [ ] Completion, progress and quiz results for each learner
- [ ] Reports by group, branch, team or client company
- [ ] Certificates with your branding, expiry dates and automatic reissue on renewal
- [ ] Scheduled reports emailed to managers
- [ ] Exports to a spreadsheet when you need to combine data
- [ ] Support for SCORM files (a common course file format), if you buy or build courses in other tools

A SCORM file built in one tool can run on most platforms and send results back to them.

Must-have 4: you know where learner data is stored

Learner names, email addresses and results are personal information. If your organisation is covered by the Privacy Act 1988, the Australian Privacy Principles apply when that information is stored or handled overseas.

LearnWorlds stores data in the European Union and TalentLMS stores it in the United States. Neither offers an Australian data region. That suits many small organisations, but check before you commit if a funder, government contract or client requires data to stay in Australia.

- [ ] We know which country stores our learner data
- [ ] We have read the vendor's privacy policy and data processing terms
- [ ] We know which other companies the vendor shares data with to run its service
- [ ] We have checked our contracts and funding agreements for data location rules
- [ ] We will collect only the learner information we need
- [ ] Our privacy policy tells learners where their data goes

> **Ask for advice on your situation**
>
> This guide gives general information only. If you handle sensitive information, such as health or client case details, talk to your privacy adviser before you choose a platform.

Must-have 5: you know the full cost and your exit

Platform fees change often, so check each platform's pricing page for current plans. You pay the platform direct, in US dollars, so the cost in Australian dollars moves with the exchange rate.

Cost to check	Questions to ask
Plan fee	Is it monthly or yearly? What limits apply to learners, courses or admins?
Learner numbers	Do you pay for every registered learner or only active ones? What happens when you go over?
Sales fees	Does the platform take a fee on each sale? Which payment providers can you use?
Add-ons	Are a branded app, extra admins, custom domains or advanced reports extra?
Set-up and content	Who will set up the school and build or load your courses?
Your time	Who will manage enrolments, reports and learner questions each week?

Plan your exit before you sign up

- Check that you can export learner records, completions and certificates to a spreadsheet.
- Keep your own copy of every course file, video and document outside the platform.
- Prefer SCORM files for courses you may move later, because they load into most platforms.
- Note the notice period and what happens to your data when you cancel.

LearnWorlds and TalentLMS suit different organisations

We set up both platforms for small organisations. Each one fits a different job, and both offer a free trial so you can test them with your own material.

Compare	For selling courses	For training your people
Platform	LearnWorlds	TalentLMS
Best fit	Experts, associations and businesses selling courses	Organisations training their own staff, volunteers or client teams
Selling	Built-in sales pages, checkout, coupons and bundles	Selling is possible, but it is a smaller part of the product
Your school website	A full site builder for home, course and sales pages	A simpler branded portal for learners
Managing learners	Suits individual learners who sign up themselves	Strong on groups, branches, managers and automatic enrolment
Course building	Interactive video, ebooks and assessments	A simple course builder that is quick to learn
Data location	European Union	United States

We may receive an affiliate fee if you sign up through our links. It doesn't change our advice or your price.

Full buyer's checklist

Tick each item you have confirmed during a trial or demo. Leave it blank if the vendor only promised it.

Fit

- [ ] We know who we train and whether we will sell courses
- [ ] The platform's main users look like our organisation
- [ ] It supports the number of learners we expect in two years

Learner experience

- [ ] A test learner completed a course on a phone
- [ ] The school can carry our logo, colours and web address
- [ ] Learners can find help without emailing us

Admin and reporting

- [ ] Learners can be enrolled in bulk and in groups
- [ ] Reminders and due dates run automatically
- [ ] Reports show what our board, funders or clients ask for
- [ ] Certificates show the details we need

Content

- [ ] Our existing course files, including SCORM, load correctly
- [ ] Our team can build simple courses without help
- [ ] Videos play well on slow connections

Data, cost and support

- [ ] We know where data is stored and it meets our obligations
- [ ] We have priced our likely plan in Australian dollars
- [ ] We know which features cost extra
- [ ] We can export our data if we leave
- [ ] Support responds during Australian business hours, or we can live with the delay

Score two or three platforms side by side

Give each must-have a weight from 1 to 3, where 3 means it matters most to you. Score each platform from 1 to 5, multiply by the weight and add up each column.

Must-have	Weight (1 to 3)	Platform A	Platform B	Platform C
Fits who we train and whether we sell				
Learner experience on a phone				
Tracking, certificates and reporting				
Data location and privacy				
Total cost and exit				
Ease of use for our admins				
Support and training				
Weighted total				

Questions to ask in a demo

Send these questions before the demo so the vendor shows you your own use, rather than a standard tour.

1. Can you show me a learner completing a course on a phone?
2. How would we set up groups for our teams, branches or client companies?
3. Can you show me the report a manager would receive each month?
4. How do certificates handle expiry and renewal?
5. Where is our learner data stored, and which companies help you process it?
6. Which features in this demo cost extra on the plan we would need?
7. What happens when we go over our learner limit?
8. How do we export learners, results and certificates if we leave?
9. What support do you offer, and in which time zones?

Record your decision

The platform we chose, and what we must confirm before signing up

Get your school set up for a fixed price

Compare LearnWorlds and TalentLMS on our platforms page, or ask us which suits you. Our school set-up starts at $2,000 ex GST and a basic school is live in a week.

Compare the platforms

Discover Learning, discoverlearning.com.au, info@discoverlearning.com.au, 1300 208 943

A member of the Hungry Minds family. Bigger appetite? Hungry Minds designs and builds full programs. Learning to design? Instructional Design Australia.

General information only. Check platform prices and features on the vendor site before you buy.

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