

Newsletter – administrator guide

This guide describes the **ZSK Newsletter** plugin (`local\_zsk\_local\_newsletter`) for manual mailings and the weekly “New content” digest.

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|---|---|

| **Frankenstyle** | `local\_zsk\_local\_newsletter` |

| **Server path** | `moodle/local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/` |

| **Current version** | 1.1.0 (see plugin `version.php`) |

| **Moodle** | 4.1 or later (4.4+ recommended) |

1. Installing the plugin

1. Copy the folder **`zsk\_local\_newsletter`** to `moodle/local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/` (not `local\_newsletter`, not `newsletter` alone).
2. Log in as administrator.
3. Open **Site administration → Notifications** and run the upgrade.
4. **Site administration → Development → Purge all caches**.
5. Ensure **cron** is running on the server (required for batch sending and the weekly digest).
6. Test e-mail delivery in Moodle (SMTP configured, no “suppress e-mail” test mode).

Entry point (top navigation): **Newsletter** – visible only to authorised users.

Alternatively: **Site administration → ZSK Newsletter** or
`/local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/index.php`

Submitting to moodle.org

You only need **one** plugin entry:

Field	Value
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Plugin type	`local`
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Frankenstyle	`local_zsk_local_newsletter`
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ZIP contents	Folder `zsk_local_newsletter/` with `version.php`, `README.md`, `lang/en/local_zsk_local_newsletter.php`
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No additional plugins, no bridge under `mod/`.

Migration from `local\_newsletter`

Legacy plugin with component `local\_newsletter` (folder often `local/newsletter/`). On first upgrade to the new version, data is copied automatically ****if the old plugin is still installed****. See `docs/MIGRATION.md`.

2. Controlling access (navigation & sending)

****Path:**** Newsletter → ****Manage newsletter access****

****URL:**** `/local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/manageaccess.php`

List	Meaning
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Navigation visible	Top menu entry + overview/help
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Send newsletters	Compose, footers, send
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Site administrators ****always**** have both permissions.

****Settings:**** Site administration → ZSK Newsletter → ****Settings****

Setting	Description
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| ****Show entry in navigation**** | Master switch for the menu item |

| ****Navigation: access control**** | Allowlist only (recommended) or also roles with
`local/zsk\_local\_newsletter:view` |

| ****Sending: access control**** | Allowlist only or also roles with
`local/zsk\_local\_newsletter:send` |

Capabilities (roles)

| Capability | Meaning |

|-----|-----|

| `local/zsk\_local\_newsletter:view` | Overview and help |

| `local/zsk\_local\_newsletter:send` | Compose and send |

| `local/zsk\_local\_newsletter:manage` | Manage access lists |

Default: manager role. Additionally or instead, use allowlists under ****Manage newsletter access****.

3. E-mail delivery (master switch)

****Path:**** Site administration → ZSK Newsletter → ****Settings**** → ****E-mail delivery**** section

| Setting | Description |

|-----|-----|

| ****Enable e-mail delivery**** | On/off for ****all**** outbound mail from this plugin |

When disabled: no manual send, no test mail, no weekly digest – not even via cron. Compose and settings remain usable.

****Recommendation:**** Disable on test systems with mirrored user data.

4. Composing a newsletter

****Path:**** Newsletter → ****Compose newsletter****

****URL:**** `/local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/compose.php`

| Field | Description |

|-----|-----|

| ****Subject**** | E-mail subject line |

| ****Message**** | Content (HTML editor) |

| ****Insert footer**** | Optionally append a predefined footer |

| ****Include**** | One substring per line (OR) |

| ****Exclude**** | One substring per line (OR) |

Filter logic

1. Base set: all active users with a valid e-mail address, not opted out
2. ****Exclude first:**** if the e-mail contains any exclude substring → no send
3. ****Then include:**** if include lines exist, the e-mail must match ****at least one**** include substring
4. ****No include lines**** → all remaining users (after exclude)

****Examples:****

- Include only `smith` → only addresses containing “smith”
- Exclude `@example.com` → no addresses containing “@example.com”
- Both: exclude `@example.com` first, then only smith addresses remain

Matching is ****case-insensitive****.

Buttons

| Action | Effect |

|-----|-----|

| ****Count recipients**** | Shows how many users match the filters (no send) |

| ****Send test to me**** | Sends ****one e-mail immediately to you**** (filters ignored); subject prefixed with `[Test]` |

| ****Send newsletter**** | Queues send to all filtered recipients (batches of 50) |

5. E-mail footers

****Path:**** Newsletter → ****Manage e-mail footers****

****URL:**** `/local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/footers.php`

- Create any number of footers (HTML + optional plain text)
- Placeholders: `{siteurl}`, `{siteurl}`
- Select in the compose form dropdown

6. Opt-out (unsubscribe)

Every newsletter e-mail includes an ****“Unsubscribe from newsletter”**** link at the bottom.

- Link is individually signed per user
- Unsubscribe works without logging in
- Opted-out users receive neither manual newsletters nor the weekly digest

Opt-outs are stored in `local\_zsk\_local\_newsletter\_optout`. Links from older mails of the legacy `local\_newsletter` plugin remain valid.

7. Weekly digest “New content”

Path: Site administration → ZSK Newsletter → **Settings** → **Digest** section

Setting	Description
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Enable automatic weekly digest	On/off
Weekday / hour	When to send (cron checks hourly)
Last digest run	Status display in settings
Subject template	e.g. `New content on {sitename}`
Footer for digest	Optional
Include / exclude	Same logic as manual newsletter

Digest content

Site-wide **visible** new content since the last run:

- new courses
- new forums (`forum` module)
- new forum posts (discussion starters)
- **new events** (plugin `local\_zsk\_termine`, **Pro**): upcoming events with `timecreated` since the last digest run

All recipients receive the **same** content block (not personalised by enrolment).

If **nothing new** was found since the last run, **no** digest is sent (`lastrun` is still updated).

Digest not arriving – diagnosis

The digest has **several filters**. Task logs may show “success” even when **no e-mail** was sent.

| Stage | Typical cause |

|-----|-----|

| 1 | ****E-mail delivery disabled**** (`email\_delivery\_enabled`) |

| 2 | ****Digest disabled**** (`digest\_enabled`) |

| 3 | ****Wrong time**** – task runs hourly, sends only on configured ****weekday + hour**** (server timezone) |

| 4 | ****No new content**** since `lastrun` |

| 5 | ****No recipients**** (include filter too narrow, opt-out, all suspended) |

| 6 | ****Cron**** did not process `send\_batch` |

| 7 | ****noemailever**** / SMTP |

****CLI diagnosis:****

```
` `` bash
```

```
cd /var/www/html/moodle
```

```
php local/zsk_local_newsletter/cli/digest_debug.php --force
```

```
` ``
```

With send (test):

```
` `` bash
```

```
php local/zsk_local_newsletter/cli/digest_debug.php --force --send
```

```
php admin/cli/cron.php
```

```
` ``
```

`--force` ignores weekday/hour. Without `--send`, analysis only.

8. Technical notes

- **Layout:** Newsletter pages do **not** show course tiles (dedicated page area, layout `report`).
- **Sending:** Asynchronous via ad-hoc tasks
(`local\_zsk\_local\_newsletter\task\send\_batch`), batches of 50 recipients; large mailings may take minutes.
- **Cron:** Must run regularly (`php admin/cli/cron.php`); without cron, tasks stay queued.
- **SMTP:** Misconfiguration causes failed test sends.
- **Dependencies:** No other plugin required. Optional: `local\_zsk\_termine` for events in the digest.

9. Failed send tasks (`Send batch`)

If Moodle reports failed **`Send batch`** ad-hoc tasks:

Typical signs

| Sign | Meaning |

|-----|-----|

| Duration **0 seconds** | Usually a PHP error at task start (not SMTP timeout) |

| Several task IDs in a row | One newsletter split into multiple batches |

| **Fail delay** 1 day | Moodle retries automatically later |

Task logs ≠ queue

| Location | What it is | Delete? |

|-----|-----|-----|

| **Task logs** | History of past runs | Usually **no** per-row delete |

| **Ad-hoc tasks** | Pending / retry jobs | Delete failed newsletter batches **here** |

Steps

1. **Keep plugin up to date** (robust batch sending from version 2025052905)
2. Read **task logs** for the error message
3. **Clear the queue** after fixing:
 - **Site administration → Server → Tasks → Ad hoc tasks**
 - URL: `/admin/tool/task/adhocktasks.php``
 - Open class `local_zsk_local_newsletter\task\send_batch``
 - **Delete** failed entries
4. **Resend the newsletter** if batches never completed
5. Check **SMTP** if tasks run for a while then fail

Server (SSH, optional)

```
` `` bash
cd /var/www/html/moodle
php admin/cli/adhoc_task.php --list
grep -i "send_batch\\|local_zsk_local_newsletter" /var/www/html/moodle/moodledata/error.log
| tail -30
` ``
```

10. Checklist before the first live send

1. **Enable e-mail delivery** (except on test systems)
2. Create and test a footer
3. **Send test to me** – check layout and opt-out link
4. **Count recipients** – is the number plausible?
5. Only then **Send newsletter**

11. URLs (quick reference)

| Page | URL |

|-----|-----|

| Overview | ` /local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/index.php` |

| Manage access | ` /local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/manageaccess.php` |

| Compose | ` /local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/compose.php` |

| Footers | ` /local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/footers.php` |

| Settings | ` /admin/settings.php?section=local\_zsk\_local\_newsletter` |

| Help (this guide) | ` /local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/help.php` |

| Unsubscribe | ` /local/zsk\_local\_newsletter/unsubscribe.php?token=...` |

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