

# Macrotone Password Control Guide

*Macrotone*  
*Consulting Ltd.*

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## **Macrotone Password Control Guide:**

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### **Abstract**

This manual covers the use of the Macrotone Consulting Joomla Password Control plug-in which allows you to control password changing for your users on your Joomla!<sup>TM</sup>-powered web sites

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# Preface

**Password Control**

**Joomla**

**Extension**

**Author:** G S Chapman  
**Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016  
**Version:** 0.1.6

## *DOCUMENT HISTORY*

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Changed By:</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
0.0.4A	13/12/2011	G S Chapman	Consolidation of information and update with details of User Profile Plug-in. First web issue.
0.0.6	03/01/2013	G S Chapman	Convert to DocBook format and update for latest release information.
0.0.8	20/05/2013	G S Chapman	Incorporate all outstanding fixes ready for next major update.
0.0.9	15/06/2013	G S Chapman	Introduce modified logic for handling single date forced change. Also make use off onUserBeforeStore event to stop update of #__users table and adds a few configuration improvements. The documentation logic has also been reworked into a single section for this release.
0.1.0	20/08/2013	G S Chapman	Introduce checks upon the specified passwords in the onUserBeforeStore event trigger. Also introduce the option of a password generator into the User Profile Edit, User Registration and Back End Users Edit Forms.  The documentation has also been extended with more details of the User Plugin.
0.1.2	17/08/2014	G S Chapman	Updated to reflect the 0.1.2 release.
0.1.3	14/04/2015	G S Chapman	Updated to reflect the 0.1.3 release.
0.1.4	05/06/2015	G S Chapman	Updated to reflect the 0.1.4 release.
0.1.5	26/11/2015	G S Chapman	Updated to reflect the 0.1.5 release.
0.1.6	06/01/2016	G S Chapman	Updated to reflect the 0.1.6 release. Also includes User plugin release 0.0.5 details

## **PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT**

This is the public documentation for the Macrotone Consulting Ltd's Joomla Extension Password Control. It provides detailed some of the technical knowledge of the extension and its capabilities.

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# **Part I. System Documentation**

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

This Joomla extension is intended to introduce some security into the users' access into Joomla. Currently as released Joomla only has a simple user name and password mechanism but there is no checking of the password itself once it is defined and it could easily be the same as the user name.

**Figure 1.1. Password Control icon**



This was originally introduced as a system plug-in, with later additions to make it become a more comprehensive product. It was originally written for Joomla version 1.7, although early testing upon Joomla version 1.6 showed that it worked successfully at that time in the development cycle. With the dropping of support for Joomla 1.6, 1.7 and 2.5 it is no longer actively supported on those platforms. Release 0.1.4 and earlier run upon Joomla 2.5 but there is limited support available. The current release version works upon Joomla 3.4.

## Important

Note that release 0.1.5 has **not** been tested against Joomla 2.5.

Table 1 - Latest Release Versions

Type	Version	Comments
System plug-in	0.1.6	Current released version.
User Profile plug-in	0.0.5	Current released version.
Component	1.0.0	Not on general released.

Versions are released when they have been through internal testing and no known problems exist.

## Version numbering

The component version number was decided to begin at release 1.0.0 and the earlier releases of the plug-ins thus start at version 0.0.1. This does not imply that they are incomplete or 'pre-release'.

For transparency and insight into our release cycle, and for striving to maintain backward compatibility, our Joomla components will be maintained under the following Semantic Versioning guidelines as much as possible.

Releases will be numbered with the following format: <major>.<minor>.<patch>

And constructed with the following guidelines:

- Breaking backward compatibility bumps the major (and resets the minor and patch)
- New additions without breaking backward compatibility bumps the minor (and resets the patch)
- Bug fixes and miscellaneous changes bumps the patch

## Testing

All development and testing is carried out on our own Joomla systems. Due to the vast complexity of maintaining multiple versions of Joomla and MySQL it is not possible to guarantee that the releases

will function without problems on every possible combination of options, although great care is taken to document any known problems.

The latest version plugin(s) have been tested against Joomla 3.4.8 which is the latest Joomla version at the time of the latest Password Control Plugin release.

The released version has also been installed and is also in use upon our live web site.

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# Chapter 2. Installation

Installation uses the standard Joomla install method.

## Important

Do NOT uninstall MacroTone Password Control before updating it! Uninstalling will remove all of your configuration information and the user's password history!

## Note

The language (translation) files are NOT installed automatically. You can download and install them from our language download page. Do note that you will have to install both the component and the language packages for the component to work.

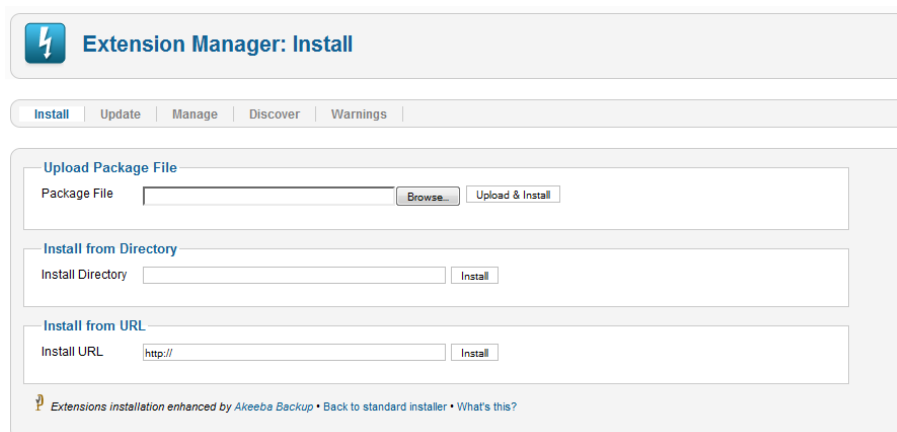
MacroTone Consulting Ltd only produces the English language files. All other languages are contributed freely by third parties. If you spot an error in the first instance please go to the translation project page to find the contact information of the translator. Abandoned languages will show the maintainer being our staff member "geoffc". In this case we will try to help you but our knowledge of foreign languages is very limited; if you would like to fix the language package you will need to create a Transifex account and to volunteer to take over the translation project for that language.

Download the Latest Version

Once you have downloaded the latest version, you are ready to install the component. The steps outlined below are generic and apply to the installation of most Joomla components.

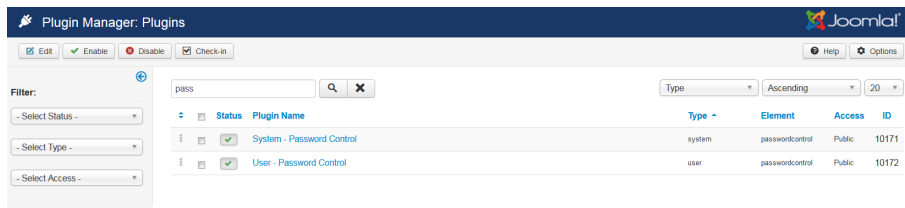
Step 1 of 3 - Install the Component: Login to your Joomla Administrative centre and in the Extensions menu, click on the Browse button and navigate to the file location where you downloaded the file. Click on the file and then click on the Install/Uninstall button.

**Figure 2.1. Initial Installation Screen.**



Step 2 of 3 - Once the Plugin is installed, enable the Plug-in in the Extensions menu, click on Plugin Manager and find your newly installed plugin called System - Password Control. A screen similar to the following will be displayed.

**Figure 2.2. Plug-in screen**



Enable your Password Control Plugin by marking the box on the left hand side opposite the plugin name, and then click the Green Enable button. After you click on it, the plugin should turn into a Green Tickmark.

Step 3 of 3 - Configure The Plugin: Whilst on this same page, click on the link System - Password Control. This will take you to the Plugin settings. In the Plugin Parameters section, enter your desired options. Settings are described in the relevant sections below.

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# Chapter 3. Password Control Usage

This section describes the various plugin options.

## Configuration

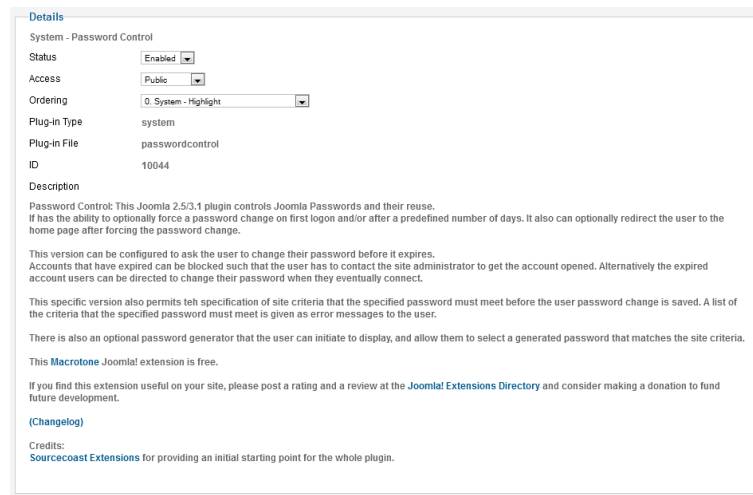
The plugin configuration is illustrated below.

Once all parameters have been specified save them to take effect. Remember that the plugin also has to be enabled!

## Plugin Configuration

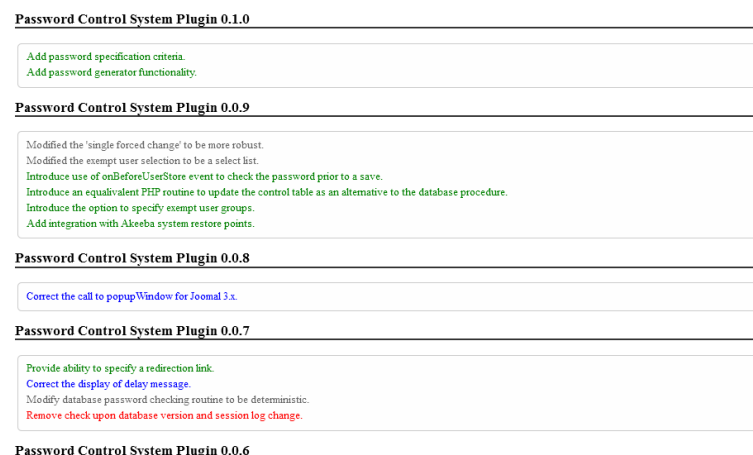
When entering the administrator plugin screen for the Password Control system plugin, the following screen will be displayed. Note that the text displayed will vary between releases.

**Figure 3.1. Administrator Plugin Screen**



Clicking upon the various links will navigate to the specified screen. For example clicking upon the 'Changelog' will show a popup window with the changes for each release. An example of the changelog display is shown in the figure below:

**Figure 3.2. Plugin Changelog**



## Basic Settings

The following screen shows the configuration parameters part of the plugin screen for the system plugin. It is here that one specifies the details of how often passwords should be changed, how many passwords are we retaining per user for checking etc. Most of the required parameters are self evident and do not require any further explanation here.

Hovering over the parameter label with the mouse will display a tooltip for the particular parameter, with more details if appropriate.

**Figure 3.3. Basic Control Settings**

The screenshot displays the Joomla! administrator interface for the Password Control plugin. At the top, there are tabs for 'Plugin', 'Description', 'Form Fields', 'Password Settings', and 'Password Generator'. The 'Password Settings' tab is active. Below the tabs, the title 'System - Password Control' is shown, along with a breadcrumb trail 'system / passwordcontrol'. A brief description of the plugin is provided, followed by a 'Show full description...' link. The main configuration area contains several settings:

- Change on first login:** A toggle switch set to 'Enabled'.
- Change email on first login:** A toggle switch set to 'No'.
- Periodic changes (days):** A text input field containing '0'.
- Force redirection after forced password change:** A toggle switch set to 'No'.
- Redirection URL:** An empty text input field.
- Redirection Message:** An empty text input field.
- Delay (seconds):** A text input field containing '10'.
- Clear page cache:** A toggle switch set to 'No'.
- Exempt Users:** A dropdown menu with 'Select some options'.
- Exempt Groups:** A dropdown menu with 'Select some options'.
- Password Exemption:** A toggle switch set to 'No'.
- No Passwords to check:** A text input field containing '1'.
- Use database routines:** A toggle switch set to 'No'.
- Unique Change Date (DD-MM-YYYY):** An empty text input field.
- Advanced warning (days):** A dropdown menu set to '0'.
- Blocking Period (days):** A text input field containing '0'.
- Password Change Link:** A text input field containing 'index.php?option=com\_users&v'.

The displayed users and user groups illustrated in the above display will be different for each site, as the users and usergroups are dependant upon those configured and registered on the particular site.

The use of the 'Force on First Logon' parameter is useful when a 'weak' password has been supplied by an administrator when setting up an account. It is suggested that if the Password Generator is used that it is probably not necessary to force the user to change their password yet again on first logon.

## Note

The 'Unique Change Date' parameter has a specific ability to force all uses (except exempt users) to change their passwords on a specific date. This parameter is specified in the usual way, but when the parameter is handled by the front end in normal operation it will modify the plugin control table for the required users and then 'reset' the plugin parameter back to a null value. This is intentional so that the user is not continually forced to change their password if a date in the past is specified.

Release 0.1.3 adds an additional option to force the user to change their email address upon initial login. Some sites using components such as eshop virtuemart, have a situation where they provide their customers with free logins. They create a number of logins with usernames such as the name of the shop + a client number, a password of 12345 and with a created email address similar to ZK1504-01@ourdomain.com. When the user logs in there is a need to force the customer to change their password, and this option that will force the mandatory email change on first login. We need to force the email change otherwise it is suspected that it will be overlooked. The change is only required for the initial login and a check for the previous email is not necessary. Email validation is performed by Joomla.

It is possible to specify specific users, or even specific groups of users that are exempt from being forced to change their passwords periodically. This might typically be applied for internal support staff for example.

Release 0.1.2 extended this so that the exempted users/groups are also able to reuse their previously specified passwords as well.

## Form Field Settings

These settings control the display of the 'other' fields upon the User Profile Edit Form. These include the 'username', 'name' and the email fields. Some sites may desire to hide these fields either to make it 'simpler' for the users' or because they are not used on the site.

It is also possible to add an additional 'informational' field to the form. This might be used to provide some additional instructions to the users, such as the form that a supplied password has to take.



**Figure 3.4. Form Field Settings**

Plugin	Description	Form Fields	Password Settings	Password Generator
	Hide name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		
	Hide username	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		
	Hide email	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes		
	Information Label	<input type="text"/>		
	Information Text	<input type="text"/>		
	Tooltip text	<input type="text"/>		

The specification of the 'informational' field can make it more obvious to the user the format requirements of the password field. The only other method, which was previously available of providing the user with this sort of information was by changing the tooltip text that is displayed when the mouse hovers over the 'password' field, which it is acknowledged is not always so obvious to most users.

If the option to force a user to change their email address upon initial login is chosen then the email address field will be displayed when the user initially logs in. The option to hide the address is not enforced in this particular situation.

## Password Criteria Check Settings

Figure 3.5. Password Criteria Check Settings

Plugin	Description	Form Fields	Password Settings	Password Generator
	Prevent name use		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Prevent email use		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Enable Strength Checking		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Min. one number		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Min. one uppercase letter		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Min. one lowercase letter		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Min. one special character		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	
	Password Length		<input type="text" value="10"/>	
	Min. entropy of password		<input type="text" value="1.5"/>	
	Max. no same characters		<input type="text" value="2"/>	
	Max. no consecutive characters		<input type="text" value="1"/>	
	Strength Indicator		<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	

There are four separate parts to the Password Criteria. The first is whether a check should be performed to prevent the user's name and site username from being in the specified password.

The second is whether a check should be performed upon the email address being contained within the specified password.

The next part is where the majority of the checks are specified.

The password criteria checks can check for the following:

- i. At least one numeric character. i.e. 0 -> 9
- ii. At least one lowercase character. i.e. a -> z
- iii. At least one uppercase character. i.e. A -> Z
- iv. At least one special character. i.e. !, #, @, % etc.
- v. The minimum length of the required password. Default 8. The longer the better.
- vi. The minimum required entropy of the password. Entropy is defined as a measure of the uncertainty in a random variable and is a common and easy way to estimate the password strength.

The entropy is given by  $H = L \log_2 N$  where  $L$  is the length of the password and  $N$  is the alphabet size, usually measured in bits.

The entropy measures the number of bits it would take to represent every password of length  $L$  under an alphabet with  $N$  different symbols.

i.e. a password of 7 lower-case characters (such as: example, polmni, etc.) has an entropy of  $H = 7 \log_2 26 \sim 32.9$ bits.

A password of 10 alpha-numeric characters (such as: P4ssw0Rd97, K51b42eQa2) has an entropy of  $H = 10 \log_2 62 \sim 59.54$ bits.

Higher entropy means stronger password (in terms of resistance to brute force attacks). Enter 0 to disable this check.

vii. The maximum number of the any specific character within the specified password. Enter 0 to skip this check.

vi- Maximum number of identical consecutive characters in the password. 1 indicates that there should be no identical consecutive characters. Enter 0 to skip this check.

The fourth and final part is whether a one line message about the determined strength of the supplied password should be displayed. This is also an optional display. There is a range of ten possible values for the determined strength of the supplied password.

## Password Generator Settings

Figure 3.6. Password Generator Settings

Plugin	Description	Form Fields	Password Settings	Password Generator
User Generate Password		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Admin Generate Password		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Dialog Box Width		<input type="text" value="400"/>		
Dialog Box Height		<input type="text" value="400"/>		
Gen Ambiguous character		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use Bootstrap Dialog		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
jQuery CDN Link:		<input type="text" value="http://ajax.googleapis.com/ajax/libs/"/>		
jQuery UI CDN Link:		<input type="text" value="http://ajax.googleapis.com/ajax/libs/"/>		
jQuery Theme Link:		<input type="text" value="http://code.jquery.com/ui/1.10.4/ther"/>		

Most of the parameters are reasonably obvious as can be seen in the figure above.

The administrator can decide whether they wish to have the back end User Edit screen display the 'Password Generator' button.

The controls over the size of the Dialog box popup window are provided for the administrator to specify which will depend upon the length of the information strings included in the dialog box. Note that the display itself will depend upon the site template (front end and back end) CSS settings.

Because the Generator Dialog window is using jQuery there are options to specify the version of jQuery to use and the location from where the files will be downloaded. The default is to make use of the (currently) latest version from a Content Delivery Network (CDN).

## Note

The jQuery setting is ignored for Joomla 3.1 sites. The reason is that this version of Joomla comes with Bootstrap and jQuery already present so any specified setting is ignored.

The code also checks whether jQuery has previously been loaded in the template and if it has, will silently ignore any specified value and use the previously loaded version.

The display of the Dialog box is controlled by the 'theme'. Various alternative themes are available and it is only necessary to specify the specific required theme in the parameters. See <http://jqueryui.com/themeroller/> for some possible themes that one may choose. The default is the 'start' theme.

## Alternative dialog window code

One particularly nasty problem was seen when testing the plugin upon a site template based upon Bootstrap 3 which included a piece of jQuery code known as mmenu used for the display of on and off screen mobile menus. The problem was traced down to a coding conflict between jQuery-ui and mmenu which was difficult to discover due to the lack of any error information and indeed any indication of what the possible cause might be. The symptoms were such that the jQuery-ui dialog window would be shown to the user but that it was impossible for any user selection to occur, or indeed for the user to be able to perform any action except to refresh the page.

The solution was to stop using the jQuery-ui code and instead substitute a different jQuery plugin known as 'jQuery.bootstrap'. This has the effect of resolving the specific conflict, but also creates a slightly different 'look' to the dialog window.

The 'jQuery.bootstrap' code is based upon Bootstrap 3 so worked flawlessly in our tests with a Bootstrap 3 site template. A new parameter has been provided to enable the use of this jQuery plugin instead of the jQuery.ui code.

Testing with Bootstrap 2 based templates such as 'protostar', indicates that the dialog window also works so it is suspected (and subsequently confirmed) that it is the 'mmenu' code that is the contributing party to the problem, not the Bootstrap code.

The admin back end continues to make use of the jQuery.ui interface.

## Front end displays

All of the following images may display differently upon the user site depending upon the site template and CSS parameters that are in use. They are shown as a guide as to what you may expect to see.

The normal user profile change screen is shown below without the 'Password Generator' feature enabled. [See later in this document for an example screen with the Generator enabled.] When a user is being forced to change their password the '(optional)' immediately after the two password fields will be changed so that an asterisk '\*' is shown indicating that the parameter is mandatory.

**Figure 3.7. Profile Change screen**

The initial welcome screen is shown when the user is configured to change their password upon the first visit to the site.

**Figure 3.8. Default initial welcome message**

If the user is changing their password, either voluntarily or as a consequence of the plugin requiring them to do so, and they attempt to specify a previously used password, then the following display is seen.

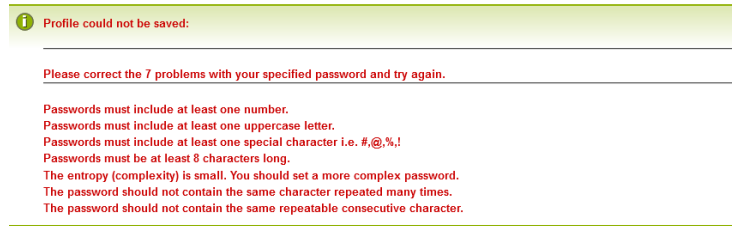
**Figure 3.9. Password already used default message**

As specified earlier the displays may be different upon the users site due to template of CSS differences.

**Figure 3.10. Password strength information text.**

If the strength indicator is selected to be displayed it is shown as in the figure above. There are currently ten different ratings, and are meant only as a guide.

**Figure 3.11. Password errors detected messages**



The screen above shows error messages displayed when an invalid password , such as 'aaaaaa' is entered. The information is shown immediately preceding the users profile change screen. The actual messages shown will obviously depend upon the errors detected.

## Password Generator Screens

The following displays illustrate the screens shown by the Password generator if configured.

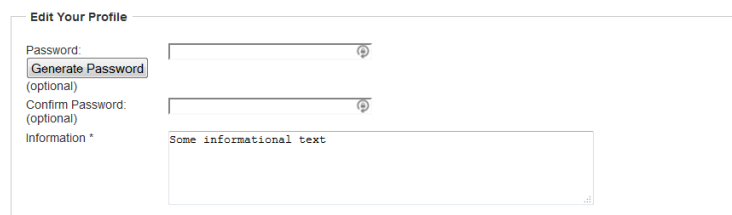
**Figure 3.12. Modified User Edit Profile Form.**



The screen above shows the modified Front end User Edit Profile Form with the additional 'Generate Password' button that the user may invoke to view an automatically generated password matching the site defined preferences. Not shown are the front end Users Registration Form and the Back end Users Edit form which display with the button similarly.

The screen below shows the same screen with the options of removing the 'username', 'name' and/ or 'email' fields, and also displaying the informational field. The text displayed will be the text as specified in the plugin parameters, and there is no default supplied since it is very dependant upon the individual site specifications/requirements.

**Figure 3.13. Modified User Edit Profile Form (2).**



Release 0.1.6 added the password checking to the Pssword Reset for. This is shown in the image below.

**Figure 3.14. Modified User Password Reset Form.**

The above screen is the second screen displayed when a password rest is requested by the user, the first which is not show is unaltered and allows the user to enter their verification code, before the above screen is displayed.

The dialog popup shown as a result of pressing the 'Generate Password' button is illustrated below. This is using the a JQuery-UI theme. Other themes are available..

**Figure 3.15. Popup Dialog Password Generator Window.**

The above display shows a sample popup dialog window with sample text and an automatically generated password. The displayed CSS example above is provided by the jQuery 'start' theme. Other themes are available.

For comparison the dialog popup shown when using the 'jQuery.bootstrap' plugin is illustrated below.

**Figure 3.16. Alternative Popup Dialog Password Generator Window.**

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# Chapter 4. Password Control System Plug-in

This chapter describes the various releases but also some details of the various features and provides a good background to some of the parameters and their usage.

## Release 0.0.1

This release was also known as RC1. As part of the development process Release 0.0.1 has some options to force users to change their password upon their first logon, and also after a specified number of days. Additional options will cause a redirect back to the home page after the password has been changed. At this release the password is not checked, only that the password is changed. The change after a number of days is based on the `last_visit_date` really only catches users who have not logged on for the specified number of days. In this version only the `onAfterRoute` event is used.

It was based upon an early plug-in release by Source Coast Systems, significantly enhanced to meet our specific requirements.

## Release 0.0.2

This version builds upon the earlier version and introduces two database tables (`passwordcontrol` and `passwordcontrol_meta`). The first table is the main table and contains details of when the user last changed their password and the hashed version of the current password. The second table contains details of the plug-in version.

When the user first connects to the system an entry is made in the `passwordcontrol` table. When the password is changed the table is updated by the `onUserAfterSave` event. Part of the checks involved includes verifying whether the user has actually changed their password. The new password is hashed using the same salt as the original password and compared. If they are the same then the `passwordcontrol` table is NOT updated, thus the user would be prompted again to change their password.

Two routines `onUserBeforeSave` and `onUserAfterSave` have been looked at. Ideally we wanted to use `onUserBeforeSave` but this did not (at the time) have the passwords in the clear to enable them to be checked. Routine `onUserAfterSave` had them visible but of course at this stage the details have already been saved in the database (in the `#__users` table). This means that even if the password is changed to itself we can still force them to change it again.

All newly registered users created after the plug-in is enabled will automatically be subject to the specifications of the parameters as specified. Any pre-existing users will not by default be forced to change their passwords unless the check box is ticked to indicate that they must be subject to the same rules.

It is recognised that there may be some users for whom it is desired that they are not forced to change their passwords. These users are catered for by specifying their user identifiers in the 'exempt users' box. Multiple user identifiers are specified by separating the ids by a space or a comma, which ever is preferred. [Since replaced by a select list.]

There is a specific check for when a user changes their password before they are prompted. In this situation the next change date is adjusted so that it is the specified number of days into the future, assuming of course that the periodic change feature is configured.

## Release 0.0.3

This release was the first widely spread release, helped no doubt by the entry in the Joomla Extensions Directory (JED). It addresses a minor issue with the previous release where the edit profile screen



displayed the password as being an optional parameter, when in actual fact the plug-in demands it as a mandatory specification. This is achieved by the use of session variables and an onContentPrepareForm event.

The specification of the password change form is now an optionally specified administrator parameter.

This release also builds upon the earlier releases by making use of the underlying database tables to give two specific abilities:

- i. The ability to force password changes for a single specified one off occurrence.
- ii. The provision of advance warning to the users enabling them to change their passwords in advance, prior to being forced to change them.

The module uses session variables. One named 'password\_force' is used to control the setting of the 'optional' setting in the password change form. The second named 'prompt\_check' ensures that a user is not continually prompted to change their password in advance more than once in a particular logon session. Each is located in their own name space 'PasswordControl'.

When a user has signed in to the system the module gets the last password change date from the database. There are then several checks performed.

If the administrator has specified that 'all' users (exempt those that are specifically exempt) should change their password after a specified date (once\_date), and that date has now passed, then the user is instructed to change their password and sent to the specified screen (by default com\_users&view=profile&layout=edit) to make the change.

If the specified number of days has passed since the last logon and the administrator has requested blocking of accounts, then the account is blocked and the user is instructed to contact the administrator.

If the specified number of days has passed since the last password change and the account is not blocked then the user is requested to change their password and redirected to the specified screen.

The last check is to see how many days are remaining before the password is due to be changed. If it is within the specified limit the user is given the option of changing the password straight away of continuing with their session.

The information requests are provided by Java script.

One minor change in this release is that when a password change is enforced by the specification of the one off change, that all users including existing users will be forced to change their passwords. Formally there was an option that permitted pre-registered users to be left unchanged. This release removes that option.

## Release 0.0.4

This was originally intended to be a stabilisation release. The following changes / fixes are included.

Fixes

The following fixes have been applied to this release:

- i. Error JParameter not found on some systems. This error is seen only on a few systems and is resolved by adding an additional include file in the main file header.
- ii. The release information within the passwordcontrol\_meta file was not updated correctly. Update has been modified to update with the correct version.
- iii. There is a warning message generated on some sites when the checking for exempt users is performed. An additional check has been placed around the source of the error.

Changes:

- i. There are a couple of minor changes to determine whether to load the parameters from the plug-in itself, or from the password control component (not yet released). This check is also used to load the language for the component rather than for the system plug-in.
- ii. The manifest file has been amended to add details of update servers to make use of Joomla update notifications.
- iii. An additional file to make up of Joomla install, update and uninstall actions has been added to the distribution.
- iv. The ability to save multiple passwords for a user has been introduced. This is specified by an additional parameter. The change allows for the additional checks for these passwords. Using a large value will cause some additional time to be used for the checking, which will depend very much on the performance of the host platform for the site. Database procedures are used to give the best possible performance of the checking.
- v. It is possible to specify a value of zero for the number of passwords to check. This is provided for those who want to force users to change their passwords but who do not specifically care whether they use different passwords or not.
- vi. Additional parameter to specify whether password checks should be performed by the bespoke database functions, or use PHP code. See database notes below.

## Database notes.

For performance reasons it was desirable to use a bespoke database function for password checks against previously specified user passwords. In developing this password checking function it was discovered that to perform the checking in the database required the MySQL `binlog_format` to be set to `ROW` or `MIXED`, otherwise the function failed. The setting discovered on the internal databases was set to `ROW`.

The setting is used by MySQL specifically where replication is being performed between databases. The default setting for all MySQL 6 databases and above is set to `MIXED`, but I am wary of forcing a change upon all users of the plug-in. For that reason there is PHP checking routine included as part of the plug-in as well as the database function. Which is used depends upon the setting of the `DBCHECK` parameter. The default is to use the PHP routine. In tests the database routine is faster for large number of passwords being checked which might be the preference, but because of the logging this is not the default. Both routines generate the same result.

If database replication is not a consideration for a site then for the use of the database routine is recommended.

The storing of multiple passwords for a user is performed by a bespoke MySQL database procedure created when the plug-in is installed. The database procedure for storing passwords in the control table is not impacted by the logging mode.

Being experienced database engineers we tend to use database routines for performance reasons, something that is not very common with other Joomla extension authors, so it is possible that some database problems which may or may not have shown up with other plugins may be seen. These problems usually manifest themselves as errors accessing database procedures or functions. These problems may be caused by underlying problems with the MySQL database system tables, and are sometimes encountered when a MySQL database upgrade has not been completed successfully. Unfortunately this means that when others (i.e. service providers) fail to perform their upgrades we can appear to be at fault. There are several examples of these types of problems reported on the Forum on the support site system.

## Release 0.0.5

This release introduces support for Joomla 3.0 and adds a few minor additions such as a changelog.

## Release 0.0.6

This minor release fixes a problem with the reporting of database errors when they are encountered. It also changes the display of the changelog to be within a modal window.

## Release 0.0.7

This was a special release for a specific client who required a version of the plugin for Joomla 1.5. This has involved making changes to the code to accommodate the restrictions present in that particular Joomla release.

This release was never publicly release since Joomla 1.5 is no longer a supported product.

This release did however incorporate a few improvements that were developed prior to the Joomla 1.5 conversion, and were thus present in the release.

- i. Provide ability to specify a redirection link.
- ii. Correct the display of delay message.
- iii. Modify database password checking routine to be deterministic.
- iv. Remove check upon database version and session log change.

## Release 0.0.8

This release resolved a few minor problems incorporates the previously developed changes for release 0.0.7 and adds one further Joomla 3.x fix.

- i. Correct the call to popupWindow for Joomla 3.x.

Other additions will be considered depending upon user demand.

## Release 0.0.9

This release add a reworked handler for the single 'once only' forced password change. It also introduces the use of the 'before' user store event when checking passwords for reuse thus eliminating the save into the #\_\_users table and well as introducing a few improvements in the configuration and normal running through the use of a PHP routine for updating the database control table for sites where they cannot use the supplied database procedure due to hosting restrictions.

- i. Modified the 'single forced change' to be more robust.
- ii. Modified the exempt user selection to be a select list.
- iii. Introduce use of onUserBeforeStore event to check the password prior to a save.
- iv. Introduce an equivalent PHP routine to update the control table as an alternative to the database procedure.
- v. Introduce the option to specify exempt user groups.
- vi. Add integration with Akeeba system restore points. Requires Akeeba Backup Pro release 3.7.8 or higher.

## Release 0.1.0

This major release introduces the long awaited control over the specification of passwords. This is briefly described below.

The following settings are configured to set how strong a password has to be.

- i. One can optionally choose whether the password should to be checked on its strength.
- ii. One can set the minimum length of the password (minimum 8 / maximum 16 characters).
- iii. One can set the minimum usage of :
  - i. one number;
  - ii. one lowercase character;
  - iii. one uppercase character;
  - iv. one special character.
- iv. One can optionally show a message, so the user can see how strong their specified password is.

There are two other checks that may be performed, both of which are individually configured.

- i. Is it acceptable for the password to include the user's name or site username.
- ii. Is it acceptable for the password to include the user's email address.

This release also has an optionally configured password generator that is added to the User Edit Profile Form, the User Registration Form and optionally the Administrator's User Edit Form. When configured and invoked by the user a pop up dialog box is presented to the user with a suggested password that meets the site criteria for specifying passwords. The user may use the suggested value or cause an alternative password to be generated. An unlimited number of passwords may be generated for the user to choose one. When chosen the password is inserted into the User Edit Profile Form password fields automatically, so the user does not have to perform any 'cut and paste' actions.

There is one fix in this release which is to correct the usage of the entries in the password control table, when the supplied PHP routine is used. The supplied equivalent Database routine is unaffected by the problem.

## Release 0.1.1

This release adds support for the PHPPass encryption mechanism introduced in Joomla 3.2. It also addresses a few small problems found in the earlier 0.1.0 release.

- i. Code Refactorisation.
- ii. Eliminate use of deprecated functions.
- iii. Update copyright date.
- iv. Change to follow change to use PHPPass for password encryption in Joomla 2.5.18 and Joomla 3.2.x.
- v. Change to allow for revised edit profile screen.

## Release 0.1.2

This release implements a few changes to allow for new encryption mechanisms introduced in Joomla 3.3. It also implements a change requested by our users relating to the display of the fields in the User Profile Edit Form.

- i. More Code Refactorisation.
- ii. Change to use jQuery 1.11.0.

- iii. Change to use jQuery-ui 1.10.4.
  - iv. Change to allow for new encryption methods Joomla 3.3.
  - v. Change to allow for Joomla 3 user password reset required flag.
  - vi. Modify checks for checking password change required.
  - vii. Introduced ability to hide some of the other user profile fields such as the email, username and name fields Also permit the addition of an informative text area field to display some helpful text to assist the user in entering their password.
- vi-Due to a coding conflict between jQuery-UI dialog windows and mmenu (a jQuery plugin for ii. mobile menus) add ability to use an alternative jQuery bootstrap dialog plugin.

## Release 0.1.3

This release adds a new requested feature to force a user to change their email address upon initial log(See above for more specific details). It also address a few changes required by the removal of support for certain features previously used by the plugins.

### Note

One other change made in the 0.1.3 release was to address a strange situation where upon one specific site, a user editing their profile and then saving the change redisplayed the 'edit profile form' again and not the expected 'display your profile' page. In the redisplay the layout and the task parameters were not set, which resulted in the 'generate' button not being displayed. We have added a check upon the Joomla version and if it is greater than 3.2 then in this situation the generator button (if configured) will be shown. We have tested this change on other Joomla versions and have not seen any problems so believe that the change is innocuous. One to be aware of.

- i. Change copyright year to 2015.
- ii. Support for Akeeba Restore Points removed as they are no longer supported by Akeeba.
- iii. New option to force the user to change their email address on first login.
- iv. Clean up of parameter settings.

## Release 0.1.4

This release adds additional exemption options for the forced changing of the email address upon initial login. There has also been a small restructuring of the code.

There is a check to catch an observed situation where one is in the process of editing ones' user profile but the view layout is set to null, rather than 'edit'. This was observed upon a Joomla 3.4 installation.

## Release 0.1.5

This release adds a few changes requested in the forum and also corrects a few problems discovered in the earlier release. It also adds a few additional changes reflecting changes in other software used by the plugin.

Permit a minimum length of 6 characters for a password. This is not something that we specifically recommend as short passwords are more easily compromised. It might be acceptable upon an internal site.

A small problem was discovered where if the front end password generator was disabled, then the back end generator would not work. The code has been restructured to prevent this problem.

Another problem identified was that if the password checking was configured such that only numerics were checked, then the password generator would only create passwords with numerics. This was caused as a consequence of using the password checking criteria as a basis for the generator. The code has been restructured and new parameters created for the generator. An additional check has been added so that if the password is being checked for a specific character type then irrespective of the generator setting, this type would be part of the generated password. It does however permit passwords to be created and minimal (or none ) password checked performed upon the generated passwords.

A new class has been added to the generator button code to permit a site to use their own CSS styling if they wish. The new class is named 'btn-pwdgen'.

There are some additional code checks to avoid a situation where user upon logging in the first time, and being presented with the password request immediately logs out. Upon relogging in they were not in some circumstances being prompted again to change their password. This change has required a change in the database table to ensure that the change request is honoured over different sessions.

### **Note**

To ensure backward compatibility this is separate from the 'force password reset' option available in Joomla 3.4, although this may be reviewed in later versions.

A new option has been added to control the loading of jQueryUI in front end. Formally there was an assumption that it was loaded if jQuery was also loaded, which is not true for many modern templates. This is now separately controlled.

The default version of the jQuery UI has been changed to the 1.11.4 release.

If jQuery is selected to be loaded by the plugin then the version default has changed to use the jQuery 1.11.3 release.

## **Release 0.1.6**

This release adds the password checking criteria to the user reset of their password when they have 'forgotten' it. This was previously omitted. The release also updates the copyright year and changes the 'once date' force change parameter to accept a calendar field instead of a text entry.

## **Release 0.1.7**

This release will address any discovered problems with the 0.1.6 release. There are no confirmed enhancements in this release currently.

Other additions will be considered depending upon user demand.

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# Chapter 5. Password Control User Profile Plug-in

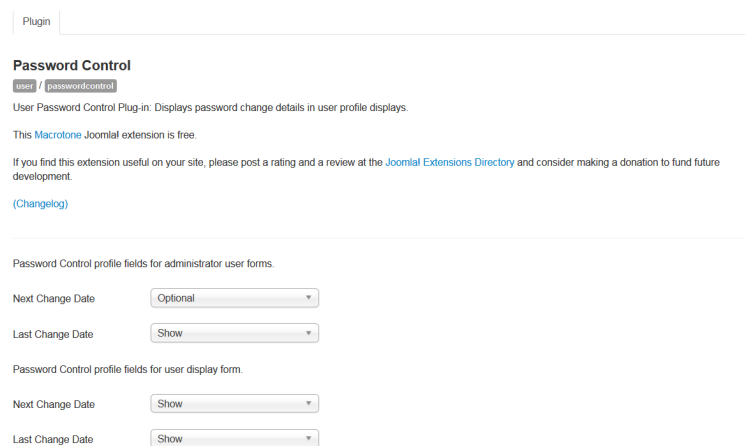
The Password Control User Profile Plug-in is an optional plug-in that requires the Password Control System Plug-in to work. It should work with the system plug-in releases 0.0.3 and above.

Installation is using the same mechanism as described above for the System Plugin, with the obvious difference in Plugin name.

This Password Control User Plug-in provides some additional options for the site administrator.

## User Plug-in Parameters

Figure 5.1. User Plugin Parameters



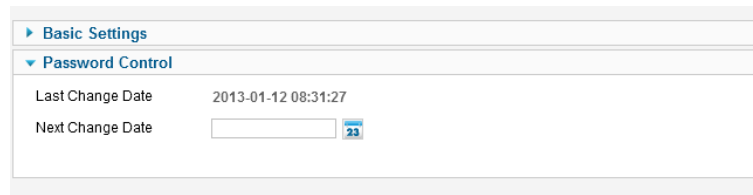
It can be configured to provide the following features:

1. The profile summary presented to the user when they look at their profile can optionally display the details of their last and next scheduled password change. Either, both or none can be configured for display. Note that the user is not presented with the detail, if they choose to edit their profile. It is not desirable that a user could edit their next password change date.
2. The details of the last and next password changes can also be configured for display in the back end user edit as well. The last password change is a display only option, whereas the next password change may optionally be edited in the back end by the administrator.
3. Setting the next password change date in the back end user edit will update the details for the user, but note that depending upon the configuration of the Password Control system plug-in parameters, this setting may or may not be used. See notes below for more details.

## User Plug-in Screens

The figure below shows the additional information presented in the Administrator's User Edit Form.

**Figure 5.2. User Plugin Information in Administrator**

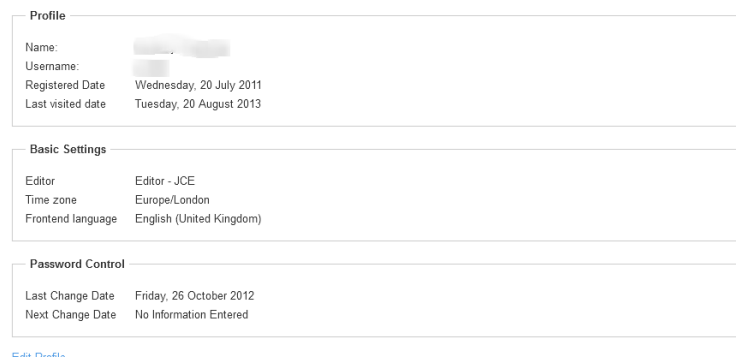


The screenshot shows the Joomla! administrator interface for the Password Control plugin. It features a sidebar with 'Basic Settings' and 'Password Control' sections. The 'Password Control' section is expanded, showing a table with the following data:

Last Change Date	2013-01-12 08:31:27
Next Change Date	<input type="text"/> 23

In the Front End User Profile the additional information is as indicated in the figure below.

**Figure 5.3. User Information in User Profile**



The screenshot shows a user profile page with three main sections:

- Profile:** Name, Username, Registered Date (Wednesday, 20 July 2011), Last visited date (Tuesday, 20 August 2013).
- Basic Settings:** Editor (Editor - JCE), Time zone (Europe/London), Frontend language (English (United Kingdom)).
- Password Control:** Last Change Date (Friday, 26 October 2012), Next Change Date (No Information Entered).

[Edit Profile](#)

## Hints

### Note

- If a new user is created then the (optional or mandatory) setting of the next password change date at the time of user creation will be overridden by the system plug-in if the system is configured to force the user to change their password on their initial login.
- The user profile plug-in requires the existence of the password control system plug-in to enable it to access the underlying database user information.
- The Password Control System Plug-in does not require the Password Control User Profile plug-in to be installed.

## Releases

The User Plug-In release details are shown below:

### User Plug-in Release 0.0.1

This is the initial release of the plug-in.

### User Plug-in Release 0.0.2

This release introduces support for Joomla 3.0.0 and also introduces a changelog.

### User Plug-in Release 0.0.3

This minor release corrected the display of the change log so that it displays within a modal window.



## **User Plug-in Release 0.0.4**

This minor release corrected the display of the change log upon Joomla 3.4 and has had a code review.

## **User Plug-in Release 0.0.5**

This minor release adds the display of the internal 'force' flag in the administrators user display. It also updates the copyright date.

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# Chapter 6. Logic Flows

This section describes the logic flows for the plugin events.

## Event onContentPrepareForm

1. Check if this is a form, if not return
2. Check if this is the com\_users, profile edit form. If not return.
3. Check whether administration back end or debugging and if so return.
4. If guest user return
5. Get session variable 'password\_force'
6. If variable enabled set form field variables for passwords to mandatory.
7. Else set field variables to optional.
8. If the options to modify the displayed form fields such as username, name and email are requested, change settings for these fields in the form.
9. If the variable to force an email change is set then empty out any existing email field values and ensure that the email field is displayed.
10. If the optional informative field is requested create the form field and add it to the form.
11. If the password generator is enabled then modify the edit profile form so that it contains an additional button which when clicked will cause the popup dialog window to appear.

## Event onAfterRoute

1. Check whether within the administration back end or debugging and if so return
2. If guest user return
3. Get plug-in parameters
4. Determine whether the user is specified in the user exemption list, or is a member of any specified exemption groups.
5. Check whether we have this particular users change details. If not we need to add them to our database table. The settings used will depend on the specified parameters.
  - i. If the user is exempt just add them to the table with the change date as null.
  - ii. If we are forcing first time password changes set the last password change to the register date.
  - iii. If we have a one off change date and it is greater than the current date, set the next change date to that date.
  - iv. If we are **only** forcing changes every so many days set the next change date based upon the current date.
  - v. Otherwise the change date is left null.

If the user is exempt, either by virtue of being specified in the user exemption list or because they are members of an exemption group we do not need to go any further and can return.

If the user exists in our table we now check whether a single one off password change has been requested by the system administrator. Depending upon the actual date specified in the plugin parameter 'once\_date' the parameter will be handled as follows:

- i. If no single change date is specified return to calling point.
- ii. If once\_date is more than the 'change days' setting in the future, the routine just returns until such time as the change date comes into range, at which time it is processed.
- iii. If the once\_date is in the past, the next password\_change will be forced whenever the user next logs in or if already logged in when they navigate to a new page.
- iv. If once\_date is between the current date and 'change days' in the future, it sets the change date to that specified.

In cases iii and iv above after changing the last\_password\_change and next\_password\_change in the #\_\_passwordcontrol table, the code then will reset the plugin parameter back to null.

6. If we are not forcing a password change return.
7. If we are forcing the initial password change and our last visit date is null the user has never visited before.
  - a. If the user is saving their profile we just update our last visit time and update the next password change time to now.
  - b. If the user is editing their profile ensure the next change date is set to current date. Set the session variable to make the password change mandatory.
  - c. If the option to force an email address change is set then set the session variable to be picked up by the form setup.
  - d. Otherwise redirect to the edit profile form.
8. The user has logged in before
9. Check if a password change is required
10. If last change date is null set it to the account registration date.
11. If we have a one off change date greater than the current date set the next change date to the one off date.
12. If the next change date is not set update it to the current date.
13. If we are performing regular password changes
  - a. If the user is saving their profile do nothing.
  - b. If they have saved their profile and we have requested redirection, redirect the user.
  - c. If they are editing their profile
    - i. If next change is null return
    - ii. If the last change is greater than the next change date update the next change date.
    - iii. If the next change date is in the future return

iv. Otherwise redirect the user if requested.

At this point we are changing the passwords periodically and the next change date should never be null. However on a fresh installation of the plug-in the pre-existing users will have a null value for the next change date. It would also be NULL if the system administration had tried setting initial password change before setting periodic password changes because then users would have already been created on the system.

14.If the next change date is set to null return

15.Check if we have the situation where the user has optionally changed their password early without us prompting. What we do here is just update the next change time as appropriate.

16.Determine if the current date is lower than the next change date.

- a. If the next\_change date is not within our specified time to give an early change prompt return.
- b. In it is then prompt the user to change their password.
  - 1. If they accept direct them to the change screen
  - 2. Otherwise set the session variable so they are not prompted again this session.

17.If the user has exceeded our criteria and is to be blocked, block the user in the database and inform them to contact the site administrator. There is a specific check to ensure that the user is not an administrator so that they are not blocked. In addition there is a check to ensure that if the change date is the registration date they are not blocked either. This allows for the situation where the user was previously blocked and the registration date was set to the last change date and it would obviously be a lot older than our change criteria. Clear the user's session and then redirect them to the front page.

18.From here on we now know we have to change the password

- a. If the user is saving their profile do nothing but we will update the last visit date to current.
- b. If they have saved their profile and we have requested redirection, redirect the user.
- c. If they are editing their profile
  - i. If next change is null return
  - ii. If the last change is greater than the next change date update the next change date in the database.
  - iii. Otherwise ensure password specification is mandatory and redirect the user to change their password.

## Event onUserAfterSave

Executes after the user (or administrator) has saved their data. We need to check whether the password was changed and if so update the passwordcontrol table.

### Note

Releases prior to 0.0.9 only made use of the 'OnAfterUserSave' event so that '#\_\_password-control' table is only updated if the passwords do not match, however by making use of this 'after' event changes to the '#\_\_users' table may/will have already been made even if the password specified has been used previously. This does not impact the display of the password reuse checks and message displays since the user is forced back to the 'edit screen to re-supply their password.

Release 0.0.9 introduces the use of the 'before' event trigger to prevent the saving of the user supplied information to the '#\_\_users' if a previously used password is supplied.

1. If this is a real user id and we have a result.
2. Check if we have previously loaded the parameters we require into the session. If not load the few parameters we require.
3. Check if we are interested in checking previous passwords. If not go to step 9 below.
4. Check if the exempt users can reuse their passwords. If they can step 9 below.
5. Check if a password change has occurred. If a password change has not occurred just return
6. Check whether the new password is the same as any of the previously saved passwords either by calling the database routine or by calling the equivalent PHP routine.
7. If we have already used the password before (for that user) and this is an administrator then raise an exception. Update the session variable and return
8. If we have not used the new password before then go to step 9.
9. Update the control table.
10. Update session variable so that password specification is now optional.
11. Update session variable so that email changing is not forced.
12. Return.

## Event onUserBeforeStore

Executes before the user (or administrator) has saved their data. This checks the specified user's password to ensure it meets the site specified criteria.

### Note

The password reuse check in this event trigger is essentially the same as the former logic contained in the onUserAfterStore event with the exception that the control table is not updated, which remains in the onUserAfterStore event.

1. If this action is taking place in the back end (administration) of the site return.
2. If the password is not being changed return.
3. Load the exemption parameters and check if the user is exempt. If so return.
4. Load the other plugin parameters. If we have previously loaded the multiple password parameters we require into the session, load them from there, if not load the few parameters we require.
5. Check if we are configured to test the password strength. If so, carry out the following checks if configured.
  1. Ensure password does not contain a space character.
  2. Check if the password it must contain at least one numeric character.
  3. Check if the password must contain an upper case character.
  4. Check if the password must contain at least one lowercase character.
  5. Check if the password must contain at least one special character.
  6. Check we meet or exceed the minimum password length.

7. Check the entropy of the password.
8. Check the quantity of characters in the password.
9. Check the password for identical consecutive characters.
6. Check if we are testing for the user's name and username in the password.
7. Check if we are testing for the user's email address in the password.
8. Check whether the new password is the same as any of the previously saved passwords either by calling the database routine or by calling the equivalent PHP routine.
9. Prepare the optional password strength text if configured.
10. If we have detected any errors in our earlier checks prepare the error message and raise an exception.
11. Return.

## Password check logic

The following logic is used by both the database function and the equivalent PHP code.

1. If we are not interested in checking the passwords then return.
2. Select an old password from the control table.
3. Extract the salt from the old password.
4. Use the salt to encrypt the new password (provided in the clear).
5. Compare the newly encrypted password with our loaded value.
6. If the two match return to the calling routine with a TRUE value.
7. If we have any more stored passwords to check go to step 2
8. With no more passwords to check return to the caller with a FALSE value.

## Password Generator logic

The following logic is used by the password generator and is Java code executed upon the client machine.

The User profile edit screen is populated with an additional button that can be 'clicked' upon to cause the display of a popup Dialog box.

1. When clicked the popup dialog window is shown with a suggested password that matches the site criteria for passwords.
2. The user has a number of options that they can take at this point.
  1. The user may choose to exit the window either by clicking the 'Cancel' button, or by clicking upon the 'X' in the top right hand site of the window.
  2. The user may decide that they do not like the suggested password and they may click upon the 'Regenerate' button which will then cause an alternative password to be created. The user may continue selecting the 'Regenerate' button for as long or for as many times as they wish to obtain a password with which they are content.

3. The user may decide that they like the suggested password and may click upon the 'Use' button at which point the dialog window is closed and the selected password value is passed back to the User edit screen.
3. If the user selected an automatically generated password the chosen password value is inserted into the appropriate password fields within the user edit profile form.
4. The password generator performs no other function within the plugin.

## Session variables

The passwordcontrol system uses a number of session variables to control its operation. This does effectively save constant reference to the plugin parameters and is done mainly to simplify the handling of sessions over the various methods.

Variable	Remarks
password_force	Used to indicate that a forced password change is requested.
email_force	Used to indicate that a forced email address change is requested upon initial login.
password_forced_change	Indicates a forced password change is required.
password_invalid	An invalid password has been provided. A change is still required. Usually this is if the user has cancelled out of the password change or a password that has been used before has been repeatedly tried.
paramset	Used as an indicator for the OnUserAfterSave event.
periodicity	Used to store the frequency (in days) required for password changes.
npassword	Used to hold the number of possible unique passwords for a user.
dbchecks	Used to indicate that database checks for the password are preferred.
db_version_stat	Used to determine whether the database has binary logging enabled.
prompt_check	Used to determine whether a prompted password change is required.

## Notes:

- a. When an administrator is performing a password change for a user, they do not use the onAfterRoute functionality (there is an early check and return if an administrator) however they do make use of the onUserAfterSave routine. The check for a password being previously used is therefore in force and the administrator will be presented with a message stating that the account user already has the password in their 'history' if the specified password has been previously used. This is not an error but expected functionality.
- b. If an administrator changes a password for a user, then the user will be prompted to change their password on their next connection.

---

# Chapter 7. Common Questions

## Additional Comments

There is a Frequently Asked Questions section on the website that attempts to answer most of the commonly asked questions. However there are a few questions that it is worth mentioning in this document since they are of general interest.

The password entry form displays options I do not want users to change.

This is possible since this is a Joomla configuration option. In the User profile the settings are in two categories: Profile, which includes username and password, and Basic Settings, which include editor, time zone, front end language.

In the back end if you navigate to User Manager -> Options, under Component (Users Configuration) you will see two options 'Front End User Parameters' and 'Front End User Language'.

Set 'Front End User Parameters' to "Hide" and that will hide the 'Basic Settings' in the Users profile.

- i. Front-end Language
- ii. User Editor
- iii. Time Zone

In the User Profile Edit form the 'default' Joomla Password tip says 'Specify 4 characters'.

This is a consequence of the COM\_USERS\_DESIRED\_PASSWORD language string being specified in the Joomla release as: 'Enter your desired password - Enter a minimum of four characters'. This can be changed by a site language override where it can be specified to be what ever the site desires. Typically the text required would reflect the settings determined for the site.

As an example one of our sites used the following text:

```
Enter your desired password - Minimum length 10 characters and
must
    include one Upper case letter, one lower case letter, one
    numeric character and
    one special character (i.e. !, #, @, %).
```

Language overrides can be performed in the Joomla administrator. First open the language override menu in Joomla admin. The menu is located under Extensions > Language Manager, under the tab Overrides. This presents a simple interface where one can filter, choose a language file for the admin or front-end, and a table list of any current overrides that are present upon the site. If there is more than one language installed then it is possible, depending upon the language which we are working upon, to select it from the drop down.

Release 0.1.2 has introduced the ability to provide an additional informational field in the front end User Edit Profile Form to also display some text to assist the user in choosing a suitable password, which is very useful especially if the password generator is not used.

## How do language overrides work

When first used Joomla will create an 'overrides' folder under the language folder upon the site. It then creates a file named zz-ZZ.override.ini within that folder, where zz-ZZ is the language criteria. i.e en-GB for an English translation. By using this mechanism when a component or Joomla is updated the contents of this file will remain unchanged.



## Overriding the default language strings

Most of the time you will want to overwrite the default language strings. The quickest way is to click on the button New, which brings you to a screen where you enter your desired string to override and the desired value. A language string consists from two parts, a constant and a value. If we know the names and values we can insert them into the field on the left side of the screen.

### **Note**

This is an additional task for the site administrator to perform. It was decided to not to automate this change of language text, due to the work required in having to update it every time the plugin parameters are changed. This may be implemented in a later release.

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# Chapter 8. Password Control Component

## Release 1.0.0

This is a future release to augment the plug-in as part of a Joomla component.

The plug-in(s) will be separate entities capable of existing in their own right or as part of the component. If the plug-in is a stand alone it will use the specified plug-in parameter settings. If the component is installed then the component parameters are used in the plug-in. There is check within the plug-in (Release 0.0.4 and above) to determine whether the component is installed and if it is, to use the component parameters. This makes sense since if the plug-in is installed via the component there would be no plug-in parameters per se, since the component install does not need them. This also means that when the component is installed it takes over control of parameter settings completely.

When the component is installed the plug-in is also be installed. If it already exists it would be overwritten. Likewise when the component is uninstalled the plug-in is also uninstalled. In the situation where the site installed the component and then decides they only want the plug-in, the plug-in would need to be installed again after the component is uninstalled.

On the component install the latest version of the plug-in compatible with the component is installed. Any prior setting for a stand alone version of the plug-in are lost and would need to be set in the component. The underlying tables and their data would however remain.

---

# Chapter 9. Future considerations

## Possible expansion options

The details below are possible options that may be added to the product as time, circumstances and demand dictate.

1. The possibility for a user to delete their own account.
2. The use of mail-only for the renewal of passwords (as mails are unique anyway)
3. Set min. number of days, after which accounts get disabled if no login to site. Partially implemented in system plug-in version 0.0.4.
4. Password ageing (expiration). Partially addressed in version 0.0.4 of the system plug-in, this should be revisited to see if there if it can be improved upon.

## Authentication Policies

One major part of the Password Control Component is the implementation of site authentication policies. An authentication policy should consist of a number of items:

1. A proper password ageing policies should be in place to naturally take care of old or unused accounts. The idea behind password ageing is that after a certain amount of time, a password expires. A password is less prone to compromise if it is changed frequently. Likewise, if an account is compromised, its usefulness will be limited to the amount of time left before the expiry timer concludes. Ageing account passwords can reduce exposure if brute-force, social engineering, or sniffing attempts are successful.
2. The password strength is extremely important. It is imperative that the systems requiring users to change their passwords also enforce some level of strictness with regards to what passwords are accepted. An unguessable password makes brute-force attacks 'the premiere method by which accounts are compromised' mostly futile. An exhaustive brute-force attack will eventually discover all passwords, given enough time, but the idea is to use a password of sufficient length, so that it cannot be guessed in a reasonable amount of attempts. The successful guessing attempts normally find extremely trivial passwords, such as ones that are the same as the user name.
3. Account ageing, that is the disabling of unused accounts, is another factor. Unused accounts are probably the second most commonly compromised. If you do not have a password ageing policy, at least be certain to disable old or unused accounts.
4. There are different ways to implement password ageing. The ageing of a password should naturally disable unused accounts. Since a user must login to be given notice that their password has expired, and if they fail to do so within a certain amount of time, the account itself can be disabled. Some of these things can be achieved with products such as Windows Active Directory and various Unix-based LDAP servers support the setting of password policies such as LDAP. It is however extremely unlikely that the majority of Joomla systems available upon the web make use of these types of systems. For that reason it is important that there is some form of control within Joomla itself. [Joomla authentication plug-ins can be used to make the necessary connections to the third party products such as LDAP if the need exists.]
5. The Password Control Component is intended to implement some form of authentication policies. This would enable a site to have different policies for different groups of users

## Password Guidelines

Despite the name, there is no need for passwords to be actual words; indeed passwords which are not actual words are harder to guess (a desirable property), but are generally harder for users to remember (an undesirable property). A strong password is a password that meets the following guidelines:

1. Be eight or more characters long. For obvious reasons, longer length passwords are preferable.
2. Contain both uppercase and lowercase letters.
3. Contain numbers.
4. Contain symbols, such as +-\*@#%=?!\_;
5. Not resemble any of previously entered passwords.
6. Not be the user's name, a friend's or a family member's name, or the login value.
7. Not be a dictionary word or common name.

## Password guessing

Studies of production computer systems have for decades consistently shown that about 40% of all user-chosen passwords are readily guessed automatically, and still more with some individual research regarding a particular user. Password strength is the likelihood that a password cannot be guessed or discovered by an unauthorised person or computer. Passwords easily guessed are termed weak or vulnerable; passwords very difficult or impossible to guess are considered strong.

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## **Part II. Appendices**

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# Appendix A. GNU General Public License version 3

Version 3, 29 June 2007

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