



Blackboard
Blackboard Academic Suite™

User Manual

(Release 7.0)

Blackboard Learning System™

Blackboard Community System™

Blackboard Learning System - Basic Edition

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CHAPTER 1 – WELCOME TO THE BLACKBOARD ACADEMIC SUITE

COURSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Overview

Courses and organizations function in the same way. The Organization Leader and the Course Instructor uses the same tools to provide an online environment. Organizations are available with the Blackboard Community System, while course are available with the Blackboard Learning System.

A course or organization consists of the Course Menu or Organization Menu and a content frame. The Menu links users to content and tools. The content frame displays content and tools.

Instructors and Leaders

Course Instructors manage all of the tools and content related to courses; Organization Leaders manage all of the tools and content related to organizations.

Functions

The table below includes information on the components of a course or organization. The names of the areas can be changed by the Instructor, Leader or the System Administrator.

AREA	DESCRIPTION
Announcements	Announcements post timely information critical to course or organization success. Click Announcements from the Course Menu or Organization Menu to view Announcements.
Staff Information	Staff Information provides background and contact information on Instructors, Teaching Assistants and Leaders.
Content Areas	Content Areas can contain a wide-range of content items including: Assessments, Assignments, Learning Units, and multimedia files.
Communication	The Communication area allows users to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • send and receive messages • open Discussion Boards • enter the Virtual Classroom • view roster • view Group pages
External Links	External Links connect users to learning materials outside of the <i>Blackboard Academic Suite</i> .

AREA	DESCRIPTION
Tools	Tools that can be used in the Course or Organization. These include: Digital Drop Box, Edit Home Page, Personal Information, Calendar, View Grades, User Manual, Tasks, The Electric Blackboard®, and Address Book.
Course Map	Navigate through a collapsible tree directory.

CHAPTER 3—WORKING IN THE BLACKBOARD ACADEMIC SUITE

COURSE MENU

About the Course Menu

The Course Menu appears on the left side of a course and contains links to materials and tools within the course. The Instructor can customize the appearance of the Course Menu and the content and tools available to users.

Two views may be made available to users; if both views are available users may toggle between them:

- **Quick View** – Displays top-level of course materials. Links may be displayed as buttons or text.
- **Detail View** – Displays course materials as seen in the Course Map. This view expands to show the hierarchy of course navigation.

A Tools Panel appears as part of the Course Menu. This box may contain links to the Course Map, Communication tools and/or Course Tools. Links to tools may also be added to the main part of the Course Menu so they appear in the Detail View or the Course Map.

The size of the Course Menu frame may be adjusted. Hold the mouse over the border that marks the right side of the Course Menu, an arrow pointer appears. Use the mouse to drag this border and expand or contract the frame.

Information about when the Course Menu was last refreshed is also available in the Course Menu. Hold the mouse over the Refresh icon to view the date and time the menu was last refreshed. In the Detail View the date and time information appears at the bottom.

View new Content

When content is added to the Course Menu or the Course Map it takes 20 minutes for it to cache; this means that new content in the Course Menu and Course Map does not appear for 20 minutes. To view content within the first 20 minutes it has been added click **Refresh**.

ENTERING TEXT

Overview

By default, *Blackboard Academic Suite* will format text to 12-point, left-justified Arial. Any other formatting must be done with HTML tags or using the Text Box Editor.

Text box options

The following options are available in most text entry boxes in the *Blackboard Academic Suite*:

FORMAT OPTION	BEHAVIOR
Smart Text	<p>Automatically recognizes a link entered in the text box. Smart text recognizes the ENTER key as a paragraph tag and accepts HTML tags as well. Smart Text will also prompt to load images if an image source tag appears.</p> <p>Web addresses entered as URLs are converted to links. The URL must begin with "http://" and there must be a space before the "http://" to distinguish it from the previous word.</p> <p>If an image tag, , is entered in Smart Text, the <i>Blackboard Academic Suite</i> will automatically prompt you to upload the image.</p>
Plain Text	<p>Displays text as it is written in the text area. Plain text does not render HTML code. HTML code will appear as text. Equations do not work in Plain Text.</p>
HTML	<p>Displays text as coded by the user using Hypertext Mark-up Language (HTML) tags.</p>



NOTE: The Smart Text and Plain Text options are only available if the Administrator has turned off the Text Box Editor or if the user does not have a Windows Operating System and Internet Explorer Version 5.x or a later.

File names

Blackboard allows the use of all characters in file names. However, the user's operating system and browser may limit the types characters accepted. For example, some browsers do not accept multi byte characters.

LINK TO FILE

Overview

Users may include a link to a file from the Text Box editor.

Fields

The table below details the fields on the Insert Link to File page:

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
Insert Link to File	
Browse	Click Browse to locate a file.
OR Specify URL	Enter a URL to create a link to a file outside of the local system. For example, from a central image repository, the URL may be http://blackboard/images/picture1.jpeg .
Link to File Options	
Name of Link to File	Enter the name of the link that users click to access the attached file.
Launch in new window	Select Yes to have the file open in a new separate window. Select No to have the file open in the content frame.

ABOUT SPELL CHECK

Overview

The Spell Check feature supports a full English dictionary, a supplemental word list configured by the System Administrator, and custom word lists that are stored as a cookie on a user's local machine. The spell check feature is available wherever users can enter blocks of text. It is also available as a module with the Blackboard Community System.

Word lists

Misspelled words are determined by the following three sources:

- **Spell Check Dictionary:** A full English dictionary that includes words that will not be flagged for correction. The dictionary is also the only source for suggestions. This dictionary cannot be modified.

- **Supplemental Word List:** A list of additional terms added by the System Administrator that do not appear in the default dictionary.
- **Personal Word List:** This word list is stored as a cookie on each user's local machine. Words are added to this list using the **Learn** function. The words in the personal word list are not flagged for correction. These words are not included as suggestions for misspelled words.

Extensive personal word lists may slow performance of the Spell Check tool.

Personal word list and cookies

The personal word list is stored as a cookie on the user's local machine. The cookie is not user or installation specific. Therefore, a user's word list will be available to them whenever they are using Spell Check as long as they are on the same local machine. Also, if another user logs onto the same machine, that user will have the personal word list stored on that machine applied to Spell Check. For example, if a user creates a personal word list on a computer in the computer lab, this word list will be available to all users who use this computer in the lab. The user may not take this word list with them to a different computer.

PART TWO: COURSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

CHAPTER 4 – CONTENT

COURSE CONTENT AREAS

About Content Areas

Course Content Areas may contain a variety of learning materials. Instructors use these areas to present information from basic text to multimedia to links to tools. Instructors can also add Assessments and Learning Units to any content areas.

Navigating within Content Areas

Instructors have unlimited options when designing Content Areas. However, navigating through Content Areas is a structured, easy-to-follow process. Content Areas are arranged as a series of nested folders. Each folder can contain items and other folders. Each folder includes the name of the folder, a navigation path, and items and subfolders the Instructor has included in that folder.

Click the appropriate folder in the navigation path to return to a previous folder or to the beginning of the Content Area. Click the link in a folder to open an item or to open a subfolder.

COURSE CONTENT

Content Visibility

Instructors may set up rules for content items that limit the availability based on date and time, individual users, course Groups, and Gradebook scores and attempts. This means that the content displayed in the Course Menu or Content Areas may change over time. For example, if a file is made available after a Test is complete, the file will only appear in a Content Area after a Student completes the Test. The following are some examples of how content is released:

- Date and time – An item may be made available for only one week or after a certain date. For lecture notes may be made available after the date of the lecture.
- Groups – An item may be available to users in one Group and not another, or it may be available at a different times to users in different Groups.
- Individual users – An item may be made available only to an individual user who is completing an extra credit project.
- Gradebook attempt - An item may be made available only after Students have completed an Assessment.
- Gradebook score – An item may be made available to all users who receive above an 80 on an Assignment.

Review Status

Review Status allows the Instructor to track user review of specific content items and may affect the release of additional content. Once the Instructor enables the tool for an item, each Student tracks

their progress. For example, the Instructor may enable Review Status for an article added to a Content Area and may make the release of a Quiz contingent upon the Student reviewing the article. Once the Student marks the article Reviewed, the Quiz will appear.

A **Mark Reviewed** button appears on the item when it is opened. After reviewing the item, select this button to mark it **Reviewed**.



NOTE: Please note that this button may be selected multiple times to toggle between **Reviewed** and **Mark Reviewed**. The Instructor only views the current setting; so if the item is marked **Reviewed**, then switched to **Mark Review**, the Instructor does not see that the item was marked **Reviewed** at any time.

ASSESSMENTS

About Assessments

An Assessment is a Test or Survey. Assessments can be found in any content area, content area folder, or Learning Unit.

Tests can be used to test the knowledge of users. The Instructor assigns point values to questions. Student answers are submitted for grading, and the results can be recorded in the Gradebook.

Surveys can be used for polling purposes and evaluations. These assessments are not graded.

There are several types of questions that can be included in an Assessment.

- **Multiple Choice:** Allows A number of choices with one correct answer. Indicate the correct answer by selecting a radio button.
- **True / False:** A statement with the option to choose either true or false. True/False answer options are limited to the words True and False.
- **Fill in the Blank:** A statement that requires an answer to complete it. Answers are evaluated based on an exact text match.
- **Multiple Answer:** A number of choices with one or more correct answers.
- **Matching:** Two columns of items where each item in the first column must be matched to an item in the second column.
- **Essay:** A question where the answer must be entered in a text box.
- **Calculated:** Contains a formula with a number of variables. The correct answer can be a specific value or a range of values.
- **Calculated Numeric Response:** Resembles a fill-in-the-blank question except a number is entered to complete the statement. The correct answer can be a specific number or within a range of numbers.
- **File Response:** Uploaded files are used to respond to the question.
- **Hot Spot:** A specific point on an image is used to indicate the answer.
- **Fill in Multiple Blanks:** Multiple responses are inserted into a sentence or paragraph.
- **Jumbled Sentence:** A sentence with a number of variables within it.
- **Opinion Scale / Likert:** A rating scale used to measure attitudes or reactions.
- **Short Answer:** Similar to Essay questions; answer length is limited.
- **Either / Or:** A statement with a pre-defined choice of two answers.
- **Quiz Bowl:** An answer appears; the users uses a who, what, or where question to respond.

Grading questions

The majority of questions in Assessments are auto-graded, meaning that Instructors assign a set number of points to each question when the Assessment is created. Users may find out their score on an Assessment immediately after completing it if all questions are auto-graded.

Essay questions and short-answer questions are not auto-graded, meaning that Instructors must grade these questions manually. After an Assessment is submitted, the Instructor reviews these questions and manually enters a score. If an Assessment contains these question types the grade for the Assessment is not immediately available after the Assessment is submitted.

Take an Assessment

Assessments are located within Content Areas in a course. Follow the steps below to begin taking an Assessment:

1. Locate an Assessment in a course Content Area and click the link associated with it.
2. Click **Yes** to begin the Assessment.
3. Instructors may choose to have users enter a password to begin taking an Assessment. If necessary, enter the valid password and select Submit to begin the Assessment. The Assessment will continue to prompt for a valid password until the correct one is entered.

If the Assessment is timed, the remaining time appears in the bottom of the browser.



- **Warning: It is important that users do not use the Back button in the Browser during an Assessment. This may cause loss of data.**

Feedback and Grades

The performance results received by the user after completing a Test depend on the options selected by the Instructor. For example, the Instructor may only show the final score for one Test, while for another Test the final score and correct answers are displayed. Feedback includes one of the following:

- Users view the final score for the test.
- Users view their answers, whether they are correct and the final score.
- Users view their answers, the correct answers and the final score.
- Users view their answers, the correct answers, feedback for the questions and the final score.

To access feedback and grade information, select the Test in the Content Area or use the [View Grades Tool](#).

Multiple Assessment Attempts

Users may be allowed to take an Assessment multiple times. If multiple attempts are allowed it is noted at the top of the Assessment. Also, a link to take the Test again appears if the Test is re-opened. Students are notified at the top of an Assessment if a Test allows multiple attempts. Only the score for the last attempt is recorded in the Gradebook.

Force Assessment Completion

Users must complete the Assessment the first time it is launched if Force Completion is enabled. If Force Completion is enabled it is noted at the top of the Assessment. Students may not exit the Assessment and continue working on it at a later date. The Save button is available for Students to save the Assessment as they work through it, but they may not exit and re-enter the Assessment.

Backtrack Prohibited

Users may not return to questions they have already answered if backtracking is prohibited. If backtracking is prohibited it is noted at the top of the Assessment. When taking an Assessment that does not allow backtracking, an error appears if attempting to use the Back button within the Assessment.



- **Warning: It is important that users do not use the Back button in the Browser during an Assessment. This may cause loss of data.**

Assessment Presentation

Instructors have two different options for presenting Assessments: all-at-once and one-at-a-time.

All-at-once Assessments present all of the questions at the same time. The following options are available while taking this type of Assessment:

FUNCTION	ACTION
Store answers	Select Save . A Saved icon appears. Answers may be changed after they are saved.
Finish the Assessment	Select Submit . A receipt page appears that states the Assessment has been completed.

One-at-a-time Assessments present questions separately; only one question appears on the screen. Users decide when they are ready to move onto the next question. The following options are available while taking this type of Assessment:

FUNCTION	ACTION
Navigate through questions	Use the navigation arrows (<<, <, >, or >>). The Question/Section Indicator describes the current location in the Assessment and the overall number of questions. If backtracking is prohibited these arrows will not appear.
Store answers	Select Save. Questions Answers up to this point are saved.
Finish the Assessment	Select Submit. A receipt page appears that states the Assessment has been completed.

About Question Completion Status

The Questions Status Indicator is a tool to provide users with a quick up-to-date look at their progress (complete or incomplete questions) in an assessment at all times. The **Save** button next to each question provides a visual reminder to save your progress periodically.

Completion status of assessment questions is displayed at the top of the page when taking an assessment.

The status of which questions have been answered is displayed at the top of the page, just below the Instructions.

When answering a question and moving on to the next question in a question-by-question assessment, the status box will be updated on the next page to show that the previous question was answered. If you do not answer a question and move on to the next page in a question-by-question assessment, the status box will show on the next page that the previous question was not answered. Navigate between questions by clicking on the question number in the status indicator.

When taking an all-at-once assessment (an assessment where the questions all appear on the same page), use a **Save** button to the right of each question to save a specific question without scrolling to the bottom of the page to save. Saving either a single question or all of the questions that have been answered (with the **Save** button at the bottom of the page) changes the status indicator to show which questions have been completed.

ASSIGNMENTS

About Assignments

Assignments list the name, description, and attachments for class work. Students complete the assignment in a separate file and send it back to the Instructor. They may also include comments for the Instructor if they choose.

Submit an Assignment

Submitting an Assignment is very simple. On the **Upload Assignment** page, Students can add comments and specify files to attach.

Instructors may create Assignments where Students do not need to attach files to complete them; Students can submit an Assignment without attaching a file. If **Submit** is selected, and no files are listed to attach, the Assignment is submitted and will no longer be available to the Student to complete.

If the same file is attached to an Assignment more than once, the file name of the duplicate will automatically include a numeric suffix. For example, History_assignment1.doc.



- **Warning: Be careful in cases where files must be submitted in order to complete the assignment! Assignments can only be submitted once.**

Follow the steps below to submit an Assignment:

1. Select the Content Area from the Course menu that holds the Assignment. For example, the Course Documents area.
2. Click the name of the Assignment. The Upload Assignment page appears.
3. Complete the **Comments** field on the Upload Assignment page.
4. Click **Browse** next to **File To Attach** to browse the local system and select a file to attach. Multiple files may be attached using the **Add Another File** option. Click **Submit** when the page is complete.



In Step 4, files may also be uploaded from the *Blackboard Content System*. Select **Browse** next to **Copy file from Content Collection** to choose a file.

Save an Assignment

The Upload Assignment page has a Save option available. This option allows the user to save the Assignment and continue working on it later. Once the Assignment is complete the user can submit it.

CHAPTER 5 – COMMUNICATION

SEND EMAIL

Overview

Users can access email functions for through the Send Email page. Users can send email to the following people in a course or organization:

GROUP	DESCRIPTION
All Users	Sends email to all users in the course or organization.
All Groups	Sends email to all of the groups in a specified course or organization.
All Teaching Assistants	Sends email to all of the Teaching Assistants in a specified course.
All Instructors	Sends email to all of the Instructors for a specified course.
All Leaders	Sends email to all of the Leaders for a specified organization.
Select Users	Sends email to a single user or select users in a specified course.
Select Groups	Send email to a single group or select groups in a course or organization.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Send Email page:

1. Open a course or organization.
2. Click **Communication** on the Course Menu or Organization Menu.
3. Click **Send Email**.

Users can also access the Send Email feature for all of their courses and organizations through the Tools Box on the My Institution tab.

DISCUSSION BOARD FORUMS

Overview

Users can post discussion items and reply to other posts. This feature is similar to Chat, but is designed so that Users do not have to be online at the same time to communicate. Discussion Board conversations are logged and organized. Conversations are grouped into threads that contain a main posting and all related replies.

Instructors and Leaders create forums on specific topics in the Discussion Board. Users may access forums by clicking on the appropriate link in the Discussion Board. When a forum is accessed a page appears which lists the different threads in the forum. A thread is a series of posts. Participants can post new threads in a forum and reply to threads that have already been posted.



NOTE: Users are able to create new threads on the Discussion Board. If allowed by the Instructor or Leader other users can create and administer forums, otherwise Users will only be able to add threads to existing topics.

The *Blackboard Academic Suite* will not accept JavaScript in the Discussion Boards.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Discussion Board page.

1. Open a course or organization.
2. Click **Discussion Board** on the Course Menu or Organization Menu or from the Communication area.
3. To access a forum listed on the Discussion Board page click a forum topic link. The Discussion Board forum will appear.

Functions

The table below details the functions available on Discussion Board Forums.

To . . .	CLICK . . .
start a new thread	Add New Thread . The Create New Message page will appear. On the Create New Message page a new subject title and discussion description may be added.
view all messages	the View all Messages up arrow. All messages appear.
view unread messages	the View Unread Messages down arrow. All unread messages will be shown.
see all the threads and responses	the Expand All plus icon. All threads and responses will appear.
see only the first message in each thread	the Collapse All minus icon. The topic threads will appear.
read a post	The link to a post.
view the tool bar	Options tab. The Options tool bar will appear.
view messages that have been archived by the Instructor or Leader	Click Here for Archives. A page will appear with the threads that have been archived from this forum. Archived messages must be made available by the Instructor or Leader.
sort the list of messages	the Sort by: drop-down list and select one of the following options: Author: sort messages by the author. Date: sort messages by the earliest date. This is the default. Subject: sort messages by the subject.

Options tab functions

The table below describes the functions available on the Options tab. Click **Show Options** to access these functions. To select multiple threads in a forum, choose the check box next to each thread that will be included.

To . . .	THEN . . .
select all threads and messages in the forum	click Select All .
unselect the selections	click Unselect All .
unselect the threads and messages that have been selected and select the threads and messages that have not been selected	click Invert .
mark messages as read	select the threads and messages. Then click Read .
mark messages as unread	select the threads and messages. Then click Unread .
view multiple threads or messages	select the threads and messages. Then click Collect .
lock a thread or message	select the thread and messages. Then click Lock .

GROUPS

Overview

Groups enable Users to collaborate with each other. Groups usually consist of a smaller group of Users in a course or organization, such as study groups or project groups. From a Group page, users may:

- send email
- exchange files
- enter discussion forums
- enter Collaboration Sessions

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Group page.

1. Open a Course.
2. Click **Communication** on the Course Menu or Organization Menu.
3. Click **Group Pages** from the Communication area.
4. Select the name of a Group.

Functions

The following functions are available from the Group page.



NOTE: Instructors or Leaders may limit which of these functions are available to Groups.

FUNCTION	DESCRIPTION
File Exchange	Share files with Group members.
Group Collaboration	Meet classmates and moderators for real-time discussion or class lessons.
Send Email	Send email to one or all of their group members.
Group Members	The names and email addresses of all Group members appear.

CHAPTER 6 – TOOLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Overview

Users can view important messages from Instructors or Leaders on the Announcements page. Announcements are organized and displayed by:

- current date
- last seven days
- last thirty days
- view all course or organization announcements

When accessed through a tab, all Announcements of interest to the user appear. These include Announcements from all courses and organizations the user is enrolled in and system-wide announcements. Users can sort the Announcements by category or post date.

Use the drop-down menu to select a view or click on the tabs to view Announcements for a specific period of time. The default is View Last 7 Days.

VIEW GRADES

Overview

The My Grades page lists each user's courses and organizations. Users then select a course or organization to access a grade report.

Users can check their grades within a course or organization by accessing the View Grades page through the Course Menu or Organization Menu.

The View Grades page includes information on the following:

- The user's average Assessment grade.
- The total number of points the user has accumulated.
- Details about each Assessment.
- Information about the class average on each Assessment.
- Grade weighting. This is the relative importance of the item when determining a final grade.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the View Grades page.

1. Open a course or organization.
2. Click **Tools** on the Course Menu or Organization Menu.
3. Select **View Grades**.

OR

1. Select **View Grades** from a tab.

PART THREE: PORTAL FEATURES

CHAPTER 7 – TABS AND MODULES

MY INSTITUTION TAB

Overview

The My Institution tab contains tools and content. Several modules include content pulled from courses specific to each user. Note that the System Administrator can rename tabs.

While users can choose which modules appear, the Administrator may restrict or require modules.

In some instances, users may have access to several tabs that contain modules. These additional tabs will include the same features for customizing the content and layout of modules.

Customization

Users can customize the [content](#) and [layout](#) of the My Institution tab. After customization, the My Institution area displays the desired settings when a User logs in again.

WHAT'S NEW? MODULE

About the What's New? Module

This Blackboard Community System module reports on additions and changes to course content. The What's New? module displays the number of new items for each content type and links to a details page for each course. The module displays items going back 7 days. The content types that are reported in the module are:

- Assessments
- Assignments
- Content

The What's New? module reports content that is made available to the entire course. Adaptive Release Content that becomes available to an individual user after certain criteria are met is not reported in the What's New? module.

The What's New? module will report changes once a day. Users will see updates the first time they log in for the day. Any changes made after the user logs in will not be displayed in the What's New? module until the next day unless the user clicks **Refresh**.

Users will only see updates for a course if the course is available and the user is a participant in the course.

CUSTOMIZE TAB CONTENT

Overview

Users can customize the modules that will appear on some tabs.



NOTE: The **Modules** topic contains Information about the types of modules available.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Tab Content page.

1. Open the My Institution tab or another tab with modules.
2. Click **Content** on the upper right hand corner.

Select Modules

Check the boxes next to those modules to appear on the tab. Click **Submit**. Modules with a red check are required and cannot be changed.

CUSTOMIZE TAB LAYOUT

Overview

Users can customize the color and placement of the modules.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Customize Layout page:

1. Open the My Institution tab or another module tab.
2. Click **Layout** on the upper right hand corner.

Function

The table below describes the functions available on the Customize Layout page.

To...	CLICK...
change where the modules appear on the tab	the arrows to move them up and down on the page or move them from one panel to another.
remove a module from the page	the remove icon. Modules with an asterisk next to them (*) are required and cannot be deleted.
change the appearance of the modules	a theme to choose a color and style for the modules.