

Blackboard 9.1 New Features

Building Content

Multiple content types provide Instructors with extended flexibility when building and structuring content within a Course. Instructors can add different types of content to a Course, including videos and images as well as packaged content, such as IMS and SCORM. Instructors also have numerous options for organizing this content, such as Content Folders, Lesson Plans, and Learning Modules.

Upload Content Using New Content Types

Several content types for uploading content to an area within a Course have been changed or added:

- **Audio:** This new content type provides a separate method of adding an audio file. This content type includes fields for accessibility.
- **Image:** This content type was available in Release 9.0, but the user interface for adding this type of file has changed.
- **Video:** This new content type provides a separate method of adding a video file. This content type includes fields for accessibility.
- **URL:** This content type was available in Release 9.0, but the previous name “External Link” has been changed to “URL.”
- **Learning Module:** This content type was available in Release 9.0, but it has changed to include a hierarchical Table of Contents. For more information, see Learning Modules.
- **Lesson Plan:** This new content type provides a new type of content container (similar to a folder) that has a tabbed format to add different content items. This feature is designed to allow Students to view content with a lesson profile and instructional objectives.
- **Blank Page:** This new content type provides a method to add an HTML page to a Content Area or the Course Menu.
- **Mashups:** This new content type enables instructors to pull data from the following third-party application content into Blackboard Learn: YouTube videos, SlideShare presentations, and Flickr photos. For more information, see Mashups.

Course Files

The new Course Files feature provides basic content management features and functions within a Course as a core part of the course delivery capabilities of Blackboard Learn. Instructors will have the ability to more effectively use (and reuse) content stored in Course Files when building a Course without

any significant impact on their customary workflows and practices. New capabilities for uploading, managing, and using content in a Course are available to support Instructors when using the Course Files feature.

In previous versions of Blackboard Learn, when an Instructor attached a file to a Course content item, that file would be placed in a “hidden” file system on the Blackboard server where it was invisible to the Instructor. Blackboard Learn now provides a Course Files area that allows Instructors or any user with an appropriate Course-authoring role to view and manage all files related to their Course content.

Attaching Files to Course Content and for Re-Using Files

The current process for attaching files to Course content remains basically the same, but with a few important additions that Instructors should note:

- When attaching a file, an Instructor can select a file from the local computer or the Course Files area of their Course.
- Instead of attached files being stored in a “hidden” file system, files attached from the local computer are uploaded automatically into the Course Files area.
- When attaching files to content items, Instructors can select multiple files from multiple folders in the Course Files area.
- Because a file may be re-used in a Course, the new 360° View lets the Instructor see all of the places that any given file has been used as well as the full path in the Course to that content item.
- The organization of files in Course Files has no impact on how they appear when linked to from a Course.
- A link to a file can be included in one or more areas in a Course.
- When a link to a file in Course Files is deleted from a Course, the file is not deleted.
- When a file in Course Files is renamed or moved, any links to the file will remain intact.
- Files uploaded by Students are not automatically added to Course Files.

Uploading Files

In addition to adding files by attaching them directly to Course content items, Instructors can upload files directly to Course Files.

Instructors can upload a single file from the local computer using Browse, or they can upload multiple files or entire folders from the local computer using Browse or by dragging the items from the desktop to the interface. Instructors can also upload a package of HTML files to be unpackaged automatically into Course Files.

Managing HTML

In Blackboard Learn, an HTML Object is an HTML file created in Blackboard Learn that has some additional, Blackboard-specific properties associated with it.

Instructors can create HTML Objects in two ways:

- The Create HTML Object action in Course Files will bring up a WYSIWYG editor that allows the Instructor to create an HTML file.
- The Save as HTML Object option in the WYSIWYG editor of content items or folders will allow the content that is created in the WYSIWYG editor to be saved to Course Files as an HTML file for re-use.

HTML files, whether uploaded or created as HTML Objects, are presented more effectively in Release 9.1. If an HTML file is linked to from within a Course or from the Table of Contents for a Learning Module, when a user clicks on the HTML file it will be displayed inline inside of the Blackboard Learn interface, instead of opened separately.

Viewing Images as Thumbnails

In Course Files, users can switch between View List, which lists the files in a directory, and the new View Thumbnails, which shows a resizable thumbnail of image files. All non-image files will display the appropriate icon for the file type.

Grade Center

The function of the Grade Center feature is the same as the previous release of the product, but a number of Grade Center enhancements have been included in Release 9.1.

Grade Blogs and Journals

Journals and Blogs can now be graded for individuals and for Groups. After a Journal or Blog is set to be graded, a column is automatically created in the Grade Center.

Instructors can enter grades for Blogs and Journals for individuals and for Groups within the Blog and Journal areas without having to navigate to the Grade Center, or they can enter them directly in the Grade Center. This enables Instructors to enter grades within the Blog or Journal so that the grading process is completed in context. All grade entries made within the Blog and Journal areas are automatically added to the Grade Center.

In addition to entering a grade, Instructors can enter grading notes and submit feedback to the Student. The grade and Instructor feedback is visible to Students, but the grading notes are not visible. For Group Blogs, Instructors can assign a Group-wide grade that applies to all Group members or assign individual grades for each Student. Instructors also have the flexibility to override the Group grade for particular Students.

Students can view their grades for Blogs and Journals within the Blog and Journal areas or in My Grades. Students will see their grade as well as any feedback provided by the Instructor.

This feature appears along the right hand margin of the Blog or Journal in the About this Journal or About this Blog section under the Student's name. Instructors can also grade Blogs or Journals from the Grade Center. Instructors will be able to set a Blog or Journal as gradable on the Create or Edit Blogs or Journals pages, which are accessed from the Control Panel by clicking Course Tools and then Blogs or Journals.

Rubrics for Grading and Completing Assignments

Instructors can create a Rubric to provide guidelines for grading an item. Instructors can associate the Rubric to a grading column and view the Rubric while assigning a grade. The Rubric needs to include how many entries will be required, the minimum length of entries, and the grading criteria.

This feature is accessed through the Course Tools menu.

Anonymous Grading

Instructors can grade assignment and test attempts while information identifying the Student remains concealed. Only after the grade for the attempt has been submitted will the identity of the Student be exposed.

The objectives of grading anonymously include creating a grading workflow that is less prone to bias or favoritism on the part of the Instructor. It also serves as a protection for Instructors who may be subject to a complaint of unfair grading.

The Instructor will have the option of selecting to grade anonymously before beginning the grading process for the item. The order of the attempts is scrambled during the anonymous grading process to address scenarios where an Instructor may have a class somewhat memorized by alphabetic order.

This feature is accessed through the column contextual menu in the Grade Center. In addition, it can be activated when grading by test attempt as well as when grading by question.

Grade by Question Attempt

Question-by-question grading accommodates Instructors whose preferred workflow for assignments and assessments is to enter grades by question for all Students as opposed to by all questions by Student. For example, an Instructor may want to gain an overall feel for how the class has answered an essay question by moving through all of the Students' attempts at that question before moving to the next question. Question attempt grading also provides great efficiency for the grading process by enabling Instructors to immediately start grading without having to open each assessment or assignment.

This feature is accessed through the column contextual menu in Grade Center.

Smart Views

Instructors can use Smart Views to view specific information and data as desired in the Grade Center. The system views include viewing only Assignments, Assessments, Blogs, Discussion Boards, or Journals.

These views can be customized so that Instructors may select criteria of categories, status types, or users.

Instructors can also create custom Smart Views with different variations on these configurations. Instructors can designate any system or custom Smart View as a favorite, which will result in it displaying in the Control Panel. By doing this, Instructors can directly access their preferred views from the Control Panel without having to enter the Grade Center and then select a Smart View. By default, Smart View favorites for Assignments and Tests are available on the Control Panel. In addition, the Full Grade Center is now accessible from the Control Panel.

Instructors can instantly manipulate the Grade Center grid display by selecting category and status filters that have been placed on the main Grade Center page. This feature enables Instructors to quickly view specific categories and status types, such as assignments that need to be graded, without having to configure a Smart View.

The Smart View feature is accessed in the Manage menu of the Grade Center. After Smart Views have been created and designated as favorites, they are accessible either through the Control Panel or in the Smart View list under the Manage menu. The Category and Status filters are located on the main page of the Grade Center.

Misc.

- Instructors are prompted to save or delete specific Grade Center columns when deleting a Group with gradable Blogs, Journals, Wikis, or Discussion Forums or Threads.
- Instructors navigating away and then back to the Grade Center in one login session are returned to the last scroll point they viewed or graded in the grid.
- Instructors can color code Grade Center cells that meet certain criteria such as grade threshold, exempted grade and so on. This new feature helps instructors spot trends and action areas in large Grade Centers.

Learning Modules

Learning Modules from Blackboard Learn Release 9.0 has been enhanced in Release 9.1 to incorporate the navigable table of contents available in Learning Modules in CE and Vista.

These enhancements help Instructors present material in a more meaningful and engaging way to keep Students organized and on track with Course materials. Release 9.1 provides enhanced capabilities for all user roles:

- Faculty and Instructional Designers will use Learning Modules to organize and present content to Students in their Blackboard Learn Courses. These enhancements will provide a way to select how material is presented and how Students proceed through the material in the most appropriate way for the content being used and how the Instructor plans to teach.
- Students will use Learning Modules to access Course content and navigate Learning Module content using the Table of Contents.

Table of Contents View

The Instructor can choose whether to present the content contained in the Learning Module in a hierarchical, outline-style format. Using this view, a Student will be able to navigate through the Learning Module in the manner prescribed by the Instructor. If the Table of Contents is selected, the Instructor can also select the numbering or lettering format to be used in the Table of Contents.

Instructors may create folders and sub-folders within Learning Modules and populate them with content. As the Learning Module is populated, the Table of Contents will be created accordingly and numbered or lettered automatically in the format selected by the Instructor. New content items in Release 9.1, such as Mashups and Lesson Plans, can be incorporated into Learning Modules.

The Table of Contents can be manipulated by Instructors and Students to accommodate individual viewing preferences. It can be minimized and oriented on the left side or along the bottom of the screen.

Content Folder Structure

Instructors may create folders and sub-folders within Learning Modules and populate them with content. As the Learning Module is populated, the Table of Contents will be created accordingly and numbered or lettered automatically in the format selected by the Instructor. New content items in Release 9.1, such as Mashups and Lesson Plans, can be incorporated into Learning Modules.

Sequential Navigation of Content

When an Instructor chooses sequential navigation, items in the Learning Module will become viewable as users progress through the content. Without sequential navigation, all content items in the Learning Module are viewable and users may navigate the content at will.

Misc.

Items hidden in the table of contents in Learning Modules are made unavailable so they cannot be accessed directly. Additionally, Learning Modules have been enhanced so that when they are copied, links to any tests, assignments, or surveys, are created.

Mashups

Increasingly, sites and services on the Web offer the means for end-users to consume and re-use the site's content outside of the site itself. In Web 2.0 applications, the term "Mashup" refers to displaying

data from one third-party application in another application. For example, a real estate listing service that maps the homes-for-sale listing data onto Google Maps.

In educational settings, this ability to consume and re-use external content offers the opportunity for Instructors to incorporate content generated and hosted elsewhere into instructional or learning activities.

The new Mashup integrations with popular services allow Instructors and Students to discover, select, and embed content from those services without ever leaving the Blackboard Learn interface. This provides a seamless, easy-to-use experience that does not require the user to jump between Blackboard Learn and other sites or to have any particular knowledge about or comfort with HTML codes.

The Mashup tools, which are delivered as Building Blocks, are available by default. As long as a Mashup tool remains available, Instructors can add that Mashup type anywhere in a Course and Students can add Mashups anywhere the text editor is available to them, such as when creating Discussion Board or Blog posts.

Uploading Mashups Content

This release supports the uploading of Mashups content from the following third-party services:

- YouTube: YouTube enables users to share videos.
- Flickr: Flickr enables users to share photos.
- SlideShare: SlideShare enables users to share presentations.

Tests, Surveys, and Question Pools

In Release 9.1, Instructors and Course Builders have expanded question management capabilities available for use when creating Tests, Surveys, and Question Pools. These changes allow for more centralized control over question content and reduce the amount of time required to make global edits.

Question Finder

Instructors and Course Builders have a new interface from which to discover questions.

Instructors and Course Builders can create Tests, Surveys, and Pools by reusing questions that have been collected in the Question Finder repository. The list of questions available under “Find Questions” can be filtered by Test, Survey, or Pool, or by such attributes as question type, category, topic, or level of difficulty. As the user selects these attributes, the list of questions updates dynamically. The filtering capability is further enhanced by a search capability, which allows the user to refine the filtered list.

The discovery process is also aided by a new section in the user interface that acts as a staging area for questions. The user can peruse and select or deselect as many questions as they want. When they are finished, this collapsible staging area will contain their selected questions. The staging area allows users to keep track of how many questions they have selected.

Link to Questions

Instructors can choose to link to or copy questions from any Test, Survey, or Pool within a Course. Linking to a question ensures that any changes to the original question are reflected in all links. Copying a question creates a separate question that is not affected by changes to the original question. Questions can be copied between Courses, but they cannot be linked across Courses.

Question Sets

In addition to Random Blocks, Instructors can use Question Sets to randomly select a set number of questions to appear on a Test that are pulled from a specific group of questions selected by the Instructor. Instructors can select to include questions from one or more existing Tests and Pools. From this set, the Instructor specifies how many questions to display on the Test. The specific questions displayed are chosen randomly each time the Test is taken. This provides Instructors and Course Builders with a better idea of what will be displayed to Students than when using Random Blocks. This will make it easier to review the appropriateness of questions and help reduce the need to recreate Question Sets.

Random Block Improvements

The process to create or edit Random Blocks includes more capabilities.

Batch Deletion and Point Updates

Instructors can perform basic actions such as question deletion and point updates as batch actions, which can be targeted by question type. Users can update points for individual questions as well as points per question and number of questions to display for Random Blocks or Question Sets directly from the Canvas page. Taken together, these changes improve Instructor productivity and allow them to edit tests in less time.

Copy Test, Surveys, and Pools

Instructors and Course Builders can now copy a Test, Survey, or Pool directly from the List page. This addresses a common scenario in which an Instructor needs to provide a pre-test and post-test and needs to create two assessments that have more or less the same form. This capability also allows users to easily create new, smaller pools that contain a subset of questions of a larger pool. It is a much faster way to create similar tests compared to the import feature, which requires more steps.

Misc.

- Move and Copy are now two distinct options for content items. This allows items that cannot be copied such as Tests, Surveys, and Assignments to be moved to another location.
- Test-takers are reminded to submit answers before they are allowed to leave a test.
- Random Blocks and Question Sets are both available for instructors to add groups of questions to tests. Random Blocks pull questions into a test from a pool based on certain criteria. They are

dynamic and reflect changes to the question pool. Question Sets are static and are made up of specific questions selected to be in the Question Set used in the Test.

- Question and response statistics are displayed for each question on the Tests Statistics page.

Textbook

A new button is available in a Content Area that enables Instructors to add a textbook to a Course. Instructors can manually add textbook information to the Course, or they can locate Textbooks in an external source, searching by title, author, subject, and ISBN.

Wikis

The new Wiki tool allows Instructors to create Wikis for Courses, and groups to host collaborative content and group projects.

Course Wikis allow the entire Course to participate. Group Wikis allow a subset of the Course members to work on collaborative projects. Instructors specify whether and when Students are allowed to view or edit a particular Wiki.

Supporting Collaborative Learning

Wikis provide a collaborative area for Course content that allows Student participation and contribution. Both Students and Instructors can easily create content within the Wiki such as study guides and shared notes.

Instructors can also use the Wiki for collaborative group projects where the Wiki's history and participation summary tools give the Instructor more in-depth insight when assessing individual contributions of the Students while grading as well as throughout the collaborative process.

Students can use the Wiki to collaborate on content for the Course as well as for group projects. The Wiki's collaborative capabilities and history features help Students see what other Students have contributed and help avoid overwriting each other's work. For groups, the Wiki can be used to simply share ideas or to host the final output of a group project.

Creating and Editing Wikis

Wikis are created and edited using the same Visual Editor (VTBE) that is used throughout Blackboard Learn. Users do not need to learn a special Wiki markup language.

Users can create multiple pages in a Wiki as well as create multiple Wikis. Users can link between Wiki pages to make it easy to interconnect pages. Page navigation is provided to quickly navigate between the pages of a Wiki even if the users do not add links within page content.

Versioning and Comparing Pages

Versioning at the page level allows for complete tracking of content changes in the Wiki. Users can view a comparison of two versions of a Wiki page to see the specific changes that a user made to a Wiki page.

Grading Wikis

Instructors can grade Wikis without having to leave the Wiki and go to the Grade Center. Students can be given group or individual grades to allow grading based on individual contribution.

Viewing Participation Summaries

Instructors are provided with a summary of Student participation in a Wiki that allows them to drill down to detailed views to help assess each Student's contribution. Instructors can view a summary of participation as counts and percentages of words and saves for each Student. Instructors can then drill down for each Student to see a summary and details for that Student's contributions. Instructors also can compare a Student's saved version with the previous version of the page to evaluate that Student's contribution. Grading is integrated at this level to help Instructors grade based on an individual Student's contribution.

Commenting on Wiki Pages

Users can comment on the pages of a Wiki to give feedback and facilitate collaboration.

Creating Wiki Links as Course Content

Instructors can link to a Wiki or Wiki page in Course content.

Using Adaptive Release

Wikis support the standard Adaptive Release options.

Importing and Exporting Content

Wikis support standard Blackboard Learn content exchange to export/import and copy with Courses.

Course Links

When Course Links are created, the link and the location are automatically populated, providing consistency across the link name and location.

Discussion Board

The Discussion Board has two enhancements to streamline grading and create consistency across all collaborative tools.

- Instructors can clearly identify and grade users who are members of Groups participating in group discussions.
- Instructors can enter grades, comments, and feedback when viewing Discussions similar to the experience in Wikis Blogs, and Journals.

Email

Emailing content to users has been improved, making selecting recipients easier and more intuitive.

- The To, CC, and BCC labels are now buttons that allow selecting individual users, courses or organizations, a group, or roles within the course or organization.
- The system will now check that recipients have access to the emailed files or folders. Users will be warned if recipients do not have access to read the files. If recipients do not have access to read the files, the system can automatically set read permissions after confirmation with the user.