Advanced Blackboard

Instructional Design and Access

Summer 2019
Agenda

• Course Customization
• Communication Tools
• Course Activity Tools
• Building Tests
• Using Panopto and YouTube
• Some Advanced Tools
• Other things Bb can do
• Frequently Asked Questions
• Blackboard Training Options
Course Customization
Customizing the Look of Your Class

• Changing the theme
  • Bb themes and buttons
  • University themes
• Uploading banners and pictures
• Changing the “landing page”
• Learning Modules versus Content Folders
Changing the Theme

• In “Course Management” choose “Customization” and then “Teaching Style.”
• Many themes and also button choices
• Changing your theme will not delete any uploaded content
Uploading Banners and Pictures

- In “Teaching Style” you can upload, delete, or change your course banner.
- Create an image that is approximately 1100 x 210 px in size (training is available from IDA in image manipulation if you are unsure how)
Uploading Other Pictures

• Pictures must be uploaded to the class and not “copied in” with keystrokes.
• In any WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor, choose the icon called “Insert/Edit Image.” It looks like a small landscape drawing.
• Upload a file in .jpg or .png.
• Add description and title.
Changing Your “Landing Page”

- Changing your landing page is easy
- Choose “Select Course Entry Point” in the same “Teaching Style” area
- Course must begin on a Blackboard area and not on an external website
- Choose one entry point and leave it there all semester to avoid confusing students
- Make sure to do this after you have finalized your course menu
Changing Menu Style

- Choose “Select Menu Style” in the same “Teaching Style” area.

- If you select Text style for your menu, you can change the text color and background color of your menu.
- If you select Buttons, you can choose the button type, shape, and color from the button library.
Content Organization

• Content can be uploaded in several formats:
  • Individual files, text-based “Items” with or without additional files and links, and direct weblinks
  • File “Content Folders”
  • “Learning Modules”

• Choose an organization scheme that makes sense to you, and stick to that theme throughout the whole class
Building an “Item”

• The “Item” is a great tool. Name your item, type what you want, and upload files, pictures, or create weblinks if you like. Remember accessibility!

• To build an item, go to the area of the course you want to put it and choose “Create Item” in the “Build Content” area.
Uploading Files Directly

- Files can be uploaded directly and do not require an “Item” to house them.
- In the same “Build Content” area you can choose “File.”
- Give your file a meaningful name, and upload by browsing your computer.
Creating Direct Weblinks

• Weblinks can be created from a link in the same area
• Make sure to give your link a name, and do not upload the “raw” URL (web address), and also provide a description of the website.
Content Folders and Learning Modules

• You can also organize your course into units by using Blackboard’s Content Folder or Learning Module tools.

• These are similar in function but give a different look.
Content Folder versus Learning Module

• The “Content Folder” tool will show a list of content on the page, much like the Content area itself.

• The “Learning Module” tool will provide students with an index to one side and allow them to “page” through the content in the main window.

• The “Content Folder” is more “free flowing” allowing students to choose the order they look at the content easily.

• The “Learning Module” allows the professor more control over the order of the content’s delivery by the system.
Other Customization

- University template is available with WSU images used to decorate the class and give it a unified feel
- Your department or college may have other templates available
- Contact Instructional Design and Access with questions about templates
Communication Tools
Communication

- Email
- Course messages
- Announcements
Email

• All WSU courses are created with the email tool turned on.
• Students can send email to each other or to the instructor directly from the course.
• No “sent mail” box for recordkeeping.
• To delete for students, simply delete the menu link. Professors can always access through the “Course Management,” “Course Tools” area.
Course Messages

• Like email, but delivered to a mailbox inside the course.
• Students and professor must “come to class” to see the messages, but they are archived in the course forever.
• Has a “sent mail” feature.
• Must be turned on by creating a tool link in the course menu.
Announcements

• Announcements are a “better way to email” the whole class.

• Emails that come from the announcements tool might not look as “pretty” as the announcement does because some formatting features do not translate from the WYSIWYG editor to the email.

• If you want to have your announcement sent as an email right away, you need to click the box that says “send copy of this announcement immediately.”

• You can set up announcements in advance, but if you do that, do not choose “send copy of this announcement immediately.”
How to Set Up Announcements

1. Click on the 'Create Announcement' button.
2. Enter the subject and message in the Announcement Information section.
3. Select the duration option: 'Not Date Restricted' or 'Date Restricted'.
4. Optionally, select 'Send a copy of this announcement immediately'.
5. Announcements appear directly below the repositionable bar.
6. Students are still notified of the announcement even if the bar is removed.
Course Activity Tools
Tools

- Discussion Boards
- Journals and Blogs
- Wikis
- Assignments
Discussion Boards

- Just a tool!
- Allows for threaded conversations that are student-led, instructor-led, or both.
- Has a WYSIWYG editor that allows more than just text uploads.
- Can be graded but doesn’t have to be.
- IDA provides additional training on running effective discussion boards.
Setting up a Discussion Board

- Discussions > Create Forum > Make Choices > Submit
Journals and Blogs

• The same tool with different default settings. Journals default to “private” and blogs do not.

• Challenging to grade in comparison to discussion boards and assignments. Each file must be individually opened.

• May still be a very good fit for some professors depending on expectations.
Setting up Journals and Blogs

- Course Tools (in Course Management) > “Journals” (or “Blogs”) > ”Create Journal” (or “Create Blog”)
Wikis

• Under-used tool.
• Very popular with professors who have adopted it.
• Think of it as a “Google Document” with excellent tracking.
• Can be graded.
• Good for projects, creating a class glossary, working on case studies.
Setting up Wikis

- Course Tools (in Course Management) > “Wikis” > ”Create Wiki”
Assignments

• The Assignments tool is the most useful tool in Blackboard.

• As the professor, you have many grading tools available to you when students submit through the assignments tool.

• Students can upload files or type their submissions directly into the Blackboard interface.

• You can accept assignments once or many times, and grades will automatically go to your gradebook.
• Decide where you want to put your assignment, then choose “Assessments” > “Assignment”
• There are many settings you can use or leave blank.
• Due dates are linked to the “Calendar” tool
• Grading is linked to the Gradebook and is required.
• Rubrics are optional, and you can set one up or reuse one from a previous Bb assignment.
• Choose “Submission Settings” and decide if you want your assignment to appear and disappear on specific dates.
Hints for Assignments Tool

• Be careful with SafeAssign and its Global Database.
• If you set availability dates, make sure the “make assignment available” choice is also checked or your assignment will not become available on the date you set.
• Delegated grading does not work well and will cause you hassles.
• Be careful with anonymous grading.
• Typically, leaving defaults is good.
Building Tests
Building Tests

- Creating tests
- Using Pools
  - Random Block
  - Question Sets
  - Find Questions
- Problematic question types
Creating a Test

• Putting a test on Blackboard is at least a two-part process.
• To create the test, select “Tests, Surveys, and Pools” in “Course Tools” and then choose “Tests” again.
• Choose “Build Test.”
• Provide a name, description, and instructions, and choose “submit.”
Setting up a Test

• Now you can add questions. If you do not have pool questions, you will choose “Create Question” and then select the question type.
• Questions can have names, but don’t require them. HINT: adding names makes finding a bad question easier later.

• If you want randomized answers, that must be selected from the question construction screen. It defaults to off, so make sure to turn it on.

• “Submit” when you are finished adding questions.
• A finished test must still be deployed and made available. If you do not do these steps, your students will never see the test.
• Deploy a test the same way you would add an assignment.
Deploying a Test 2 of 2

- Choose your final settings and make the test available.
- Make link available.
- Choose number of attempts.
- If multiple, choose recorded grade.
- Set Timer if using.
- Set date restrictions if using.
- Never use Force Completion!
Setting up a Pool

• Pools are useful if you want to re-use questions for comprehensive exams.

• Also useful to improve test integrity as tests can be constructed to draw randomly from a pool, giving each student a unique exam.
  • Combined with random answers and timed tests, you can help ensure a very secure exam.

• Some text publishers provide pools, and these can be loaded into Blackboard.
  • Almost all of these publisher pools have the answers available to students online through a simple Google search.
Creating a Pool

• Pools are very similar to tests in all respects, but they are created in the “Pools” area, not the “Tests” area under “Tests, Surveys, and Pools.”

• Choose “Build Pool.”
Setting up a Pool

• Question types are the same as in the Tests area.
• Typically, pools have many more questions than you would use in a test.
• Always give questions a name when using a pool. Otherwise it can be very difficult to find a question later.
• Once a pool is created, you can access it when you create a test.
• When you reach the Test Canvas, choose “Reuse Questions”, and then choose “Create Question Set,” which works better than “Create Random Block” (although either will work).
Using a Pool 2 of 2

- Once you select your questions, tell the system how many questions to display each time. It will draw from your set or block randomly.
Question Types to Avoid

• Some question types you should avoid because of accessibility issues include: hot spot, jumbled sentence, and the calculated formula and calculated numeric. Of these, hot spot and jumbled sentence are the most difficult to make accessible.

• If you need to use an inaccessible question type, contact IDA so we can help with an exception request.
Using Panopto or YouTube
Panopto Assignments

• Panopto is the university’s video creation and hosting service.
• It allows screen capture, picture-in-picture, talking head, and PowerPoint views.
• Allows for captioning.
  • Machine captioning is the first step.
  • Professors must edit their own captions.
• Allows for student use for assignments.
• Contact Instructional Design and Access for specific training.
• YouTube is an acceptable video hosting option as well.
• All videos should be set to “Unlisted” and not “Private” or “Public.”
• Videos must be captioned before using in a class.
  • YouTube’s captioning is similar to Panopto’s, with a machine captioning first step and required editing.
• You may link or embed other people’s YouTube videos, but you need to ensure they are accurately and completely captioned before using.
  • If you need to use an un-captioned video, contact Instructional Design and Access to receive training on how you can add captions to third party videos.
Some Advanced Tools
Adaptive Release

• Useful if you want to ensure students master or at least go through material before other material is available to them.
• Can be the source of increased student concern and complaint when material doesn’t show when they expect it to.
• Increases the set-up time for a class but gives the class a more customized feel.
• Instructional Design and Access can help you learn how to set up adaptive release.
Using Groups

• The “Groups” tool allows you to randomly or purposefully group students into working groups.

• The tool allows for gradable assignments the whole group turns in.

• The tool provides most of the same tools as are available in full Blackboard, but only specific groups have access to the different areas.

• Groups is a very good tool, but the order that things happen matters. If you are considering using this tool, contact Instructional Design and Access for more instruction.
Other Things Bb Can Do
External Publisher Materials

- Blackboard works well with many publisher materials and can function as a pass-through to a publisher site.
- WSU does not provide support for publisher sites.
- There are possible accessibility challenges with the use of publisher materials. If you have questions about publisher content accessibility, contact Michael Cole for a content audit.
Date Management

• Blackboard has many places where professors can set dates of all kinds. When you roll your content from one term to the next, those dates will obviously change. You can manage all dates at one time using the “Date Management” tool.
Using Blackboard Help

• Instructional Design and Access is here to help you.
• Blackboard’s “Help” features are excellent.
• Access Help through the link in the “Course Management” area.
Getting a Sandbox (AKA: “DEV Shell”)

• Instructional Design and Access can provide you with as many “sandbox” courses as you would like.
• You can play with tools, build new content, work on fixing classes, or anything you want with a sandbox.
• If you would like a sandbox, email Instructional Design and Access at IDA@Wichita.edu and request a “DEV” shell. This is short for “development” shell, and it’s what we call them in our office.
FAQ
FAQ 1 of 3

• Why can’t I remove people from my Blackboard class?
  • It is too easy to permanently delete the full record for a student, so if you remove the wrong one, a lot of problems are created.

• Why can’t I merge my own Blackboard classes?
  • Unfortunately, professors were doing merges incorrectly and damaging classes and gradebooks. We took over merging to help ensure your content is not accidentally damaged.

• What’s the best/quickest way to get Blackboard help?
  • It is always the OneStop. Level 3 tickets will be advanced by OneStop directly to Instructional Design and Access, and we can track problems better this way.
• Why doesn’t this training cover the gradebook?
  • The gradebook gets a little coverage incidentally in our Bb trainings, but for in-depth gradebook training, look for other online trainings or come to our labs. There are a lot of ways to mess up a Bb gradebook, and we would like to help you in person if that’s possible.

• Why does Blackboard get updated so often?
  • Blackboard is updated on a yearly cycle and is updated one or two days after Christmas every year. The only other upgrades happen as emergency actions, and we avoid them at all costs. We upgrade over winter break to try to limit the pain for professors, but there really is no good time. If we did not upgrade our system would start to get buggy and we would not have the most recent tools.
• What is the “Content Collection”?
  • The content collection is the area in your class where Blackboard automatically stores all your files. When you upload a file to Blackboard, it goes directly to Content Collection, which only you can see. If you delete a file in Blackboard, a copy is retained in the content collection, even if you can no longer see a link to it in the class. Students can never see directly into your content collection.

• Where did my favorite tool go?
  • Sadly, Blackboard does not support all its tools, and sometimes favorites go away. This is a Blackboard corporate decision, not a WSU decision. It causes us a lot of problems when tools go away too.
Blackboard Training Options
Other Blackboard Training

• Online through myTraining
• Face-to-face sessions
  • Academic Resources conference each August
  • On-demand for departments or small groups of faculty and/or staff
  • Regularly-scheduled face-to-face trainings, also listed in myTraining
• IDA Labs
• Personal tutoring sessions
• IDA@Wichita.edu
Thank You

Please send questions to IDA@Wichita.edu