

Blackboard FAQ

1. What web browser should I use with Blackboard?

The Blackboard system works best with Internet Explorer 6.0 or better. We've noticed some peculiarities with Netscape and other browsers that may cause information not to be submitted or updated properly.

2. Is there a limit to how much information can be uploaded to a course?

Yes, each course has a disk space limit of 100 megabytes and no individual file can be more than 10 megabytes. This limit is in place because of the space restrictions on our servers. If you need more space, please contact your local helpdesk with a detailed explanation, if they agree that the need is legitimate, they will forward that request to the Blackboard System Administrator.

3. I have uploaded content to my courses, but students report that they cannot find them.

If you have uploaded content to your course(s) but your students don't see a link to your courses on the courses tab you need to make sure the course is set to be "available." This will be evident if the course says (unavailable) next to the course name on YOUR blackboard courses tab. To make the course available: Go to the control panel course options Settings course availability and change "make class available to students?" from "no" to "yes."

4. What username and password do my students use to log into Blackboard?

Usernames in Blackboard are the same as the e-mail username and are set in the Banner System. Students, faculty, and staff are issued these usernames when they entered into the Banner System. If a student, faculty, or staff member has lost or forgotten their password they should see their local help desk to have it reset.

5. Can I (or my students) change the assigned Blackboard password?

Blackboard passwords are the same as the Portal (My DTCC) password and may be changed by clicking on User Account Management, under the DTCC Student Sign-on Tab.

6. My student has tried everything, but the username and password still don't work.

The student should contact their local Helpdesk. They will be able to help determine why the student can't log in.

7. My students are reporting that it takes a long time to download files from my Blackboard course site.

The time it takes a student to download materials from your course site depends on the size of the materials posted in the course site. We also need to take into account students accessing the system from home. Students not using cable or DSL, will be limited to a download speed of 28.8 kilobits per second (kbs) with a standard computer modem. The only way to address this issue is to be aware of the size of the documents posted in a course and how long it will take students to download them. You can use the download calculator at the following site to calculate how long it will take to download a given file size.

<http://www.kolias.com/computers/downloadtime.htm>

File Size	Download Time at 28.8 kbs
10 Kilobytes (typical web page without images)	2 seconds
100 Kilobytes (typical Word Document)	28 seconds
1 Megabytes (typical PowerPoint presentation)	4 minutes 51 seconds
10 Megabytes (large PowerPoint Presentation)	48 minutes 32 seconds

It is recommended that you post single documents that are less than one megabyte for student downloads.

8. I was assigned to teach a course prior to the start of the semester. How long does it take before I can access the course in Blackboard?

24 hours after the course is listed in Banner and you are listed as the instructor in Banner, you can access your course.

9. When are enrollment and email lists updated to reflect student add/drop information?

The enrollment data is updated each night during the business week. Any changes will be reflected in Blackboard after 24 hours.

10. What happens to my previous semester's information? Can I retrieve grade books, drop box submissions, etc., after the semester ends?

No. We do not provide retrieval of this information from our main system. If you foresee a need to retrieve these items you will need to archive your course to your local hard drive. This will give you access to all your files locally.

11. What do I need to be aware of when using the Assessment tool to give online quizzes or tests?

- When creating an assessment utilize the question pools feature to create and modify questions that can be selectively loaded into assessments. NOTE: If you create questions within an assessment rather than a pool, they cannot be edited or chosen selectively.
- Don't use the date availability options found in the Assessment Manager. Instead use the password feature (optional) and make the assessment appear as an item in the Course Documents or other content area. This will create a link to the assessment in that area and you can use the MODIFY options for that item to control availability and set Tracking so you can see if the student accessed the assessment.
- Once students have taken the assessment, NEVER make the assessment unavailable from the Assessment Manager, doing so will wipe-out all the student grades for that assessment.
- Tell the students the following about taking assessments:
- Once an assessment is started, they must finish it. If they close the browser window the system will think they have already taken the assessment and the instructor will have to clear the attempt from the gradebook.
- They cannot open a second browser window or use the browser BACK button anytime during the assessment. Doing so will result their attempt not succeeding.
- Do not DOUBLE-CLICK the SUBMIT button this will make the system think you have tried to take the assessment twice and you will receive an error.
- Tell students to write down the answers to their questions on a piece of paper as back-up in case the assessment fails to submit. In some cases the system will give them a link back to the assessment to re-enter their answer to the questions. Having them written down allows the student to quickly re-enter the answers. Have them include information about when they attempted the assessment and what kind of computer, browser, and internet connection they were using. This will become a record that they took the assessment in case it fails to submit and will give troubleshooters a place to start looking for errors.

12. Can a course have more than one instructor such as in a team teaching environment?

Courses can have multiple Instructors assigned in the Banner system. Blackboard will have the instructors listed that are in Banner. **Note:** A course can also have a grader, teaching assistant, or course builder. Each of these roles allows someone, such as a student assistant, to have access to certain parts of a course to help the instructor. Graders have access to the gradebook and assessments. Course builders have access to upload content in the content areas. Teaching Assistants have access to all the areas the same as the instructor. Also, only the primary instructor in Banner can complete the Last Date of Attendance and No Show.

13. If a course has multiple instructors, is there any way to track the changes made by each instructor?

No, there is no way to track the changes made by individual instructors. Any instructor can change any item in a course. If two instructors are working on the same item at the same time, the person that saves the item last is the one that gets recorded.

14. Can the instructor in a Blackboard course be changed in case of personnel changes during the semester?

Yes, instructors can be added or changed any time through the Banner System. Instructors or Department Chairs must contact the Registrar's Office to have the instructor changed in the Banner System.

15. If I already have a Web or FTP site, can I also have that site appear in my Blackboard course?

Courses are automatically created in Blackboard from the data taken from the Banner System. It is NOT possible to have a Web or FTP automatically linked directly to your course. You can, however, place a link within your Blackboard course that directs students to outside sites.

16. My students can only view a PowerPoint in slide mode, which prevents them from printing. What's wrong?

The students need to right-mouse-click on the link to the file for a pop-up menu. Choose "save link as" or "save target as" to save the file to their hard drive. They can then view /print the PowerPoint file if they have PowerPoint installed on their machines.

17. I want colleagues outside of the University to be able to see my Blackboard course. Can I set this up?

No, this at this time only registered students and instructors have access to the Blackboard System.

18. Can I use the SEND E-MAIL function within Blackboard to send e-mail to people not enrolled in my course?

No, the SENDMAIL function only allows mail to be sent to people enrolled within your course(s) and not across courses.

19. My students report that they are not receiving e-mails that I sent through the Blackboard send mail function.

Students automatically have their Email account information entered into the Blackboard system. You need to direct students to check their College Email accounts. In order to insure that your e-mail was sent correctly, you should check the box labeled SEND A COPY OF MESSAGE TO SELF. This will send a copy of the email to your account as well as the students you selected.

20. Can I get a return receipt for e-mail sent from within Blackboard so that I will know when the e-mail was read?

No, the Blackboard software does not support that feature. If this is important, use your regular e-mail program, not Blackboard.

21. I don't want Blackboard to automatically grade an assessment, created within Blackboard, can I grade the assessment myself?

No. Multiple Choice, Matching, True False and Fill-in the Blank questions are automatically graded by Blackboard. The instructor must grade Short Answer or Essay questions. The points given to a student for any question can be overruled or modified by the instructor after an assessment has been taken.

22. Can I include special symbols within Blackboard assessments and what symbols can students enter when answering the questions?

Special symbols, such as mathematic equations, must be represented as graphic images within questions. These can be added to a question using HTML in the Question Pool editor. Students can only enter the standard ASCII characters found on the computer keyboard. They cannot record equations and specialty symbols into assessment answers.

23. Can Blackboard assessments have an answer range? For example, could an answer be anything between 10.0 and 20.0?

No, not at this time. Student answers to assessment questions must exactly match what the instructor recorded as answers to questions. The only exception to this is fill-in the blank, but the instructor must still enter every permutation of an answer that will be acceptable.

24. Will Blackboard create a graph of the grades for an assessment?

No, not at this time. Blackboard does not produce a graph of grades. It does provide limited statistical information via the gradebook options. The gradebook

can be exported to an Excel spreadsheet, where graphs of grades could be created.
NOTE: An Excel spreadsheet CAN NOT be imported back into Blackboard.

25. *Can I add non-Blackboard grades to the grade book?*

Yes, the spreadsheet view of the grade book has an ADD ITEM button that will allow you to add a column to the grade book, label it, and fill in the points for each student.

26. *What is a package file?*

A package file is a set of documents, typically web pages that are compressed into a single file using a program such as WinZip. This “packaged” file can then be uploaded to Blackboard and “unpacked” to create a learning module. For example: an instructor has created a set of five web pages to show different cloud formations. These pages contain their own navigation buttons and graphics. By packaging them up with WinZip (or other compression tools), all the files can be uploaded to Blackboard at one time and unpackaged for use. A link is then created to the entry point (first page) of these files. A student could then view these files by using the navigation built within the pages. NOTE: when creating packaged files you cannot include SPACES in the names of any of the files or folders within the package.

27. *What is Smart text?*

Smart text is similar to plain text except that you can include limited HTML tags such as for bold or <i> for italics to format the text within the document entry box.

28. *What is Offline content?*

Offline content is content that a student will access for a course that is not on the Internet. The most common use for this item is to link to a CD that might come with a textbook. WARNING: if you use this tool you must know the full path to the content you want to link. For example, the path might be:
X:\simulation\cloudsimulator.exe where X: is the drive letter of your CD drive.

29. *Can students post to the discussion board anonymously?*

Yes, when a discussion forum is created the instructor has the option of allowing anonymous posts. Students will then be able to check a box in the entry form that takes their name and e-mail address off of the post. This keeps even the instructor from knowing who posted a discussion entry. If you do not want to allow anonymous posts, be sure to uncheck this option when creating or modifying a Forum.

30. *A student reported that they took an online assessment (test or quiz) but the results were not recorded. Instead, a little lock icon shows up in the gradebook for their entry.*

In a case such as this, it is likely that the student did not complete the submit process due to situations such as: (1) they accidentally closed the browser window, (2) the network connection was dropped, or (3) the browser session timed out. You can clear their attempt at the assessment by:

In the course Control Panel, click on the GRADEBOOK.

Click the LOCK icon next to the student's entry for the assessment.

The student's attempt will load in the browser.

Click the CLEAR ATTEMPT button. This will erase the student's attempt and let them retake the assessment.

31. Is there anyway that I can ensure that the student actually took the online assessment (test or quiz)?

There is no direct way to ensure whether a student actually took an online assessment, but there is a way to see whether they viewed the assessment. To do so, create the assessment in Blackboard content area that can be tracked. Areas such as **Course Information** and **Course Documents** are such areas. When you select one of these areas from the assessment creation menu, the assessment will be added as an item, say, to course documents. Then, you can modify this item under the control panel and select 'track number of views.' This way, statistics can be generated to see who has viewed the assessment(s).

Click the MODIFY button next to the item you want to download.

In the section labeled "Content Attachments" and "Current Attached Files," find the file you want to download.

Use the RIGHT-CLICK on the link to pop up a context window. Select SAVE TARGET AS and a file save dialog box will appear.

Save the file to a folder on your hard drive. The file will now be saved on your computer. Unfortunately any images that were in the document are not downloaded with the page.

To retrieve any images that are in the document. View the document in Blackboard by clicking on the link.

When the pictures appear, RIGHT-CLICK on each one and select SAVE PICTURE AS from the pop-up menu. Save each picture into the same folder as your HTML page. Repeat this for each image on the page.

You can now edit your HTML page in your editing software.

32. When I download a Microsoft Office document, make changes to it, and then re-upload it, the system doesn't seem to recognize the changes I made to the document.

The standard web cache setting is to let Internet Explorer automatically determine whether a page needs to be updated or not. This causes a problem with Blackboard documents that have been downloaded and modified because the browser cache sees that same file in cache and never actually uploads the modified document; instead, it

uploads the original version from the browser cache. Luckily the fix is very simple. You need to set the browser cache options on your computer to update the page on every visit to the page. Instructions:

In Internet Explorer, go to the TOOLS menu and select INTERNET OPTIONS. The Internet Options control panel will open.

In the middle of the window will be TEMPORARY INTERNET FILES area. Click on the SETTINGS button. The settings panel will open.

Under "Check for newer versions of stored pages" check the option labeled EVERY VISIT TO THE PAGE.

Click OK to close the settings panel.

Click OK to close the Internet Options.

CLOSE and RESTART Internet Explorer. This is very important. The settings you changed will not take effect until all browser windows have been closed and the program restarted.