



ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Issue: I want to change the order that Announcements are displayed, but the newest addition always appears at the top.

Answer: When a new Announcement is added to a course, it automatically takes the top position. By changing the date or by changing the time that the Announcement is scheduled to display after, the order of the Announcements can be changed. To place an Announcement at the top, set the display after date and time to be later than the subsequent Announcements.

Issue: Email from individual students gets very overwhelming especially around deadlines and tests.

Answer: Use Announcements to communicate frequently and mitigate email with students. Also consider creating a time for live discussion or Q&A using the Virtual Classroom or Chat tools.

Issue: Is there a central location where students can be reminded to check their calendars or meet with their group?

Answer: Assigning Tasks such as checking the course Calendar or Syllabus, posting to a Discussion Board, or meeting with a Group can reinforce the importance of staying up to date with course events and assignments.

KEEPING CURRENT

Announcements • What's New Module

Push critical or time sensitive messages out to all course users using Announcements. Announcements can be made permanent, always displaying, or they can be timed to release and expire on particular dates. Announcements can contain hyperlinks as well as links to Course Content. Set Announcements as the entry point for a course, Control Panel > Settings > Course Entry Point, so the first thing students will see when they enter the class is new Announcements.

Add the What's New Module from the Community System to the Blackboard entry page by selecting Modify Content > Select Module > Submit. This module will instantly inform course members what has been added to every Blackboard course they are enrolled in since the last time they logged in, and provide them a link to the course. Remind students to refresh the module to see the latest information.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Blackboard Messages • Email

Blackboard Messages sends secure electronic messages from within the course, but without relying on knowing email addresses or using email clients. Blackboard Messages creates an email-like environment inside a course so that participants can use a familiar communications system without the need for a personal email account. By using Blackboard Messages instead of Email, problems with students changing addresses or not having one, mail not being delivered or email server problems will not affect course communication. Blackboard Messages encourages students to log into courses frequently to find out what is going on because they must be logged into a course to retrieve messages. Blackboard Messages also become part of the course record.

Contact students using Email from within the course, keeping them up-to-date, answering questions and providing feedback. Email relies on students having a valid email address and a way to access to their mail outside of Blackboard. Email messages are received in the user's email account that is listed in their Personal Information. Many institutions create email accounts for students, and pre-populate courses with this information. Students can be prevented from changing their email addresses within the course, keeping the addresses used in Blackboard courses constant. Email messages do not become part of the course record; no copies are retained within Blackboard. For security and privacy, email addresses are hidden within the course and an email author is simply presented with a list of course members.

STAYING ON TRACK

Calendar • Tasks

Record and organize important events such as dates and times for assessments, assignments, virtual classroom sessions, online chats, and office hours using the Calendar. Students and instructors can use the Calendar to record personal events as well as shared entries. Calendar events can also be posted for Communities and the institution.

Instructors can give students a "To-Do" list by assigning them tasks, linking direct student action to online activities such as tasking each student to update their Personal Information by a certain date. Tasks can have a priority and their status can be tracked, but they do not appear in the Gradebook. Students can manage their tasks from their Blackboard entry page and sort them by course.





ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Issue: Students expect that their online test scores will appear in their View Grades as soon as they finish the exam but reading essays takes a while to accomplish and then the grade has to be manually posted in to the Gradebook.

Answer: Make sure to explain to students that essay questions on tests and assignments require manual grading and will not appear in their View Grades until they are scored. Provide a date when they can check back to see their grades.

LINKS

Teaching and Learning Tools Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/corp/objects/images/quicktutorials/teachlearntools.swf>

What's New Module Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/products/quicktutorials/WhatsNewModule.swf>

Blackboard Messages Flash Tutorial

http://www.blackboard.com/products/quicktutorials/Blackboard_Messages.swf

Report Card Module Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/products/quicktutorials/ReportCardModule.swf>

Gradebook Flash Tutorial

<http://www.blackboard.com/corp/objects/images/quicktutorials/gradebook.swf>

SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS

View Grades • Report Card Module • Staff Information

Creating an online course environment where instructors give students frequent direct feedback sets achievement goals and standards. Use the Gradebook as a means of providing students with feedback on assignments and tests so that they know where they stand and what they must accomplish for success.

The Gradebook can be managed completely within Blackboard, automatically adding assignments, graded Discussion Board forums or threads, and tests. Instructors can add additional columns to the Gradebook and can control how each item is scored and final grades calculated. The Gradebook can also be managed offline in another application that will import and export comma or tab delimited files.

Depending on how grades are administered in a course, controlling when students can access their grades may be desirable. One way to accomplish this is by removing the My Grades tool from the course until grades are available, for example adding the My Grades tool after the first assignment or exam has been scored. Go to the Control Panel > Manage Tools > Tool Availability and uncheck My Grades. Restore the tool by rechecking it to give students access to their grades.

The Report Card module from the Community System can be added to students' entry page to provide a total grade based on Gradebook settings for each Blackboard course they are enrolled in. Links give instant access to View Grades for each course. If My Grades has been disabled for a course, students will receive a message that says their grades for that course are not available.

Posting information about yourself, teaching assistants, and other staff members can set expectations for communication, office hours, grading and provide other administrative information. Using the Staff Information tool located under Course Tools on the Control Panel, provide a photograph, a Curriculum Vitae, virtual office hours, contact information and more for each staff member. Alternatively, use Portfolios to present a more in depth presentation about yourself. Portfolios can organize information about the courses you teach, the organizations you belong to and personal areas of interest and expertise. Portfolios can link to files in the Content System as well as outside URLs.

