

Significant Changes, Fixes, and Improvements in Blackboard 9

Modern interface

- On some pages, Blackboard 9 uses a Web 2.0 interface to drag-and-drop items on the screen, select drop-down menus, and access contextual help.
- Blackboard 9 offers support for content reordering and style sheets, significantly increasing Blackboard's accessibility.

New course home page

- Each course opens to a course home page that contains modules such as *My Announcements*, *What's New*, and *To Do*. This automatically-updated home page provides students with information on what has changed in the course since the student last visited, what items require the students' attention, and what items are past due or are due in the near future.
- Instructors can modify the home page, add/remove/reposition the home page modules, or select a different course entry point (the page users see when entering a course.)

Improved course management workflow

- Blackboard's course content creation and editing tools (e.g., upload a file, create an assignment, post a link to an external website) are embedded throughout the course and no longer require instructors to go to a separate Control Panel. Instead, instructors can click the *Edit Mode* switch in the top right corner of any Blackboard course page.
- All options in the Control Panel are now available from the main course menu. Instructors no longer need to navigate to a separate area of the course to use these options.
- Instructors can edit and organize their Course Menu and can, in Edit Mode, drag-and-drop the Menu's items to change their order.
- Course Menu items that have contain no content are automatically hidden from the students' view but are always visible to the instructors in Edit Mode. Once content is added to a Course Menu item (e.g., when a syllabus is uploaded or content is added), Blackboard automatically makes that Menu item visible to students.
- Course Tools and Communications Tools have been combined into a single Tools area that appears in the default Course Menu. This gives instructors easier control over the tools they want to enable and disable.

Inline confirmations

- Instead of displaying a separate receipt page every time a user does something (the old *OK* button), Blackboard 9's confirmations display on the same page where the user was working.

Updated Grade Center

- Instructors can enter results, scores, percentages, and other forms of grading directly into the Grade Center page. This inline editing process is similar to entering grades into a spreadsheet. Each grade entered into the Grade Center is automatically saved.
- The Grade Center automatically records the grading history. If an instructor or a TA changes a student's grade, Blackboard's grade history will show the new grade, the old grade(s), when the grade(s) changed, and who made the change(s).

- Instructors can create *Smart Views* to categorize students based on selected criteria. This is helpful with merged course rosters to view and enter student grades based on the students' original course sections. It's also helpful for instructors with multiple TAs and want to divide the management of student grades among them.
- Instructors have the ability to create and print grade reports—such as final grades—to hand to students or add to the instructors' files.
- The Grade Center now supports average grade and minimum/maximum grade calculations.

Significantly improved file collection and exchange

- Blackboard's Assignment Tool lets instructors create a separate upload area for each assignment. Instructors can download all of one assignment's student files in a single zip file, and Blackboard will automatically rename each student's file to include the assignment's name, the student's username, and the filename the student originally submitted. For example, if Stan Student [sstudent] submitted a paper for Assignment 7 with the file name of *ourfriendthemollusk.doc*, Blackboard would automatically rename the file *assignment_7_sstudent_ourfriendthemollusk.doc*.
- Blackboard 9 also offers a Group File Exchange tool for small groups to share work.

New private blog and journal creation tools

- Blackboard 9 has built in private Blog and Journal tools that let students create and share ideas with their instructors or other students enrolled in a class. To respect the privacy of the students' work, Blackboard 9's blogs and journals are private and cannot be viewed outside of the course in which they are created.
- Individual journals allow students in a course to record their course experiences and what they are learning. These thoughts can be a private communication between a student and the instructor or shared with everyone in the course. The author or the instructor can then add comments.
- Group journals allow groups of students to reflect collaboratively and comment on their group members' findings. To maintain privacy, group members may add journal entries anonymously.
- Individual blogs provide each student in a course with an area to share thoughts and work with others in the course and to receive comments and feedback on entries.
- Course blogs allow all users in a course to share their thoughts and work in one common area that everyone in the course can read and add comments.
- Group blogs allow groups of students in a course to post thoughts collaboratively and comment on others' work, while everyone else in the course can view and comment on the group's entries.

Self and peer assessments tools

- Blackboard 9 supports the creation of self- and peer-assessments of text, images, and digital-based information. Instructors can create an exercise with a list of questions for the assessor as well as a variety of grading or marking criteria. The instructor distributes the assessment and chooses if students will assess their own work or the works of other students. In turn, the students submit the work to be reviewed by the instructors.

Easier group creation

- Instructors can create any number of groups at once.
- Students can be assigned randomly to groups, manually assigned by the instructor, or asked to sign-up for a group themselves.
- Students can create their own self-enrollment groups, although instructors have the option of modifying or restricting access to these student-created groups.

Automatic update notification

Students and instructors will be notified automatically via a nightly email digest if something changes or is updated in a course.

Minor Updates and Improvements

Announcements

- Instructors can change the display order of their announcements.
- Announcements are displayed on the Home Page with other modules.

Assignments

- Instructors can choose to deploy Assignments to all students individually or to groups of students. This allows instructors to assign a single grade to all of the students in a group and also to override that group grade and assign a student a different grade.
- Instructors can allow students to submit multiple attempts for the same assignment. Each attempt can be graded and commented on individually.
- Instructors have the ability to give specific students an additional attempt at an assignment to accommodate extenuating circumstances.

Tools

- The Personal Information > Edit Personal Information links point to custom pages for users to change their last name, address, and telephone numbers for Bb displays.
- Blackboard's Electric Blackboard tool has been renamed *Journals* and offers more features than the old Electric Blackboard did.
- Blackboard replaced the Student Homepage tool with the *Blog* tool that lets students better express their thoughts and reflect on learning within a course.

Calendar

Instructors can add a start time and stop time for each Calendar event.

Course Menus

Each course's Course Menu includes a hyperlink to the CSUStan Library

Tests, Surveys, and Questions

Instructors can reorder questions in a test or survey using the new drag- and-drop feature.