

LMS Comparison (Blackboard Learn v. Blackboard Learn Ultra v. Canvas)

Adapted from the original document created by Digital Learning Team at the University of Sheffield.

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About this document

The below are features of our existing LMS (Blackboard Learn Original), the new version of the platform (Blackboard Learn Ultra), and Canvas

Though every attempt has been made to find out every feature that is present, the systems are very large and as such there is the potential that a feature or function has been missed.

It is also worth noting that these systems have been explored "out of the box" meaning that additions to functionality haven't been explored directly.

This document serves to explore the features in these systems, ensuring it covers the need for existing practice and exploring where there are differences from our existing LMS.

Important notes:

1. An  in a column does not necessarily indicate a "lost" feature. It is possible that the feature might have been re-directed or enhanced with a different product. It could also mean that the feature might have been decommissioned for more accessible alternatives.
2. The "Notes" column is intended to provide some clarification; however, it cannot fully distinguish differences in "asset maturity" of all features.
3. These external tools function in both Blackboard Ultra and Canvas: Ally, Turnitin, Portfolium, Eesy Soft, LinkedIn Learning.
4. Blackboard Learn will continue indefinitely; however, the expectation is that support will deteriorate similar to that seen for Windows 7 and will create increasing problems with use of the current LMS.

Function/Activity				Notes
Building content				
Add an item or page				* Learn Ultra: PDF documents don't open within the browser. You first need to download and then open. There are plans for adding the option to render course files directly in the browser in the product roadmap.
Add a blank page				Learn Ultra: Pages are called "Documents."
Add a folder				<p>Canvas: Files uses a folder hierarchy. Modules uses indentation and text headers for organization.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Folders structures can have multiple levels, unique descriptions for each folder and support conditional availability.</p>
Drag and drop file upload				* Learn Original: Javascript must be enabled in the browser.
Upload an audio file				Would encourage this to be done via Kaltura.
Embed a YouTube video				Learn Original, Learn Ultra and Canvas all have an integrated YouTube search tool.
Slideshare embed				

Customisable left hand menu structure				* Learn Ultra: Courses don't use a left hand navigation by design to promote a common look and feel across all courses.
Add external web links				

Re-order content				Learn Ultra, Canvas: Drag and Drop supported across content tools.
Add video & images				Learn Original, Learn Ultra, Canvas: Images and video can be uploaded, linked, or embedded directly into the editor.
Adaptive release function				Canvas: Date/Time, Requirements, and Mastery Paths. * Learn Ultra: Conditional availability for any content item or folder, based only on Date/Time and Performance. Conditional availability based on Sequence supported within a Learning Module. Currently not based on membership; however, plans for group membership requirement in the product roadmap.
Date and time restriction				Can control as part of conditional availability.
Batch/Bulk edit				Edit due date, show on, hide after and visibility in bulk.
Content collection				Canvas: Free Learning Object Repository "Canvas Commons" available for all Canvas instructors/IDs/admins.
Textbox				
Bold, underline, italics,				
Strikethrough				
Text alignment				

Font sizing				* Learn Ultra: Font sizes restricted to text style (title, header, subheader, paragraph) for accessibility.
Different fonts				* Canvas: Via HTML/CSS.

Text colours				
Highlight text				
Symbols				Learn Original, Learn Ultra, Canvas: Via native text input.
Emoticons				Learn Original, Learn Ultra, Canvas: Via native text input.
Bullets, numbering				
Text wrapping				
Subscript/Superscript				
Anchors				Canvas: Can link to all content natively, anchors within pages via HTML.
Equation editor				Canvas: WYSIWYG editor and direct LaTeX input. All equations support screen readers with MathML backend. Learn Original, Learn Ultra: Integrated WIRIS LaTeX editor, based on MathML and accessible to screen readers.
Tables				
HTML Editor				Learn Ultra: Plans to add secure and responsive HTML editor in the product roadmap.
Mashup tool				Canvas: This is the name of a specific Blackboard tool but equivalent functionality is available in Canvas via embed tool. Learn Ultra: The term “mashup tool” is not used in the Ultra design.

Tools				
Blackboard Ally				<p>Note: Ally integration with Canvas and Learn Ultra offers the same depth of integration because they both provide REST-based API access. It could be that currently today, different feature sets exist between the two integrations, but not because of any technical limitation with either platform.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: In courses, if you add a file into a content block on a document/page, Ally doesn't come up as an option. If you add the file directly to the document/page, the option is available.</p>
Achievements tool				<p>Canvas: Similar functionality available via free integration with badging partner, Badgr.</p>
Activity Stream				<p>Ultra's Activity Stream is fully responsive, customizable and personalized to each student and instructor.</p> <p>* Learn Original course activity also auto-populates to Ultra's Activity Stream when "dual course mode" is enabled.</p>
Staff contacts tool				<p>Canvas: Available via Canvas Profiles and the Canvas Syllabus.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Would need to be created manually in Ultra. Not planned for Ultra product roadmap.</p>

Blog tool - Personal to student				<p>Canvas: While there is no tool called “blogs” equivalent pedagogical goals are possible using Canvas Collaborations, Pages, or Assignments.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Plans for blogs in the product roadmap.</p>
Blog tool - to be used as assessment tool				<p>Canvas: While there is no tool called “blogs” equivalent pedagogical goals are possible using Canvas Collaborations, Pages, or Assignments.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Plans for blogs in the product roadmap.</p>
Wiki tool				Learn Ultra: No plans for Learn Original parity in the product roadmap.
Email tool				Canvas: Messages support a variety of notification channels which includes email. Other automated notifications can also go to a user’s email.

				Learn Ultra: "Messages" feature is part of both Ultra's base navigation and courses and can be used to email users in any course. Messages also appear in the Activity Stream and can be sent to users via SMS text.
Manual enrol groups				
Self enrol groups				
Glossary tool				Canvas: Similar functionality can be achieved with LTI App partners or via manual linking of content to other content. Learn Ultra: No plans for Learn Original parity in the product roadmap.
Calendar tool				Learn Ultra: Additional support for adding an external calendar via ICS file.
Announcements				
Built in e-Portfolio tool				Canvas: All users have access to the free for life Portfolium Network so they maintain ownership and presentation over their folio even beyond their time at a given organization. Learn Ultra: ePortfolios are built-in and native to the system, accessed in the tools area from the base navigation.
Date management tool				Canvas: Dates can be bulk changed automatically at course copy time, and via drag and drop at any time on the calendar. * Learn Ultra: Date management tool functionality is part of the "Batch Edit" course feature, which includes the ability to edit due

				dates and visibility for multiple content items in the course outline. There are additional plans to make this feature closer in parity to Learn Original in the product roadmap.
Bulk management of display dates				Canvas: Automatic updating of dates on course copy. Learn Ultra: Part of wider batch edit tool.
Tasks				Canvas: automatically generated todo list, plus the ability for students and teachers to add their own todos which show up across Canvas (calendar/syllabus/mobile/etc.)

				<p>* Learn Ultra: There are no plans for Learn Original parity in the product roadmap. Students and instructors use the Activity Stream and Grades page to track the status of upcoming, current and past due work. Calendar functionality can also be used to add and keep track of tasks.</p>
Attendance monitoring tool			*	<p>* Canvas: Attendance tool is the third-party tool "Roll Call".</p>
Course catalogue				<p>Canvas: Available via Canvas Catalog product.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Course catalog only shows Original courses presently. Plans for inclusion of Ultra courses is in the product roadmap.</p>
Discussion analysis			*	<p>*Canvas: available via LTI App partners.</p>
Goals and Alignments				<p>Learn Original, Learn Ultra: Goals can also be aligned to rubric rows and test questions.</p>
Lesson plans			*	<p>* Canvas: Equivalent functionality available via Canvas Modules, embedded content, and content linking.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: No plans for Learn Original parity in the product roadmap.</p>
Retention centre			*	<p>*Canvas: similar functionality available via new Analytics (included) with additional functionality coming in future products.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: At risk notifications available in the Activity Stream, Course Activity Related to Grades analytics dashboard from Grades page.</p>
Safe Assign				<p>Canvas: Originality detection available via LTI App Partners.</p> <p>Learn Original, Learn Ultra: Originality detection</p>

				built-in via SafeAssign.
SCORM				
Self and Peer assessment		 *		* Learn Ultra: The initial release of this feature is planned for Q1 2020.

Edit mode/Student view				
Edit mode toggle on/off				<p>Canvas: Student View supports interaction with content including submitting assignments, etc. and is not limited to viewing.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Design is streamlined for both viewing and editing, eliminating the need to have an edit mode toggle on/off. Student View also supports interaction with content and assessments.</p>
Student view				<p>Canvas: Student View supports interaction with content including submitting assignments, etc. and is not limited to viewing.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Student View also supports interaction with content and assessments.</p>
Look and feel				
Theme customisation at course level				<p>* Canvas: account and sub-account theming (such as a Business program with different branding from the University) displays at the course level.</p> <p>* Learn Ultra: Plans for supporting visual themes on course views is the product roadmap.</p>
Banner tool				N/A in Learn Ultra or Canvas.

Change entry point				<p>Canvas: the home page for a Canvas course can be customized to several different options, and the course can be entered from a variety of points such as links in notifications, dashboard, calendar, todo list, mobile app, etc.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: There are no plans for Learn Original parity. By design, the default entry point for all courses is the content outline.</p>
Tests, Surveys and Question Banks				
Tests				<p>* Learn Ultra: Test settings currently require that students always see the full question text and incorrect answers. Instructors do have the option of not showing the correct answers to students on each graded attempt. All instructor generated feedback is provided from the assessment feedback panel.</p>

Surveys	✓	✗*	✓	* Learn Ultra: Plans for inclusion in the product roadmap.
Question banks/pools	✓	✓	✓	
Negative marking	✓	✓	✓	
Partial marking	✓	✓	✓	
Export/import tests	✓	✗	✓	
Import questions from offline source (e.g. CSV file)	✓	✗	✓	
Anonymous testing	✓	✓	✓*	* Canvas: Surveys can be anonymous and graded, but not Quizzes at this time.
Multiple test attempts	✓	✓	✓	
Mobile compatible tests	✓	✓	✓	
Password protect tests	✓	✗*	✓	* Learn Ultra: Plans for inclusion in the product roadmap.
Export test into a document/pdf format	✗	✗	✗*	Canvas: Being considered as a future feature.
Regular expressions in test questions	✓	✗*	✓	* Learn Ultra: Plans for release of this feature expected in Q2 2020.
Timer	✓	✓	✓	

Auto submit				
Grace period (an amount of time over the test time)				<p>Canvas: Students may have exceptions made for additional time or attempts beyond the normal close date/time.</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Students marked as needing Accommodations in the course will automatically receive extra time on a timed test, or additional attempts past the due date.</p>
Test question types				
Calculated formula				* Learn Ultra: Plans for release of this feature expected in Q2 2020.
Calculated numeric				* Learn Ultra: Plans for release of this feature expected in Q2 2020.
Either/or				
Essay				Learn Ultra: Essay questions can be check by SafeAssign for originality.
File response				* Learn Ultra: Can be used via the add additional content feature.
Fill in the blank/multiple blanks				
Hot spot				* Learn Ultra: Hot spot question type is planned for inclusion at a future date.
Jumbled sentence				

Matching	✓	✓	✓	
Multiple answer	✓	✓	✓	
Multiple choice	✓	✓	✓	
Opinion scale/likert	✓	✗	✗	
Ordering	✓	✗*	✓	* Learn Ultra: Ordering question type is planned for inclusion at a future date.
Quiz bowl	✓	✗	✗	
Short answer	✓	✓	✓	
True/False	✓	✓	✓	
Tool Integrations				
Turnitin	✓	✓	✓	
Echo 360	✓	✓	✓	
Web PA	✓	✓	✓	
Pebble+	✓	✓	✓	

ATLAS (Pebblepad)				
Google Apps				Canvas: Deep integration with Google including embedding documents, submitting documents as assignment submissions, realtime collaborations, and more. Learn Original, Learn Ultra: Can upload documents from Google cloud storage.
Lynda.com				
Management of site				
Staff enrolment tool				
Guest access		 *		* Learn Ultra: Limited guest access is available via the course catalog for Original courses when Ultra base navigation is enabled.
Assessment				
Assignment submission tool				
Group Assignments				

Rubrics				
Delegated marking				
Media submissions (audio/video)				Canvas: Natively, and via LTI Apps and all still available within the SpeedGrader. Learn Original, Learn Ultra: File upload, media links or via Kaltura, other integrations.
Date/time restriction				
Marking as late				
Multiple attempts				
Anonymous marking				
Self assessment				* Canvas: Considered for a future update. * Learn Ultra: The initial release of this feature is planned for Q1 2020.
Peer assessment				* Learn Ultra: The initial release of this feature is planned for Q1 2020.
Built in Online annotation e.g. crocodoc				Canvas: SpeedGrader uses purpose built technology from Instructure and so supports online annotation in the browser and via free Canvas Teacher app on mobile devices (including stylus support). Learn Original, Learn Ultra: Online annotation and inline grading is done today via the embedded New Box View. In 2020, Learn Original/Ultra course views will get a new, built-in

				technology developed by Blackboard, Re:Mark, that will offer seamless integration and significantly improve the grading workflow.
Audio feedback tool (i.e. built in rather than file upload)				Learn Original, Learn Ultra, Canvas: Audio feedback can be recorded directly in the grading workflow without plugins or additional software.
Video feedback tool (i.e. built in rather than file)				Learn Original, Learn Ultra, Canvas: Video feedback can be recorded directly without plugins or additional software.

upload)				
Attach files for feedback				
Feedback before grade release				
Survey before grade release				
Audio/video inline feedback				
Submit multiple files				
Grade centre/Gradebook				
Manual creation of column in grade centre/gradebook			*	<p>* Canvas: Manual columns must still have an associated item in Canvas to promote consistency and transparency of the student experience (i.e. a complete syllabus, calendar, todo list, etc.).</p> <p>Learn Ultra: Create manual grade columns and calculated columns directly in the gradebook. Drag and drop to reorder grade columns.</p>
Weighted totals				
Grading schemas		*		* Learn Ultra: Uses a default grading schema that can be configured for the course.

View grade centre/book by group		 *		* Learn Ultra: Plans for allowing filtering of the gradebook by group is part of the product roadmap.
View grade centre/book based on chosen				

parameters (smart view)				
Column organisation i.e. move the location of the column	✓	✓	✓	
Column statistics	✓	✓	✓	Canvas: some statistics available in Gradebook, with the same and additional information shown in Analytics. Learn Ultra: Column statistics are available in the Student Activity report for each assessment in the gradebook.
Download grades to spreadsheet	✓	✓	✓	
Upload grades from a spreadsheet	✓	✓	✓	
Bulk download of assignments	✓	✓	✓	
Bulk upload of feedback files	✗	✗	✗	
Create reports from grade centre/ gradebook	✓	✓	✗	
Specify decimal point in grades	✗	✓	✗	
View when student last accessed the course visible in Grade Centre	✓	✗*	✓	* Learn Ultra: Last access date/time currently available in downloaded gradebook. Plans to make visible in online gradebook view expected to be released in Q2 2020.

Analytics

Reporting/analytics tool available



Learn Ultra: Built-in and embedded analytics are the hallmark of Ultra's reporting capabilities. This includes the Course Activity Related to Grades, Student Activity and Discussion Analytics reports.

Mobile Content				
Access content				
Edit content				
Blog tool				<p>* Canvas: while there is no tool called “blogs” equivalent pedagogical goals are possible using Canvas Collaborations, Pages, or Assignments.</p> <p>* Learn Ultra: There are plans in the product roadmap to add a blog tool to Ultra.</p>
Wiki tool				* Canvas: Pages are recommended for a wiki type solution; however, it does not connect with the gradebook.
Discussion tool				
Student grade access				
Student feedback access				
Mobile tests				
Student assignment submission				
Grade assessments				

