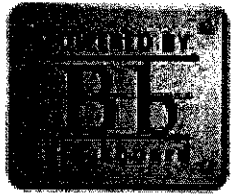


Blackboard Baseline

Jon.Dorbolo@excellenteducator.com

What is Blackboard ?

Blackboard Inc. is a successful software company that developed out of work in the mid 1990's at Cornell University to provide online course tools for educators. Blackboard Inc. offers a wide range of products to educational institutions including Blackboard Portal System™, with which an institution create an internal network for its members; Blackboard Transaction System™, which is an e-commerce solution for educational institutions; and Blackboard Learning System™, which is an integrated set of online tools for teaching and learning. Your school, company, or institution may have all or some of these products implements. Blackboard systems are designed to integrate



with one another, so depending on what your institution has implemented will determine the look, action, and options of the systems available to you. This book deals specifically with Blackboard Learning System™ version 6.x. When I speak of *Blackboard* in this guide, I am referring to the Blackboard Learning System™ version 6.x. Nevertheless, most of the descriptions and directions in this guide also apply to Blackboard 5 and earlier versions. Look for a note on the directions that stipulates when a feature is version specific.

Blackboard systems are installed and administrated locally by the client institution, so the Blackboard system that you have access to may have properties unique to your local environment. Still, the features and functions of Blackboard Learning System™ remain fairly constant across the implementations and this guide is designed to address the aspects of that system that are common to most Blackboard users.

Essentially Blackboard is a large database that allows for various accounts (students, graders, teaching assistants, instructors, administrators, etc.) that individuals may use to post web content, take quizzes, share files, and so on. When an instructor puts a page into Blackboard the information is stored in the database table for that course, content area, folder, and so on. When a students clicks on the link for that content, the database writes the page for them. It is this dynamic database process that allows for the large scale, personalization, individual grading, password authentication, and other major features that make Blackboard so useful to educational institutions.

Sometimes folks think that Blackboard is a program that individuals load onto their own computers. It is not. Blackboard requires a database server and a database administrator to manage the system. Individuals access Blackboard via the web. Consequently Blackboard is a system that institutions purchase and maintain. If you are not working at a Blackboard using school, company, or organization then your remaining option is to use the Coursesites at <http://www.blackboard.com>.

Blackboard is an environment with a collection of tools that allow for integrated development of educational content and processes. If you find it challenging and time consuming to develop web

Blackboard Baseline

Jon.Dorbolo@excellenteducator.com

sites for a course, then is an attractive solution to your content implementation needs. With this guide you will quickly discover how to turn your text and images into online content. The content (i.e. text and images) implementation process can be approached with a minimum of technical fuss so that you can concentrate on what really matters, the quality of the content. If you work well with web content but also want tools such as online assessments, discussion board, chat and whiteboard, online grade book, and much more, then Blackboard is a perfect companion utility for you. Blackboard can be used in ways that enhance, not limit, your creativity.

What is a “Blackboard course”?

Technically, a course is a section of the database designated for a group of users, e.g. an instructor and students. Functionally, a Blackboard course is a set of web resources by which an instructor may manage content, assignment, assessments, discussions, and more. Here is an important point: a Blackboard course is not a template that you must fill in. It is a resource set from which you will select the tools and add the content that are relevant to your teaching. It is possible to turn off all but one area of the course. If using only that one area is the way to advantage you and your learners, then that is what you must do. My plea is that you not view Blackboard as a preset task. Many teachers assign books from which only sections are used by the class. No teacher is bound by the book publisher to use every chapter and page of the text. Likewise, no teacher is bound by Blackboard to use every area and capability in their Blackboard course. The tools are deliberately designed to be flexible to meet many instructional needs. Get clear on what your needs are and then configure Blackboard to fit those needs. The most important capability in the Blackboard Learning System is *your* educational expertise. This book is written with an explicit objective to help you take control of Blackboard solely in order to augment your teaching and your students' learning.

What is a portal?

A portal is a web site featuring commonly used services, serving as a starting point and frequent gateway to the internet (internet portal) or a niche topic (vertical portal). Some internet portals are essential collections of links to other sites. Their value lies in acting as collections points from which diverse resources can be accessed. Examples of powerful internet portals are found at RefDesk (<http://www.refdesk.com>) and Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>), among others.

The Blackboard Portal System™ is a vertical portal designed to serve as an internal network for members of an educational institution. These networks are installed and maintained by individual institutions. There is not a universal web site that links all of these Blackboard Portal System™ together. If your organization uses the Blackboard Portal System™, then that is how you and your students will normally access courses.



OREGON
STATE
UNIVERSITY



Some Things You May Do With Blackboard

Provide Links to Web Resources

Provide students with links to websites in a way that is easy to set up and manage.

Connect to Online Library Resources

Connect students to relevant resources with your instructions. Check with your subject-area librarian.

Post Class Grades

With the online grade book, you may post grade reports that students may access. Use the grade book to conduct grade audits that students manage for themselves.

Create a Group Project Area

Add a communications center for project groups. Group members (you determine who belongs) have access to a web discussion board, group email, a file transfer tool, and a same-time white board.

Make an Online Journal or Lab Notebook

Making a private group area for each student creates a place for students to post journal entries, lab notes, etc. You may read and reply to this work without a physical notebook ever changing hands. Entries are dated and are editable.

Post a Syllabus and Lecture Notes

Use your existing Word, Word Perfect, or other word processor content to post course materials online.

Create a Discussion Forum

Create a discussion area where students post and reply to messages. When designed well, online communication activities can add much value to a course.

Produce Self-Assessment Quizzes

The assessment tools allow the creation of individual tests and quizzes that may be automatically graded. The feedback that students receive makes this a powerful study tool. Build banks of questions using the question pools so that you may reuse the questions in other quizzes and other courses.

Put Lecture Slide Show Online

If you use PowerPoint or another slide show program for lectures, you can put the slides into your Blackboard area. This is not a simple task, but one to be mastered with a modest time investment.

Getting Started in Blackboard

A Basic Walkthrough For OSU Instructors

Table of Contents

[Logging in to Blackboard](#)

[Logging out of Blackboard](#)

[Navigating Blackboard](#)

[How to activate a course in Blackboard](#)

[How to grant a TA access in Blackboard](#)

[How to grant access to an additional staff or faculty member](#)

[How to post Course Content](#)

[How to post Announcements](#)

[How to make, post, and modify Tests](#)

[How to create PDF files](#)

[Using the Gradebook](#)

[Uploading and downloading the Gradebook](#)

[Uploading Blackboard grades into Banner](#)

[How to copy the content from one course to another](#)

[How to customize the look of your portal page and course sites](#)

Logging in to Blackboard

Blackboard uses ONID accounts for authentication. If you do not have an active ONID account you will need to visit the following webpage and sign up for one:

<http://www.onid.orst.edu>

To enter Blackboard:

- Direct your web browser to <http://my.oregonstate.edu>
- Click the *Login* link.
- Type in your ONID username and password.
- Hit *Enter* or click the *Login* button.

Logging out of Blackboard

When you are finished using Blackboard you must log out. If you do not log out you may experience account problems when using Blackboard at a later time.

To log out of Blackboard:

- Click on the link labeled *Log Out* at the top of any Blackboard page.

Navigating Blackboard

The first page displayed is called the Portal page or Home page. From here you can access all other Blackboard services. On top are a collection of tabs to different areas of Blackboard. To the left there are two option menus and in the center are a collection of panes that list different information, course sites, and options.

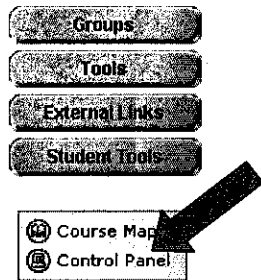
The most frequently used pane is *Courses: Quick View* or some similar pane used to view Blackboard courses. You can access the classes you are teaching or enrolled in from these locations. Simply click on the course name to enter its site.

How to activate a course in Blackboard

All course information in Blackboard is downloaded from the Banner database (OSU Online Services). If a course is listed in Banner as being taught by a certain instructor it *will* appear in Blackboard for that same instructor. When courses are created they are set to *Not Available* so instructors may add content before students view it. In order for a course to be visible to students, an instructor must activate it.

To make a course available to students follow these steps:

- Enter the Course from your Blackboard portal page as the instructor.
- Select the course Control Panel.



- Select *Settings*.
- Select *Course Availability*.
- Click *Yes* for Available.
- Click *Submit*.

COURSES > TEST COURSE BB_TEST_101 > CONTROL PANEL

BB_TEST_101

Content Areas	
Course Information	Books
Course Documents	External Links
Assignments	

Course Tools	
Announcements	Discussion Boards
Course Calendar	Send E-mail
Staff Information	Collaboration
Tasks	Digital Drop Box

Course Options	
Manage Course Menu	Import Package
Manage Tools	Export Course
Recycle Course	Archive Course
Settings	Course Copy
Import Course Cartridge	Resources

How to grant a TA access to Blackboard

Teaching assistants can be added as members of course sites by designating them as a TA for the course in Banner. Departmental staff are able to manage instructor and teaching assistant information in Banner. Faculty should contact the person in their

department who manages Banner information and request that the TA be added to the course as a “0% instructor”.

How to grant access to an additional staff or faculty member

Departmental staff can be added to Blackboard courses using the department subject code. They can be added as either Course Builder or Teaching Assistant depending on the level of access needed. Staff that needs to update content can be added as Course Builders. Staff that need access to grade book information can be added as Teaching Assistants. Departmental staff can be given access for a specific term or for all terms (which includes the current term and future terms being loaded at the given time).

Requests to have staff added must be sent to *support@my.oregonstate.edu*

Please include:

- Course name and Department Subject Code(s)
- Staff member's name and ONID username.
- Which terms to add staff member to (current, future, or all).
- Level of access (Course Builder or Teaching Assistant).

How to post Course Content

You can post various course material in the *Content Areas* of your Blackboard course (syllabus, lecture notes, readings etc).

Posting to a *Content Area*:

- Enter the Control Panel of the course in question.
- The *Content Areas* are listed towards the top of the page in their own pane.
- You can choose where to put the content according to your own needs and preferences (*Course Documents, Course Information* etc).
- Click on the desired content area.
- A list of what is currently posted will be displayed. You may add different types of content from this page.
- If the content is in word processing format choose *Add Item*. If it is a webpage choose *Add URL*.

Add Item:

- The name is chosen from the pull-down menu or specified in the text field below it. Choose a color and add any extra text you wish to include.
- Choose *Browse* from the *Content Attachments* section and find the document you wish to post.
- Select *Submit* at the bottom of the page.

Add URL:

- Specify the name of the link, the address and any additional text.
- Choose *Submit* at the bottom of the page.

Note: There are other options when adding content that instructors may modify as they wish but generally the defaults for these options are adequate. The best formats for Blackboard documents are ones that all users will be able to view. Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat files are two good choices.

How to post Announcements

Announcements are displayed in detail on the main page of the individual course site. A summary of the announcement is also displayed on the Portal page of any user registered for that course.

To add a Course Announcement:

- Enter the *Control Panel* of the course you wish to post to.
- Click on *Announcements* in the *Course Tools* pane.
- Click on the *Add Announcement* button.
- Type in the subject and message body of the announcement.
- Decide if you want to make the announcement permanent or temporary and check the appropriate box.
- According to your preference you can also place a link in the announcement to a portion of the course site.
- When you are finished click on *Submit*.

How to make, post, and modify Tests

New Blackboard tests are created through the Control Panel. Tests are stored here until they are deployed into a content area. Once added to a content area, a test needs to be activated so it will be visible to students.

To create a new test:

- Enter the Control Panel of the course.
- Click on *Test Manager* under the *Assessment* pane.
- Click the *Add Test* button.
- Fill out the name, description, and instructions for the test.
- In the *Test Canvas* you can add and modify test questions by choosing the questions type from the pull-down menu and then clicking *Go*.
- Once a question and its answer have been created click the *Submit* button.
- When the test is complete click *Ok* in the *Test Canvas*.

To add a completed test to a content area:

- Enter the Control Panel.
- Click on the desired content area and navigate to the desired location.
- Click the *Add Test* button.
- Select the test you wish to add and click *Submit*.

Note: Only tests which have *not* been deployed to a content area are viewable in this test selection window.

To make a test available and change other test options:

- Enter the content area from the Control Panel.
- Click the *Modify* button next to a test.
- Click on *Modify the Test Options*.
- Next to the link availability option click *Yes*.
- You may also change other options here such as answer feedback and question randomization.

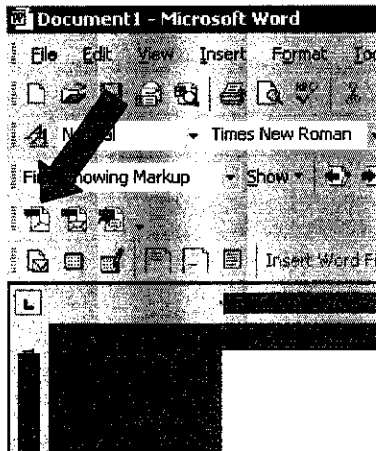
How to create PDF files

Because PDF files are an excellent choice of format for Blackboard course documents, this section has been added to help instructors create PDF files from Microsoft Office documents.

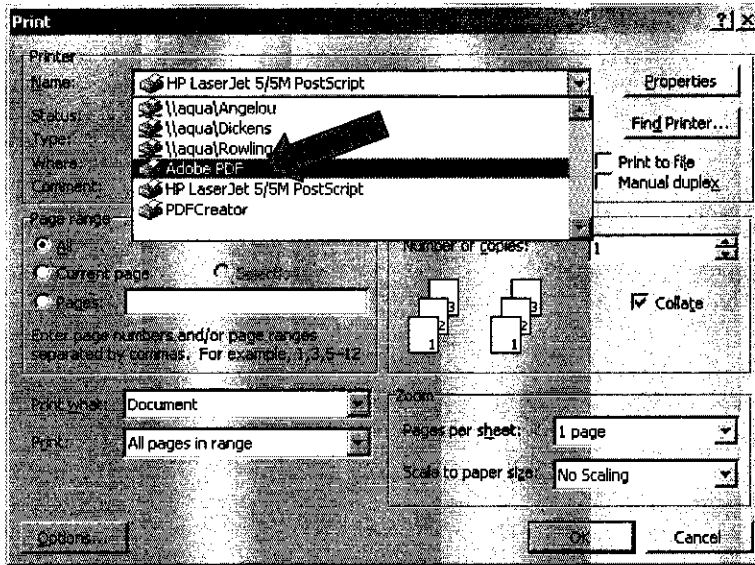
Note: In order to create a PDF file we recommend that you purchase a copy of the full professional version of Adobe Acrobat. You can obtain a license and CD from www.oetc.org. Talk to your departmental accounting staff for more information on purchasing a license and/or copy of Adobe Acrobat Professional 6.0 from OETC.

To create a PDF file from a Microsoft Office document:

- Open the document you want to convert to a PDF file.
- Look for a small Adobe toolbar with only three buttons.
- Click the far left button to convert your document to PDF format.



- If you do not see this toolbar, open the *Tools* menu and select *Customize*.
- In the *Toolbars* tab scroll down to the very bottom and check the box next to *PDF Maker 6.0*.
- If you cannot get access to the Adobe toolbar, open the *File* menu and select *Print*.
- Under the printer pull-down menu choose *Adobe PDF*.



- Click *Print* and your file will be converted to PDF format after you designate where you would like to save it.

Using the Gradebook

The Gradebook is accessible through the Control Panel of any course. All currently registered students will be listed along with course items they are graded on. Internal tests and assignments created in Blackboard are automatically listed in the Gradebook. Other assignments outside of Blackboard must be entered manually.

To enter a non-Blackboard graded item:

- Click on *Add Item* from the menu in the upper left.
- Name the item and select a corresponding category.
- Enter a brief description of the entry if desired.
- Enter how many points are possible for this item.
- Choose whether you would like the grade displayed as letter, percentage, score or text (most common choice is percentage or score).
- Select the desired visibility to students.
- If you wish Blackboard to factor this score into the *Total* column of the Gradebook then select *Yes* for the next option. If you wish to keep it separate from the final score tally than select *No*.
- Click *Submit*. Your new Gradebook item will be displayed on the following screen.

As stated before, the scores of *internal* Blackboard tests and assignments will be automatically entered in to the Gradebook. There are two ways to manually enter the scores of *external* Blackboard tests and assignments.

First option:

- Click on a student's name from the main Gradebook page.
- Click on *User Grade List*.
- The scores of all graded items are listed for this student. An instructor may modify them as desired.
- Click *Submit* when finished.

Second option:

- Click on any of the graded items from the main Gradebook page.
- Click on *Item Grade List*. The score for this item is listed for every student. The instructor may modify the grades as desired.
- Click *Submit* when finished.

Uploading and downloading the Gradebook

Instructors can download and save a Gradebook for use in a spreadsheet program. This file can be uploaded to the course Gradebook at a later date.

To download a Gradebook:

- Enter the course Gradebook from the Control Panel.
- Select *Download Grades*.
- Click *Download* and save the CSV file to a location on your computer. You can open this file with Microsoft Excel.

Note: Downloading grades does *not* remove any information from the course Gradebook. The *Total* and *Weighted Total* columns are included in a Gradebook download. However, these columns will not be included in a Gradebook upload because they are generated by calculations within Blackboard. The Instructor cannot manipulate the data for these areas.

To upload a Gradebook:

- Enter the course Gradebook from the Control Panel.

- Select *Upload Grades*.
- Click the *Browse* button and search for the Gradebook file you wish to upload.

Note: It is best to upload a Gradebook file that has been previously downloaded from Blackboard. Creating a Blackboard Gradebook file from scratch in Excel is extremely complicated and not recommended.

- Click *Submit* when you have found the Gradebook file.
- Choose what column you want to import and what the destination column in the Gradebook will be. You can choose to make it a new column if you wish.

Note: Choosing the same import and destination column will overwrite any data in the destination column. Be sure of your choice before you proceed.

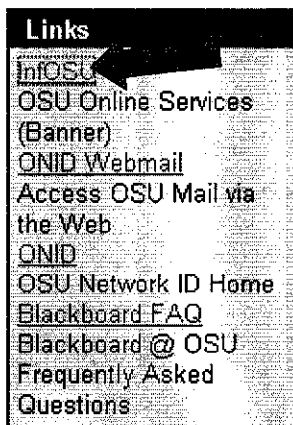
- Click *Submit*.
- On the next page select the students that you wish to make this upload effective for. Only the students you check will get the upload you selected on the previous page.
- Click *Submit*.

Uploading Blackboard grades into Banner

Instructors can choose to use their final Blackboard course grades as term grades in Banner. This function must be performed from within OSU Online Services (InfoSU).

To upload grades from Blackboard into Banner:

- Click on the *InfoSU* link on the Portal page.



- Login to OSU Online Services with your OSU ID# and GAP.
- Click the *Faculty & Advisor* menu item.
- Click *Final Grades-Upload from Blackboard*.
- Select the grading term and click *Submit*.
- From the drop down menu choose the appropriate Blackboard course that contains the grades you wish to upload to Banner.
- Click *Submit*.
- Verify your choice and click *Submit*.

Note: Banner will only accept grades that are in the proper format for that particular course. If a course is P/NP, for example, the Blackboard grades must be in that format. Also, Banner will only recognize grades in the Blackboard Gradebook that have a *Final Grade* column with at least one student grade entered.

How to copy the content from one course to another

This saves instructors from having to replicate course material or manually transfer course content.

To copy a Blackboard course:

- Enter the course site you want to copy from.
- Enter the Control Panel.
- Click on *Course Copy*. It is located under the *Course Options* heading.
- Click on *Copy Course Materials into Existing Course*. Use the *Browse* button to find the destination course site, select the areas to move.
- Click *Submit*.

How to customize the look of your portal page and course sites

Instructors may change the look of their portal page by choosing what information panes are displayed and where they are placed. Course sites can be changed by modifying the left toolbar.

To customize your Portal page information panes:

- Click on the *Content* button toward the upper left of the page.

- Select the panes you want displayed by checking the corresponding boxes.
- Click *Submit*.

To customize the location and appearance of the Portal page information panes:

- Click on the *Layout* button (next to the *Content* button).
- Use the two boxes for left and right placement to determine what order the panes appear in.
- Choose a different color theme if desired.

To modify the number of options in a Blackboard course toolbar:

- Enter the Control Panel of the Blackboard site.
- Click *Manage Organization Menu* in the *Organization Options* pane.
- Add, remove, modify, and sort the links in the toolbar from here.
- Click *Submit*.

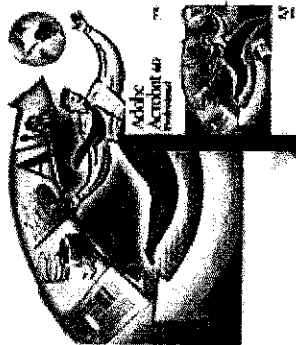
To modify the look and color of the buttons in a course site toolbar:

- Enter the Control Panel of the course site.
- Click *Settings* in the *Organization Options* pane.
- Click *Organization Design*.
- Click *Organization Design*.
- Select your preferred style and color options.
- Click *Submit*.

The Secret to Dynamite and Practical



Convert!



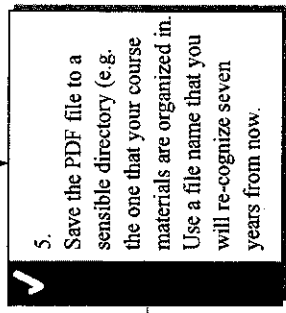
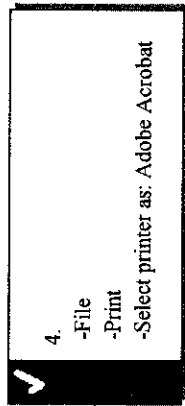
1. Install a PDF conversion program. Adobe Acrobat is the original and most versatile. Freeware such as PDF creator and PDF95 can be installed by download.



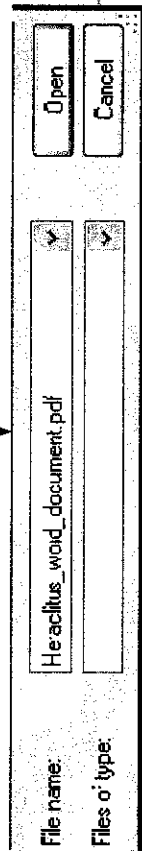
2. Create content in preferred application (e.g. Word, WordPerfect, PowerPoint, Excel, Inspiration, etc.)



3. Convert to PDF



6. Add an Item in a Blackboard content area



7. Browse for the file and find the PDF that you created

