Managing Course Content

I. Course Files

Creating and maintaining a repository of materials is an important part of developing an Blackboard course. With Course Files, not only do faculty have access to all of their files, but they have the ability to manage, organize, and view those files as suits their needs.

Course Files is a centrally located repository on the Blackboard server for organizing and storing content. In the Control Panel, the Course Files section is titled 'Files'. Once content is in Course Files, it can be linked to from any place in the course where attaching files is available.

Course Files within each course displays content for that specific course, not for other courses taught by the instructor. You can create folders in Course Files to organize your content in a way that is logical to you.

Content in Course Files is considered course content for course reuse. Therefore, links to files can be deleted in the course, yet the files themselves will remain in Course Files where they can be linked to again. Also, if a file is modified or moved to another Course Files folder after it is linked in the course, the link will not be broken.

There are 4 things you can place in the Course Files area:
1. Files (any type)
2. Packages (zip files) *(see below)*
3. Created HTML Objects *(see below)*
4. Folders

Uploading (Zipped) Packages
Files and folders can be zipped into a package and uploaded into Course Files. You can choose to upload the zipped file and automatically unzip its contents, keeping the folder structure and links intact, or keep the file zipped.
To upload and automatically unzip a package:
1. Create a folder in Course files for the contents of the zipped package.
2. Click the name of the new folder.
3. On the Action Bar, point to Upload to access the drop-down list.
4. Select Upload Package.
5. Click Browse to locate the file on your local drive.
6. Click Submit. The zipped package will automatically unzip in the selected folder.

NOTE: How to add the Zipped file content to your course
In the Content Area, from the Build Content drop-down list, create an Item or a file and use the Browse Course Files function to search for the start page for the unzipped content. In the Content Area, students will click the link for the lesson's start page and be able to view the lesson contents in order with all links intact.

HTML objects

Within Course Files, new items can be created using the Text Editor. These items are called HTML Objects.

HTML Objects are created in Course Files using the Create HTML Object function on the Action Bar. The Text Editor can add files, images, and multimedia to an HTML Object. Any files added to the HTML Object are saved in Course Files in the same folder as the HTML Object. The new HTML Object can be linked to one or more locations in the course. NOTE: The system automatically adds the .html extension to the HTML Object file name.

1. Click the Course Files folder where the HTML Object will be created.
2. On the Action Bar, click Create HTML Object.
3. On the Create Reusable Object page, type a Name. This is the file's name in Course Files.
4. In the Text Editor, type the content. Use the Text Editor functions to format the text and add files, images, and multimedia, if desired. Any files added from a local drive as attachments are automatically uploaded to Course Files.
5. Click Submit.

II. Moving/Copying/Reordering content

Move Content

Instructors can move Content Items from one of their Courses to another of their Courses, and from one area to another area in the same Course, with some restrictions.

To move Course content:

1. Access the Content Area, Learning Module, Lesson Plan, or folder containing the piece of content to move.
2. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
3. Click the item's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
4. Select Move. If Move does not appear, this option in not available.
5. On the Move page, select the Destination Course from the drop-down list. The default setting is the current Course. Only courses where the Instructor has a role permitting copying content appear in the list.
6. Click Browse to select the Destination Folder.
7. Click Submit.

Copy Content

Instructors can copy Content Items from one of their Courses to another of their Courses, and from one area to another area in the same Course, with some restrictions.

To copy Course content:

1. Access the Content Area, Learning Module, Lesson Plan, or folder containing the piece of content to copy.
2. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
3. Click the item's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
4. Select Copy. If Copy does not appear, this option in not available.
5. On the Copy page, select the Destination Course from the drop-down list. The default setting is the current Course. Only courses where the Instructor has a role permitting copying content appear in the list.
6. Click Browse to select the Destination Folder.
7. For some items, select an option for Create links for items which cannot be copied. If the options are grayed out, links cannot be created.
8. Select the Copy Alignments option.
9. Click Submit.

Reorder Content

Items can be reordered using the drag and drop controls or by using the Keyboard Accessible Reordering Tool.

1. Click the Keyboard Accessible Reordering Tool beside the Edit Mode button.
2. Select the item you wish to move in the list.
3. Use the up and down arrows below the title box or on your keyboard to adjust the order.
4. Click Submit.

III. Learning Modules

Learning modules allow you to create a learning path of content to lead your students through. It is presented one screen at a time, and you can place any type of object you want on each screen… documents, surveys, quizzes, discussion boards, videos, etc.

How to Create a Learning Module

1. Access a Content Area, Lesson Plan, or Folder.
2. Ensure Edit Mode is ON.
3. Point to Build Content on the Action Bar to access the drop-down list.
4. Select Learning Module.
5. On the Create Learning Module page, type the Name. Optionally, type instructions or a description in the Text box. Use the Text Editor functions to format the text.
6. Under Availability, select the Yes option to make it available to users.
7. Use the Display After and Display Until date and time fields to limit availability. Select the Display After and Display Until check boxes in order to enable the date and time selections.
8. Select Yes to Enforce Sequential Viewing of the Learning Module.
9. Select Yes to force the Learning Module to Open in New Window.
10. Select Yes to Track Number of Views.
11. Select Yes to Show Table of Contents to Users.
12. Select the type of Hierarchy Display from the drop-down list.
13. Click Submit.

IV. Lesson Plans

A Lesson Plan is special content type that combines information about the lesson itself with the curriculum resources used to teach it. Default lesson plan sections include the instructional level, grade level, objectives, and subject area of the lesson. Additional sections can be added to the Lesson Plan, arranged to display in any order and optionally shown to students.
Curriculum Resources

Any type of content item can be added to the Curriculum Resources Tab.

Adding content is accomplished the same as in Content Areas. Select the type of content to add from the drop-down list generated from any of the buttons: Build Content, Evaluate, Collaborate, or Assign Textbook and then fill in the necessary information and options.

The Curriculum Resources appear under the Content Information sections when the Lesson Plan is displayed.

Lesson Plan Sections

By default Lesson Plans have four sections, Instructional Level, Instructor, Subject Area and Objectives. These sections can be deleted by clicking the “X” icon. They can be moved using the drag-and drop function or the keyboard reordering function.

Additional Lesson Plan Sections can be added by clicking Add Lesson Section and then selecting the type of section to add. New sections appear at the bottom of the section page but can be reordered at any time.

Share some or all of the sections with students by first making the Lesson Plan available under Options, and then selecting the Share with Students checkbox at the bottom of each section.

V. Course Links

A Course Link is a shortcut to an area, a tool, or an item and can be added to a Content Area, Learning Module, Lesson Plan, or folder. All existing items that appear in the pop-up Course Map can be linked to using a Course Link. For example, if a Course Link is created to a tool, and that tool is not turned on, users accessing the Course Link receive a message informing them that the tool is not turned on. The same is true if a Course Link is created to a content item that is subject to Adaptive Release rules. Users who are not permitted to access the content because of a rule receive a message informing them that access to the content is not permitted.

Add a Course Link to a Content Area, Learning Module, Lesson Plan, or folder to provide quick access to relevant materials and tools. For example, an Instructor can create a Discussion Board Forum where users discuss the assigned readings. A Course Link to this Forum can be placed in the Content Area with the articles for users to access.

Course Links can be set to appear on a specific date and time and to stop appearing on a specific date and time. Display restrictions do not affect content availability, only the appearance of the Course Link. How to Create a Course Link

1. Access a Content Area, Learning Module, Lesson Plan, or folder and ensure Edit Mode is ON.
2. Point to Build Content on the Action Bar to access the drop-down list.
3. Select Course Link.
4. On the Create Course Link page, click Browse to Choose Item.
5. In the pop-up Course Map, select the item.
6. The Name and Location text boxes are automatically populated. Optionally, edit the Name and select the color of the link. The Name appears as a link in the Content Area.
7. Optionally, type information or instructions in the Description text box and use the Text Editor functions to format the text.
8. Set the Options for the Course Link.
9. Click Submit.

Note: In the Content Area, a Course Link has a unique icon represented by a few links of chain accompanying the standard icon for the tool, item, or folder.

VI. Importing and Archiving

Course Cartridges
Course Cartridges are pre-made materials produced by professional authors, editors, and publishers that can be downloaded and added to a Course.

Course Cartridges enable Instructors to gain access to complete sets of teaching tools provided by academic publishers. In one central location, Instructors can find relevant, publisher-created materials. Once the materials are downloaded to a Blackboard Learn Course, Instructors are free to customize the content by adding and deleting materials as needed to correlate with specific topics covered in the classroom.

Course Cartridges can serve as supplements to existing online Courses, or provide an excellent start for faculty who are just beginning to develop online teaching strategies. Instructors will benefit from the ease of use, variety, and professional quality of the materials available on Course Cartridges. Instructors download Course Cartridges from the Course Cartridge Repository and install cartridges into Courses.

How to Import a Course Cartridge

1. On the Control Panel under Packages and Utilities, click Import Course Cartridge .
2. Type the Course Cartridge Download Key in the field provided. Course Cartridge content will be added to Course materials.
3. Click Submit.

Note: *The Download Key is obtained from the publisher. Without a Download Key, it is not possible to add Course Cartridge content.*

Exporting/Archiving course content

The Export/ Archive Course page organizes all export and archive packages that are created from the Course. When the Course is exported or archived, a link to the package appears on this page. The Instructor may download the package to a local computer, and then use it in the future for import or restore operations.

When a package is exported or archived, it does not appear on this page immediately. An email is sent to the user once the system has created the package; the user may then open this page to find the package and download it.

Note: It is recommended that packages be deleted from this page once they are downloaded. Each package counts against the Course quota; so keeping packages on this page may result in limited space to add additional content to the Course.

On the Control Panel under Packages and Utilities, click Export/ ArchiveCourse.

VII. Early Warning System

The Early Warning System is a tool used to communicate warnings to Students or Observers that a performance problem is beginning to appear or has become more serious. Warnings are generated based on graded performance, late or missing course work, or attendance within the online course. The Instructor can choose to communicate a particular warning to just the Student, the Student and a parent or advisor that is assigned as an Observer, or just the Student's Observer. In addition, the Instructor has control over the message each time a warning is communicated. The Instructor can use the default message or edit it to more accurately communicate the seriousness of the situation.
Important Information about the Early Warning System

When using the Early Warning System, please keep the following key points in mind:

* The Early Warning System does not continuously monitor the course. The Instructor must check the Early Warning System periodically and click Refresh to discover incidents of Student performance that trigger an alert. The Early Warning System consolidates these incidents and allows the Instructor to easily report problems, the Early Warning System does not automatically detect problems and notify Students and Observers. Remember to refresh rules manually on a regular basis.
* The System Administrator may turn off access to the Early Warning System based on policies at the institution. If the Early Warning System is on at the system-level, the Instructor may still turn it off within the course.

* The Early Warning System keeps a log of alerts sent to users. The log is searchable and is used to verify that a Student was alerted to a problem.

Early Warning System and the Grade Center
The Early Warning System is designed to work closely with the Grade Center. Early Warning System rules use Grade Center results to create rules and create alerts to student performance based on those rules. In particular, the Early Warning System can trigger an alert based on grades recorded in the Grade Center. As well, Assignments or Tests that are not completed by the deadline may also be used to trigger an alert.

Early Warning System and the Performance Dashboard
The Performance Dashboard includes information about Early Warning System alerts. The Early Warning Column shows the number of warnings and the number of total rules that may trigger a warning. Clicking on the data in this column will open the Early Warning System. The Early Warning System column will only display if the tool is turned on in the course.

VIII. Notifications

The Notifications Dashboard contains four basic modules that give information to users based on their enrollment and their role in the system. Users with multiple enrollments will receive information in modules for all their classes and organizations. Users with multiple roles will receive information in modules for all their roles. Users can navigate to individual items to take action.

For all users, each Course contains a Notification Dashboard specific to that Course. Instructors can customize the notifications that appear on this Dashboard, as well as opt to have email notifications sent to their account. **To change the settings for your personal notifications, click the 'My Places' at the top of the Blackboard window, then click 'Edit Notification settings'.**

The page displays these modules:

* Needs Attention - Displays all items in a course that require some type of interaction. Instructors, TAs, and Graders see assignments, tests, and surveys that have been submitted.
* Alerts - Displays past due and early warning notifications for all courses. Instructors, TAs, and Graders see the users in each course that have past due items and who have generated early warning messages. Links are provided to email students and view early warning system rules. Students see any assignments, tests, or other items that are past due and any early warning messages received.
* What's New - Displays a list of new items in all relevant courses and organizations. Instructors, TAs, and Graders see any new assignments that have been submitted, tests that have been submitted, new discussion board posts. Students see new discussion board posts, new grades posted, new content that is available.
* To Do - Displays the status (Past Due/Due) of relevant course work and tasks. Students see any grade items that have listed due dates in two categories, what is past due and what is due in the future. Links to relevant course items are provided.

IX. Misc

Display Content as Items or Text

In the Content Area, you can display the contents as “Show Icons and Text” or “Show Icons Only” View. In the “Show Icons and Text” view, you will see the corresponding icon with the content name and description. In the “Show Icons Only” view, you will see the corresponding icon and content name.

1. From the Course Menu open the content area.
2. Click the Action Link Icon beside the name of the content area.
3. Select Show Icons Only or Show Text Only.

Track Usage

Tracking Reports area can be used by instructors to generate reports on the course usage and activity. Instructors can view specific Student’s usage to determine if Students are actively using the course.

1. From the Course Menu select a Content Area.
2. Select the Content Item where you want to apply the Tracking Report.
3. From the Content Item’s contextual menu select Statistics Tracking.
4. Select On or Off.
5. Click Submit