

# Instructor's Guide to Creating Blackboard Course Sites

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## Overview of Blackboard

Blackboard is a commercial Course Management System (CMS) shared by the tri-college consortium. Blackboard simplifies the process of creating web pages for your courses. As a course creator, you need not use the web page language HTML (although you can) nor worry about the finer details of posting pages in the correct folder. It is an integrated system for creating course web sites complete with multimedia, discussions, and assessments. Blackboard allows variable levels of access, enabling you to select exactly what each user sees.

This guide is intended for faculty creating Blackboard course materials, as well as students and other staff assisting those faculty members. It will introduce you to the basics of posting courses and using common features.

### Your Blackboard Account

Each tri-college faculty member, student or employee with an active email account is assigned a unique Blackboard account. Using this account, faculty members and their designated assistants can manage the content, availability, and other aspects of pages for their courses. Students can view their courses and contribute messages, papers, or other items as you allow.

You can access the Blackboard system from on or off campus by logging onto <http://blackboard.swarthmore.edu> with your *Blackboard username* and *password*. Haverford College Blackboard accounts are in the format **hc.juser** – where *juser* is your e-mail account name.

### Logging on

The first time you log on select the option **First Time User?**. This brings up a form requesting your name and email address or Blackboard username. **Enter your first and last name exactly as they appear in the College directory.** You will then receive an email sent to your Haverford email account containing instructions for resetting your Blackboard password. If you get an error message, try clicking the back button on your browser. If you still have problems, contact the Helpdesk.

Once you reset your Blackboard password, simply log on with *hc.username* and your new password.

### Customized User Screens

Blackboard is designed as a customized system where each user gets a personalized account. Users log into their own accounts and get a choice of two main screens, selectable via the tabs **Home** and **Courses**. The *Home* tab displays any announcements, tasks or calendar items relevant for that user. The *Courses* tab lists all courses in the Blackboard system that the user either teaches or is enrolled in. Clicking on a course takes you to the course web site.

## Planning Your Course Site

It is best to have your syllabus ready, along with an idea of how you want your course to be organized, before you begin setting your course up in Blackboard. Blackboard comes with a default design. Although we have tried to make the course shells suitable to most needs, you may

want to tailor this design to better suit the work in your particular course. It may be helpful to meet with your liaison or come to a Blackboard workshop for help in planning a site, especially if you are new to Blackboard.

## Setting up Your Course

All courses you are teaching or taking should appear in the **My Courses** box. Click on the **Courses** tab at the top of the page to see more details on these courses. If you are teaching a course and it does not appear, contact your liaison.

**Note:** You will have access to all courses you are registered to teach when you log into Blackboard. However, by default your courses are not available to others. You will have to provide access via the Blackboard control panel. This is explained later.

### Dealing with Multiple Sections of the Same Course or Cross-Listed Courses

If you teach more than one section of the same course, or your course is cross-listed, you may wish to consolidate those classes before you start working on Blackboard. You can consolidate classes via the Merge tool. See the *Merge Courses* tip sheet, linked from Blackboard help, for details and instructions.

If you wish to merge courses or sections, it is best to do so before you start adding content to your course shells.

### The Default Course Menu

Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Swarthmore have each set default course menus, with some differences by department. By default, Haverford courses have the following main menu.

#### Announcements

In this section you can set up announcements, such as a room change, an upcoming exam, a guest lecturer, etc.

See the *Announcements* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

#### Faculty Information

This section makes it easy for you to give students basic information about yourself and any other faculty teaching the course.

See the *Staff Information* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

#### Syllabus

This is a section which lets you add content such as plain text, html, Word documents, PDFs, etc. Most people use this section to type their syllabus, or to post a word document containing the class syllabus.

See the *Course Content* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

## Course Documents

Functionally, the Course Documents section is the same as the Syllabus section, in that it lets you add content such as as plain text, html, Word documents, PDFs, etc. However, this is typically where people put readings, practice tests, answer keys, or other items needed to understand and complete course work.

See the *Course Content* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

## Submit/Retrieve Assignments

This is a drop box where you can leave documents for your students and you can retrieve documents from your students. You can target documents to particular students or the entire class. Students posting to this section can only send documents to you, not other students in the class. If you want students to share documents among themselves, have them post documents in the discussion area, or talk to your liaison about using the group tool.

See the *Digital Dropbox* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

## Discussion Board

The discussion board is most often used to have students share questions and ideas with each other. You can set up forum topics and students can post messages related to those broad topics.

See the *Discussion Board* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

## Send Email

This link makes it easy for you and your students to email one and another.

See the *Send Email* tip sheet, linked from the Blackboard help page, for more information on using this navigation area.

## Library Resources

Your subject librarian has tailored this section to the needs of your department. It contains links to reference materials and contact information for those relevant to your area of study. Talk to your librarian for more information about this section and how to customize it more exactly to your needs.

## What's New

This link may display different information for everyone who logs into you class. It will highlight anything that changed since a person last logged onto the Blackboard system and checked your course site. This information will display automatically; you need not do any setup work.

## Control Panel

As the instructor, you can add content into the default menu as described above, or you can modify that menu to more closely meet your needs. Either way, you will need to use the Control Panel to create your Blackboard course.

Find the **Control Panel** on the left menu of your screen (circled in **Figure 1: Default Course, Instructor view**). This button provides access to all of Blackboard’s development tools. Students will not see this button, although they will see the course navigation links.

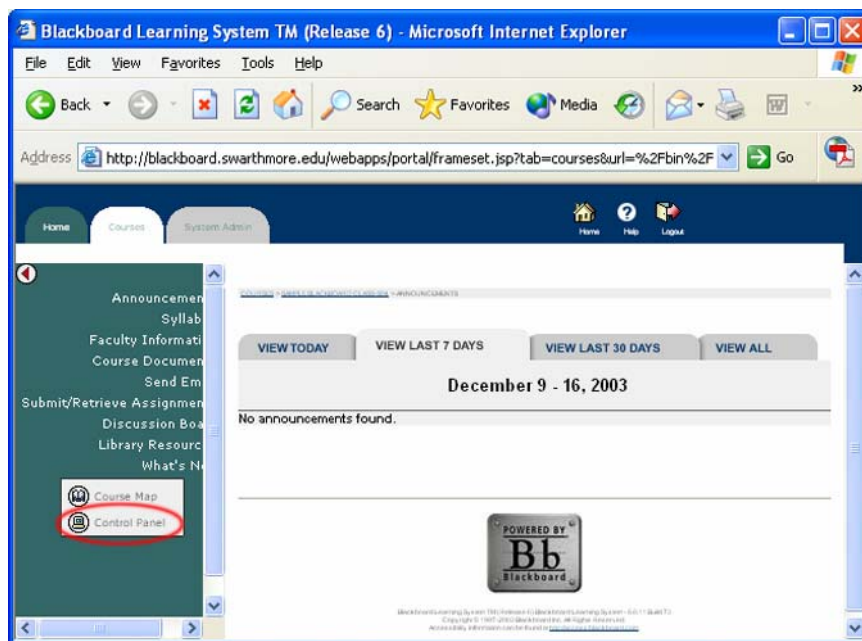


Figure 1: Default Course, Instructor view

The full control panel interface is shown in **Figure 2: Control Panel**. This handout will not cover all tools available to you, only those that are important in building a basic course site.

<p><b>Content Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Syllabus</a></li> <li><a href="#">Course Documents</a></li> <li><a href="#">Library Resources</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>User Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">List / Modify Users</a></li> <li><a href="#">Create User</a></li> <li><a href="#">Manual Add/Remove Users</a></li> <li><a href="#">Manage Groups</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Course Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Announcements</a></li> <li><a href="#">Course Calendar</a></li> <li><a href="#">Staff Information</a></li> <li><a href="#">Tasks</a></li> <li><a href="#">Discussion Boards</a></li> <li><a href="#">Send E-mail</a></li> <li><a href="#">Collaboration</a></li> <li><a href="#">Digital Drop Box</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Test Manager</a></li> <li><a href="#">Survey Manager</a></li> <li><a href="#">Pool Manager</a></li> <li><a href="#">Gradebook</a></li> <li><a href="#">Gradebook Views</a></li> <li><a href="#">Course Statistics</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Course Options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Manage Course Menu</a></li> <li><a href="#">Archive Course</a></li> <li><a href="#">Manage Tools</a></li> <li><a href="#">Settings</a></li> <li><a href="#">Merge Course Sections</a></li> <li><a href="#">Import Package</a></li> <li><a href="#">Resources</a></li> <li><a href="#">Export Course</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Support</a></li> <li><a href="#">Manual</a></li> <li><a href="#">Contact System Administrator</a></li> </ul>

Figure 2: Control Panel

## Manage Course Menu

You can start development anywhere, but unless you wish to use the default navigation links, it is best to start in the **Manage Course Menu** section. This lets you set up the basic structure of your course site. Spending time up front on the course menu makes your site easier for you to maintain and for students to navigate. You can create new navigation links, or reorder, rename or hide existing navigation links.

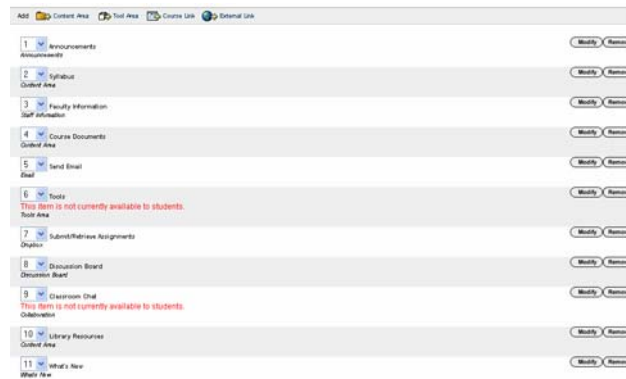


Figure 3: Manage Course Menu

### Add New Navigation Links

Before you can add new navigation links, you need to understand Blackboard's concept of Content Areas, Tool Areas, Course Links and External Links. You must select one of these area types when you add a navigation area. You can later modify details about that area, but if you wish to change the area type you must add a new navigation link.

#### Content Area

Within a content area of your site you can add text and documents to explain general content of your course. This type of link allows you to post your syllabus, course readings, assignment, and other explanatory types of information. It is used for the default navigation links *Syllabus* and *Course Documents*.

#### Tools Area

The tools area provides access to Blackboards more dynamic features, such as the discussion board, collaboration (Blackboards chat tool), electronic drop box (for exchanging files with students, and between students), student grade book (for posting student grades), and group area (creating a space for group projects). It is used for the default navigation links *Submit/Retrieve Assignments*, *Discussion Board*, *Send Email* and *What's New*.

#### Course Links

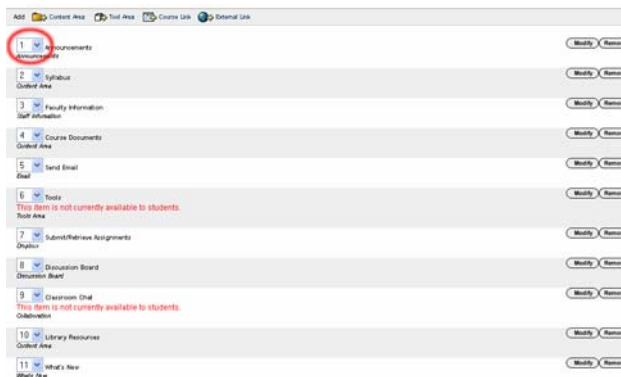
You can link from one section of your site to another.

#### External Links

You can create links to web sites outside of Blackboard.

## Change Link Order

To Change the link order, change the order number appearing to the left of the link name. (Circled in **Figure 4: Select the Order of Navigation Links**)



**Figure 4: Select the Order of Navigation Links**

## Change Link Names and Features

You can change the name and access rights of any link via the modify button.



**Figure 5: Modify Button and Menu Options**

Within the modify menu you have the following features.

**Area Type:** As explained above, Blackboard has several different data types it allows you to work with, Content, Tools, Course Links and External Links. You will select this area type when you add the link through the main Manage Course Menu window. If you select a Content area, your main option is what to name it. However, if you select the Tools area, there are a variety of tools you can select, each very different in function. If you wish to work with tools that are not already in the template, such as grade books or groups, see the *Instructor Tip Sheets* or *Blackboard Release 6 Instructor's Manual*, linked from the Blackboard Help menu, or contact your liaison for more information.

**Area Name:** Select from the existing options, or type in your own link name.

**Allow Guest Access:** Allow guests into this area so that people who are not enrolled in your class can see this section of your course site. We recommend you turn on this option, at least during the drop/add period, for those sections you want students considering the class to be able to access.

**Allow Observer Access:** Observers are Blackboard users who are observing a particular enrolled student. Although we almost never have observers on the system, you should enable this option. Due to a bug in Blackboard, it can affect guest access.

**Make Available to student/participants:** Can students see this link? Normally you want the answer to be yes. However, you may wish to set the area up, but make it unavailable during development. Likewise, you may wish to have it as an option if students show an interest in an area, but not clutter up your menu with it otherwise.

## Hide Navigation Links

While you can remove links that you will not use by clicking on the **Remove** button, it is often preferable to leave the link in place, but to make it **unavailable**. That way you hide the link, making it easy to change your mind and add the area back later.

## Course Content and Tools

Once you have your navigation buttons you are ready to enter the content for your site. A number of tip sheets, available via the Blackboard help menu, show you how to add content and use various popular features in Blackboard. Out of these, a few are especially useful:

- *Adding Course Content*
- *Discussion Groups*
- *Digital Drop Box*

## Who Sees Your Class Site?

**By default, nobody can see your class site but you, the course instructor!** This allows you to develop your site without concern about students and others accessing the site before you have confirmed that the information is accurate and ready for viewing.

When you are ready to present your Blackboard class, you must make it available. From the **Control Panel** select **Settings**, then **Course Availability**, then set availability to **Yes**, and **Submit**.

Although your class is not visible to others by default, Blackboard is set up so that students enrolled in your Blackboard class site, via the Blackboard program, will have special access rights to your class once you make it available. All students officially enrolled in a tri-college course are automatically enrolled in the corresponding Blackboard course. Enrollments in Blackboard courses are updated three times each day.

Update methods are slightly different before and after drop/add period ends.

- **During drop/add period:** Students will be enrolled in Blackboard classes, provided they have requested registration via the student registration web page. If you would like your students to have access to a Blackboard course during this period, ask them to add your class to their online registration list. Also, because not all students will register, we recommend you set your class up with guest access—at least during this period.

- **After drop/add period:** Students will only have access to courses in which they are officially enrolled--unless you allow guest access, or request special access for a student.
- **Access to non-registered students, faculty or staff at any time:** You can manually enroll students in any of your courses.

See the *User Management* tip sheet linked from the Blackboard help menu, for instructions on how to

- Make your class available to students
- Enable guest access
- Manually enroll non-registered students

### Instructor's Checklist

This quick checklist will help you get all your Blackboard materials in order.

- **Did you plan your course site?** See *Planning Your Course Site*, page 1.
- **Did you set your navigation links?** See, page 5.
- **Did you set up your site with the content and tools desired?** See the Instructor Tip Sheets, available via the Blackboard help page.
- **Did you set availability for your courses so students can see them?** See *Who Sees Your Class Site?*, page 7.
- **Did you set guest access, at least for drop/add, and encourage students to add your class to their online registration list?** See *Who Sees Your Class Site?*, page 7 and the *User Management* tip sheet linked from the Blackboard help menu.