

Blackboard

Academic Suite™

Faculty Release Notes

Release 8

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Introduction

About the Release Notes

The Release Notes provide Instructors with information about new features and enhancements. This includes information on browser compatibility, new feature descriptions, and changes to the system from the previous release.

What is in the Release Notes?

The Release Notes contain the following sections:

- New Features and Enhancements – Describes new features in this release, additional important enhancements that have been made to the system, and how to enable or disable these features.
- End User Compatibility Matrix – Reviews which end-user browsers and operating systems are supported with this release.
- Reference materials – Lists and describes reference manuals available for this release.

New Features and Enhancements

Overview

In response to user feedback, Blackboard Academic Suite™, Release 8, introduces a number of new features and enhancements to the existing features.

This section reviews the new features in Release 8, explains their default availability upon installation, and specifies Blackboard license requirements.

New features and enhancements fall into the following categories:

- [Grade Center](#)
- [Self and Peer Assessment Building Block™](#)
- [SafeAssign™](#)
- [Blackboard Content System™ Enhancements](#)
- [Scholar™ Building Block for Basic](#)

Grade Center

Overview

Almost entirely redesigned, and newly named, the Grade Center exhibits new capabilities and vast improvements over the previous Gradebook. Some of the new features or improvements include the following:

- A redesigned tool bar, titled the Action Bar, through which multiple functions are possible
- The ability to create and print Reports, such as final grades, to hand out to Students or other interested parties
- Inline editing: the ability to enter grades directly through the Grade Center spreadsheet
- New grade calculations, Average grade and Minimum/Maximum grade, and improvements to the creation of Weighted grades and Total points grade
- Smart Views -- the ability to categorize Students into groupings based on selected criteria. These views can be displayed in the Grade Center.
- A multitude of ways to customize the display of the Grade Center
- The ability to create Grading Schema: multiple grading scales that match Assessment grades to chosen grade displays, such as text or percent grades

Grade Center main page

The Action Bar on the Grade Center main page contains multiple functions, including the following:

- Adding columns
- Managing Grading Periods
- Grading Schema
- Smart Views
- Emailing Students
- Creating Reports
- Viewing Grade History

Within the Grade Center spreadsheet, it is possible to enter results, such as scores, percentages, or other forms of grading, into the spreadsheet itself.

In the various Columns, cells, and rows, the Instructor can quickly perform multiple functions that formerly required multiple clicks and subsequent navigation to other pages.

Reports

Through the Grade Center, an Instructor may create a Report that displays various grade and Student information. A Report could be used, for example, as a final grade Report or a mid-term progress report. The Instructor can control what grades are displayed in the Report as well as what student information appears. A signature line and any comments can be added. Reports can then be printed from the screen and distributed.

Grade Calculations

In the Grade Center, an Instructor can calculate grades by combining multiple Columns to attain performance results, such as class averages, final grades that are based on a weighted scale, or total points, and so on. These include **Weighted** grade, **Total** points grade, **Average** grade, and **Minimum/Maximum** grade. Each of these functions allows the Instructor to choose the Columns included, such as all Columns from a Grading Period, all Columns, or selected Columns.

Smart Views

Instructors have the ability to customize the Grade Center to display a subset of Students based on selected criteria. Called **Smart Views** these customized displays can be saved and used again. Students can be sorted based on Course, Group, performance measurements, or other criteria. Once built and saved, Smart Views become a selectable list item on the **Current View** drop-down menu of the Grade Center page, enabling easy navigation from one view to another.

Grading Schema

Administrators and Instructors can create Grading Schema-- a diagram based on percentage ranges that matches scores to specific grade displays -- and then use it in grading. For example, a Student's raw numeric score on a quiz that has 100 possible points is an 88. The Instructor creates and deploys a Grading Schema titled "Standard," in which a percentage of 87.5 to 89.5 equals a B+, this score results in a B+. Conversely, if the grade display option Letter is chosen, the B+ will display to the Student. The Instructor can also choose text as the display option in Grading Schema. Grading Schemas may be edited or added to an ongoing Course and grades will be updated to reflect the changes.

Blackboard Content System Enhancements

Collaboration (Workflows)

New to the Blackboard Content System is the Collaboration page. Through this page, it is possible to create, initiate, and manage Workflows. A Workflow is a chronological collection of tasks that comprise a business process, an Assignment, or a collaborative project. Now, all Blackboard Content System users can create multi-stage Workflows, thereby creating tasks, defining task order, and managing the Workflow. This can all be managed through the Collaboration page.

Workflows are comprised of Actions of Milestones. Actions are required steps that an assigned Workflow participant must complete before passing the Workflow onto the next assigned participant. These are designed by the Workflow Owner. The Workflow Owner also determines Milestones: goals in a Workflow that are reached through the completion of Actions.

Workflows are deployed by using Models. A Model is a collection of Milestones and Actions that are pre-defined so a Workflow can be deployed quickly and easily. A model serves as the template for a Workflow: A single Model multiple Workflow can have occurrences and can be shared with other Content System users. Sharing these Models with the appropriate roles within an Institution can increase efficiency and accuracy.

The Collaboration page provides users with the capability to do the following:

- **Get Started** on a Workflow
- **Check the Progress** of a Workflow
- **Design Models** of a Workflow
- **Email Workflow** participants
- Create a **To Do List** that displays the Workflow Actions to which the user has been assigned.

Metadata

There are a number of enhancements to Blackboard Content System's Metadata feature.

Metadata is now integrated with the Blackboard Outcomes System's Standards, Objectives, and Goals, wherein the Standards, Objectives, and Goals can be treated as Metadata and be used to align Content System items.

Also, Metadata can now be linked to the creation of a Content Item. If configured, Metadata subsets are filled out upon Content item creation, facilitating precise records. When the Content item is created, the Metadata aligned with the Content item is displayed.

360° View

Improved in the Blackboard Content System for Release 8 is the 360° View, which is available for each Content item. Through the 360° View, users can view the properties located on various pages in the interface, the information on existing links to the item, and the Metadata information associated to the item.

Miscellaneous Enhancements

There are numerous smaller enhancements to the Blackboard Content System.

It is now possible for users to subscribe to a directory in the Blackboard Content System so that they are notified of any changes or updates to the directory.

Any Content item created using any Visual Text Box Editor in the Blackboard Learning System can be saved as a Reusable Object. Reusable Objects can be used anywhere in the system and they use the same settings as other Content items. Users can select a storage location for Reusable Objects, and they may be copied and reused just as other Content System Items.

Administrators can set the local file upload to require users to upload content to Content Collection.

Advanced System Reporting

Advanced System Reporting enables an Institution to do robust reporting to understand how its system is being used. Data from predefined fields in a separate database is used to create and tailor reports to meet specific needs. These reports assist in understanding and analyzing use of the system and can report information such as when different types of users access the system, how they use the system, and if the system improves Student performance. Librarians can discover how Content System Items are being used, including information such as how many links exist to each Item, from which Courses, the frequency of access to those items, and the last date of access.

These features and enhancements are available for the Blackboard Content System license.

SafeAssign

Overview

Release 8 features the new SafeAssign™, a tool that compares submitted Assignments against a set of academic essays to identify areas of overlap. SafeAssign can be used to prevent plagiarism and to create opportunities to help Students identify how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

SafeAssign draws from several different databases: the Internet, ProQuest®, ABI/Inform® database, institutional document archives, and the Global Reference Database, which includes content submitted into SafeAssign from Blackboard-powered institutions.

Please note that SafeAssign content must be created itself, and that previously created Assignments cannot be integrated with SafeAssign.

SafeAssign is integrated with the Grade Center.

SafeAssign is available as part of the Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise platform.

Self and Peer Assessment Building Block

Overview

The new Self and Peer Assessment Building Block is a comprehensive and flexible tool for the self- and peer assessment of text, images, and digital-based resources within Blackboard Learning System. It allows an Instructor to create an exercise with a list of questions for the assessor. These questions can have a variety of grading or marking criteria, created or selected by the Instructor, to be used in the assessment.

The Instructor then distributes the exercise with the questions and criteria to the Students. The Instructor can choose to have the Student assess his or her own work or the works of other Students. In turn, the Students submit the work, to be viewed by the Instructor. The Instructor can monitor the progress of the assessment, download the assessment submission and results, and add the assessment marking to the Grade Center.

Blackboard Scholar Integration with Blackboard Learning System – Basic

Overview

Blackboard Scholar is a social bookmarking service customized for education. Social bookmarking is an activity performed over a computer network that allows users to save and categorize a personal collection of bookmarks -- stored or retrievable web pages -- and share them with others. It provides a new way for Students and Instructors to find educational resources on the Web for Courses and research. Furthermore, by storing and sharing associated information with each resource through tags and disciplines, Scholar allows users to evaluate the resources and find the most relevant and reliable.

Scholar is directly integrated within the Blackboard Learning System™ - Enterprise, Vista, and CE Licenses, providing access within the Course environment.

Blackboard Academic Suite Changes

The table below lists the functional changes in Blackboard Academic Suite8.

Component – Subsystem/ License	Change/New Feature	Description
Grade Center All Licenses	Various New Features and Changes	The Grade Center has vast changes and additions. For more information, see the Instructor Manual.
Collaboration (Workflows) Blackboard Content System license	New Feature	Collaboration and Workflows have various new features, and enhancements. For more information, see the Blackboard Content System User Manual.
SafeAssign Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise license	Instructor Control Panel: from any Course Content Page, in the Select: drop-down menu> SafeAssign	Add a SafeAssignment to the Course.
SafeAssign Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise license	Instructor Control Panel: Course Tools> SafeAssign	Displays the page for managing and viewing SafeAssignments created for the Course.
SafeAssign Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise license	Instructor Control Panel: Course Tools> SafeAssign>SafeAssignments tab	Displays the SafeAssignments created for the Course and their corresponding information.
SafeAssign Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise license	Instructor Control Panel: Course Tools> SafeAssign>Direct Submit tab	Direct Submit generates SafeAssign reports on papers submitted outside of a SafeAssignment and it may also be used to add papers to the institutional database.
SafeAssign Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise license	Students: Any Course Content area: select a SafeAssignment	Submit to a SafeAssignment.

Component – Subsystem/ License	Change/New Feature	Description
Course Content – Add Item, Metadata Blackboard Content System license	Content area: Add Item>Submit and Add Metadata	Link Metadata Attributes to a Content item.
Course Content – Metadata Blackboard Content System license	Content area: Add Item>Submit and Add Metadata>Keep these Values synchronized	If there are changes to the Metadata, this will be reflected in the Content items associated to it.
Content Collection – Metadata Blackboard Content System license	Content Area folder or subfolder: Modify Folder> Permissions	Subscribe to a Folder.
Course Content item Blackboard Content System license	Control Panel>Content Collection>360° View	View the properties located on various pages in the interface, the information on existing links to the item, and the Metadata information associated to the item, among other information.
Course Content Blackboard Content System license	Save as Reusable Object	Save a newly created Course Item as an Item in the Content Collection.
All Content Areas	Self and Peer Assessment	Create a Self or Peer Assessment for a Course or to be stored in the Content area.
All Content Areas	Self or Peer Assessment: Modify>Assessment Canvas	View and modify Assessment questions and evaluation criteria. Preview the submission page or the evaluation page for the assessment
All Content Areas	Self or Peer Assessment: Modify>Properties	Modify the properties, instructions, availability, and evaluation options of a Self or Peer Assessment.
All Content Areas	Self or Peer Assessment: Modify>Export Assessment	Export an Assessment as a file that can be reused and

Component – Subsystem/ License	Change/New Feature	Description
		shared.
All Content Areas	Self or Peer Assessment: Modify>Assessment Canvas>Question	Add a Question to a Self or Peer Assessment Exercise.
All Content Areas	Self or Peer Assessment: Modify>Assessment Canvas>Question>Criteria	Add Criteria to the Questions for a Self or Peer Assessment.
All Content Areas	Self or Peer Assessment: Modify>Assessment Canvas>Question>Modify	Modify the Questions for a Self or Peer Assessment.

End User Configuration Matrix

End User Configuration Guidelines

End users must use a certified or compatible operating system and browser configuration with the Blackboard Academic Suite.

Browser	Windows XP	Windows Vista Desktop	Mac 10.3	Mac 10.4	Mac 10.5
Microsoft Internet Explorer 6	Compatible	Certified	Not Tested	Not Tested	Not Tested
Microsoft Internet Explorer 7	Compatible	Certified	Not Tested	Not Tested	Not Tested
Mozilla Firefox 1.5			Compatible	Certified	Not Tested
Mozilla Firefox 2.0	Certified	Certified	Not Tested	Certified	Not Tested
Apple Safari 2	Not Tested	Not Tested	Not Tested	Certified	Certified
Apple Safari 3	Not Tested	Not Tested	Not Tested	Compatible	Compatible

Key	
Certified	fully tested and supported
Compatible	key application areas tested
Not tested	specified Browser is not supported for the Operating System
Provisional	will test on Beta versions of new platforms and browsers. Certification is dependant on release by 3rd parties

* All configurations marked as Compatible and have undergone a limited engineering analysis to test areas of the Blackboard Academic Suite that may have browser issues.

Reference Materials

About Reference Materials

A full suite of reference materials is available with the Academic Suite. All materials are located in the Reference Center at <http://behind.blackboard.com>. These materials include the following:

Manual Name	Description
Outcomes Manual	This provides information and instructions on the usage and capabilities of the Outcomes System.
Blackboard Academic Suite End User Manuals	
User Manual	Reference manual detailing the tools and functions included in the platform from the general user perspective. This manual includes information on the Blackboard Learning System and the Blackboard Community System.
Instructor Manual	Reference manual providing detailed information about building and managing Courses and Organizations. This manual includes information on the Blackboard Learning System and the Blackboard Community System.
Blackboard Content System End User Manuals	
User Manual	Reference manual detailing the tools and functions included in the system for all end users. This manual includes information on the Blackboard Content System.