



# **Blackboard 9.1 Release Guide for Truman Faculty and Staff**



## Introduction

Challenged with meeting the expectations of their 21st-century learners, educators are constantly trying to find ways to make their instruction more engaging. Faculty spend a lot of time on non-teaching administrative activities, such as grading, data-entry, paperwork, and Course management, that distract from learning activities which help retain and keep students engaged in academics.

Colleges, schools, and departments often spend significant amounts of time and resources on manual processes to align what is happening in the classroom to department, program or overall institutional objectives. Clients are trying to navigate a time of significant demographic shifts and technology innovation while maintaining the integrity of the academic process, accessibility, service quality and accountability to leadership.

Blackboard Learn™ Release 9.1 will help you to meet these challenges by fostering student engagement, supporting educator efficiency, and delivering open and extensible learning.

## Fostering Student Engagement

The exciting new social learning and teaching tools available in Release 9.1 foster more logical, visually impactful, and active learning opportunities for students, helping them stay connected to their educational experience 24 hours a day:

- Learning Modules Table of Contents view
- Wikis for Courses, organizations, and groups
- Mashups
- Integration with Blackboard Connect

## Supporting Educator Efficiency

Many of the new features and enhancements in Release 9.1 save educators and organizational leaders time and effort and make it easier to focus on student achievement and retention:

- Learning Modules Table of Contents view
- Improved grading capabilities
- Course Files area for managing content
- Customizable Teaching Roles

## Blackboard Learn Documentation Suite

A full suite of reference materials for Blackboard Learn 9.1 is available on [Behind the Blackboard](#).

## About this Document

Release 9.1 includes exciting new product innovations, and Blackboard is committed to providing the tools and resources necessary to help you plan and prepare for your upgrade. This document is designed to give the users a comprehensive look at the features and functions of Blackboard Learn, Release 9.1, and how they compare to Release 9.0.

## Building Content

Multiple content types provide Instructors with extended flexibility when building and structuring content within a Course. Instructors can add different types of content to a Course, including videos and images as well as packaged content, such as IMS and SCORM. Instructors also have numerous options for organizing this content, such as Content Folders, Lesson Plans, and Learning Modules.

### Feature Enhancement - Upload Content Using New Content Types

Several content types for uploading content to an area within a Course have been changed or added:

- **Audio:** This new content type provides a separate method of adding an audio file. This content type includes fields for accessibility.
- **Image:** This content type was available in Release 9.0, but the user interface for adding this type of file has changed.
- **Video:** This new content type provides a separate method of adding a video file. This content type includes fields for accessibility.
- **URL:** This content type was available in Release 9.0, but the previous name “External Link” has been changed to “URL.”
- **Learning Module:** This content type was available in Release 9.0, but it has changed to include a hierarchical Table of Contents.
- **Lesson Plan:** This new content type provides a new type of content container (similar to a folder) that has a tabbed format to add different content items. This feature is designed to allow Students to view content with a lesson profile and instructional objectives.
- **Blank Page:** This new content type provides a method to add an HTML page to a Content Area or the Course Menu.
- **Mashups:** This new content type enables Enterprise Edition clients to pull data from the following third-party application content into Blackboard Learn: YouTube videos, SlideShare presentations, and Flickr photos.

## Course Files

### Using Course Files for Basic Content Management

The new Course Files feature provides basic content management features and functions within a Course as a core part of the course delivery capabilities of Blackboard Learn. These features and functions were previously available only to clients who licensed the content management capabilities.

Instructors will have the ability to more effectively use (and reuse) content stored in Course Files (or in the Content Collection if the content management capabilities have been licensed) when building a Course without any significant impact on their customary workflows and practices. New capabilities for uploading, managing, and using content in a Course are available to support Instructors when using the Course Files feature or the Content Collection.

In previous versions of Blackboard Learn, when an Instructor attached a file to a Course content item, that file would be placed in a “hidden” file system on the Blackboard server where it was invisible to the Instructor. Blackboard Learn now provides a Course Files area that allows Instructors or any user with an appropriate Course-authoring role to view and manage all files related to their Course content.

### Attaching Files to Course Content and for Re-Using Files

The current process for attaching files to Course content remains basically the same, but with a few important additions that Instructors should note:

- When attaching a file, an Instructor can select a file from the local computer or the Course Files area of their Course. If the content management capabilities have been licensed, an Instructor can select a file from any available Content Collection.
- Instead of attached files being stored in a “hidden” file system, files attached from the local computer are uploaded automatically into the Course Files area. If the content management capabilities have been licensed, attached files can be placed in any available Content Collection. This allows Instructors to see, manage, and re-use the files in other parts of their Course. An Instructor can now upload a file once and use it in multiple areas of the Course.
- When attaching files to content items, Instructors can select multiple files from multiple folders in the Course Files area. If the content management capabilities have been licensed, Instructors also can select multiple files from any available Content Collection.
- Because a file may be re-used in a Course (or across Courses if the content management capabilities have been licensed), the new 360° View lets the Instructor see all of the places that any given file has been used as well as the full path in the Course to that content item.
- The organization of files in Course Files has no impact on how they appear when linked to from a Course.



- A link to a file can be included in one or more areas in a Course.
- When a link to a file in Course Files is deleted from a Course, the file is not deleted.
- When a file in Course Files is renamed or moved, any links to the file will remain intact.
- Files uploaded by Students are not automatically added to Course Files.

## Uploading Files

In addition to adding files by attaching them directly to Course content items, Instructors can upload files directly to Course Files or to any available Content Collection if the content management capabilities have been licensed.

Instructors can upload a single file from the local computer using Browse, or they can upload multiple files or entire folders from the local computer using Browse or by dragging the items from the desktop to the interface. Instructors can also upload a package of HTML files to be unpackaged automatically into Course Files.

## Grade Center

The function of the Grade Center feature is the same as the previous release of the product, but a number of Grade Center enhancements have been included in Release 9.1.

### Feature Enhancements

#### + Grade Blogs and Journals

Journals and Blogs can now be graded for individuals and for Groups. After a Journal or Blog is set to be graded, a column is automatically created in the Grade Center. Instructors can enter grades for Blogs and Journals for individuals and for Groups within the Blog and Journal areas without having to navigate to the Grade Center, or they can enter them directly in the Grade Center. This enables Instructors to enter grades within the Blog or Journal so that the grading process is completed in context. All grade entries made within the Blog and Journal areas are automatically added to the Grade Center.

In addition to entering a grade, Instructors can enter grading notes and submit feedback to the Student. The grade and Instructor feedback is visible to Students, but the grading notes are not visible. For Group Blogs, Instructors can assign a Group-wide grade that applies to all Group members or assign individual grades for each Student. Instructors also have the flexibility to override the Group grade for particular Students.

Students can view their grades for Blogs and Journals within the Blog and Journal areas or in My Grades. Students will see their grade as well as any feedback provided by the Instructor. This feature appears along the right hand margin of the Blog or Journal in the About this Journal or About this Blog section under the Student's name. Instructors can also grade Blogs or

Journals from the Grade Center. Instructors will be able to set a Blog or Journal as gradable on the Create or Edit Blogs or Journals pages, which are accessed from the Control Panel by clicking **Course Tools** and then **Blogs** or **Journals**.

#### + **Rubrics for Grading and Completing Assignments**

Instructors can create a Rubric to provide guidelines for grading an item. Instructors can associate the Rubric to a grading column and view the Rubric while assigning a grade. The Rubric needs to include how many entries will be required, the minimum length of entries, and the grading criteria. This feature is accessed through the Course Tools menu.

#### + **Anonymous Grading**

Instructors can grade assignment and test attempts while information identifying the Student remains concealed. Only after the grade for the attempt has been submitted will the identity of the Student be exposed. The objectives of grading anonymously include creating a grading workflow that is less prone to bias or favoritism on the part of the Instructor. It also serves as a protection for Instructors who may be subject to a complaint of unfair grading.

The Instructor will have the option of selecting to grade anonymously before beginning the grading process for the item. The order of the attempts is scrambled during the anonymous grading process to address scenarios where an Instructor may have a class somewhat memorized by alphabetic order. This feature is accessed through the column contextual menu in the Grade Center. In addition, it can be activated when grading by test attempt as well as when grading by question.

#### + **Grade by Question Attempt**

Question-by-question grading accommodates Instructors whose preferred workflow for assignments and assessments is to enter grades by question for all Students as opposed to by all questions by Student. For example, an Instructor may want to gain an overall feel for how the class has answered an essay question by moving through all of the Students' attempts at that question before moving to the next question. Question attempt grading also provides great efficiency for the grading process by enabling Instructors to immediately start grading without having to open each assessment or assignment. This feature is accessed through the column contextual menu in Grade Center.

#### + **Smart Views**

Instructors can use Smart Views to view specific information and data as desired in the Grade Center. The system views include viewing only Assignments, Assessments, Blogs, Discussion Boards, or Journals. These views can be customized so that Instructors may select criteria of categories, status types, or users.

Instructors can also create custom Smart Views with different variations on these configurations. Instructors can designate any system or custom Smart View as a favorite, which will result in it displaying in the Control Panel. By doing this, Instructors can directly access their preferred views from the Control Panel without having to enter the Grade Center and then select a Smart View. By default, Smart View favorites for Assignments and Tests are available on the Control Panel. In addition, the Full Grade Center is now accessible from the Control Panel.

Instructors can instantly manipulate the Grade Center grid display by selecting category and status filters that have been placed on the main Grade Center page. This feature enables



Instructors to quickly view specific categories and status types, such as assignments that need to be graded, without having to configure a Smart View.

The Smart View feature is accessed in the Manage menu of the Grade Center. After Smart Views have been created and designated as favorites, they are accessible either through the Control Panel or in the Smart View list under the Manage menu. The Category and Status filters are located on the main page of the Grade Center.

## Learning Modules

Learning Modules from Blackboard Learn Release 9.0 has been enhanced in Release 9.1 to incorporate the navigable table of contents available in Learning Modules in CE and Vista. These enhancements help Instructors present material in a more meaningful and engaging way to keep Students organized and on track with Course materials. Release 9.1 provides enhanced capabilities for all user roles:

- **Faculty and Instructional Designers** will use Learning Modules to organize and present content to Students in their Blackboard Learn Courses. These enhancements will provide a way to select how material is presented and how Students proceed through the material in the most appropriate way for the content being used and how the Instructor plans to teach.

- **Students** will use Learning Modules to access Course content and navigate Learning Module content using the Table of Contents.

## Feature Enhancement

### + Table of Contents View

The Instructor can choose whether to present the content contained in the Learning Module in a hierarchical, outline-style format. Using this view, a Student will be able to navigate through the Learning Module in the manner prescribed by the Instructor. If the Table of Contents is selected, the Instructor can also select the numbering or lettering format to be used in the Table of Contents.

Instructors may create folders and sub-folders within Learning Modules and populate them with content. As the Learning Module is populated, the Table of Contents will be created accordingly and numbered or lettered automatically in the format selected by the Instructor. New content items in Release 9.1, such as Mashups and Lesson Plans, can be incorporated into Learning Modules.

The Table of Contents can be manipulated by Instructors and Students to accommodate individual viewing preferences. It can be minimized and oriented on the left side or along the bottom of the screen.

### + Content Folder Structure

Instructors may create folders and sub-folders within Learning Modules and populate them with content. As the Learning Module is populated, the Table of Contents will be created accordingly and numbered or lettered automatically in the format selected by the Instructor. New content items in Release 9.1, such as Mashups and Lesson Plans, can be incorporated into Learning Modules.

## **+ Sequential Navigation of Content**

When an Instructor chooses sequential navigation, items in the Learning Module will become viewable as users progress through the content. Without sequential navigation, all content items in the Learning Module are viewable and users may navigate the content at will.

## **Lesson Plans**

The Lesson Plan feature enables Instructors and Course designers to create a structured unit plan with distinct and customizable sections that provide a means of documenting information such as description, learning level, delivery instructions, and so on. Lesson Plans also include content designed for an individual unit using any type of content or tool enabled in the Course. This feature will meet the challenge of developing unit plans and incorporating content in blended environments where classroom Instructors use Blackboard Learn as an instructional tool in the classroom as well as for online teaching. Another challenge that Instructors have is reducing the time spent planning and creating materials to focus on instructional activities. As a planning tool, the Lesson Plan feature will benefit Instructors who can centrally plan and consolidate materials and resources. Instructors will also have a streamlined means of selectively exposing information and resources to Students as part of the planning process.

### **Creating Customized Lesson Plans**

Each section of a Lesson Plan can be individually renamed and reorganized however the Instructor wishes. There is a high degree of variation in institutions as to what information and details are required in Lesson Plans. The Lesson Plan feature has maximum flexibility to accommodate these variations.

### **Controlling Visibility**

The Lesson Plan feature enables Instructors to select which Lesson Plan sections are visible to Students. This enables Instructors to include non-Student-facing instructional information (such as instructions for delivery in the classroom, comments, suggestions for use, and so on) in the Lesson Plan while also including Student-facing information (such as learning objectives, materials needed, Student team assignments, and so on). In effect, Lesson Plans provide a planning tool for Instructors and Course designers as well as a tool for organizing Student-facing instructional materials.

## **Mashups**

Increasingly, sites and services on the Web offer the means for end-users to consume and re-use the site's content outside of the site itself. In Web 2.0 applications, the term "Mashup" refers to displaying data from one third-party application in another application. For example, a real estate listing service that maps the homes-for-sale listing data onto Google Maps.

In educational settings, this ability to consume and re-use external content offers the opportunity for Instructors to incorporate content generated and hosted elsewhere into instructional or learning activities.

The new Mashup integrations with popular services allow Instructors and Students to discover, select, and embed content from those services without ever leaving the Blackboard Learn interface. This provides a seamless, easy-to-use experience that does not require the user to jump between Blackboard Learn and other sites or to have any particular knowledge about or comfort with HTML codes.



The Mashup tools, which are delivered as Building Blocks, are available by default. As long as a Mashup tool remains available, Instructors can add that Mashup type anywhere in a Course and Students can add Mashups anywhere the text editor is available to them, such as when creating Discussion Board or Blog posts.

### **Uploading Mashups Content**

This release supports the uploading of Mashups content from the following third-party services:

- **YouTube:** YouTube enables users to share videos.
- **Flickr:** Flickr enables users to share photos.
- **SlideShare:** SlideShare enables users to share presentations.

### **Tests, Surveys, and Question Pools**

In Release 9.1, Instructors and Course Builders have expanded question management capabilities available for use when creating Tests, Surveys, and Question Pools. These changes allow for more centralized control over question content and reduce the amount of time required to make global edits.

#### **Feature Enhancement**

##### **+ Question Finder**

Instructors and Course Builders have a new interface from which to discover questions. Instructors and Course Builders can create Tests, Surveys, and Pools by reusing questions that have been collected in the Question Finder repository. The list of questions available under “Find Questions” can be filtered by Test, Survey, or Pool, or by such attributes as question type, category, topic, or level of difficulty. As the user selects these attributes, the list of questions updates dynamically. The filtering capability is further enhanced by a search capability, which allows the user to refine the filtered list.

The discovery process is also aided by a new section in the user interface that acts as a staging area for questions. The user can peruse and select or deselect as many questions as they want. When they are finished, this collapsible staging area will contain their selected questions. The staging area allows users to keep track of how many questions they have selected.

##### **+ Link to Questions**

Instructors and Course Builders can choose to link to or copy questions from any Test, Survey, or Pool within a Course. Linking to a question ensures that any changes to the original question are reflected in all links. Copying a question creates a separate question that is not affected by changes to the original question. Questions can be copied between Courses, but they cannot be linked across Courses.

##### **+ Question Sets**

In addition to Random Blocks, Instructors can use Question Sets to randomly select a set number of questions to appear on a Test that are pulled from a specific group of questions selected by the Instructor. Instructors can select to include questions from one or more existing Tests and Pools. From this set, the Instructor specifies how many questions to display on the Test. The specific questions displayed are chosen randomly each time the Test is taken. This

provides Instructors and Course Builders with a better idea of what will be displayed to Students than when using Random Blocks. This will make it easier to review the appropriateness of questions and help reduce the need to recreate Question Sets.

#### **+ Random Block Improvements**

The process to create or edit Random Blocks includes more capabilities.

#### **+ Batch Deletion and Point Updates**

Instructors and Course Builders can perform basic actions such as question deletion and point updates as batch actions, which can be targeted by question type. Users can update points for individual questions as well as points per question and number of questions to display for Random Blocks or Question Sets directly from the Canvas page. Taken together, these changes improve Instructor productivity and allow them to edit tests in less time.

#### **+ Copy Test, Surveys, and Pools**

Instructors and Course Builders can now copy a Test, Survey, or Pool directly from the List page. This addresses a common scenario in which an Instructor needs to provide a pre-test and post-test and needs to create two assessments that have more or less the same form. This capability also allows users to easily create new, smaller pools that contain a subset of questions of a larger pool. It is a much faster way to create similar tests compared to the import feature, which requires more steps.

## **Wikis**

The new Wiki tool allows Instructors to create Wikis for Courses, organizations, and groups to host collaborative content and group projects. Course and organization Wikis allow the entire Course or organization to participate. Group Wikis allow a subset of the Course or organizations members to work on collaborative projects. Instructors specify whether and when Students are allowed to view or edit a particular Wiki.

### **Supporting Collaborative Learning**

For clients who have licensed only the Course delivery capabilities, Wikis provide a collaborative area for Course content that allows Student participation and contribution. Both Students and Instructors can easily create content within the Wiki such as study guides and shared notes. For clients who have licensed the community engagement capabilities, Wikis provide organizations with a powerful collaborative editing tool that can be used for any content that requires collaboration and change tracking, such as meeting minutes, by-laws, or simple pieces of content.

Instructors can also use the Wiki for collaborative group projects where the Wiki's history and participation summary tools give the Instructor more in-depth insight when assessing individual contributions of the Students while grading as well as throughout the collaborative process. Students can use the Wiki to collaborate on content for the Course as well as for group projects. The Wiki's collaborative capabilities and history features help Students see what other Students have contributed and help avoid overwriting each other's work. For groups, the Wiki can be used to simply share ideas or to host the final output of a group project.

### **Creating and Editing Wikis**

Wikis are created and edited using the same Visual Editor (VTBE) that is used throughout Blackboard Learn. Users do not need to learn a special Wiki markup language.

Users can create multiple pages in a Wiki as well as create multiple Wikis. Users can link between Wiki pages to make it easy to interconnect pages. Page navigation is provided to quickly navigate between the pages of a Wiki even if the users do not add links within page content.

### **Versioning and Comparing Pages**

Versioning at the page level allows for complete tracking of content changes in the Wiki. Users can view a comparison of two versions of a Wiki page to see the specific changes that a user made to a Wiki page.

### **Grading Wikis**

Instructors can grade Wikis without having to leave the Wiki and go to the Grade Center. Students can be given group or individual grades to allow grading based on individual contribution.

### **Viewing Participation Summaries**

Instructors are provided with a summary of Student participation in a Wiki that allows them to drill down to detailed views to help assess each Student's contribution. Instructors can view a summary of participation as counts and percentages of words and saves for each Student. Instructors can then drill down for each Student to see a summary and details for that Student's contributions. Instructors also can compare a Student's saved version with the previous version of the page to evaluate that Student's contribution. Grading is integrated at this level to help Instructors grade based on an individual Student's contribution.

### **Commenting on Wiki Pages**

Users can comment on the pages of a Wiki to give feedback and facilitate collaboration.

### **Creating Wiki Links as Course Content**

Instructors can link to a Wiki or Wiki page in Course content.

## **Building Content**

### **Feature Enhancement**

#### **+ Upload Multiple Files or Folders**

As in Course Files, Instructors can upload multiple files or entire folders from the local computer into the Content Collection using Browse or by dragging the items directly from the desktop to the interface. Instructors can also upload a package of HTML files to be unpackaged automatically into the Content Collection. The same options for defining certain settings and metadata that currently exist when uploading a single file will be available during the process and can be applied to multiple files.

#### **+ Create Folders In-Line**

Instructors can create a new folder in the Content Collection without being taken to a separate page. When an Instructor clicks **Create Folder** on the main page, the name of the new folder



can be typed in the text box that appears. To add the folder using the default folder settings, the Instructor clicks **Submit**. To add the folder using customized folder settings, the Instructor clicks **Create and Customize**.

## Views

### Feature Enhancement

#### + New Thumbnail View

As in Course Files, users in the Content Collection can switch between **View List**, which lists the files in a directory, and the new **View Thumbnails**, which shows a resizable thumbnail of image files. All non-image files will display the appropriate icon for the file type. Clicking a file's icon displays a new quick view of the file including its image, file size, enabled features, and comments.

References: Blackboard Learn (2010) *Release 9.1 Understanding the Change from Blackboard Learn 9.0 to 9.1* from <http://www.blackboard.com/learn>.