# Faculty Guide to Blackboard

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Overview

Blackboard is an online learning management system (LMS). It provides you with a ready-made online course that you can use to post course documents and communicate with students. Blackboard includes useful teaching tools such as discussion boards, blogs, and journals, and allows you to create and administer online tests and surveys. In an emergency (pandemic flu, or weather-related), instructors should plan to use Blackboard to continue teaching. This is a quick guide; a more detailed guide is available from the Faculty Center for Learning Development (FCLD) website:
http://www.hartford.edu/academics/faculty/fcld/

Here are the steps for getting started using Blackboard.

1. Get a University email account through Help Desk Services. Go to the Help Desk in the main library or call (860) 768-4357 (on campus) or (844) 292-3213 (off campus). A day after the email account is active, the Blackboard account is available.
2. Contact FCLD for a Blackboard orientation session fcld@hartford.edu or (860) 768-4661.
3. Login into Blackboard: http://blackboard.hartford.edu
4. Upon login, you should see your courses listed on your Blackboard Home Page in the My Courses box. Enter a course by clicking on it.
5. Check course roster against the one listed in Banner Self Service http://banweb.hartford.edu/
6. Upload and organize your course files and folders in the central file storage area called Files.
7. Create links from course files to course content areas (e.g., Course Documents, Assignments).
8. Add any interactive assignments (blogs, wikis, etc.) or multimedia (e.g., YouTube).
9. Post a welcome announcement in your course.
10. Make sure your course is available to students.
11. Explain to students how to get help: Student Blackboard Support (860) 515-3742.
12. If time allows, reserve time in a computer lab to take a tour of your course with your students.

How Do I Log In to Blackboard?

You must have a valid University of Hartford email account to log into Blackboard. If you don’t have one, visit the Help Desk on the main floor of Mortensen Library. You must present proof of affiliation with the university (i.e. contract of hire, class schedule, or University ID card) to be issued an email account. You should be able to log into Blackboard within 24-48 hours of applying for an email account.

To login:
- Go to http://blackboard.hartford.edu.
- In the login text box, type the first part of your University of Hartford email (jdoe if your email is jdoe@hartford.edu).
- Your Blackboard password is initially set to the last four digits of your University ID.
- Click Login. You will now see your Blackboard Homepage.
To log out, use the Logout button at the top right of the screen.

**Online Blackboard Help**

Instructions are available for both you and your students. Select the **Help** icon at the bottom of the dropdown menu on your My Blackboard Home page (see image at left). This links to many faculty support materials, including videos, quick guides, and the FCLD website. You can also go to [http://help.blackboard.com](http://help.blackboard.com), maintained by Blackboard. Be sure you are filter it for only Blackboard 9 Spring 2014.

FCLD maintains a faculty help line at (860) 768-4661 or at fcld@hartford.edu.

Help is also available from any Control Panel in the **Help** area:

- **Blackboard Help for Instructors** – sends you to Blackboard’s Help page.
- **Contact Support** – sends an e-mail to FCLD staff.
- **Video Tutorials** – accesses Blackboard’s On Demand Learning Center containing video tutorials and other written support documentation. They are also on YouTube.

If FCLD is unavailable to help, a quick ‘Google’ search will help locate answers to common Blackboard questions from other University websites.

Students can find Blackboard instructions within a course by selecting **Tools**, then the link labeled **Blackboard Help for Students**.

**Blackboard and Email**

- Your email address in Blackboard is set to your University of Hartford email.
Although you can send email from your Blackboard course, you need to read it using your regular email program (e.g., webmail, or the email program to which you forward your webmail).

To access webmail, go to http://hawkmail.hartford.edu and login using your email username and password.

For information on forwarding your email to another address, go to http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/www/qanda/19971001-2.HTML.

Administration and Lifecycle of Blackboard Courses

New Courses on Blackboard

Blackboard courses are set up automatically for all courses sixty days prior to the start of each term and remain up for just over a year. Instructors must be listed as the course instructor in the Banner computer system in order to access the course on Blackboard. Contact the Registrar’s Office (860) 768-4594 or your department for help with getting listed as the official instructor.

- If you are teaching multiple sections of the same course and would like students from those sections enrolled into one Blackboard course, please fill out FCLD’s multiple-section course request form: http://www.hartford.edu/academics/faculty/fcld/learn_blackboard/course_requests/Multi_Section_Request_Form.aspx
- Once you have built your course in Blackboard, you can reuse the course content each term by copying it forward. Blackboard copying instructions may be found at http://www.hartford.edu/academics/faculty/fcld/data/documentation/bb9/Maintenance_Customization/BB9_short_copying_content.pdf.

All Blackboard instructors have a “sandbox” course, listed in the My Courses module of your Blackboard Home Page. This course is a private space that can be used as a practice course. You are also provided with a second Blackboard user account that is enrolled as a student in your sandbox (or any other of your courses). You will need to log off from your instructor account and log in with your student account when you wish to see course from the student point-of-view. To login as your ‘practice student’, type in the your username which is your own username with an underscore in front of it (_jdoe if your username is jdoe) and the password which is initially set to the last 4 digits of your University ID. Many instructors find this second account useful for checking Blackboard Grades, previewing tests, etc.

Enrollments

Students who are officially enrolled in a course (via the Registrar) are automatically enrolled into the Blackboard course as soon as the course is created. Add/drops are updated three times a day from the Banner system. Faculty should avoid manually adding or dropping students in Blackboard courses.

Course Availability – Unavailable vs. Available

All courses are created by default as ‘unavailable’ - hidden from students, but accessible to the instructor. If your course is not available, you will see a message ‘not currently available. To change the availability:
• Enter the course and be sure edit mode is on (green light in upper right corner).
• Under Control Panel and select Customization
• Click Properties.
• Scroll to Set Availability.
• Select Yes or No and click Submit.

Getting to Your Blackboard Course
After you log into Blackboard, you will see your Blackboard Home Page. Each Blackboard user has a unique Home Page that can only be accessed by that user. Use Personalize Page and Add Module to customize your Homepage.

![Blackboard Home Page](image)

You probably want to explore the Tools menu. Under Personal Information, you will find a place to change your password (recommended for first time users).

Changing Your Blackboard Password

1. From your Blackboard Home Page, find the Tools menu at the left of your screen.
2. Select Personal Information.
3. Select Change Password.
4. Enter your new password twice.
5. Click Submit to save your changes.

Note: If you forgot your password, simply click on “Forget Your Password?” on the login page and Blackboard will send an email to your University of Hartford email address that contains a link which allows you to set a new password.
Basic Editing and Navigation Tools

Below are the basic buttons used to navigate Blackboard and access the course menus:

| ![Edit Mode] | Edit Mode appears on the upper right of every course page. To edit a course, it must be ON. The OFF mode is useful for seeing the course the way students see it. |
| ![Downward facing arrows] | Downward facing arrows reveal dropdown menus. You might only find them when your mouse is hovered over them. |
| ![Double-sides arrows] | Double-sides arrows are used to move content. Click on it and hold it down to ‘drag and drop’ the item to a new location. |
| ![Sideways-facing chevrons] | Sideways-facing chevrons will open sub-menus in the ‘working area’ of your course (the area to the right of the course menu). |

Basic Course Tools

The Course Menu

The default course menu includes tools, resources, and content areas. Note: The grey tab just to the right will collapse and hide the menu.

- **Announcements** – Use this to communicate changes, new content or other messages. Can also be used to email students.
- **Instructor Information** – used to provide students with your contact information (phone number, office hours, email, etc.)
- **Course Information** – Typically provides links to syllabus, goals and objectives for the course, grading policies, rubrics, and textbook information.
- **Course Documents** – Post articles, sample projects, guidelines.
- **Assignments** – Links to course assignments and submissions.
- **Discussion Board** – Provides an interactive discussion area.
- **Recordings** – If you are using Echo360 to record lectures, the recordings will be posted here.
- **Tools** – Simply a menu link to student Tools.
- **Alerts and Notifications** – Instructor and students can turn on alerts to get email notification of newly added or edit course content, submitted assignments, etc.
- **Library** – A link to online catalogs and resources.
- **Academic Honesty** – Links to the University’s guidelines on Academic Honesty and information about SafeAssign, Blackboard’s plagiarism detection tool.
- **Student Resources** – Links to useful student information on the University’s website.
- **Help** – Links to the Student Blackboard Help Page
Customizable Course Menu: Adding, Renaming, and Deleting Menu Items

To add or edit buttons in the main Course Menu:
1. Click the “+” icon in the upper left of the Course Menu.
2. Choose the type of menu item needed.
3. Name the button, make it available to users and click Submit.

Button Choices

Content Area is a place to upload files or create content, such as Course Documents or Course Information.

Module Pages are customizable “alert” areas that allow students to see grades, alerts, and tasks in a dashboard layout.

Blank Pages adds a single page of content as a clickable link in your Course Menu. Only text, images and files can be added to Blank Pages.

Tool Link links to tools, including class blogs, wikis, etc.

Web Link pages make it easy to add links to Internet Web sites.

Course Link creates a link to a specific area in your course. If you post your syllabus under “Course Information,” you can link to it from your Course Menu by adding a Course Link.

Subheaders and Dividers allow you to add headings & divider lines.

The Control Panel – Your Access to Course Building Tools

Most of the tools you need to build a course are under the Control Panel. Each menu item has a sub-menu of tools. Students do not have access to the Control Panel.

Files – central repository of all your course files

Course Tools – used to access communication and editing tools

Evaluation – course statistics, Early Warning tools and performance dashboard showing overview of student activity in course

Grade Center – the online gradebook, which can be downloaded

Users and Groups – access and view course roster, create groups

Customization – Includes course properties, making course available, menus for changing menu style, course colors, as well as making tools available (if you don’t see one that is mentioned in this guide)

Packages and Utilities – various tools for making course backups, coping course materials from a previous term, etc.

Help – accesses Blackboard’s help materials
**Adding an Announcement**

Announcements are a quick way for instructors to communicate with students regarding the course. They can be sent out as an immediate email if the instructor selects the “Email Announcement” option.

1. Enter the course and be sure you are in edit mode.
2. Click on the **Announcements** menu button.
3. Click **Create Announcement**.
4. Fill in both the **Subject** and **Message** sections.
5. Under options, choose whether or not to make the Announcements date restricted. We recommend you use Not Date Restricted – that way students can always go back and scroll through the announcements to find it. Otherwise, you use the **Display After** and **Display Until** to control how long it is visible to students.
6. To automatically email the announcement to students, be sure “Send a copy of this announcement immediately” is enabled.
7. To modify or delete an existing announcement, click the chevron icon associated with that announcement and select Edit or Delete.

**Communicating with Students: Email and Messages**

**Send Email**

Blackboard includes a ready-made email distribution list for all students in your Blackboard course. Email in Blackboard is one-way, i.e., it is sent from Blackboard but students must read the email using own their email program.

1. Enter course and be sure edit mode is on.
2. Under Control Panel, select **Course Tools**.
3. Select **Send Email** from the list.
4. Select **All Users** (or one of the other options).
5. Enter a Subject and Message.
6. Select **Attach a File** if you wish to attach a file (optional).
7. Click **Submit**.

**Course Messages**

The Blackboard **Course Messages** tool provides a “Blackboard only” alternative to communicating with your students. Messages are sent and stored only within your Blackboard course.

1. Enter course and be sure edit mode is on.
2. Under Control Panel, select **Course Tools**.
3. Select **Course Messages**.
4. Click **Create Message**.
5. Click **To**, **Cc**, and/or **Bcc** and choose recipients.
6. Enter a Subject and a Message and click **Submit**.
**Uploading a File (use Course Files to add a lot all at once)**

If you only plan to upload a few files, you can just upload files directly to the content area. Make sure *Edit Mode* is ON. Please be sure to read about Course Files below, as adding many documents this way might become a headache later on in terms of course size and organization later on...

1. Enter the course and be sure you are in edit mode.
2. Click one of Content Area menu buttons (e.g., *Course Documents, Course Information*).
3. Click *Build Content* button.
4. Select *Item* under the Create menu.
5. Type the name of material – this is a title, so be sure to use capitalization.
6. Type a brief description about the material or instruction for your students in the text box.
7. Click *Browse My Computer* to find the file.
8. Fill in the remaining options and then click *Submit*.

Folders can be used to help organize the course and make it easier for your students to find materials. First create the Content Folder (under Build menu), then click on it to add materials (from inside).

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**Using Course Files to Add Content to your Blackboard Course (lots of files)**

If you plan to upload a lot of files to Blackboard, you want to use *Files*, also known as *Course Files*. Course Files is a central file repository for all the files in a course. Instructors can upload, organize and edit course materials right from Course Files. Students can only access files if the instructor creates links to them in Content Areas such as Course Documents, Course Information, etc. Used in conjunction with a related tool called Web Folder, an instructor can even edit and upload files directly from his or her computer desktop.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you keep uploading the same file over and over again, you get duplicate files in Course Files. Be sure you clean up Course Files from time to time.
Uploading Many Files (to Course Files)

You can upload most types of files to Blackboard. Word, PDF, and Text files are easily opened by most students and maintain their format. To upload to Course Files, select one of the following options:

- Under Control Panel, click on Files.
- Click on the Upload button. You have several upload options:
  - If you have a ZIP file of materials to add to the course, select Upload Package. This option will automatically unzip its contents, and create the same folder structure within Course Files.
  - If you would like to upload an individual file, select Upload Files, use the Browse button to select the file, and then click Submit.
  - If you want to drag and drop files, select Upload Files, then Multiple Files (see below). Drag and drop any files (or folders of files) that you would like to add to the course. Note: You may have to do a Java update. Click Submit to upload the files.

Keep in mind that this is just a file storage area. Files submitted to Course Files are not accessible by students until you link them to a course content area (e.g., Course Documents).

Linking Course Files to Content Areas (so students can access them)

When you add a file to your Course Files, you can add a link to it in any content area of your course. To do this:

1. Make sure Edit Mode is ON.
2. Click one of navigation buttons belong to Content Area such as Course Documents.
3. Click Build Content button.
4. Select **Item** under Build Content.
5. Type the name of material.
6. Type a brief description about the material or instruction for your students in the text box.
7. Click **Browse Course** to find the file you uploaded to **Course Files**.

8. Select the file from **Course Files**.
9. You may select some options if necessary:
   a. **Permit Users to View the Content Item** (If yes, students can access it.)
   b. **Track number of views** (If yes, statistics will be recorded on student access.)
   c. **Select Date and Time Restrictions** (If you don’t specify dates, the file will go up immediately and stay up for the duration of the course.)
10. Click **Submit**. Always check your work by turning **Edit Mode** to **Off** and clicking links as your students will be doing.

**Managing Course Content (e.g., moving, copying)**

Posted content in your course has a chevron dropdown menu. Clicking this chevron reveals options to modify, copy, delete, and enhance that content item, as shown below.

- **Edit** – modify the item.
- **Adaptive Release** – can be used to trigger the release of course materials (e.g., 80 or higher on a quiz) or limit access to a few student names.
- **Adaptive Release Advanced** – allows instructor to set up customized trigger rules.
- **Set Review Status** – uses a visual open/shut ‘eye’ icon to indicate whether a student has accessed the content item.
- **Metadata** – catalog/record general information about the item.
- **Statistics Tracking/View Report** – allow instructors to view statistics for that item (which students clicked on it and when).
- **User Progress** – shows a dashboard of students’ progress for that particular item based on Review Status.
- **Copy** – allows you to copy that item to another of your own Blackboard courses or a different place in the same course.
- **Delete** – deletes the items from the course.
Other Tools for Building your Course

For instructions on how to set up and use each tool listed, use the Blackboard Help for Instructors found in your Blackboard course under Help in your Control Panel. Or, go to the FCLD website: http://hartford.edu/academics/faculty/fcld/learn_blackboard/default.aspx and click on the menu item labeled Instructions for Using Blackboard. FCLD has separate documentation on many of the specific tools or features that includes instructions, tips for integrating them into teaching, and best practices.

Build Content

- Item – Add a file with a text description underneath.
- File – Add a file without any description
- Audio – Add an audio recording
- Image – Add an image file
- Video – Add a video file
- Weblink – Post a link to a website
- Learning Module – Add content as sequenced instruction
- Lesson Plan – Instructional Design wizard for building step-by-step lessons
- Syllabus – Create a modularized syllabus in Blackboard
- Course Link – Create a link to somewhere else in the course
- Content Packages (SCROM) – Used to add advanced, premade learning objects
- Content Folder – creates folders for content, used to organize course materials by week, content type, etc.
- Module Page – creates a new module page, similar to the Alerts and Notifications page.
- Blank Page – creates a blank page that you can create ‘on the fly’ (without uploading anything)
- Flickr Photo – add photos from Flickr, a website for sharing photos
- SlideShare – add presentations from Slideshare, a website for sharing presentations (e.g., PowerPoint).
- YouTube Video – add videos from YouTube, a website for sharing videos
- Ensemble Video – add streaming videos from the campus version of ‘YouTube’.

Create Assessment

- Test – create a graded online quiz or test, using a variety of question types and options
- Survey - create an anonymous, non-graded online survey
- Assignment – create a button for students to submit a specific assignment to you in Blackboard
  (Now includes options for SafeAssign, Blackboard’s plagiarism detection tool within the Submission Details expanding block in the Assignment tool).
- Self and Peer Assessment – create an assignment for students to peer-review
Tools

*Discussion Board* – an asynchronous group communication tool used to discuss a specific topic. Participants post written items and use a reply button to create a threaded, discussion.

*Blog* – asynchronous group communication tool typically used to post one person’s perspective and have others write short comments in response to it. Typically focuses on a specific topic.

*Journal* – a more private communication tool typically used by one student to write reflections. Only the instructor reads and comments on them.

*Wiki* – a collaborative writing tool used by many authors to jointly write a single document. The final product is a series of linked web pages that can span many topics (like Wikipedia).

*Groups* – create private group space for student’s use. Each group includes a variety of tools such as chat, discussion, wikis, etc.

*Chat* – synchronous communication tool used to type ‘live’ messages in real time.

*Virtual Classroom* – synchronous tool used to teach ‘live’ using chat and white boards.

*Tools Area* – provides students a link to all tools.

*Document Package* – Used to upload zipped files to Blackboard.

*Café Scribe Content* – Provides a link to the digital content from the University Bookstore.

*ECHO Content* – links to the ECHO360 Lecture Capture content [http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/mts/echo.html](http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/mts/echo.html)

Partner Content

*Search for Textbook* – search and post ready-made information about your text, including ISBN, whether it is required or not, and pricing.

*Manual Entry Textbook* – create your own textbook entry, similar to above, by typing the information in a form.

*Commercial Content* – not enabled on our Blackboard system. We do have McGraw-Hill, Cengage, and Pearson integration if you are using their digital materials. Contact FCLD for assistance with enabling them within your course(s).

The Discussion Board

The Discussion Board is a great tool for allowing asynchronous, reflective communication. Discussion Boards allow students time to formulate a response, offer a safer communication arena for shy or ESL students, and can enhance face-to-face discussion that have taken place in class. They can also become a place for more informal discussion and sharing such as for introductions or a FAQ for the course. You, as an instructor and facilitator of the discussion board, are able to assess your students’ grasp of the course content from their posts.

It’s a best practice to establish guidelines such as appropriate use of the Discussion Board, provide a model for a good post, one which illustrates substantial vs. insubstantial posting, and let students know how often you expect them to post as well as how often they can expect you to participate in the discussion. Most instructors grade discussions in order to encourage student participation. It is possible to grade discussions right within Blackboard’s Grade Center and typically, instructors use a rubric on which to grade discussion posts. If you are unfamiliar with rubrics, [http://rubistar.4teachers.org](http://rubistar.4teachers.org) is helpful or consult Rick King’s “Discussion Rubric” sample, posted on the FCLD website. You can create rubrics using Blackboard’s own rubric (or copy and paste from one in RubiStar).
**Discussion Board Structure**

**Forum** A forum is made up of threads (topics) and replies to those threads. The forum description is used to explain guidelines for the discussion and describe the general topic.

**Thread** Threads are added by students and instructors to start new topics. The instructor launches the discussion by posting an initial thread. The essential question that begins a discussion needs to be open-ended, thought-provoking, and deep enough to allow students to synthesize and analyze course content in their subsequent discussion.

**Reply** Discussion participants use the Reply button to respond to the thread questions, or to reply to each other's replies. These replies are called ‘posts’. Listed posts are indented, according to which post was being read when the reply button was used.

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**Setting up a Forum**

Instructors can set up several forums each having its own topic or set up a forum that contains many topics by adding threads. **Note:** Students cannot post to the Discussion Board until you set up a forum and/or add a thread.

To begin adding forums to the main discussion board in your course:

- In the menu of your course, click on the **Discussion Board** button in your course menu. (If you do not have a Discussion Board button, click on the **Tools** button instead and select the Discussion Board.)
- To add a Forum to the Discussion Board, select **Create Forum**. Provide a name and include a general description of the forum topic. If this is the first forum of the semester, you may want to include general instructions and guidelines for forum participation, such as how often to post or how long posts should be.
- Fill in forum settings. If you would like your students to be able to initiate conversations, be sure to click “Allow members to create new threads.” Otherwise, students can only post to the discussion board if you post questions first. Click **Submit**.
- To force students to publish their own post prior to reading others, select **Participants Must Create**…
- Descriptions of the Forum Settings options are below:
Forum Settings

Viewing Threads/Replies – Standard means anyone can post at any time. The second option may be used to prevent students from waiting until everyone else has posted before posting their own thread.

Grade - allows instructor to grade the discussions and posts grade in the online Grade Center. NOTE: If you grade by thread, you may end up with many, many columns in your Grade Center.

Subscribe – Allows participants to receive an e-mail notification when new posts are created.

Create and Edit:

- **Allow Anonymous Posts** - Allows students to post without identifying themselves. Not recommended.
- **Allow Author to Delete Own Posts** - Allows students to delete messages they have posted. Before enabling this option, you may wish to consider how this might disrupt the flow of conversation (especially if you are grading posts).
- **Allow Author to Edit Own Published Posts** – Allows students the ability to modify published posts; again, consider how this might alter the flow of conversation or grading.
- **Allow Members to Create New Threads** – allows students to start a new topic.
- **Allow File Attachments** – Allows file attachments to be added.
- **Allow Users to Reply with Quote** – Includes original message text when replying to that message. It is not necessary to allow this as there is always a button available that allows anyone to see the text of the post they are replying to within the reply screen.
- **Force Moderation of Posts** – If this is selected, instructors must read all incoming posts, and then elect to reject or publish the post. This is not a recommended practice.

Additional Options:

- **Tagging** - Allows tags (keywords for searching later) to be added to messages on the forum after using Collect.

- **Allow Members to Rate Posts** – Allows students and instructors to insert a one-to-five star rating as a form of peer review.

**Getting into the Forum**

To monitor and facilitate the discussion board, enter the forum by clicking on the forum name.

![Discussion Board](image)

**Entering a Forum by Clicking on Forum Name**

**Starting the Discussion**

To start the discussion, click on **Create Thread**. Fill in the subject, then put in the starting comments and questions for your topic. A good discussion board question is one that gets the student to analyze and synthesize ideas, rather than simply summarizing a reading or restating facts.

**Reading and Replying to Questions**

Students and instructors click on a thread or any other subject line of any post to read it. Click the **Reply** button to respond the post you clicked. A link to your response will appear in chronological order indented once under the original post you clicked.
Discussion View

Select Expand All if you wish to see an outline view of the discussion - posts are indented under the original message.

The Online Grade Center

Blackboard’s Grade Center is an online grade book that calculates grades, and allows you to track student progress, provide feedback to students, download grades to your computer – even create reports. You don’t have to type in student names, as Blackboard does it for you. All you have to do is add assignments, which become columns in the spreadsheet. Columns are created automatically by Blackboard if you use the following tools: Tests, Surveys, Assignment Tool, and graded Discussion Board forums. If you elect to grade them, columns are also automatically added for journals, blogs, etc. You enter grades directly into the cells of the spreadsheet with a simple point and click of your mouse. The Grade Center is very flexible, allowing you to drop lowest grades, weight grades, filter views, and more.

IMPORTANT: The Grade Center is complex. It is strongly recommended that you attend a Grade Center seminar even if you have used previous versions of Blackboard’s grade book. Please contact FCLD to find out when a Grade Center seminar is offered at 768-4661 or email fcld@hartford.edu or check our seminar schedule at http://www.hartford.edu/fcl.

Viewing the Grade Center

Instructors, TAs and Graders are the only roles in Blackboard that can view, post, and edit the Grade Center. Students can only view their own individual grades.
**Instructor View**

To access the Grade Center as an instructor, go to the **Course Management** area, under **Control Panel**, click **Grade Center**, and then choose **Full Grade Center**.

**Blackboard Grade Center (Instructor’s view)**

**Student View**

Students access Grade Center by selecting **My Grades**, either from the Student Menu if the instructor included it separately, or from the **Tools** menu.

**Reading the Grade Center – The Icon Legend**

The Grade Center Icon Legend defines Blackboard’s grading symbols.

- **User Unavailable**: Shows that the student has been blocked from the course.
- **Column Not Visible to Users**: Instructor has selected the **No** option for “Show this column in My Grades.”
- **Completed**: Complete/Incomplete is the grade value and it is showing as “completed”
- **Needs Grading**: An item or portion of an item such as an essay needs to be viewed and graded.
- **Override**: The grade has been modified via a manual edit.
- **Attempt in Progress**: Student is currently working, and/or has ‘saved’ to return and work later. In any case, the student is not ready to have the instructor grade yet.
- **External Grade**: A column can be viewed in a tab outside of Grade Center (not enabled).
- **Grade Exempted for this User**: Instructors can exempt a student from a grade.
- **Error**: Grade Center error.
- **Not Participating**: Student is not participating in this assignment (e.g., group discussion).
Grade Center Basics

Below you will find instructions for basic Grade Center functions. More instructions and how-to videos can be found on the FCLD website here:
http://www.hartford.edu/academics/faculty/fcld/learn_blackboard/blackboard_instructions.aspx

Adding a Student (Row)

Students are automatically listed in the Grade Center, appearing as rows when they are enrolled into your Blackboard course. If a student drops the course, it is important to know that his/her grades (and other course work) will not be deleted from the course. If the student should add the course again later, he/she will simply reappear in your Grade Center along with any of the grades/course work.

Create an Item (Column)

You have the option of adding items, which make up the columns, either manually or automatically. To add an item manually, select Create Column (see image below) and fill in information such as column name, description, category, and points possible. Note: If you would like to weight grades, then it is important to enter a category for each item that you add.

Select Create Column in Grade Center to Add Columns

Weighting Grades

After you have created your Grade Center columns and are ready to weight the items, select Add Calculated Column (see image below). After providing the column name and description, you have the ability to weight whatever columns you wish by either item or category or a combination of both, and can consider dropping lowest grade or taking only the highest grade, for instance.

Setting up Weighted Grades
**Entering Grades**

Grades can be entered directly into the spreadsheet by clicking a cell, typing a grade, then hitting the Enter key. Alternately, you can select View Grade Details from the cell drop down menu and enter a grade by selecting the Manually Override tab and entering the grade in the box provided. Either way is quick and easy and allows you to advance to the next student or column.

**Downloading Grades**

It is a good practice to keep a copy of your students’ grades on your own computer as well as in Blackboard’s Grade Center. One way to do this is to download your Grade Center two or three times per semester, using the Download tool as shown below.

**Blackboard Best Practices & Tips**

- Be sure you provide your students with the Student Guide each semester and point out the Blackboard Help button so they can access student handouts on Blackboard.
- Start small and add more each semester; don’t feel like you need to do it all the first semester.
- Keep file sizes small, kilobytes rather than megabytes.
- Do a Blackboard orientation session with your students.
- Be transparent when things go wrong; technology doesn’t go perfectly all the time for anyone!
- Update and revise your course site regularly.
- Start with a welcome and communicate expectations about using Blackboard to your students.
- Provide clear instructions if plugins are required or if files take a while to open/download.
- Follow Fair Use Guidelines for online learning; cite sources and warn students some materials are protected by copyright (can be done by an announcement).
- Be sure to balance your Blackboard and in-class assignments so as not to overload your students.
- Try out some of the advanced Blackboard workshops to learn more.

**Hardware and Software Specifications for Blackboard**

- You need a computer with multimedia capabilities (i.e., sound with speakers), a monitor capable of at least 800 x 600 resolution, a modem or Internet connection of at least a 56K modem connection, and an Internet Browser in order to access Blackboard.
- Your browser must accommodate both Java and JavaScript for some functions of the course. These are functions you can turn on in your browser.
- Your browser must be set to accept cookies (use minimum browser security settings).
- Firewalls will affect your ability to access and use Blackboard.
- Popup Blockers will affect your ability to use the Collaboration Tools and other features.
Windows Users Only – Downloading Java
Java is required to use Collaboration Tools in Blackboard. This plug-in may be downloaded from a page that appears when you join a Collaboration Session, or, visit http://java.sun.com/products/plugin/index.jsp and download Java. MAC OS X has Java installed.

Enabling Cookies in Your Internet Browser
In order to use Blackboard on your personal computer, you must have cookies enabled. To do so:

Internet Explorer
Open Internet Explorer and select Tools → Internet Options. Select the Privacy Tab.
1. Using the sliding bar, slide the bar down so that the cookie settings are Medium or lower.
2. Click Apply. Then click OK.

Safari
1. Open Safari and select Safari → Preferences.
2. Click Privacy.
3. Under Block Cookies select the option “From third parties and advertisers”
4. Close the Window.

Mozilla Firefox
Cookies are enabled by default in Firefox.

Enabling JavaScript in your Internet Browser
Blackboard requires that your browser accommodate JavaScript for some functions to work properly. Please do the following to ensure your browser is ready:

Enabling JavaScript in Internet Explorer
Open Internet Explorer and go to Tools → Internet Options.
1. Click on the Security Tab, then Custom Level.
2. Scroll to the section titled Scripting.
3. Verify that Active Scripting is enabled, click OK, Yes to the warning, and then OK.

Enabling JavaScript in Mozilla Firefox
Javascript is enabled by default in Firefox.

Supported Browsers & Operating Systems for Blackboard 9.1 SP 13
Mac OSX Operating System

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safari 6.0.3</th>
<th>Safari 6.0.1</th>
<th>Safari 5.1</th>
<th>Safari 5.0</th>
<th>Safari 4.0</th>
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<th>Firefox (Final Release Channel)</th>
<th>Chrome (Stable Channel)</th>
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## Windows Operating System

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<tr>
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<th>IE 8</th>
<th>Firefox (ESR)</th>
<th>Firefox (Final Release Channel)</th>
<th>Chrome (Stable Channel)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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### Configuration Notes:

- Microsoft SQL Server 2008(R1) will not be supported past SP11.
- 64-bit Client Operating Systems: We are generally un-prepared to test 64-bit versions of client operating systems. We will continue to keep Windows XP 64-bit unlisted. 64-bit Windows Vista and Windows 7 will remain Compatible [June 2011]
- Internet Explorer 8 is only supported in Standards Mode.
- Internet Explorer 9 is only supported in Standards Mode.
- Blackboard strives to make all its products as accessible as possible. JAWS 13 and 14 were used during accessibility testing of 9.1 SP13.
- Chrome support: due to the auto-update feature of Chrome, support is based on the version available at the time of testing. 9.1 SP13 was tested with Chrome 26.0.x.
- Firefox support: due to the auto-update feature of Firefox, support is based on the version available at the time of testing. 9.1 SP13 was tested with Firefox versions 20.0.x and 17.0.x (ESR).
- Note on OSX 1.8 Java is no longer shipped as part of the OS install and must be downloaded and installed by users on request of application/applet - this is a one time action on the part of the user.

### Technologies NOT supported

- Internet Explorer 6, 7
- Firefox 1.x, 2.0, 3.0, 3.5 and 3.6
- Safari 2.0, 3.x (or any version on Windows)
- Windows XP 64-bit (unlisted)
- Mac OS X 10.3, OS X 10.4, OS X 10.5
- Jre 5 though it may continue to work
Faculty Center for Learning Development (FCLD)
FCLD provides consulting and instructional support to faculty and staff who are using technology in teaching and learning. The FCLD Faculty Lab in Mortensen 203a is available for faculty support and use and is equipped with instructional technology-related equipment including: PCs, Macs, scanners, and projectors as well as support staff. Faculty wishing to use the lab may contact FCLD.
Phone: (860) 768-4661  Email: fcld@hartford.edu
Website: http://www.hartford.edu/fcld

Office of Technology Services (OTS) Help Desk
For general computer and Internet/network support questions (not directly related to the classroom but rather passwords, Internet/email problems, Banner, campus Facebook).
Phone: 768-4357 (on campus) or (844) 292-3213 (off campus)
Email: ots@hartford.edu  Website: http://hartford.edu/ots
Student Blackboard Support: (860) 515-3742 or http://www.hartford.edu/studentbbsupport