Navigating Blackboard 9.1

Blackboard 9.1 has been completely redesigned with the same type of navigation that was introduced in the Grade Center in Blackboard 8. This interface requires fewer clicks to access data, thereby making it faster and easier to navigate than version 8. Instructors will find that all the functionality is still available; it has just been retooled, relocated, rearranged and enhanced.

There are four fundamental navigation changes in the Blackboard 9.1:

- Course Menu
- Course Homepage
- Edit Mode in Content Areas and Folders
- Course Management Menu

Course Menu

The Course Menu, previously only editable from the Control Panel, now provides faculty with the ability to

1. Add new menu items on the fly.
2. Personalize the menu view.
3. Rearrange the menu items using drag and drop
4. Edit the menu item name and availability using the Action Link menu (chevron sign)

Note: In version 9.1, Blackboard automatically hides empty Content Areas. Content Areas that are hidden are excluded from the Student view; however, hidden content areas are displayed in the Instructor view with a “hidden” icon.

Course Homepage

The Course Homepage, new to Blackboard 9.1, is the default entrance page for a course. Customizable by the instructor, the page presents students with modules that emphasize:

1. My Announcements
   My Announcements produces a quick view of recent course announcements each of which link to the Announcements page.
2. **To Do**
   Linked to the *Due Dates* set within the Grade Center, To Do provides students with notices about assignments due within the course as well as items that are past due.

3. **What's New**
   What’s New provide students with a quick view of recent activity within the course including new Announcements, Course Content, Assignments, and Discussions postings.
**Edit Mode in Content Areas and Folders**

In Blackboard 9.1, a variety of content can be added to courses from within a Content Area or Content Folder. Previously done primarily through the Control Panel, Instructors can now go directly to the Content Area from the Course Menu, click on the **Edit Mode** button and begin adding content.

Instead of the select items menu available in Blackboard 8, 9.1 presents instructors with a four-tabbed Action Link menu. Interface comparison seen below.

The various content, assessment, and interactive tools that can be accessed from these tabs and added to the area or folder are summarized below.

**Building Content**

Clicking the Action Link menu button on the Build Content tab reveals a dropdown list of all the content options available. There are six options under Build Content that are either new, improved, or enhanced.
1. **Audio, Images, Video and URL** – These content types have been enhanced in 9.1 allowing them to be added directly to a content area without creating an Item.

2. **Learning Module** – In 9.1 the tool has been enhanced to automatically create a menu (hierarchical table of contents) as content is added. This creates a self-contained learning unit that provides a path for students to progress through the content in a logical, sequential way.

3. **Lesson Plan** – This new content type provides a content container similar to a folder that has a tabbed format within which to add different content items. This feature is designed to allow Students to view and associate the content with the instructional objectives and lesson profile.

4. **Blank Pages** – this new 9.1 function allows HTML pages to be added to Content Areas.

5. **Module Page** – This new content presentation mode can be added to a content area to display specialized content from a variety of prefabricated modules such as Content Collection, Dictionary, NBC Archives, and Thesaurus to name a few.

6. **Mashups** – Blackboard 9.1 includes some quick-embed options for pulling content in from YouTube, Flickr and Slideshare. The content can be displayed in the following ways:
   - Thumbnail: displays a small size of the item on the course page with controls to launch it.
   - Text Link with Player: displays a link to launch the item on the course page.
   - Embed: displays the item directly on the course page.
Create Assessment
Create Assessment contains all tools/features within Blackboard that are traditionally used as assessments. While the four options under Create Assessment are not new to 9.1, they have been relocated out of the Control Panel and have received some long awaited improvements, particularly in the Assignment Tool.

Add Interactive Tool
Add Interactive Tool contains all tools/features within Backboard that are traditionally used for the purposes of collaboration. Clicking on the tool links will prompt the instructor to create discussion forums, groups, wikis, blogs, etc.

Assign Textbook
Assign Textbook allows the instructor to search for a textbook or to manually enter textbook information into a Content Area. This feature would most likely be used within a Content Area titled Syllabus where the Textbook information would fit best. Textbook information displayed includes Title, Author, ISBN, Publisher, Publication Date, Binding, Type, and Price.

Note: The price included in the search results is the publisher suggested retail price and may not reflect the price set by local sources.
Course Management Menu

Control Panel
The Control Panel screen familiar to Blackboard users has been eliminated in 9.1. The functionalities from within the Control Panel have either

- Been incorporated into more logical areas
  (Example: the ability to add announcements from within Announcements and editing the course menu directly from the course menu)
- Relocated within the Course Management menu on the left-hand-side of the course page.

Many of the tools previously on the Control Panel page are located within sub-menus that can be accessed by clicking on the menu items under Course Management.

Content Collection
Previously in Blackboard, items uploaded for use in a course fell subject to Blackboard’s filing abyss. Once it was uploaded there was no way to find the file within Blackboard. New to Blackboard 9.1 is the Content Collection that provides instructors with the ability to upload, organize, and search content directly within a file storage area associated with each course.

Upload Content
Multiple files or entire folders can be uploaded to a course Content Collection by

- Browsing for the files on your local computer or
• Setting up a Shared Location and dragging items directly from your personal computer into Blackboard.

Packaged HTML files are now automatically unpackaged when uploaded to Content Collections. Blackboard 9.1 also versions documents to avoid file duplication. Once uploaded into the Course Content Collection, files are available for use within Content Areas within the course. Conversely, if a file is uploaded directly into a Content Area it can be accessed from within the Course Content Collection.
**Search Content**

Instructors can search for content in the Content Collection using the search tool located in the Content Collection section of the Control Panel. The system provides options for Basic, Advanced and Saved Searches.
Course Tools

The Course Tools menu in Blackboard 9.1 combines features formerly located in the Control Panel under Course Tools and Assessment.

The Course Tools menu will display all of the tools that have been enabled within the course. For example, it is from within the Course Tools menu where tools will be configured and items like Tests, Surveys, and Pools will be created.

If a tool appears to be missing from this area, it likely needs to be enabled under Customization > Tool Availability.

Assessment/Evaluation Tools

Assignment Tool

The Assignment Tool in Blackboard 9.1 now allows instructors to create assignments that allow multiple submissions. There are three submission options:

- One Attempt
- Multiple Unlimited Attempts
- Multiple Set Number of Attempts

In addition to being able to set multiple attempts, the instructor has the ability to distribute assignments to Groups and allow additional attempts per individual user instead of Clearing the Attempt. When grading the attempts, the instructor can set which attempt(s) will appear within the Grade Center including:

- Grade First Attempt
- Grade Last Attempt
- Highest Grade
• Lowest Grade
• Average of Grade Attempts

Tests & Surveys
Instructors can create tests and pools using questions stored in the new Question Finder tool. Searches can be filtered by test, survey, pool, topic, category or level of difficulty while the page updates and search results to match the query.

Instructors and Course Builders can also 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.
Another feature improvement is that tests, surveys and pools can be duplicated directly from the tests page, the survey manager or the question pool manager.

**Self and Peer Assessment**

The Self and Peer Assessment Building Block allows an Instructor to create an exercise, composed of one or more Questions, each with one or more Criteria, to be presented to their Students for completion and evaluation. These Assessments, along with their Questions and Criteria, can be exported and then imported for later use.

The Criteria that accompany each Question provide the means to evaluate the responses to those Questions. The number or Criteria can also range from one ("Did the answer = 4?") to many:

- Does the response place the issue within the broader context of the subject?
- Is the response well organized and clearly laid out?
- Was the response proofread carefully? Was it free of significant grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors?

The Self and Peer Assessment Building Block is a tool designed to facilitate the objective, analytical, and learning comprehension skills of students. Reviewing the work of fellow students through criteria-based reference evaluation allows constructive feedback. The constructive feedback that students give to and receive from their peers can enhance their comprehension of the subject material and provide valuable insights into their own efforts.
Grade Center

For the most part, the Grade Center in Blackboard 9.1 has undergone few changes. The most notable change is the access of the Grade Center from within the Course Management panel in the bottom left-hand page navigation. The SmartViews feature has been called out more prominently in 9.1 and the Grade Center now allows the addition of Grading Color Codes.

SmartViews

SmartViews were introduced in Bb 8.0 as a way to filter the Grade Center to see only the desired columns and/or students. Blackboard 9.1 has created SmartView Favorites which automatically create tool-based SmartViews and displays them in the Course Management under the Full Grade Center.

Example: If an Instructor uses the Assignment Tool, a SmartView is automatically created to display a view of the Grade Center that only contains columns associated with the Assignment Tool or that are categorized as Assignments.

Grading Color Codes

Grading Color Codes allows the instructor to apply a background color or text color on cells within the Grade Center that meet certain criteria such as Needs Grading, In Progress, or Exempt. Color Coding can also be applied to Grade Ranges such as highlighting grades Less Than, More Than, or between a value set.
Users and Groups
Instructors have access to the same user management tools in Blackboard 9.1 as they did in version 8, but they have been consolidated in the Users and Groups menu under Course Management.

Groups
Groups allow instructors to organize students into groups of any size and provide them with a set of collaboration tools accessible by only group members and the instructor. Although this tool is not new, it has been enhanced in 9.1 to allow for:

- Group self-enrollment using an electronic sign-up sheet and
- Automated randomization of group enrollments.

How a student accesses Groups within a course has changed slightly. Once added to a group, a student will not only see the Course Menu but also a My Groups Menu. Expanding this area reveals all of the tools available to the students in the Group.
Customization
Coming soon......

Packages and Utilities
The Packages and Utilities menu includes items formerly available under Course Options in the Control Panel. While most of the functionality remains,

- Course Copy has been enhanced
- Export and Archive have been combined and
- A Bulk Delete feature has been added.

Course Copy
The Course Copy feature has been enhanced to take advantage of the new Content Collection feature. When copying a course, the Course Files option allows the instructor to determine if the Course Copy will

- Copy links to Course Files or
- Copy links and copies of the content which includes all Course Files
To help the instructor make this decision, the Calculate Size button can be used to determine how large the course is. The Manage Package Contents button opens the Course Files page and allows the instructor to select which content to copy and which content to delete from the package. This new tool is a great way to manage course size and ensure that only up-to-date materials are copied to the new course.

**Note:** The Course files option also appears in the Export/Archive Course utilities.