

Blackboard 6 Features

Course Settings

Control Panel » Course Settings

improved

There have been a few changes made to the Control Panel. In Blackboard 5 there was a link in the lower left hand corner of the screen labeled “Course Settings”. This link allowed you to customize the appearance of your course site and disable tools and guest access. In Blackboard 6 these features are now accessed through a few different links: Manage Course Menu, Manage Tools, and Settings.



Renaming your own navigation menu buttons

new

In Blackboard 5 you were restricted to naming your navigation menu buttons a small set of pre-specified words or phrases (i.e. Course Documents, Course Settings, etc.). In Blackboard 6 you can now rename these navigation menu items yourself by clicking on Manage Course Menu » Modify.

Plain text navigation menu

new

In Blackboard 5 you were restricted to having your navigation menu comprised of a series of buttons. In Blackboard 6 you can select a “text only” navigation menu by clicking on Settings » Course Design » Course Design and specifying “text” as opposed to “buttons”.

Content Area Tools and Features

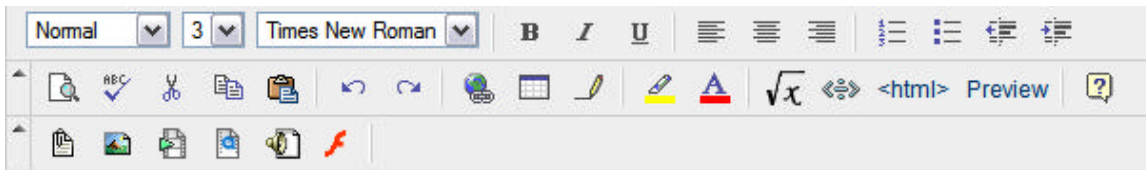
Composing

new

When composing content in Blackboard, there are now WYSIWYG controls, enabling familiar formatting of all content without knowledge of HTML or other languages. (Only available for Internet Explorer 5.5+)

There are controls for adding multimedia content such as movies or animations, as well as an editor for WebEQ and MathML equations.

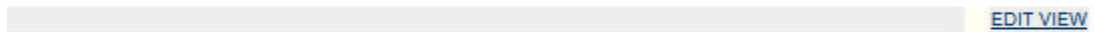
Other new features include a spell checker and a Preview tool.



Edit View

new

When you enter a course as an instructor, there is an unobtrusive little link on the right side that will save you hours:



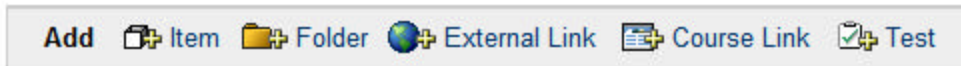
Clicking this link gives you an administrative view for that section, allowing you to edit, create, and remove content just as you would in the Control Panel. This is especially useful when you are inside nested folders.

After clicking the link once it changes to “Display View”, which sends you back to the students’ perspective.

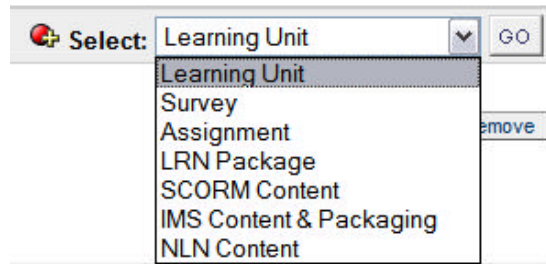
Content Area Controls

new

There have been a few new buttons added into the content areas control panel.



- The “External Link” button allows you to now add External Links into any content area within your site.
- The “Add Course Link” button allows you to link to content elsewhere in your Blackboard site without entering it twice.
- The “Test” button is the new way to deploy your quizzes and assessments. In order to make a quiz available in a certain content area you now use the “Test” button as opposed to the Assessment Manager.
- Additional content types are available in a drop-down menu on the top right.



Copying Content

new

You can now copy content that you have uploaded into any area of your Blackboard course site. In addition, the copy feature allows you to copy content into any other area within all course sites to which you have instructor level access.

Assessments and Surveys

Test Manager/Survey Manager

new/improved

The Assessment Manager has been renamed “Test Manager”. This is where you go to build assessments. You can also now access this area from the Test button in a content area.

You can no longer deploy assessments from the Test Manager. In order to make assessments available you now must browse to the specific content area where you'd like it available and use the “Test” button. From there you can deploy an existing assessment or you can create a new one from scratch or from a question pool.

The system also has a separate link now for creating Surveys - this link is



now named “Survey Manager”. Survey management is the same as Assessment management with one small difference. In the content area where you wish to

deploy a survey, instead of clicking the Test button, you must select “Survey” from the drop-down menu and click “Go”. From there you can include an existing survey or jump to the Survey Manager.

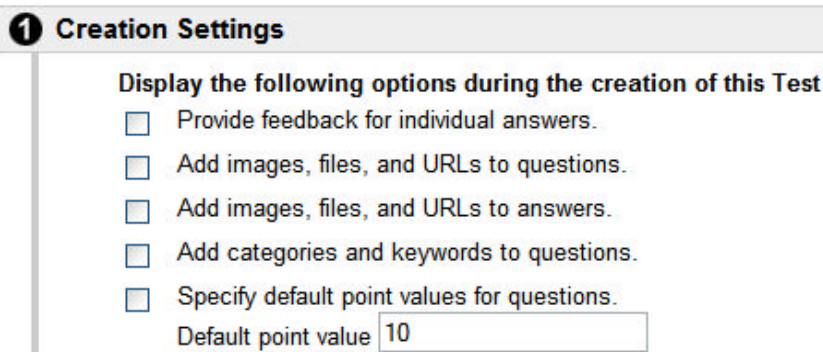
Creation Settings

new

When creating quizzes you now have a link labeled “Creation Settings”. This link enables you to specify global settings that will apply the entire time you are creating a quiz. So, instead of having to

go in and specify the individual point values for each question you can now use the creation settings button to specify that every question you create should be worth 10 points.

This replaces to some extent the “Normal | Advanced” button from version 5.



1 Creation Settings

Display the following options during the creation of this Test

- Provide feedback for individual answers.
- Add images, files, and URLs to questions.
- Add images, files, and URLs to answers.
- Add categories and keywords to questions.
- Specify default point values for questions.

Default point value

Availability Settings

new

After adding an assessment or survey you can then go in and “Modify test options”. In addition to the different availability settings supported in Blackboard 5, you can now reveal questions one at a time, prevent backtracking, and randomize questions in an individual exam.

The On-Line Gradebook

Manage Item/Spreadsheet Settings

new

The manage items button allows you to reorder the assignments in the on-line gradebook. In addition, you can further customize the display of your on-line gradebook by:

- changing the display of student's names,
- creating new customized gradebook item categories, and
- adjusting the way letter grades are displayed based upon your own weighted curve's numeric values.

Weighting of Grades

improved

You can now have your on-line gradebook weight items by item or by gradebook category.

Upload and Download Now Supported

new

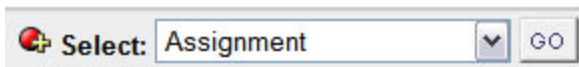
You now have the ability to upload grades into the gradebook as well as export. First, download the gradebook. After adding the new data, upload it and the changes appear in the course.

Assignments

To add an assignment:

new

Log in to your course site and visit the content area where you'd like to add the assignment for students to view and complete. Within the content area click the dropdown menu in the upper right hand corner of the screen and select the "Assignment" option. Then click the button labeled "Go".



Provide instructions for the assignment, then type in the text of the assignment or attach your file as you would when adding any other content. Adding an assignment in this way creates a new entry in the gradebook. If you are creating an *ungraded* assignment, use the "Add Item" button on the top left instead.

Students Complete the Assignment

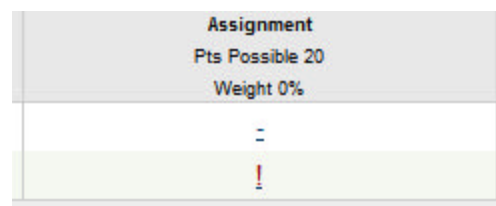
new

Students log in to your site, browse to the content area where the assignment is uploaded, and then click the "View/Complete" link. They will finish completing the assignment and then they are given the option to submit a file as the completed product. In addition to submitting the file they can also include comments.

To view and grade completed assignments:

new

Log in to your course site and visit the on-line gradebook. You will now see that an additional column has been created for the assignment that you distributed. Scroll down your list of students; you will see exclamation marks next to students who have completed the assignment, but who

A screenshot of a gradebook table. The table has a header row with the following text: "Assignment", "Pts Possible 20", and "Weight 0%". Below the header, there are two rows of data. The first row has a minus sign "-" in the column corresponding to the "Assignment" header. The second row has an exclamation mark "!" in the same column. The background of the table is light gray, and the data rows have a light green background.

have not been assigned a grade yet. Click on the exclamation mark to see more details. From there you will have a link to view the completed assignment file attachment that students have submitted. You can then open or save the attachment, assign a grade, and post comments or notes back to the student regarding the assignment.

Differences between the Digital Drop Box and Assignments

While this tool may at first seem like a replacement for the Digital Drop Box, there are some important differences. The Digital Drop Box is better suited to a repeated revision cycle between the instructor and the student, where the Assignment feature is a way for the student to submit work to the instructor a single time, and receive feedback and a grade once.

The Collaboration Environment

These tools have been improved to give the instructor easier control over the discussion space. The new recording feature allows the instructor to archive the discussion. Archives can be made available to the students or only to instructors.

Lightweight Chat

new

Blackboard 6 now provides a real-time collaboration option that is optimized for low bandwidth applications. Lightweight chat allows you to communicate in real time with students enrolled in your site.

The Virtual Classroom

improved

The new Virtual Classroom environment supports a host of new features including:

- The ability to conduct a real-time web tour of your Blackboard site
- The ability to conduct web tours
- Breakout rooms for small group conversations
- The ability to record collaboration sessions for viewing on demand

Message System

new

The new Message System is like an email system for members of an individual class. It is a secure way to exchange messages specifically for a single course.