

ITS Resource Center Home

Blackboard Course Management Tools

Contact Information

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There are a number of useful available for managing various aspects of a Blackboard course space. Some of these tools are part of Blackboard and some have been written by third-party developers and are not a standard part of Blackboard (and do not appear in the Instructors' manual).

- [Sign-up Lists](#)
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Sign-up Lists

Although Blackboard does not have a full-fledged scheduling system within itself, we have two tools that will allow the creation of time slots which students can sign up for – one using group sets and one using a custom content type. Each tool has advantages and disadvantages, depending on your needs. Here is documentation for both:

To create sign-up sheets using group sets, see the [Blackboard Sign-up Sheet](#) documentation. To use the custom content type, see the [Using the Sign-up Tool](#) documentation.

Online Attendance

Go to the Control Panel area, expand the Course Tools sub-menu, then click on Online Attendance. Use the Setup page to set semester start/end dates and days of meeting each week, then quickly enter attendance for every class meeting (there are values for present, absent, excused, late, etc.). This tool is not connected to the Grade Center, but does provide a report showing total number of days present, absent, etc. for each student.

Safe Assign

This is an anti-plagiarism service run by Blackboard; one can either create an assignment that will automatically be submitted for checking against databases of known paper mills, or submit occasional papers manually if you suspect that a bit too much cutting and pasting has gone on. Here's how to submit a single paper:

1. Go to Control Panel area of the course, expand the Course Tools sub-menu and select the SafeAssign tool.
2. Click the Direct Submit link.
3. Under the Private Direct Submit area, click the Submit Papers tool button.

4. In the File Upload area, browse to the paper and click Open to attach it as usual. The other options can remain as is.
5. Click Submit. You should have results back within an hour indicating if the service found any duplicated sections of the paper. Under the SA Report section, you can click the green link to see a full report with likely sources.

The SafeAssign service accepts the following formats: Word 2003 (.doc); Word 2007 (.docx); Rich Text Format (.rtf); text files (.txt); Portable Document Format (.pdf); and archive files (.zip).

For further information, please see the [SafeAssign Wiki](#).

Add a Test Student

This tool allows an instructor to create a sample student account to use for checking what a course looks like to students. You can enroll this student account in any course. Go to the Control Panel area, expand the Course Tools sub-menu, then click on Add Test Student.

Course Reports

There are a number of Course Reports available in the Control Panel area under Evaluation. These reports show overall usage by user of various parts of the course. (To track student accesses of individual items, turn on Statistics Tracking for that item and check the results under View Statistics; see the "Monitoring Student Progress" page for further information.)

Course and Section Groups and what to do with them

Every course section in Blackboard has a group in the "Groups" area which has a title such as "ITS_100_01_FA2012_Group". This group is created automatically when we create the course shells every semester. It contains all the students for that section and is automatically updated as students add and drop courses. If a course is cross-listed with another department, these groups reflect the enrollments as seen in WebAdvisor. If an instructor requested that multiple sections of the same course be merged, then the enrollments reflect the original sections. These automatically-created groups can be used for a number of different purposes, such as sending email, group file exchange, viewing sub-groups of students in the Grade Center, and for group assignments.

Sending Email to Groups

You can use these groups for sending section-specific email:

1. Click on "Send Email" in the Tools area.
2. Select the "Select Groups" option.
3. Highlight a group and click the right-pointing arrow to choose it.
4. Enter the subject and message as usual.
5. Click "Submit."

Group File Exchange

For example, if you need an area in Blackboard for students to share files, just tell your students to:

1. Click on "Groups" in the Tools area.
2. Click on the name of the group that looks like a course id and ends in "Group."
3. Click on the "File Exchange" tool in the Group Tools area.

4. Click the "Add File" button and browse to the file to upload.
5. Click "Submit."

Filter by sections in the Grade Center

If you would like to organize the Grade Center to see the grades of different sections separately, you can create a "Smart View" in the Grade Center using these automatically-created groups:

1. Go to the Grade Center of your course (under the "Evaluation" sub-menu).
2. Under the "Manage" menu, pick "Smart Views."
3. Click the "Create Smart View" button.
4. Enter a name for this view (for example, "Section 01").
5. Under "Selection Criteria," the "Type of View" should already be "Groups" by default.
6. In the next area, select one of the groups under "Value."
7. Click Submit and go back to the Grade Center.
8. In "Current View," if you mouse over the "Full Grade Center," a list should drop down which includes your newly-created view. Select this view and the Grade Center will load with only the students from that group.

Group Assignments

You can also create assignments for individual groups.

1. Go to the course area in which you wish to create the assignment.
2. Select "Create Assignment" under the "Evaluate" button.
3. In section 6, you will see that you can set the "Recipients" to "Groups of Students."
4. When you click this radio button, you will see a list of all the groups in your course. Highlight the one you want and click the right-pointing arrow to move it to the "Selected" box.
5. Click Submit. The assignment will now only appear to the members of that group.

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