

Blackboard Service Level Agreement

Blackboard is the on-line course management system at Hamilton College. Blackboard has a number of useful instructional features, such as document posting, e-mail, discussion boards, small groups capability, file exchange, quiz generation and grade book. Hamilton creates a course space for almost all classes each semester shortly after the pre-registration period for that semester. Faculty are assigned to courses as instructors as soon as the Registrar's office is notified of which sections they are teaching. Students are enrolled in course spaces as users as soon as they are registered in the course.

The Blackboard system receives user, course and enrollment information from the Registrar's system (Datatel's Colleague product) in files which are downloaded daily. Therefore, almost any information which might need to be updated in Blackboard must originate first in Colleague (at the Registrar's office). Since files are generally downloaded once at the close of the business day, it may be as much as 24 hours before a change made in the Registrar's system propagates down to the Blackboard system.

Blackboard may be accessed from any computer with a browser and either a network connection on-campus or internet service off-campus. Blackboard may be accessed via the Blackboard URL (<http://cms.hamilton.edu>) or via the Hamilton portal (<http://my.hamilton.edu>), using the e-mail user name and password. If accessed via the Blackboard URL, the Blackboard "My Institution" page acts as the home page; if accessed via the portal, the user's portal page acts as the home page. Faculty and students should have the "My Courses" channel automatically enabled in their portal pages and listing all courses which they are teaching or for which they are registered. In addition, the "My Announcements" channel lists Blackboard announcements and the "My Calendar" channel includes items from the Blackboard calendar.

Since Blackboard receives most of its information from the Registrar's system, most changes or corrections need to be completed first at the Registrar's office. For example, if a faculty member does not see a course in Blackboard which they believe they are teaching, then they should check at the Registrar's office to make sure the Registrar has assigned them to this class. During the add/drop period (first week of the semester), Blackboard is updated twice per day; students should be encouraged to make all changes at the Registrar's office as soon as possible if they need access to a Blackboard course space. There are a few exceptions which are handled upon request by ITST:

1. High school (Bridge) students enrolled in Hamilton courses must have Blackboard accounts created separately if they do not have Hamilton e-mail accounts (one-day advance notice)
2. Any person who does not have a current Colleague ID and Hamilton e-mail (for example, alumni or guest auditors) will also need to have an account created separately (one-day advance notice)
3. While cross-listed course spaces are merged in Blackboard by default, multiple sections of the same course for which a professor wishes to use the same Blackboard space will be merged only upon request (two-day notice)

ITST suggests that all instructors maintain backup copies of any course material uploaded to Blackboard (including the grade book, which may be downloaded to Excel). Course spaces are available to students only during the semester of instruction; they are available to instructors for at least two years. After two years, the course spaces are disabled but can be re-enabled upon request. No decision had been made on the ultimate length of time that a course space will be archived, but in no case should students view any material they or their instructors post as a

permanent archive; since their enrollment in the course is made unavailable after the end of the semester, they will be unable to access it. In addition, any particularly large files (for example, digital video) should be archived to CD or DVD at the end of the course, as the Blackboard server has only a limited amount of storage space and is not intended as a permanent archive.

ITST offers introductory workshops in Blackboard for faculty at the beginning of the academic year. At other times, individual tutorials can be arranged. In general, faculty are expected to be the resource for their students in using Blackboard.

The Blackboard server will generally be available 24 hours per day, seven days per week, with the exception of posted down times and network emergency outages. We will respond to reports of errors (bugs) within one business day; if a resolution cannot be reached, we will report the problem to Blackboard support within one business day. We encourage users to visit the Blackboard support site (<http://behind.blackboard.com>) for training tips, FAQs and the knowledge base.

For questions or comments regarding this document, please e-mail: course_support@hamilton.edu