

Supplementing Your Course with Blackboard

Blackboard is an online course management system available to faculty and students at LeTourneau University. Some courses are taught entirely online within the Blackboard environment, while other courses use Blackboard to supplement the learning that takes place in the classroom. This workshop is designed to help faculty members get started using Blackboard as an instructional resource, or “assistant”, to help you and your students achieve the learning objectives in your courses.

A. The Basics – Getting Started

A.1 *Logging in to the Blackboard system*

- 1) Connect to the Internet if necessary, and open Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator.

NOTE: If you use an online service with a browser dedicated to that service (i.e., AOL or Juno), connect to the Internet as usual, then minimize your online service window and start Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator.

- 2) Navigate to the LeTourneau Online website: <http://online.letu.edu>

SUGGESTION: Add the Blackboard web site to your Favorites inside Internet Explorer. Adding the link to the Links bar is the most accessible method.

- 3) Click Login

- 4) When prompted, type your username and password, and click OK.

NOTE: If you ever forget your password, use the “Forgot your password?” link underneath the username and password text boxes on the login page to reset your password.

A.2 *Changing your personal information (password, CD-drive letter)*

NOTE: Your username on Blackboard will always be the same as your LeTourneau network username. Initially your passwords will be the same as well. It is recommended that you keep the passwords the same, and NEVER let anyone else know your password.

- 1) On the *My Blackboard* screen, click Personal Information
- 2) Click Change Password to change your password, or Set CD-ROM Drive to change your CD-ROM drive letter

- 3) Enter the requested information and click Submit

A.3 Customizing the appearance of your My Blackboard screen

- 1) Click the minimize button (the underscore) in the upper right corner of any of the modules to minimize that module on the screen
- 2) Click the close button (the X) in the upper right corner of certain modules to remove that module from the screen
- 3) Click the edit button (the Pencil) in the upper right corner of the My Courses module to change which courses appear in the listing, change what information about each course appears, or add web page links to the listing
- 4) Click the Contents button to add and/or remove content modules to/from the screen
- 5) Click the Layout button to modify where modules appear on the screen

A.4 Accessing a course site

NOTE: Faculty and students are automatically added to course sites on Blackboard. If there are any discrepancies on your course listing, contact blackboard@letu.edu

- 1) On the *My Blackboard* screen, click a course name on the right side of the screen

NOTE: If you are enrolled as a student, you will then see whatever the instructor has made available to you; if you are enrolled as an instructor, you will see what the students see, as well as a Control Panel button at the lower left of the screen.

- 2) Click the navigation buttons along the left to view different portions of the course:
 - **Announcements** — announcements made by the instructor; this is the first page that anyone entering the course will see
 - **Course Information** — information about the course, such as the course syllabus, class schedule, grading policies, student expectations, etc.
 - **Staff Information** — information and pictures about the instructor(s) and other relevant people, such as teaching assistants or guest lecturers
 - **Course Documents** — documents related to the course content, such as lecture notes and handouts
 - **Assignments** — online quizzes and surveys, and descriptions of class assignments, along with any necessary files that students need to access

- **Communication** — a collection of communication tools, including the Discussion Board, the Collaboration Tools, Send E-mail, the Roster, and Group Pages
- **External Links** — links to other websites related to the course
- **Tools** — a collection of student tools, including tools for editing their student pages, checking grades, changing their password, submitting files to the instructor through a digital dropbox, accessing a calendar, and viewing the student manual
- **Course Map** — a "table of contents" for the entire course site
- **Control Panel** – the instructor’s control panel for adding content to their course sites, managing discussion boards and email, updating the gradebook, etc.

B. Communication Tools

B.1 Viewing the roster

- 1) Click the Communication button
- 2) Click Roster
- 3) Click the List All tab, then click the List All button; the roster should be displayed
- 4) When you click a student’s name you will see any information they have provided on their student homepage in your course (they do this through the Tools area)
- 5) When you click a student’s e-mail address, a Microsoft Outlook email message window will appear with that student’s email address automatically entered; you can then complete the message and send it

B.2 Sending e-mail

- 1) Click the Communication button
- 2) Click Send E-mail
- 3) Choose one of the available options – if you choose to select individual users or groups, you will then need to click each user or group to include
- 4) Type the subject and the message in the spaces provided
- 5) Click the Add button to add an attachment if desired

6) Click the Submit button

NOTE: Blackboard can be used to SEND EMAIL, but NOT to receive email. You will continue to use your LeTourneau email account to receive messages sent to you through Blackboard. Blackboard does not retain copies of messages that you send, but it does send a copy of every message you send to your inbox for your records.

SUGGESTION: Set up a folder in your Microsoft Outlook for each of your courses, and when students email you about your course, file the messages inside that folder. You could even set up a rule to automatically file messages for you.

ANOTHER NOTE: For security and anti-spam reasons, only LeTourneau email addresses are used within the Blackboard system.

B.3 Using the Discussion Board

NOTE: The Discussion Board can contain multiple forums (created by the instructor) for online topical discussions. Conversations that take place within a Discussion Board forum are asynchronous, meaning that participants can post messages and replies to messages at any time, and read others messages at any time.

- 1) Click the Communication button
- 2) Click Discussion Board
- 3) To create a forum, click the Add Forum button (only instructors see this button)
 - a) Enter a title and description for the forum
 - b) Uncheck anonymous posts (unless you don't mind anonymity)
 - c) Click Submit
 - d) You can rearrange the order of your forums using the numbers at their left

SUGGESTION: Create forums for personal information and prayer requests, or for homework help, or for weekly discussion questions, or for topical debates, or for current events updates, or for posting of research project ideas, or for posting and sharing of project results. This works best if you assign a point value to participation in these forums, and clearly define your participation expectations. It also works best if you as the instructor participate often in the forum.

- 4) To enter a forum, click the name of the forum you wish to participate in

- 5) To post a message about a new topic, click the Add New Thread button, fill in the subject and message, and click Submit
- 6) To read a message that has already been posted, click the subject of the desired message
- 7) To reply to a message that has already been posted, click the subject of the desired message to display it on the screen, then click the Reply button (to the far right); fill in the Message and click Submit; scroll down the screen while replying to see the original message
- 8) To attach a file to a message (which will make the file available for students to view or download), create your message as described in step 5 or 7 above, then click the Browse button under the message to locate your file; click on your file, click Open, then click Submit
- 9) To sort messages other than by date/time posted (the default), use the Sort By dropdown box at the bottom of the message listing inside a forum; choose to sort by Author, Date, or Subject
- 10) To see multiple messages on the screen at one time, first click the Show Options button (upper right corner) inside a forum, check the messages you wish to display (or use the Select All button at the top), then click the Collect button

SUGGESTION: For a printed record of discussion board conversations, use the method described in step 10 above to collect and view all messages within a forum on one page, then print that page and file away.

B.4 Using the collaboration tools

NOTE: Blackboard contains two collaboration tools – a lightweight chat and a virtual classroom. The lightweight chat allows course participants to have a text-based chat in real-time. The virtual classroom allows participants to do everything the lightweight chat allows them to do, as well as view web pages, course content, or a collaborative whiteboard. Two collaboration sessions are included with every course by default – a lightweight chat session called Office Hours, and a virtual classroom session called Lecture Hall. Other sessions can be created by the instructor as needed.

- 1) To enter an existing collaboration session, click Communication, then click Collaboration, then click the Join button to the right of the desired session

NOTE: the first time a Blackboard user tries to join a collaboration session, they will be instructed to download and install the Java Plug-in.

- 2) Once inside a collaboration session, simply type a message in the Compose textbox (near the bottom of the window) and press Enter, or click the Compose button for a larger composition area
- 3) To record (or archive) the chat session, the instructor must click the Record button in the upper right corner and name the archive; the recording continues indefinitely until the instructor stops the recording
- 4) Inside a virtual classroom session, use the Course Map, Whiteboard, and Group Browser links near the upper left to allow all participants to view and discuss the same content in the whiteboard area of the window
- 5) Leave a session by clicking the close button (black X in the upper right corner)
- 6) End (and expel all users) a session by clicking the End button (white X on a red circle)

SUGGESTION: create a collaboration session for homework discussion and encourage your students to meet online in that session to discuss homework, or schedule time before major exams when you'll be in the Office Hours session and encourage your students to join you for an online review.

B.5 Creating group pages

NOTE: Blackboard allows the instructor to set up groups for students. Then each group has their own e-mail function, discussion board, file exchange area, and virtual classroom.

- 1) Click the Control Panel link at the bottom left
- 2) Click Manage Groups
- 3) Click Add Group
- 4) Enter a name and description for the group
- 5) Check each area you want to enable for the group
- 6) Click Submit, then click OK
- 7) Click the Modify button next to the group you just created
- 8) Click Add Users to Group to select which students to assign to this group

SUGGESTION: Create a Group on Blackboard for each group of students working collaboratively on a project, and encourage them to take advantage of those group features.

C. Customizing a Course (using the Control Panel link)

NOTE: Whenever you are working with the Control Panel, use the “breadcrumb trail” near the top of the page to return to your course or the main Control Panel page. Simply click the course title or the words “control panel” within that breadcrumb trail.

C.1 Changing the look of your course

- 1) Click Manage Course Menu to add or remove major areas, to reorder the available areas, or to change which tools are available within a particular area; you can even add web page links to your course menu
- 2) Click Settings to change the course entry point to your course (to make an area other than Announcements be the main course page), or to change the design of your course (the buttons, the colors, or the banner)

SUGGESTION: use a free banner-making web site to create and save a banner that you can then upload into your course. One such site:

<http://www.flamingtext.com/net-fu/forms/banner.html>

C.2 Adding/removing students, graders, teaching assistants, or course builders

- 1) To add a student, click Enroll User, then enter the student’s last name to add and click Search; check the student to add and click Submit, then click OK
- 2) To modify the role of a user, click List/Modify Users, then enter the user’s last name and click Search; click the Properties button to the right of the user name and specify the desired role for that user

SUGGESTION: a student in your course cannot have another role at the same time. If you want a student of yours to help you with grades or building course content, send a request to blackboard@letu.edu to have another user account created (i.e., RollerAssistant) and have your student use that account for working with your course

- 3) To remove a user from your course, click Remove Users from the Course, then enter the student’s last name to remove and click Search; check the student to remove, type “Yes” in the box provided, and then click Submit

C.3 Adding or editing announcements

- 1) To add an announcement that will stay visible for 7 days, click Announcements, click Add Announcement, type a subject and a message for your announcement, then click Submit
- 2) If you want the announcement to always be visible on the first course page (until you remove it), then when adding an announcement, check the option to always show the announcement on the main page
- 3) To modify an existing announcement, click the Modify button to the right of the announcement, make any necessary changes, click Submit
- 4) To remove an existing announcement, click the Remove button to the right of the announcement, then click OK

SUGGESTION: Add some simple color codes to the text of your announcements to alert the students when you have new announcements. Use

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<font color="red">your text here</font>
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to change the color of text. Most color names will work.

C.4 Adding or editing course information, staff information, course documents, assignments, or external links

NOTE: When working with these page editors, you can organize your items into folders. Items are really sub-sections of a page, so you basically want one folder for each major page of information.

- 1) Click the appropriate link within the Content Areas or Course Tools
- 2) To type text directly onto Blackboard, or to paste text copied from another source, click the Add Item button, enter a title for the item, choose a color for the title, enter or paste the text, then click Submit

NOTE: When you add HTML codes to your text, choose the HTML button below the text to display your text correctly.

- 3) To upload an existing application file (such as a Word document or PowerPoint file) for your students to view or download, click the Add Item button, enter a title for the item, choose a color for the title, scroll down and click Browse, locate your file and click the filename and click Open, enter a name for the link, then click Submit
- 4) To upload a picture or web page that will immediately appear (without students having to click an extra link), click the Add Item button, enter a title for the item, choose a color for the title, scroll down and click Browse, locate

your file and click the filename and click Open, choose “Display media file within the page” for the Special Action, then click Submit

- 5) To upload a zipped file containing an entire web site, click the Add Item button, enter a title for the item, choose a color for the title, scroll down and click Browse, locate your zipped file and click the filename and click Open, choose “Unpackage this file” for the Special Action, then click Submit

SUGGESTION: Save a PowerPoint presentation as a set of web pages, zip the resulting files and upload them to Blackboard as a “package”. Your students will not need PowerPoint on their machines to view this type of presentation.

- 6) To add a folder, click the Add Folder button, enter a name for the folder, and enter a brief description of the folder’s contents, then click Submit; add content to a folder by clicking the name of that folder, then following the instructions in steps 2, 3, 4, and 5 above

SUGGESTION: Use folders to organize your homework assignments and lab assignments, or lecture presentations, etc.

- 7) To add a URL (web address), click the Add URL button, enter a Name for the web page link, add the URL (you can copy and paste this directly from the web browser), add a description, choose to launch the web page in an external window, then click Submit
- 8) To add a test, click the Add Test button, and choose whether to create a new test or select an existing test (that you would have created through the Test Manager); after selecting an existing test, choose to Modify the Test Options and make the link visible for your students, set any date restrictions necessary, and specify feedback and deployment options

SUGGESTION: Create a one or two essay question test for your students as homework. You will be able to see their submissions through the gradebook.

- 9) To add an assignment, choose Assignment from the dropdown box at the top right and click Go; enter a name for the assignment, specify the number of possible points, enter the instructions to the student, specify availability options, and click Submit.

SUGGESTION: Use assignment whenever you want your students to submit a file or comments for a grade. This will link the assignment to the gradebook for easier organizing, viewing, and grading.

- 10) To add a survey (an ungraded, anonymous test), choose Survey from the dropdown box at the top right and click Go; choose whether to create a new

survey or select an existing survey (that you would have created through the Survey Manager)

NOTE: Tests, surveys, and assignments are automatically added as items in the online gradebook.

- 11) To modify an existing item or folder, click the Modify button next to the item or folder
- 12) To remove an item or folder, click the Remove button next to the item or folder

C.5 Working with the online gradebook

- 1) Click Gradebook
- 2) Click the Add Item button to enter a grade entry item (for example, Homework 1, or Quiz 3) and specify the item's name, type, number of points, and availability, then click the Submit button
- 3) To modify or delete an item, or rearrange items, click the Manage Items button
- 4) To add your own item categories or grading display options, click the Gradebook Settings button
- 5) To specify the weighting for grades, click the Weight Grades button
- 6) To enter a column of grades for one item, click the name of the item at the top of the column, then choose Item Grade List
- 7) To edit a grade for only one student, click that student's grade or grade symbol
- 8) To edit all grades for only one student, click that student's name
- 9) To view summary statistics for one grade item, click the title of the grade item at the top of the spreadsheet, then choose Item Detail

C.8 Creating a pool of questions for use in quizzes and surveys

- 1) Click Pool Manager
- 2) Click Add Pool, enter a name and description for the pool, and click Submit
- 3) Choose a question type and click Submit

- 4) Fill in the data necessary for the chosen question type and click Add New Question to continue adding questions to the pool, or click Preview Pool to view all questions entered so far

C.9 Creating a test or survey

- 1) Click Test Manager or Survey Manager
- 2) Click the Add Test or Add Survey button
- 3) Enter a name and description for the assessment and click Submit
- 4) Enter instructions to your students and click Submit
- 5) To enter new questions, choose a question type and click Submit, then fill in the data necessary for the chosen question type; click Add New Question to continue adding questions to the assessment, or click Preview Assessment to view all questions entered so far
- 6) To enter questions that already exist in a pool, choose “From Question Pool or Assessment” as the question type and click Submit, then follow the instructions on the screen

D. Getting Help

D.1 Viewing the instructor’s manual

- 1) Click the Control Panel button on the lower left of your screen
- 2) Click Manual
- 3) Browse through the manual, or click on a topic in the table of contents located on the left; you may also choose to save a Word copy of the document to your hard disk

D.2 Contacting Blackboard’s support web site

- 1) Click the Control Panel button on the lower left of your screen
- 2) Click Support