

## Collection of Blackboard Tips

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### 1. How to Make Your Courses Available to Students

By default, courses are loaded into Blackboard as 'unavailable for student viewing'. This gives the instructor time to build the course without student viewing. When an instructor is ready to display his/her course, we expect that they will enable the availability setting. To make a course available to students go to the "**Control Panel**" button of your course (click on the link to the course and then look on the left hand side for the "Control Panel" button), then click the "**Settings**" option and then "**Course availability**". Choose "Yes" and then hit "Submit". An "available" course will show up in both "All My Courses" and "Custom My Courses" modules on the "My Courses" tab. An "unavailable" course will show up only under the "All My Courses" module.

## 2. Hiding Courses from Previous Semesters

Users can choose to omit courses from previous semesters from their "All My Courses" module, on the "My Courses" tab; these courses can be brought back at any time. To hide a course, click on the "**My courses**" tab and then on the **Pencil Icon** on the right top corner of the module. Then uncheck the "Display Course Name" and "Display Course ID" boxes for each course you want to hide and click on the "Submit" button. Please note that a hidden course can be accessed by students enrolled in the course as long as it is available for the student view.

## 3. How to Retrieve a Locked Assignment

When a student clicks by mistake on "SAVE" instead of "SUBMIT" after uploading an assignment to the area created using the Blackboard Assignment Tool, a lock icon shows up in the Gradebook and the teacher cannot access the student's assignment. To retrieve the locked assignment, you could ask the student to go back to the assignment and "SUBMIT" the saved assignment, but a faster way to gain access to the assignment is described within the page below:

- *Click on the link for more details:*  
<http://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/blackboard/weekly-tips/LockedAssignment2008.pdf>

## 4. ClassTop: A new Blackboard Building Block

ClassTop is a simple to use desktop application that makes it easy for instructors to manage Blackboard course materials. The software runs on the user's computer and it has a drag-and-drop interface. ClassTop allows instructors to work offline and then synchronize with Blackboard when connected to the Internet. ClassTop makes it easy to load more files at once, drag-and-drop content from course to course, add/edit/delete announcements, but won't let you manage online quizzes, assignments (created with the Assignment Tool) or Discussions boards.

ClassTop can be downloaded from the Blackboard Welcome Page.

- *Great Flash Demo Tutorials for ClassTop are available at:*  
<http://classtop.com/instructorsupport.htm>

- To view a ClassTop demonstration given by David Haley, Professor in the Computer Studies Department, go to:  
<http://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/blackboard/classtop-demo-jun08.htm>
- To learn how to archive your courses at the end of the semester using Classtop, go to:  
<http://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/blackboard/weekly-tips/ClassTopTMTraining.pdf>

Note: You need Adobe Acrobat Reader version 9.

## 5. Blackboard is Perfect! Myth or fact?

Currently, there are a few Blackboard issues you have to be aware of, but fortunately there is a workaround for each of them.

1. **Exclamation mark instead of a grade in the students Gradebook:** If your students report that they have an exclamation mark in their Gradebook, while you see a grade in the teacher's Gradebook, click on the grade and then on the "View" button. One of the attempts will show as "In progress" and won't have any grade. Removing the failed attempt will fix the problem.
  - *Note: To easily spot the exclamation marks in your gradebook, click on the title of the quiz while in gradebook, choose "Item Options" and then "Modify Gradebook Item". Change the "Grade of last attempt" to "Highest grade" from the drop down list and click Ok.*
2. **Special Characters in File Name:** Do not use any special characters like %, \*, \$ or # in the file name as these will prevent access to the files in question if they are uploaded to Blackboard. Warn your students of this, since files they upload to the Digital Drop Box, the Assignment element or File Exchange will not be retrievable if they have these characters in their file names. If you use one of these special characters in the name of the Assignment itself or if you apply formatting attributes to the title of the Assignment, you will also have trouble downloading the Assignment files (through the Gradebook) your students have sent you.

## 6. How to Open an Online Quiz for Review after its Completion.

A completed quiz can be opened for review at any time you wish to allow the

students to see their quiz answers along with the correct ones. Even if initially, after submitting the quiz, the students would receive only the score and/or the submitted answers, Blackboard allows you to change the settings. Go back to the area where you made the quiz available to students and click on the "Modify" button for the link to the quiz. Then click on the "Modify the Test options" and under "Test Feedback" check the "Submitted answers", "Correct answers" and "Feedback" options. Your students will see the completed quiz from their Gradebook (Course Tools/My grades), by clicking on the quiz grade.

## 7. How to Enroll an Existing User to a Blackboard Course

If you would like to give your coordinator or another teacher access to your course, the first step is to add the user as a student. To do that, go to "Control Panel", click "Enroll Users", do a search by "Last Name", "Username", or "Email" for the user you want to add and click "Search". Once you have found the user, click the checkbox for "Add" and click "Submit".

To change the role from "Student" to "Instructor", "Course Builder", "T.A." or "Grader", go to Control Panel, "List/Modify Users" and do a search by "Last Name" for the user you want to edit. Once you have the user listed, click the user's "Properties" button and, on the Properties page, under "Role and Availability", change the user's role. When done, click on the "Submit" button.

## 8. How to Make a Quiz Available only to a Student or a Group of Students

One way to re-open a quiz only for a student is to set up a password and then give the password to the student(s) who had missed the quiz. The link to the quiz is still visible to all students, but only the ones who have the password are able to view and take the quiz.

With the "**Adaptive Release**" function, an instructor can make a quiz visible only to the students who need to see it. After the quiz is deployed, click on the "Manage" button, next to the link to the quiz, and then on the "Adaptive release" link. Next, choose the quiz availability dates and browse to find the student(s) who will need to take the quiz. Also, if you have created groups in your course, under "Course Groups", you have the option to select one group of students who will see the link to the quiz. Ignore the number 3 and 4 and then click Submit. On the date you set up under number 1 (Date), the quiz will show up only for the student(s) listed under number 2 (Membership).

- *Note: Make sure that the quiz is set up as "available", otherwise it won't show up to the students you entered under "membership". Please note that the link to the quiz that has the "Adaptive Release" on is visible to the instructors only in Control Panel.*

## 9. How to Copy Online Tests from one Blackboard course to another one

Once you have created an online test, you might want to re-use it in another course. This is how you can do it:

1. **The Export/Import process:** To copy all the tests, surveys and pools at once, use the Export/Import process ([http://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/blackboard/pdf/Course\\_Export\\_Import.pdf](http://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/blackboard/pdf/Course_Export_Import.pdf)) and check only the "Tests, Surveys and Pools" option. The tests will be copied as un-deployed and will be accessible only from Control Panel/Test Manager. If you would like to have the tests available/deployed, during the export process check that content area where you have the quiz deployed and the "Gradebook Items and Settings" option. The links to the tests will be copied as well. Please note that all the gradebook columns will be copied at the same time.
2. The **Export** button, under Control Panel/Test Manager: Use this option when you want only a particular test to be copied over. Click on the Export button near the test and save the zip file on your computer. Go to the destination course, Control Panel/Test Manager, and click on the Import button. Click Browse and look for the zip file saved previously and then click Submit. Note that this won't work for random tests created based on the questions from a Pool. In that case, you will need to export the Pool, instead of the test, then import it under Pool Manager and re-create the random test.

## 10. Running Total and Running Weighted Total columns in Gradebook

You can replace the **Total** and the **Weighted Total** columns with **Running Total** and **Running Weighted Total**. These columns do not include scores from assignments/tests that the students have not taken or that have not been graded. The Total and Weighted total columns do include assignments/tests that have not been graded, assigning them a score of "0".

Use these options when you display the final grade as percentage or letter, as it won't work if you display it as score. Go to Control Panel/Gradebook, click on the heading for the Total or Weighted Total column and then on the "Modify Gradebook Item" option. Check "Yes" near the "Except items that have not been graded" and click Submit. Remember to hide the Total column if you weight the grades, as the students can get confused seeing both columns. Note that in order to project the most accurate picture of how the student is doing when using the "Running Total" option you should enter a zero for any assignment that is not turned in by the due date.

### 11.A Creative Way to use a Wiki in Blackboard

If you have given your students presentation topics to choose from, a creative way to allow them to sign up for one of the topics is to set up a wiki. A Blackboard wiki allows the students to edit the page by simply clicking on the "**Edit**" option, once they are within the wiki. While a student is editing the page, the wiki is locked out and won't allow another student's access until the current student has saved his/her changes. To set up a wiki, go to any content area, choose "**Wiki**" from the drop down list on the right hand side and click Go. Enter a name for your wiki and click OK. When you click on the "**View**" link, the first page you see is the wiki Homepage. To edit it, click on the "**Edit**" link, on the right hand side (under Page), and insert a table with 2 columns; one will list the presentation topics, while the other will allow the students to enter their names.

- *Please note that students will be able to edit the content entered by another student, but the wiki's history will make you aware of this fact.*

### 12.The Gradebook "Extra Credit" Category

If you are ready to give bonus marks to your best students, this is how you do it:

- If your Gradebook is **Weighted**, add a new item (column) in the gradebook, name it "Bonus marks" and choose "**Extra Credit**" for the "Category". Make the "**Points possibles**" one ("1") and set the weighting to 1%. Deduct 1% from the weight of one of the items in the Gradebook, so that the Weighted Total will show 100%. Give all students 1 point, but give "1 + the bonus points" to your best students.

- If your Gradebook is **non Weighted**, add a new item ("Bonus Marks"), choose the "**Extra Credit**" category and make the points possible zero ("0"). Then add the bonus points to the students who deserve it. In both cases, have the "Bonus Marks" column visible to students and included into the Gradebook calculation.

### 13. Embed a YouTube Video in Blackboard

Not many of you know that a YouTube video can be embedded very easily in any Blackboard content area, in a wiki/blog or in a discussion board post. Go to the Youtube video you want to show your students and look for the "Embed" text box on the right hand side. You should see a code between the <object ></object> tags. Copy that code by selecting it first and then click on the "Copy" option (from the shortcut or Edit menu) and switch to Blackboard. In the Visual Text Box editor, click on the HTML button (it looks like <> in a content area or is called HTML in a wiki/blog) to go to the HTML view and paste the code there. Click again on <> for a content area or click on the "Update" button for a wiki/blog and then on Submit. The YouTube video will show in the textbox. All you have to do is click inside it to have it play within Blackboard. Since only a link to the video will exist in Blackboard, you can embed as many YouTube videos as you'd like as this won't affect the course quota.

*\*Please note that you have to use Internet Explorer to embed your YouTube video. However, both IE and Firefox will display the video without any problem.*

### 14. RSS Feeds in Blackboard

When RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed links are added to a Blackboard course, links to articles dynamically appear as the site is updated. To learn how to add a RSS feed to your Blackboard course, please go to

<http://www.algonquincollege.com/lts/blackboard/pdf/RSS-Feeds.pdf>

For any question regarding these tips, please send an email to Mariana Pietraru at [bbhelp@algonquincollege.com](mailto:bbhelp@algonquincollege.com) or come to room C102B, in the Woodroffe Campus.