

Getting Started in Blackboard

Blackboard is a Course Management System that can enhance teaching and learning in face-to-face and distance courses. It provides tools for content management (ie, uploading and sharing), assessment (in the form of surveys, exams, and assignments), and communication within the class. Students can access course site content from any networked computer at any time of the day or night, which reduces the need for instructors to continuously provide copies of course materials. The discussion boards, virtual classroom, and email function enhance communication between students in the course and the instructor, and course discussions can continue outside of the traditional classroom venue. Here are the things that instructors need to get started:

Log into Blackboard

Access Blackboard by going to <http://blackboard.case.edu>. Click the **Login** button at the left of the screen. Type in your Case username and password (eg, pqs4) and hit *Enter* or click the **Sign on** button. You will then be logged into the system, and will find yourself on the "My Institution" page.

Go to Case Blackboard Instructors

All registered instructors have access to the Case Blackboard Instructors Organization. It contains useful tools and documentation for creating and maintaining Blackboard Course sites, and is worth visiting for reference. It also contains the link to the Blackboard Course Wizard, the tool that lets instructors create their Blackboard Course sites. Click on the title of the Case Blackboard Instructors Organization to access it.

The Blackboard Wizard

The first link on the organization page is the Blackboard Wizard. Click on it. You will be taken to the main page of the Wizard. Select the menu option to "Add a New Blackboard Site" and – when prompted – login with your Case ID and password.

You must select a semester in which the course is being taught, the course you wish to create a site for, and add any title information (such as Fall 2007) to distinguish it as your own course. Each course needs a unique ID for the Blackboard system; the Wizard suggests one that you can use or ignore. The system will ask you to confirm your selections before creating the site. Once you tell it to create the site, the system will create a course space and add your enrolled students to it.

Once the site is created, you can add any TAs or Co-instructors (by adding individual users) or additional sections of a course such as cross-listings or multiple recitation or lab sections (by adding more course sections.)

Using your Blackboard Site, Part 1: Availability

Once your Blackboard sites are created, you must make them available to the enrolled students. You can do this by going back to the "My Institution" tab of Blackboard. On this page, you should see your newly created course site(s) listed in "My Courses." Click the name of the course you want to work with.

Once in the course site, click on the link to the Control Panel (at the bottom left.) This Control Panel is how instructors create and control their courses. To make the course available to the students, click Settings (in the Control Panel), Course Availability, and Set Availability to "yes." At the end of the semester, reset the availability to "No."

Using your Blackboard Site, Part 2: Content

Adding content to your Blackboard site is also done through the Control Panel. To add documents, click on a Content Area (Course Information, Course Documents, Assignments, External Links.) You can then structure your course materials by uploading files, adding links to web pages, and creating folders for your content.

Instructors can use Blackboard as an email roster. Simply go to the Control Panel, select Send Email, and the system will give you the options of sending email to all students, individual students, all instructors, or any list you wish. The email function is very basic, but does let instructors quickly contact their students.

Additional Communication is possible with the Discussion Board. Discussion boards encourage interaction outside of class time. Simply enter the Discussion board through the control panel, click the **Add Forum** button, add a title and description and submit. You can get a discussion started by adding a thread for students to use.

The Drop Box is a space into which students can submit assignments for the instructor. The Assignment Manager works similarly to the drop box, but allows for easier downloading of the assignment files. The Assignment Manager also ties into the Gradebook.

The Gradebook is a good way for instructors to inform students of progress in the course. Each student has access only to their own grades, and only to those grades the instructor specifies. This is also a basic tool, but it does ensure information privacy for the students.