An Introduction to Blackboard for Faculty

Part II: The Control Panel and the Instructor’s Perspective

This guide will walk you through the most salient features of the Blackboard 8.0 Control Panel, the most important page from an instructor’s point of view. Whenever you need to create, manage, or modify something in the course, assess students, and change settings, you will be using the Control Panel. In addition to showing the main features of the Control Panel, you will learn how to create a discussion forum and how to change the course banner.

Step 1
To access the Control Panel, click on the “Control Panel” item in the lower half of the navigation pane.

Step 2
The Control Panel is divided into six sections: “Content Areas,” “Course Tools,” “Course Options,” “User Management,” “Assessment,” and “Help.”
**Step 3**
The “Content Areas” section manages the areas of the course that students will access by using the navigation pane. Here, you can create or modify course information (the syllabus, course objectives, rubrics), course materials (instructional content), and assignments. You can also add useful external links.

**Step 4**
In the “Course Tools” area, you can make announcements, edit your staff information, and email your students. To divide your class into groups, you can use the “Advanced Group Management” tool.

“SafeAssign” allows you to use Blackboard to check students' assignments for plagiarism. This is also where you will manage class blogs and class wikis.

**Step 5**
To change the look of your course and adjust settings, go to the “Course Options” area. The next two steps will show the “Manage Course Menu” and “Manage Tools” screen.

“Course Design” will be covered in Step 20. The “Settings” screen contains the most important feature in Blackboard: “Course Availability.” If this is disabled, students won’t be able to access your course!
**Step 6**
On the “Manage Course Menu” screen, you will see a list of all the main folders in the navigation pane. You can choose to add, rename, or remove any folder. You can also add a link to a tool such as a blog to make it easier for your students to access it.

**Step 7**
Blackboard has many features. Some will be very useful for you, but others you may not use. The “Manage Tools” screen allows you to enable or disable features. “Content Type Availability” controls what types of content appear in the dropdown list when using the Add Content feature in the upper right of any content area.

**Step 8**
Almost all Blackboard courses use the Discussion Board tool. In Step 4, you can see that the Discussion Board is disabled. You can enable it from the “Tool Availability” screen.

**Step 9**
Return to the Control Panel. Now the “Discussion Board” link can be clicked on.
Step 10

Click the button on the top left to create a forum. From this screen you can also edit, remove, or grade existing forums.

Step 11

Give your forum a name. You will probably create a number of different forums for different topics in your course. If you want a forum only to appear when that topic is being covered, you can change the forum availability settings.

Step 12

We recommend that you allow members to subscribe to the forum so that students can choose to be emailed whenever a forum or a certain thread is updated. Make sure you enable forum grading and enter a number after “Points possible” so that the discussion forum appears in the Grade Center. Once you click “Submit,” your forum has been created!
**Step 13**
You will probably use the “User Management” area less often. We recommend you use the Advanced Group Management tool instead of the “Manage Groups” item. The following steps will show you how to view the class roster, which can also be done using the Performance Dashboard (see Steps 12 and 14). First, click on “List/Modify Users.”

**Step 14**
Next, click on the “List All” tab.

**Step 15**
To view the class roster, click the “List All” button. Don’t worry about the warning, it won’t take too long to load!

**Step 16**
This is what the list of users looks like. You can also view a list of the course users with the Performance Dashboard, which we will cover next.
Step 17
The next two steps will show you two very powerful features in the “Assessment” section: the Grade Center and the Performance Dashboard. The “Assessment” section also has the Early Warning System, which makes it easier for you to keep track of poorly performing students. To create a test, we recommend that you use the Pool Manager to build a question pool before using the “Test Manager.” For more information, consult the tutorial or handout for creating tests.

Step 18
If you have correctly configured your assignments and tests and other course requirements, students’ grades will appear in the Grade Center. You can add/change grades here, and enable Blackboard to calculate weighted averages.

Step 19
The Performance Dashboard displays statistics for each student, including last course access and number of posts to discussion boards.
Step 20

Finally, a great way to personalize your course is to create your own banner. Click on “Course Design” in the “Course Options” section (see Step 5) to access this screen, then click on “Course Banner.”

Step 21

You can upload an image to use as the course banner. SPS faculty can email Sylvie Richards (Sylvie.Richards@mail.cuny.edu) to request a banner image for their course. We recommend that the banner include the course title and be roughly two by eight inches (about 200 by 800 pixels). Upload by clicking the “Choose File” button. Click “Submit” when finished.

Step 22

Now, when your students go to the Announcements page (the home page), they will see the new banner!
Step 23
Finally, further documentation and tutorials provided by Blackboard can be found in the “Help” section. The Manual offers details about all of Blackboard’s many features. Note that your students can access the Student Manual in the Tools section. You have now completed the tour of the Control Panel!