Getting Started with Blackboard Ultra Courses

Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, Aberystwyth University

If you've got any questions about using Blackboard, please contact elearning@aber.ac.uk / 01970 62 2472.

Further information and support can be found on our:

- Webpages
- Blackboard FAQs

What is Blackboard?

Blackboard the University's Virtual Learning Environment. Each Course has its own online site that offers a range of materials to support learning and teaching.

Getting Started

You can log into Blackboard from any device connected to the Internet using a browser, such as Google Chrome or Firefox.

- Open a browser and enter **https://blackboard.aber.ac.uk**
- Login using your Aberystwyth University email address and password

Students can access Blackboard from the **Current Students** webpage by clicking on **Your Sites** and **Blackboard**.

Ultra Base Navigation

When you log into Blackboard, you will land on the **Courses** page. Use the menu along the lefthand side to navigate to different areas of Blackboard.

Take a look at our **How do I get started with Ultra Base Navigation FAQ** for further information on how to:

- Manage your Courses (modules that you are enrolled on as a student or staff member)
- Manage your Organisations
- Manage your Profile (including changing your language setting)
- Managing your notifications

Accessing and managing your Course

From the 1 September each academic year, your Courses will default to the Courses landing page. Prior to that, the Courses will show on **Upcoming Courses** once they have been created.

All Courses are created automatically with a **pre-agreed Aberystwyth University template**.

Staff and student enrolments are managed by feeds that update hourly during the current academic year. Staff enrolments feed from the Module Approval Form through to AStRA and

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the Timetable System before coming through to Blackboard. Students will appear on their Courses once they have completed Registration.

Take a look at the **Navigate inside a Course Blackboard** help for an overview of a Blackboard Course.

Of particular interest along the top of the screen are:

- **Course Staff:** lists staff who are listed on the Module Approval Form as contributing to the Blackboard Module and have fed through from AStRA. See our **How do I know what the User Roles in Blackboard are in relation to the Modules Database FAQ** for role profiles.
- **Calendar**: some items, like due dates, are automatically added to the calendar. You can also add your own calendar items.
- **Discussions**: lists all the discussions in the course.
- Messages are not currently used by AU
- **Gradebook**: contains information on student assignments, progress, and grading statistics;
- **Analytics**: take a look at how your students are using your course

Down the side of the Content Page are a list of useful links

- **Class Register**: lists students who have registered to take your Course and completed Registration in AStRA
- **Groups:** arrange your students into seminar groups, release activities based on group membership, create groups for assessed work;
- **Course Image**: update your course banner
- Attendance is managed outside of Blackboard, so you can ignore this link
- **Announcements:** communicate with your students about upcoming their upcoming tasks, deadlines, or activities;
- Books and Tools: Links to available Tools
- **Question Banks**: access all the test questions available in your course.

Organising Learning Materials

Learning materials can be organised using Folders or Learning Modules.

You can choose the one that best suits your learning design, or you can use both.

1. You can create two (2) levels of folders within a Blackboard Ultra course. This is to help with accessibility and makes it easier for students to locate their materials. If you used lots of nested folders in Blackboard Original, you need to think about simplifying your course structure. Some examples of how this works in practice are:

- Semester 1
  - Week 1
  - Week 2
  - Week 3

- Topic 1
  - Sub-topic 1
  - Sub-topic 2
  - Sub-topic 3

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2. Learning Modules are good for content that is presented in a particular sequence. You cannot create a Learning Module inside a folder. But you can create folders inside your Learning Modules.

You can drag and drop content around the Blackboard Course, so don't worry if you add it in the wrong place to start with.

Adding Learning Materials (+)

Once you have created your Folder / Learning Module, you are ready to start uploading content (e.g., PowerPoint files, PDFs, Word documents etc). You can either add materials to the top level of the course, or within a Folder / Learning Module.

When you add content to a Folder

1. Click on the name of the Folder to expand it.
2. Click the **+** from inside the expanded Folder.

All content is created from click the **+** icon in the Course:

- **+** > **Create**. Used to add documents / folders and links as well as assessments, collaborative documents and participation and engagement tools.
- **+** > **Copy Content**. Used to copy material from other Courses and Organisations, including Original Courses.
- **+** > **Additional Tools**. Used to add LibGuides, Reading Lists, Turnitin Assignments, and Panopto Links.

Create Documents

You can create a content item and add a document

It's important that you make sure that students can see the items – you can either make them **Visible to Students**, or use the Release conditions pane to set when the documents automatically appear.

You can edit and delete content, as well as change its location. Batch Editing options are also available.

You can link to documents stored in your OneDrive.

Create your reading list link
- Click on the **+** icon
- Click on **Additional Tools**
- Click **Rhestr Ddarllen / Reading Lists**
- You may need to go through an authentication process to access the reading lists. Follow the instructions on screen.
- Search for the module code of the Aspire reading list you want to add
- Click the **Embed list** button next to the list in the search results with the most recent time period.
- Drag & drop the reading list link you've created so it is one of the top 6 items

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Create Panopto links

You can create a link to your Panopto folder which holds all the recordings for the course

- Click on the **+** icon
- Click on **Additional Tools**
- Click on the small **+** in the bottom right-hand corner of the **Panopto link to all recordings** box
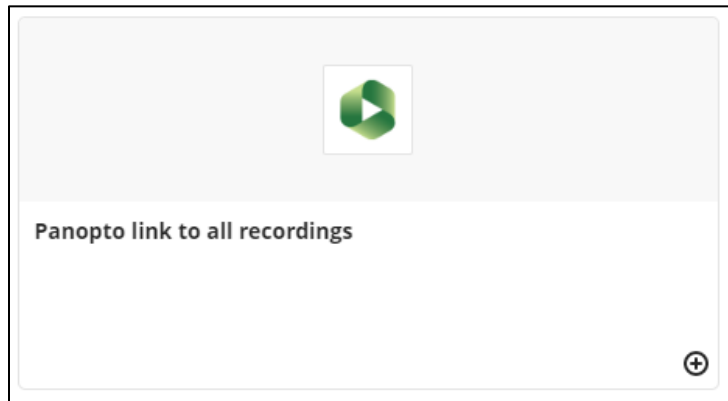
- Make the link **Visible to students**

You can also link to an individual recording:

- Click on the **+** icon
- Click on **Additional Tools**
- Click on the **Panopto link to recording** box
- Select the relevant recording
- Make the link **Visible to students**

Create links

You can [create links to other web sites](#).

You can also create links to content in the module – for example you may want to create a link to your module handbook from the assessment folder. Note that you can't create a course link to a Folder or a Learning Module.

- Click on the **+** icon
- Click on **Create**
- Click on **Link**
- Select **Create Course Link** at the top of the page
- Type in a keyword from the content name
- Click on the Search button
- Click in the circle next to the content you want

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- You can now add information about the link
- Click on **Save**

Copy Content

You can [copy materials](#) from other Blackboard Courses and Organisations, including previous years' modules into your Ultra course. You may find that some items or folder structures from Original courses won't copy. This is usually because a tool is not available in Ultra (e.g., blogs, wikis).

You can look at the [Copy Details pane](#) to see why material hasn't copied.

Note that when you when you copy materials into your course it is hidden from students. You can either change this on [individual items](#) or by using [Batch Edit](#).

Additional Tools

You can create links to recordings, as well as to the Panopto folder containing all your recordings. You can also embed LibGuide materials. Information about creating Turnitin Assignments can be seen below.

Create a collaborative document

If you have previously used a wiki in Blackboard, the [Cloud Collaboration](#) tool provides a wiki equivalent. You can set up a collaborative document in OneDrive which students can then work on together (either in real-time or in their own time).

Assessment and Grading

We recommend that all submission points are created in the Assessment and Feedback Folder. Remember to click on the name of the folder to expand it before you add your submission point.

Create a Turnitin Submission Point

The process for creating a Turnitin submission point has not changed. To get to the Turnitin page to set-up your submission point:

- Click the **+** icon
- Click on **Additional Tools**
- Click on **Turnitin Assignment**
- Follow the instructions on the [Turnitin web site](#).

Note that the AU E-submission policy requires the following:

- Feedback release date – set to 15 working days after the Due Date
- Optional settings:
  - Enable anonymous marking (unless exempt from anonymous marking)
  - Similarity reports – Generate reports immediately (students can resubmit until due date)
  - Allow students to view Similarity Reports

Create a Blackboard Assignment

Blackboard assignments are recommended for submission of multiple files, large files, or for staff who want to use a Welsh language submission interface - create a Blackboard Assignment.

Note that the AU E-submission policy requires the following:

Assignment Settings:

- Anonymous Marking - Hide participant names (unless exempt from anonymous marking)
- Leave Post assessment marks automatically unticked. You will need to manually post the marks after the 15 working days for marking.

Create a Blackboard Test

Guidance on creating tests is available on the Blackboard help site. We recommend that all staff using Blackboard Tests as part of formal assessment attend the E-learning Essentials: Introduction to Blackboard Tests training session. If you are using Blackboard Tests to deliver high-stakes summative assessment, please see our Exam Settings Guide.

Interaction and Participation

There are 3 tools that help facilitate interaction and participation in Blackboard Courses:

1. Discussions: students can create posts, respond to each other's post, and create a sense of community:
   a. How to create discussions
   b. How to respond to discussions
   c. How to manage discussions
   d. How to grade discussions
   e. How to analyse discussions
   f. How to set up group discussions

   Take a look at our Tips for Discussion Board Engagement blogpost for some ideas to help you design your discussion board activity.

2. Journals: a private space between Course Instructors and Students. Use this tool for students to reflect on a process.
   a. Guidance on how to create Journals
   b. How to grade Journals

3. Collaborative Documents: embed collaborate Word, Excel, or PowerPoint files in your Blackboard Course for students to collaborate on in their own time. We are using this tool for Wiki and Blog alternatives.
   a. Create a Collaborative Document

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