Blackboard Basics

Instructional Technology Services
Seattle Pacific University

What is going to be covered today?

- Overview of the SPU Blackboard environment
- Recommended computer specifications and plug-ins
- How to log into the SPU Blackboard system
- Understanding how courses are named and populated
- How to view a roster of your students
- How to make your course available
- Understanding and modifying the course navigation menu
- How to add announcements
- How to add content
- How to create a forum on the Discussion Board
- How to collect, retrieve, and return student assignments

Need help?

- Email onlinelearning@spu.edu
- Call 206.281.2212
- Visit the ITS Office, located on the lower level of the SPU Library
- Online documentation – http://spuonlinelearning.wordpress.com

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What is Blackboard?
Blackboard is a course management system. It allows an institution to quickly set up password protected online course components for individual face-to-face and online courses.

Recommended Computer Specifications
Computer specifications for both PC and Macintosh computers can be found online – http://spuonlinelearning.wordpress.com/ Please take a moment to review the recommended hardware and software specifications as they will help ensure that you have a successful online experience.

In general, if you have a computer 3 years old or newer that has broadband Internet access, it should work. You will want to be sure to have the **latest copy of Microsoft Office** and **virus scanning software** on your computer. Information about how to obtain these pieces of software free through SPU is also available online. If you are unsure if your computer meets the recommended computer specifications, please contact the Online Learning Help Desk.

Recommended Plug-ins
A plug-in is a small piece of software that is added to a program to expand its functionality. For instance, in order to view a PDF document, you would need to download the free plug-in called Acrobat Reader. Plug-ins vary in size and may require several minutes to be downloaded and installed. Once installed, a plug-in should run reliably for all online courses using this same plug-in. Please take the time to download each plug-in so that you can receive the fullest online learning experience possible - http://spuonlinelearning.wordpress.com/

How to log into Blackboard

- In your web browser, go to www.spu.edu
- From either the **Current Students** or the **Faculty & Staff** menu, select **Blackboard**.
- Log in using your SPU username and password.
- Click on a link to a course.

Understanding Course Names
The following naming convention is used to identify courses:
quarter status, academic year & quarter, CRN, name of course

Quarter status is identified by the following:

C = Current quarter
F = Future quarter
P = Past quarter
Z or no letter = The course is not tied to a specific course in Banner.

This naming convention is used so that courses are sorted by term on the screen.
When reading the academic year and quarter, the first 5 digits represent the academic year. For example, 20101 represents the 2010-2011 academic year. The number following the academic year represents the quarter: 0 = Summer 1 = Fall 2 = Winter 3 = Spring

Population of Courses
Once a student registers for a course in Banner, they automatically will be listed in the course site the following morning.

Please note: Students will not be able to see a course site until you choose to make the course available via the Control Panel.

- Cross-listed courses: Students enrolled in cross-listed courses will appear in the same course site.

- Multiple sections of same course: If you teach multiple sections of a course, separate course sites will be created. If you plan to use the same content in multiple sections, we recommend placing documents in one site and then copying them over to the other site(s). We don't recommend that students manually be placed into the same site as that defeats the automated population process.

Adding or Removing Users
WARNING: Please **do not** manually add instructors or students to or remove instructors or students from your course. Doing so will cause that person's account to be disabled for that site. Instead, if an instructor or student needs to be added to a course site, please work with Student Academic Services to add that person to the course in Banner first. You may still manually add people to a course site as a TA if desired.

How to view a roster of your students

To view your course roster in Blackboard:

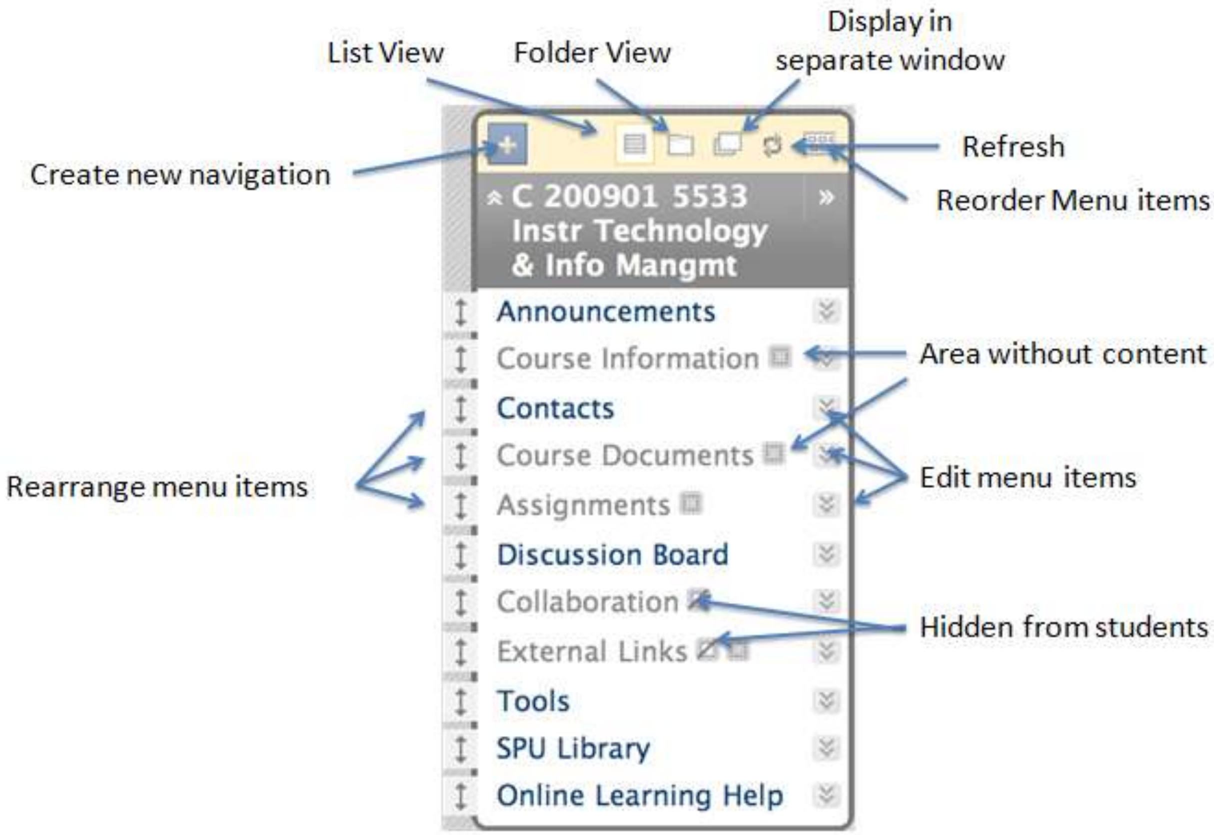
1. Log into your course site.
2. Under the Control Panel, click **Users and Groups > Users**.
3. Set Search to **Username** and **Starts with**.
4. Type "**%**" in the text box.
5. Click **Go**.

How to make a course available to students

When you are ready to have students view your course:

1. Log into your course site.
2. Under the **Control Panel**, choose **Customization > Properties**.
3. Under Section 3 **Set Availability**, choose **Yes**.
4. Scroll to the bottom of the page, and click **Submit**.

Understanding and modifying the course navigation menu



How to add announcements

The Announcement page is the first thing your students will see when they log into an online course. As such, this is an ideal place to post time-sensitive material.

1. Log into your course site.
2. Click **Announcements**.
3. Click the **Create Announcement** button.
4. Type a **subject** and **message**.
5. Under the Options section, you may select when you want this announcement to appear.
6. Under the Course Link section, you also may choose to link to other areas within your course site by clicking the Browse button and selecting the appropriate area.
7. Click the **Submit** button.

How to add content: Creating folders

Documents posted in an online course should be organized so that students can quickly find what they are looking for. Using folders within your course site to group your documents is beneficial, especially if you post many documents. To create a folder:

1. Log into your course site.
2. Click on the area in which you want to add a folder (i.e. Content).
3. Click the **Build** button, and choose **Create Folder**.
4. Type a name for the folder.
   You can enter a short description of the folder contents in the Text field, if desired.
5. Under the Options section, you may choose to set a date restriction on the availability of the folder. It is typically recommended that these dates not be restricted so that students have access to the content throughout the duration of the course.
6. Click the **Submit** button.

To add documents to a folder, click on the name of the folder and follow the steps for adding documents.

How to add content: Adding documents

You can post a variety of document types to your course site, including Microsoft Office documents (i.e. Word, PowerPoint, Excel) and Adobe Acrobat PDF files. To add a document to your course site, please do the following:

1. Log into your course site.
2. Click on the **area** (i.e. Content) in which you want to place the document. If you want to post your document in a specific folder, click on the name of the folder.
3. Click the **Create Item** button.
4. Type a **name** for the document.
   You can also add a short description or message to accompany your document in the Text field.
5. Under the Attach or Link Content section, click the **Browse** button.
6. **Locate the file** you want to post, and click **Open**.
7. In the Name of Link to File field, you may choose enter the type of file you are posting (i.e. Word Document). If you don't enter anything, the file name of your document (i.e. syllabus.doc) will appear as the linked text.
8. Under Options, you may choose to track who views the document and set date restrictions. If you do not set a date of restriction, the document will display indefinitely within the course site. It is generally recommended that date restrictions not be set.
9. When you're finished, click the **Submit** button.

Creating a forum on the Discussion Board

Your course site provides a discussion board as a communication tool. This feature is designed for asynchronous use, meaning users do not have to be available at the same time to have a conversation. An additional advantage of the discussion board is that conversations are logged and organized by forums that contain threads and all related replies. The first step in setting up an online discussion is to create a forum. We recommend creating a new forum for each new discussion topic.

1. Log into your course site.
2. Click the **Discussion** link in the navigation menu.
3. Click the **Create Forum** button.
4. Next, type a **title** and **description** for your forum.
5. Under Forum Availability, you may choose to make the forum available right away by selecting **Yes**. You may also set a date restriction, if desired. Typically, we recommend that you leave a forum available to students once they have access to it.
6. Under Forum Settings, we recommend that you check the following options:
   Allow author to modify own published posts
   Allow members to create new threads

   You may choose to check other options depending on your preferences. Please note that typically it is not recommended that you check Allow anonymous posts. It is best to have the author take responsibility for their statements. A complete description of forum settings is available online at http://spuonlinelearning.wordpress.com
7. Click the **Submit** button

How to create a collection point for assignments

The Assignment tool can be used by instructors as a way to collect student assignments digitally. When instructors choose to create a place in their course for students to submit their assignment, a column is automatically added to the course Grade Center. This enables the instructor to easily track which students have submitted their assignment, grade the assignment, and return the graded assignment to students for their review.

Adding an Assignment

1. Log into your course site.
2. Click on the area where you'd like the link to the assignment to appear (i.e. Content).
3. Click the **Evaluate** button, and choose **Create Assignment**.
4. Type a **name** for the assignment, and provide instructions in the box below.
5. Under the Assignment Files section, you may attach a document that outlines the assignment or is a template students are to use when completing their assignment. Click the **Browse for Local File** button.
   Locate the document you want to attach, and click **Open**.
   Repeat this process if you have more than one file to attach.
6. Under Grading, type the **points possible**.
7. Under Availability, check the box to Make the Assignment Available.
   You may also choose to adjust the number of attempts, set a date restriction, and track the number of views.
8. Click the **Submit** button.

Note: It is a good idea to post an announcement informing students of the availability and location of the assignment. For example, your announcement could read, "This week's assignment, (assignment name), is now available in the Content section." This tells students what assignment is available and where to locate it.

Retrieving Student Work

You have two options for retrieving submitted assignments. You may a) retrieve them one at a time as students complete them or b) wait until all are finished and retrieve them all at once.

To retrieve assignments one at a time:

1. Under the **Control Panel**, click **Evaluation > Grade Center**.
2. You will see a green exclamation point in cells for students who've submitted their work. Locate the assignment you want to correct, click the **double arrows** to the right of the exclamation point, and choose **View Grade Details**.
3. Click the **Open Attempt** button.
4. Under Section 3 Review Current Attempt, **click on the link** to the student's document, and choose **Save**.

   Save the file to a desired location on your computer. **Note:** It is often helpful to use a naming convention when saving student assignments so that you can easily identify which assignment belongs to a student. For example, you could name the file as: studentlastname_studentfirstname_documentname_corrected

   If a student posted more than one file for a given assignment, you could name the second file as: studentlastname_studentfirstname_documentname**02**_corrected

To retrieve assignments all at once:

1. Under the **Control Panel**, click **Evaluation > Grade Center**.
2. Click the **double arrows** next to right of the name of the column and choose **Assignment File Download**.
3. **Check the boxes next to the names of the students** whose assignments you want to download. You may also choose Check All box at the top to download all students' assignments or click the Select Ungraded link to download only those students whose work has not been graded.
4. Click the **Submit** button.
5. On the next page, you will see a link to the assignments that have been packaged. Click on the **Download Assignments Now** link to save the assignments to your computer. **Note:** Your computer must be able to open zip files in order to view these assignments. If you do not have this capability, it is recommended that you download each assignment individually.
6. The File Download box will appear. Locate **where** you want the file to be saved on your computer, give the file a recognizable **file name**, and click **Save**.
7. Locate the zip file you saved to your computer and open it (you may be prompted to extract the files). When you've finished assessing a student's assignment and adding your comments, resave the file to your computer and close the document.

Returning Corrected Assignments

Once you have assessed a student's assignment, you can return it to the student for their review.

1. Under the **Control Panel**, click **Evaluation > Grade Center**.
2. Locate the column / row for the assignment you want to return, click the **double arrows** to the right of the exclamation point, and choose **View Grade Details**.
3. Click the **Open Attempt** button.
4. Under Section 4 Grade Current Attempt, assign the **grade**, make any **comments** you want to send to the student, and attach the corrected file. To attach the corrected file:
   Click the **Browse for Local File** button.
   Located the file, and click **Open**.
5. Click the **Submit** button.
6. Repeat this process for each student. The graded assignment will appear for students under Tools > My Grades.