

CHALKDUST

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Blackboard @ VUW: An Update

2004 marks the third year since Blackboard was adopted at Victoria as a Learning Management system. Since 2002 the institutional role of Blackboard has changed from a stand alone system used by a handful of courses to a critical integrated system supporting online teaching and learning at VUW.

Release 6 of the Blackboard system in the second trimester of 2003 brought much more flexibility to the way instructors design and structure their Blackboard courses, and introduced a number of useful new features, such as the **assignment management tool** for electronic submissions of student assignments, ability to **copy and paste content items** within a course and between courses, and **enhanced synchronous collaboration tools**: an online chat and virtual classroom.

Unfortunately, the nice new features were somewhat offset by the problems introduced in the early releases of version 6. Although the overall stability of the system has now improved, there are still unresolved problems that exist in the currently used version of Blackboard (v.6.0.10). These problems, especially in the areas of **tests** and the **online gradebook**, prevent users from taking full advantage of the new features of Blackboard 6.

Known issues are listed in the **Staff Information Module**, on the Blackboard portal page for all staff members. *Please review this module to be aware of the problem areas and faulty functions.*

Chalkdust welcomes suggestions and contributions. Please contact Irina Elgort if you have an article or idea about online learning that you would like to share.

Facts about Blackboard @ VUW

- In 2003 the VUW Blackboard system had 664 courses¹ with instructors or teaching assistants, including 272 trimester 1 courses, 238 trimester 2 courses, 58 trimester 3 courses and 44 double trimester courses. **Overall about 40% of all 2003 courses were offered in Blackboard.**
- There were more undergraduate (438) than postgraduate (213) courses offered in Blackboard, and the highest number of courses offered was at the 300-level (182).
- There were 14578 unique students enrolled in courses offered on Blackboard in 2003, with 10176 students in trimester 1 courses, 11537 in trimester 2 courses and 3285 in the summer trimester courses.
- The highest enrolment was in 100-level courses (8600), followed by 200-level (6336) and then 300-level courses (4685).
- There were 839 instructors and teaching assistants associated with 2003 courses in Blackboard.
- The system also hosted 40 student, staff & research organisations in 2003, with nearly 26000 enrolled users.

¹ Some of these courses were double- or triple-coded joint courses, which means that the actual number of courses available on Blackboard was higher.



"I'm sending you to a seminar to help you work harder and be more productive."

Getting Started with 'TurnItIn.com'

What is it?

TurnItIn.com is a website service that the University has licensed for use by all academics and students. The TurnItIn.com website provides a means for students to learn about plagiarism by getting feedback on their work, and a means for staff to get information about potential student misconduct in written work.

How does it work?

The service works through a website hosted at <http://www.turnitin.com/>. After a course is registered with the service, students can upload their assignments in a variety of electronic formats (including plain text and word documents) and the system compares their work with a very large database of material sourced from all over the Internet and from other students. The system generates a report describing how similar aspects of the student's work are to other pieces of written work in the system and provides a very clear indication of the extent of that similarity. Students and staff can then see this report and make a judgment about whether the similarity constitutes plagiarism and take appropriate action.

It is important to appreciate that the system does not decide whether similarity means misconduct or plagiarism – there are many legitimate reasons for high degrees of similarity including quoting and the use of standard bibliography styles. The final judgment needs to be done by a human, who can take

all of the circumstances into proper account.

How can I get access to it?

To get access you, as course coordinator, need to contact Stephen Marshall at the UTDC (Stephen.Marshall@vuw.ac.nz, x5205). He will send you the information necessary for creating accounts on the system and also provide access to documentation on how to use the system effectively to encourage intellectual honesty on the part of your students.

How do my students get access to it?

Once you have created a course on the TurnItIn website, you will have a unique code and password that the students then use to access the service over the Internet from home or the University and upload their work. The UTDC have prepared instructions for your students which can be easily uploaded into Blackboard for them to refer to.

When using TurnItIn, you should consider carefully how you want to have the students use the system and you should contact Stephen Marshall at the UTDC to discuss your exact situation – there are a number of different ways of using the system that are effective in different teaching contexts.

Further information on Plagiarism resources at VUW can be found at the UTDC web site: <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/resources/>.

What makes an online community successful?



1. A community has to be about something. It must be centred around some topic or activity, or as Hegel and Armstrong (Net.Gain) say, it needs a "distinct focus".

2. There must be a creation of the sense of the whole. This requires an ongoing exchange of messages, thoughts, between the members, and the fostering of relations that last through time.

3. Content and communication must form a seamless whole. On discussion lists, people often complain when members go off topic. In successful communities, such as Slashdot (<http://www.slashdot.org>), the conversation is regularly 'seeded' with content and activities proposed by moderators. Communities such as IFETS (<http://ifets.ieee.org>) or ITForum (<http://it.coe.uga.edu/itforum/index.html>) typically centre conversation around a discussion paper.

4. There must be an appreciation of participant contributions. A person needs to have a persistent and unique identity within an online community, to see themselves reflected in the whole. This does not happen if contributions submitted to a discussion board appear to languish, not having been read.

5. A community is sustained only through ongoing communications. It must be remembered that communication and interaction are the primary objectives of a community, not an adjunct or secondary activity.

6. A successful community empowers its members. This is especially important in learning, where a community enables students to build their own learning. To facilitate this process, community organizers should provide access to resources and information.

7. Activities and resources in a learning community need to be structured with a pedagogical purpose. In a community with static membership, this means a gradual progression toward more complexity and deeper discussion.

8. A successful community will have a sense of history. The contributions and connections made in such a community have a lasting impact. A community should have an archive, created by earlier students, that later students can build on.

Adapted from "Learning Communities" by Stephen Downes (with permission)

<http://www.learnscope.anta.gov.au/learnscope/golearn.asp?category=11&DocumentId=5249>

Blackboard Course Life Cycle: A Reminder

- When a course is first added to your list of courses in Blackboard it is **unavailable** to students. This gives you time to set up the course before releasing it to students.
- When you have finished with the initial set up of the course you need to **make it available** (Use: *Control Panel > Settings > Course Availability*).
- When you have finished teaching a course in Blackboard, you need to **make it unavailable**.

Note: A good time for making a course unavailable is after the final exam/course marks for the course are out and have been released to students.

Copyright and Blackboard

by Dr. Stephen Marshall

In 2003, the University entered into a licensing agreement with Copyright Licensing Limited that, as well as permitting paper distribution of copyright material, also allowed for the digital distribution of that same material. This license has a number of important restrictions. In particular, the license excludes and thus you cannot copy:

- works stipulating that they may not be copied under a copyright reprography licence of this nature;
- works downloaded from the Internet;
- printed music (including the words);
- loose maps and charts;
- unpublished religious orders of service;
- New Zealand newspapers (from October 2003);
- house journals (publications for employees);
- photographs and/or illustrations published separately from a textual work;
- privately owned work issued for tuition purposes and limited to a clientele who pay fees; or
- theses, dissertations and student papers.

As well as this restriction, there is also the requirement that the University display a notice on each pack of information supplied. This notice informs students of the restrictions on the use of the material provided under the license. In order to facilitate compliance, the UTDC will be shortly adding the following notice to Blackboard at the login screen:

Copyright Warning Notice

You are being provided with copies of copyright material made for educational purposes. These include extracts of copyright works copied under copyright licences. You may not make these materials available to other persons, nor make a further copy for any other purpose. Failure to comply with the terms of this warning may expose you to legal action by a rights owner and/or disciplinary action by the University.

By logging into Blackboard you are acknowledging this warning and agreeing to comply with its terms.

By doing this, the University is complying with the terms of its license and avoiding the need for similar warnings to be displayed on every piece of licensed digital content displayed on Blackboard. If you have any questions about this notice please feel free to contact Stephen Marshall at the UTDC (x 5205, Stephen.Marshall@vuw.ac.nz).

Copyright is a complex topic and alternative strategies for the legal use of digital material are discussed in more detail in this month's issue of *Spectrum*. You can also find more information on the UTDC web site at: <http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/resources/>. If you have any questions about a particular use you should contact **Brian McKeon** at the Student Notes Office, Facilities Management (x6609 or 239 9737, bkcrmckeon@actrix.gen.nz) and discuss it with him. We have a number of licenses in place and he can guide you through the details. Further information can also be found on the Copyright Licensing Limited website: <http://www.copyright.co.nz/home.newuser.html>.

New in the UTDC Library

The Virtual Student: A Profile and Guide to Working with Online Learners by Rena M. Palloff and Keith Pratt (2003)

In this book the authors offer an overview of the key issues of student learning online and provide a practical guide to working with online students. The book covers a broad range of topics including learning styles, multicultural issues, evaluation, retention, and the challenging problems of plagiarism and cheating. /ISBN: 0-7879-6474-3/



Effective Teaching with Technology in Higher Education by A.W. Bates and Gary Poole (2003)

This book draws on current research and best practice to show how to integrate technology into teaching in higher education. It provides a comprehensive theoretical and pedagogical foundation for helping instructors make critical decisions about the use of technology within the curriculum. /ISBN: 0-7879-6034-9/

Delivering Learning on the Net: The Why, What and How of Online Education by Martin Weller (2002)

This book explores the reality of online education today. It presents a detailed global picture of issues, values and experiences, and shows how to approach developing and using the Net for learning.

The topics covered include the Net and its relation to education, developing and implementing online courses and the key issues surrounding online education. /ISBN: 0-7494-3675-1/

How to change your password

If you do not know or cannot remember your password to login to Blackboard,

- Go to the **VUW Blackboard page**: <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz/>
- Click the **Login** button and then click on the **"Forgot your password?"** link.
- In the **Lost Password** web page that comes up, fill out EITHER part 1: Find User With User Name, OR part 2: Find User(s) with email (make sure you do NOT fill out both parts).
 - If you choose to fill out **part 1**, start your first and last name with a **capital letter**. In part 3, click **Submit**.
 - If you choose to fill out **part 2**, you will need to click on your user name in the screen that comes up first, and then click **Submit**.

Blackboard will send you an email message with instructions and a link to set your new password.

VUW Blackboard Procedures in 2004



At the beginning of the new academic year we would like to remind you about some of the business rules and procedures associated with the Blackboard Learning Management system at Vic.

- **Student Blackboard Accounts:** All **student accounts** are created in Blackboard automatically. Student information in Blackboard is based on student data in Banner². Student email addresses in Blackboard are their SCS email addresses (e.g., smithjohn@student.vuw.ac.nz).

Note: If a student uses a different email address, s/he needs to set up email forwarding from his/her SCS email account to another account, by logging into **SCS Email** (<http://mail.student.vuw.ac.nz>) and selecting **Options** and then **General**. Students are unable to change any of their personal details in Blackboard, apart from their passwords.

- **Staff Blackboard Accounts:** All **staff accounts** are created in Blackboard centrally, by the ITS. Staff Blackboard accounts are created for new users at the same time as their VUW staff infrastructure accounts.

- **Student Enrolments:** Students are **enrolled** in Blackboard courses automatically. Student enrolment information in Blackboard is based on the Banner enrolment data.

- **Course Creation:** Courses are created in Blackboard based on the Banner course data.

If you teach a number of courses as one **joint course in Blackboard**, you need to request this course to be created manually by submitting a request to the ITS helpdesk.

If one course includes more than one stream (CRN), by default, all streams are combined into one Blackboard course. If you require a separate Blackboard course for each stream (CRN) please submit a request to the ITS helpdesk.

Note: If you discover that course, staff or student enrolment information in Blackboard is missing or incorrect, you need to submit a request to its-help@vuw.ac.nz describing the problem, or call x 5050.

- Currently lecturers do NOT get access to courses in Blackboard automatically. **You need to request every course to be set up for you in**

Blackboard. This means that even if you taught a course in the previous year, you still need to request access to the same course again in the following year. The same applies if a course is offered in more than one trimester in the same year: you need to request access to each of the trimester versions of the course.

Tip: Each Blackboard course has a prefix which identifies the year and trimester of the course, e.g. a course labelled 03.1.INFO101 is taught in the first trimester of 2003, while a course labelled 04.2.INFO101 is taught in the second trimester of 2004. Based on the Banner enrolment data, student enrolments in Blackboard are directed into the corresponding instance of a course.

² **Banner** is the name of the Central Student Administration System, which is used as a primary source of information about VUW courses, student details and student enrolments in Blackboard. For example, if a course does not exist in Banner it will not be created in Blackboard, or if a student does not have a valid enrolment code in a course in Banner, this student will not be enrolled in the corresponding Blackboard course.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

Why do instructors need to request courses? Wouldn't it be easier if it was done automatically?...

... some of you may ask. Of course, this would be a better solution. Unfortunately, this is not possible right now, because information identifying course co-ordinators for each course is not stored accessibly, and needs to be provided for each of the courses by either the lecturers themselves or by school administrators.

The good news is that *with your help* an automatic solution can be implemented in the near future, as school administrators can now enter information about lecturers who co-ordinate courses into Banner. Once this information is in Banner for the majority of courses, we can write a script that would associate courses in Blackboard with course co-ordinators listed in Banner.

How do I request access to a course?

To request access to a course in Blackboard, send an email to the ITS helpdesk (its-help@vuw.ac.nz) or call 463-5050.

In your email or phone request please provide the following information:

- **course code** of the course,
- **trimester(s)** when it is taught (PTR - part term code- in Banner),
- whether you want content from another course in Blackboard copied into the new course.

When a new course is configured in Blackboard, either the default or school course template is copied into the courses (unless there is a request to copy course content from a previous course).

Please indicate if you do NOT want to have a template copied into your course.

Upcoming Workshops

Blackboard I: QuickStart to Teaching with Blackboard

April 20, Tuesday, 10 am - 12 pm
April 23, Friday, 1 - 3 pm

June 15, Tuesday, 10 am - 12 pm
June 22, Tuesday, 2 - 4 pm

August 3, Tuesday, 10 am - 12 pm

Blackboard II: Diving in Deeper

June 16, Wednesday, 10 am - 12pm
August 6, Friday, 1 - 3 pm

All courses are held in room RB901 (top floor of the Library).

To enrol, visit
<http://www.utdc.vuw.ac.nz/workshops/>.