Blackboard 9.1 SP 8 UO Update Information

June, 2012; JQ Johnson

The UO is upgrading is Blackboard system to the latest version, 9.1 SP 8, on June 16, 2012. This new version is not a huge change with many new features, but it does have very visible changes in appearance, plus a few new features and lots of bugfixes. This note summarizes some of the most noticeable changes that instructors will see after June 16.

Getting Started

There are no changes to the login screen and only a few appearance changes on the My UO page. When you visit your coursesite, though, you’ll see a large grey box – a “Quick Setup Guide” with a wizard that you can use to configure your course look and feel, help for common tasks such as how to make your site available to students, and more. For now, we recommend that you **not** use the wizard to change your “Course Structure.” Review the help information, then you can permanently dismiss the popup by clicking “Hide” at the lower left then “Apply Changes.”

Appearance

The default look of a blackboard site now has a cleaner and simpler, more rectangular, appearance, plus a simpler color palette. However, instructors can easily customize the colors for the site using a new “Change Course Theme” pulldown menu near the upper right.

You’ll also notice that most contextual menus (the ubiquitous chevrons, \( \equiv \)), list reordering arrows (\( \downarrow \)), and other control icons have been hidden. This produces a much cleaner appearance for the instructor. Instead, when an instructor moves the mouse cursor over an item the controls reappear.

The old green “action buttons” at the tops of many pages are now grey, and look more like tabs than buttons. But the functionality is still the same – click “Build Content” in your Course Documents to add an item as usual. Other action bar items in a content area have been renamed and reorganized. Action bars in other areas such as the grade center have the new appearance, but generally retain the same organization.
The Control Panel has been slightly modified. Customization > Style is renamed Customization > Teaching Style.

**New Features**

**Navigate between courses**
A button at the upper left lets you quickly jump from your current coursesite to the corresponding place in another coursesite without having to return to the My UO screen first.

**Automatic re-grading of tests**
Important new feature: If an instructor changes a test after students have taken it, the student attempts are automatically re-graded.

For any given test question, instructors can drop, give full credit, change point value, or change which answer is marked correct. After the question has been updated, Blackboard recalculates the score of all submitted assessments that included the updated question, reflects the updates in the Grade Center, and provides notification to both the instructor and optionally to the student for all impacted submissions.

Instructors can now also specify negative point values for incorrect answers on test questions, allowing penalties for egregiously wrong responses.

**New Content Editor**
The Visual Text Box Editor has been replaced by a new “Content Editor,” with many changes to appearance and improvements. The UO is beta-testing this software, which is expected to be available to other Blackboard customers this fall. Among the key changes:

- Content Editor starts ups with just the most commonly used commands for entering text, but a downarrow at the left expands to additional rows of buttons.

- Menus have been re-arranged and icons changed. Move your mouse over individual buttons to see tooltips that describe their functions. Or use the help button (ℹ️) in the first row.

- You can now copy and paste from Word. Most formatting is preserved, and the resulting code actually works.

- A “Math Editor” button (🔍) runs a new Formula Editor, replacing the old WebEQ math editor. The new editor is easier to use and works much more reliably, especially on Macintosh. Initially it will only allow creation of new formulas, but a release this summer will add the ability to edit previously-created formulas.

**New course import options**
Blackboard now supports the import of prepackaged course content in more formats, including “Chalk Titles” and “LTI.”
Course Structures
In addition to course themes (specifying the appearance of a course), you can now add prepackaged sets of "course structures" to your site. Course structures contain course areas, optional sample content, pedagogical information, and instructions to help you design your course. Course structure content and Main Menu links are added to your existing content, so if you change your mind you can simply delete the added content.

Bug Fixes
Significant work has been done to make Blackboard compatible with the latest browsers. We currently recommend Blackboard with any of the most recent versions of Mac Safari, Google Chrome, Firefox, or Internet Explorer 9. We do not recommend using non-Mac versions of Safari (including iOS) or Internet Explorer 8 or 10.

Many obscure security vulnerabilities in the product have been patched.

Faculty and students at UO have reported a variety of problems over the past few months that are resolved in SP 8. Some of the fixed issues that have been reported by our instructors include:

• Cells in last row of grade center are inaccessible in IE
• Forced submit tests have "In Progress" status when student exits exam prior to timer expiration
• Grade Center columns associated with gradable discussion forums can't be deleted
• VTBE is adding <br/> for blank lines in Chrome and Safari
• HTML content entered in VTBE displays differently in different browsers
• When trying to enter needs grading attempt in full grade center SequenceId error is shown
• Localization problems with entering grades with some language packs
• Deleting attachments from blog entries results in errors and the blog entries cannot be deleted
• Chat and virtual classrooms do not work on Mac OSX and with new versions of java on windows
• Menus for equation editor do not display in Firefox

For more information

The Blackboard 9.1 SP 8 release notes contain detailed information from Blackboard Inc. on changes.
Visit youtube or google and search for "blackboard 9.1 sp8" for lots of additional information.