What’s New in Blackboard Learn: Bb 9.1 April 2014

On the evening of September 13, 2014 the VCCS Blackboard learning management system will be upgraded to the latest April Release. There are some new and improved features that will enhance your experience with Blackboard. In this document, we will discuss the enhancements and new tools that will be available to faculty and students after the latest Blackboard upgrade.

Student Preview

The new Student Preview feature provides the capability for an instructor to see the course exactly how a student would see it. It accomplishes this by allowing the instructor to easily transition into and out of a system-managed preview account that is automatically enrolled in the course as a student.

The Student Preview feature provides a new button that appears in the breadcrumb bar next to the Course Themes and Edit Mode buttons and is shaped like an eye. Clicking on the Student Preview button moves the instructor into Student Preview mode.

While in Student Preview mode, the instructor can interact with the course as if he were a student, including: submit assignments; take tests; create blog and discussion posts; create journal and wiki entries; view student tools, such as My Grades.

When exiting the Student Preview mode, the instructor is prompted as to whether the preview student and all associated data is deleted (the default) or kept. An instructor might choose to keep the data to be able to check grade calculations or verify other behaviors that requires the instructor to view student activity. After exiting Student Preview mode and keeping the data, the instructor can navigate to areas of the course where they can view that preview student's activity, such as the Grade Center. The preview student is clearly identified by the appended "_previewuser" text on the username and last name.

To delete any retained data, the instructor must re-enter Student Preview and exit again, this time choosing "Delete the data" at the prompt. Choosing to delete the data unenrolls the preview student from the course. All activity conducted or created as the preview student is removed from the course permanently. This includes attempts, submissions, grades, posts, etc.

Instructors - More Info
Creating and Editing Assignments

The interface for creating or editing an assignment has undergone a significant update to accommodate new Anonymous and Delegating Grading and to improve the workflow for the creation of all assignments. When creating or editing an assignment, instructors can enable Anonymous Grading and Delegated Grading within the Grading Options section. Enabling Delegated Grading permits an instructor to assign specific teaching assistants or other graders in a course to grade particular groupings of student submissions. The Reconcile Grades page allows an instructor to review provisional grades, feedback, and make a determination regarding the final grade.

Delegated Grading

Lead instructors can now delegate grading tasks to Teaching Assistants or other delegated graders. The assigned graders will only see the specific assignment attempts for which they have been designated to grade within existing Learn workflows and interfaces such as the Needs Grading page. This functionality also allows you to avoid bias and promote reliability by obtaining two or more grades from separate individuals from which a final grade can be established.

Instructors - More Info
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Anonymous Grading

The Anonymous Grading function now provides a more useful and robust way for instructors to grade anonymously. For Anonymously Graded Attempts, student identifying information will be obfuscated. The student’s name is replaced with a unique identifier that can be used by the graders and instructors to identify a particular attempt for further discussion without discovering the identity of the student. If an assignment is set to be Anonymous, the student will be informed of this fact when submitting the assignment and will when reviewing his grade with My Grades and on the Review Submission History page.

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Assessment Significant Figures in Calculated Formula Test Questions

Calculated Formula questions in Tests allow instructors to create quantitative questions using a formula & variables that can be dynamically generated, calculated, and scored. The automated grading of these questions, the correct answer to be calculated using the defined formula and
variables, and the student’s response validated to award credit, has been improved to include calculation to significant figures. In addition, Blackboard has improved the support for scientific/exponential notation. The Test Canvas and the Item Analysis report have also been updated to include Significant Figures information.

Instructors - More Info

SafeAssign Integration

SafeAssign has been integrated with regular Blackboard assignments. This means that instead of a separate assignment option, SafeAssign is now an additional option available when creating regular assignments. Like other options on Assignments page, this option will be point-in-time and editable after assignment creation. If the option is changed later, new submissions will honor the new state of the setting. As part of this integration, several new features have been introduced to the SafeAssign service, including group submissions, multiple attachments, and multiple submissions.

Instructors have the option to “Exclude Submissions” when creating a Learn Assignment. This option will allow instructors to create SafeAssignments that do not get submitted to the Institutional or Global Reference Databases. This in turn enables students to “check their work” against SafeAssign sources prior to submitting a final version without subsequent revised drafts being flagged as matching the previous “draft” submissions.

With the integration of SafeAssign in Learn Assignments, the separate grading interface for SafeAssignments is no longer necessary. In its place, SafeAssign will be visible directly within the Learn Assignment grading workflow. When instructors are able to use the Inline Grading workflow, SafeAssign is visible as a new section in the right hand menu bar

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SafeAssign Originality Reports Improvement

In addition to improving the design and visual aesthetic of the SafeAssign Originality Report, SafeAssign recognizes a student’s multiple attempts for an individual assignment as submitted by the same student for the same assignment. SafeAssign does not check the contents of the student’s current attempt against content from previous submissions.

Instructors - More Info
New Score Attempts

A Score Attempts Using drop-down list has been added to the Test Options and Create Assignment. This is a workflow improvement to ensure you know about and can easily find this setting for tools that support multiple attempts.

Test Total Points Adjustment

The “total points” for a test is automatically calculated in Grade Center. If instructors wish to ignore the automatic total and specify a fixed value, they can manually change the points. While the override is in effect, any changes resulting in a new automatic total will not be reflected in the effective total for this test result.

My Grades:

The look and feel of My Grades has been updated.

- An Order by drop-down list allows you to change order by course, last activity, or due date. By default items are ordered by course, which displays items in the order the instructor has arranged them.
- You can narrow the listed items by selecting All, Graded, Upcoming, and Submitted. For example, selecting Graded only shows rows that have been graded by the instructor.
- The text size and row spacing have been reduced, resulting in more information being displayed on the page at once. Feedback is included right in-line, so you do not need to click on anything to view it – it just shows up on the page.

Students - More Info

If you would like additional information about the new features or need additional help learning how to use the features, please visit the eLIT website at:
http://www.virginiawestern.edu/elit/index.php