

Blackboard 9.1 Manual for Students

for students



Blackboard

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Blackboard Manual for Students

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1 What is Blackboard?

Blackboard is a so-called digital learning environment, a website where lecturers can place assignments and course material per module and where students can consult with each other online. You can also submit the assignments you have worked on online.

This manual gives a brief explanation of the way Blackboard works. It should also be said that Blackboard websites can differ, depending on the lecturer's personal preferences. It is possible that the website for your course does not include all the features discussed in this manual.

2 What do I need to work with Blackboard?

- Computer with an Internet connection.
- Browser (preferably at least Internet Explorer 7, Firefox 3.5 or Safari 3.2).
- Java minimum version 1.6.
- User name and password.

3 How can I access Blackboard?

- 1 Start the browser and go to the web address: bb.vu.nl.

Please note: This is a web address without www.

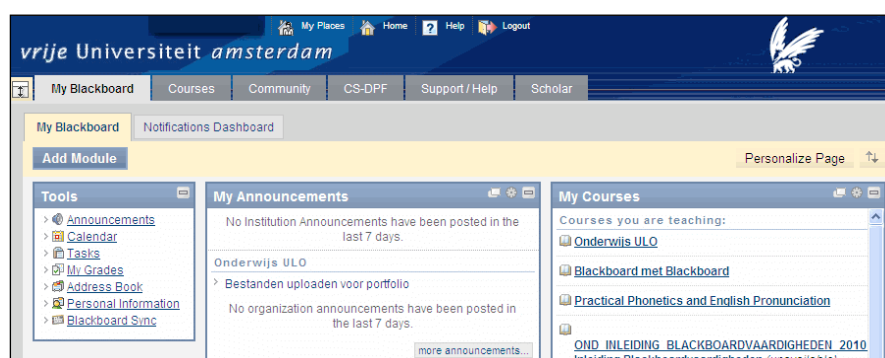
- 2 Enter your user name and password. Use your VU-net-id to log in.

If you have any questions and/or problems concerning VU-net-id: go to www.digidesk.vu.nl.

Exceptions:

- If you are a new VU student, a letter containing your VU-net-id and password will be sent to your home address. You will find more information about the VU-net-id on www.digidesk.vu.nl.
- Guest students etc. who have not been allocated a VU-net-id, go to the tab **[Support/Help]** > **[Students]**.

Once you have entered your user name and password, press **[Login]**. The following screen will appear:



This is your personal start screen within Blackboard. Starting from this page (**[My Blackboard]**), you will be able to access your own courses and communities/organizations as well as a number of tools with which you can organize your work or modify information on yourself.

4 Changing the password

You cannot change your password in Blackboard if you log in with a VU-net-ID. You can change your VU-net-id password in **TOP** (<https://top.vu.nl>).

Exception: If you do *not* use a VU-net-id, go to the tab **[Support/Help]** > **[Students]**.

5 Forwarding email

Via the website <https://studentprofile.vu.nl> you can enter a forwarding address (the address that ends in @student.vu.nl) if you want to receive your e-mail at another address.

Please note: Remember to empty your mailbox regularly! New messages will NOT be forwarded if your mailbox is full.

6 Access to a course

There are three ways of gaining access to a course site:

1. Already enrolled ([see section 6.1](#)).
2. Access via TIS ([see section 6.2](#)).
3. Enrolling for a course via Self Enroll ([see section 6.3](#)).

6.1 Already enrolled


You are already enrolled on the Blackboard course. You can check this by making sure that the course appears on the tab **[My Blackboard]** in *My Courses*.

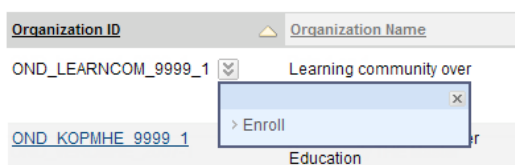
6.2 Access via TIS

To gain access via TIS, you have to enroll for a specific course in a specific academic year. (Mostly) you will then automatically be enrolled on the Blackboard course.

6.3 Enrolling for a course via Self Enroll

A lecturer may ask you to enroll yourself on a certain course via Blackboard. This procedure is known as Self Enroll and works as follows:

- 1 In Blackboard, go to the tab **[Courses]**.
- 2 Under **[Course Catalog]** you will see an overview of all the faculties.
- 3 In your faculty, search for the course in which you wish to enroll.
- 4 Click .



- 5 Click **[Enroll]**.
- 6 You will receive confirmation of your enrollment. Click **[OK]**.
- 7 Now you are in the course website, where you will have access to all the available features.

From now on, this course will appear in your personal overview of courses in the *My Courses* field on the start page **[My Blackboard]** in *Courses in which you are enrolled*.

Important note

- If you are expected to enroll for a course via Self Enroll, it is the lecturer's responsibility to enable this feature for the course. If the **[Enroll]** button does not appear as an option for a course in the Course Catalog, you should contact the lecturer giving the course.
- Enrolling on a course via Self Enroll does not necessarily mean that you are officially enrolled with the faculty as participating in a course. Ask the lecturer if you need to enroll separately, for example via the education secretariat.

7 How can I access the website for my course?

On the tab **[My Blackboard]** under the field headed *My Courses*, you will see an overview of the courses you are taking.


- Click the name of the course you wish to access.

You can leave the course website via the tab **[My Blackboard]**, and return to your personal start page. You can go to another field without having to re-enter your user name and password.

8 What can I do in Blackboard?

Welcome screen/My Blackboard

Blackboard gives you a certain amount of freedom in arranging your own welcome screen:

- It is possible to move the various modules (windows) on this page. Click on the window title bar and drag it to a new position on the page.
- **[Add Module]** allows you to add extra windows providing your own bookmarks, a search engine, a list of tasks, etc.
- **[Personalize Page]** allows you to change the colour of the windows.
- On the top right of the page you will find the icon, , which can also be used to move the modules windows via the keyboard.
- Using the icons at the right side of the title bars:

in some module windows, not all icons are available



Click on this icon to open a module windows as pop-up windows



Click on these icons to minimize or maximize module windows

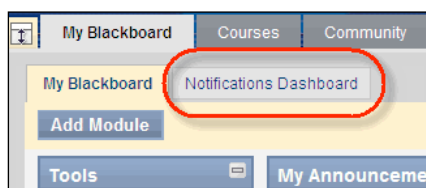


Click on the 'wheel' to reorganize a given module window



This icon enables you to remove certain modules from **[My Blackboard]**.

Notifications Dashboard



Under the sub tab **[Notifications Dashboard]** you can see the latest modifications and an overview of activities at a glance. The dashboard issues notifications whenever a new content item, a new announcement, a new discussion board message or a new mark in My Grades become

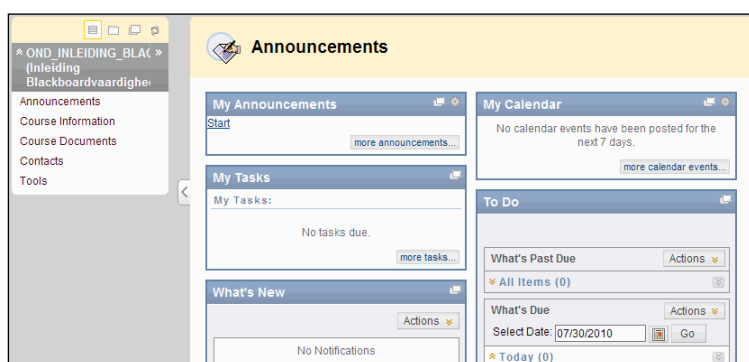
available. As a user, you can set the courses or *communities* for which you would like to receive notifications.

Language settings

[Personal Information] > [Change Personal Settings] > [Select Language Pack] allows you to select the language you want to use in Blackboard. You can choose from Dutch and English (United States). A lecturer can overwrite the language you have selected for his or her course.

Course content

Each subject has its own website. The various course fields (buttons on the left-hand side) allow you to access and download your announcements and course material, communicate with fellow-students, submit assignments, etc.



The precise features available depend on the way the lecturer uses the course website for teaching. It is possible that not all the course fields described below will be available. The *names* of the menu on the left-hand side of the screen can vary per subject. The location of the course material will also depend on the lecturer.

Fields of Blackboard that the lecturer can use are:

Fields

Here you will find:

[Announcements]

Up-to-date announcements

for example: a change of classroom, an announcement that examination marks have been published

[Course Information]

General information about the subject

for example: study guide, description of the subject, teaching aims, consulted literature, etc.

[Course Documents]:

Content of the subject

for example: explanations of the course material, background literature, assignment details, tests, lecture notes and the like.

[Contacts]:

Names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of the lecturers and other relevant parties such as practical supervisors.

[Tools]:

This button includes a large number of **[Tools]** to communicate with your lecturer and to communicate or work with other students.

The most frequently used are:

- **[Discussion Board]** for online discussions or distributing

assignments. The **[Discussion Board]** is explained in more detail in [chapter 11](#).

- **[Groups]** is used if you work together in groups. The lecturer defines the groups. Group members are then granted access to a separate area for discussion, collaboration and to exchange documents.
- **[My Grades]** shows you the results you have attained and provides an overview of the assignments you have submitted.
- **[Send E-mail]** allows you to send your e-mail to all or a selection of the students enrolled on the course and the lecturers.
- In **[Tasks]**, you will find an overview of assignments and you can monitor the progress of various assignments.

[External Links]:

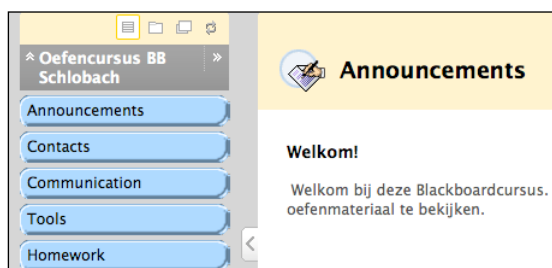
The lecturer can use this field to create links to relevant websites outside the digital learning environment.

[Assignments]:





Here you will find details of assignments and you will be able to submit your own completed assignments. You may also find diagnostic tests, questionnaires and evaluations.

Course Menu

Click on the arrow <, to hide the course menu. This will give you more screen space for the real content.



There are four icons above the buttons in the course menu, which have the following functions:

-  Display Course Menu in a list view.
-  Display Course Menu in a folder view. All folders can be expanded and collapsed.
-  Open Course Menu in a new window
-  Refresh Course Menu

Breadcrumb

The breadcrumb path (for example: [Hoorcollege geven](#) > [Documenten](#) > literatuur > week 3) will show you where you are in Blackboard. The links in this path will help you to navigate swiftly.



Review status

The lecturer may decide to assign certain parts of the course documents (items) a review status. You will see the button **[Mark as reviewed]** next to the item. Clicking this button will tell the lecturer that you have looked through the document in question and the date. A lecturer may decide to control the availability of new documents on the basis of the review status of previous documents.

9 Receiving announcements via RSS

You can now receive *Announcements* from Blackboard on your *RSS reader*. You have to manually paste the code in your RSS reader.

- 1 Scroll down the **[My Blackboard]** tab to the heading *Announcements2RSS*.
- 2 Right click on the **RSS** button and select the option **[Open connection in a new window or tab]**.
- 3 Copy the http address. This is the RSS-feed.
- 4 Then paste the address in an RSS reader (for example iGoogle or Netvibes).

10 Blackboard Sync

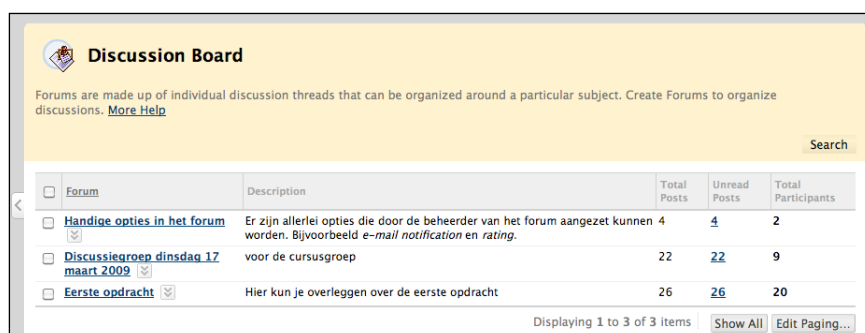
Via **[Blackboard Sync]** you can install the *Blackboard Sync application* on your Facebook, your iPad or your iPhone. You will then be able to view new contributions, for example, such as new contributions to discussions. You can find out more on the **[Support/Help]** tab.

11 How does the Discussion Board work?

Conducting online discussions is another of Blackboard's features. The discussion list can also be used to post work on assignments on the website. This enables fellow-students and lecturers to review your work and add comments where necessary.

The lecturer can position the *Discussion Board* in the **[Tools]** or **[Groups]** field or as a separate button in the navigation structure of the course.

- 1 Click **[Discussion Board]**. You will see one or more forums. Each forum is used to discuss a specific assignment or topic.



- 2 Click on the name of the forum in which you want to leave a message or submit your work.
- 3 A forum is made up of different threads. Click the title of the message in question. The message text will appear.
- 4 Click **[Reply]**. You can now enter your reply by typing it in directly or by attaching a file.
- 5 Click **[Submit]**. Your message will now be added to the discussion.

- 6 If you want to bring up a new topic rather than respond to an existing message, you should click the button **[Create Thread]** at the top of the forum (assuming the lecturer has enabled this option). You can compile your message in the same way as described above.

Discussion Board via Groups

Some courses will probably make use of group pages. A Group Page (known as 'Group' or 'Groups' in Blackboard) gives a pre-determined group of students (selected by the lecturer) access to its own protected communication area within Blackboard. The group can use this group page to conduct private discussions, to collaborate or to exchange files.

12 How does Blogs and Journals work?

Blackboard also enables you to keep a logbook. For this, Blackboard features the blogs or journals tools. A blog is for communication with your fellow students and lecturers. A journal is used exclusively for communications between you and your lecturers.

The lecturer can position the **[Blog]** or **[Journal]** in the **[Tools]** or **[Groups]** field or as a separate button in the navigation structure of the course.

- 1 Click **[Blogs]** or **[Journals]**. You will see one or more blogs or journals. Each blog or journal is used to discuss a specific assignment or topic.
- 2 Click on the name of a blog or journal in which you want to leave a message or a comment.
- 3 Click **[Create Blog Entry]** or **[Create Journal Entry]**. Now you can directly type your entry or attach a file.
- 4 Click **[Post Entry]**. Your message or comment will now be added.

13 How does the Wiki work?

Blackboard enables you to collaborate with other students on writing texts using the wiki tool. The lecturer can position the **[Wiki]** in the **[Tools]** or **[Groups]** field or as a separate button in the navigation structure of the course.

- 1 Click **[Wiki]**. You will see one or more wikis. Each wiki is used to discuss a specific assignment or topic.
- 2 Click on the name of a wiki in which you want to leave a message.
- 3 Click **[Create Wiki Page]**.



If you want to edit the wiki page, click **[Edit Wiki Content]**.

14 Submitting assignments

A lecturer can enable various features via which you can submit assignments. This is possible via a 'text link' or via **[>> View/Complete]**. If you click this link, you will see a screen which you can use to turn in your assignment. You may be able to type the answer into the entry screen or you may have to add it as a file. You can save an answer temporarily via **[Save as Draft]** and it will not be submitted until you click on **[Submit]**.

The lecturer may have decided to check your assignment for plagiarism. If so, this will be indicated on the assignment concerned. By clicking on **[Tools]** and then on **[My Grades]**, you can see which assignments you have submitted (see [chapter 16](#)).

15 Taking part in tests

Lecturers can place tests in various areas. You can scroll through the questions using the following buttons:  Question 2 of 8 .

If you skip around questions, your answers will remain in place.

Please note: If you have only *one* attempt to answer a question, you cannot skip around questions.

Clicking **[Submit]** will close the test and your results will be sent to the lecturer. It is not usually possible to submit any more answers after you have done this, even if you have not answered all the questions.

Please note: Only click **[Submit]** if you are sure you have finished the test.

Tip: Click **[Save]** every now and then during the test to store your answers (time out).

16 Assessments / grades

[My Grades] (in **[Course Tools]**) allows you to examine your *Grade Center*. The *Grade Center* contains an overview of all assignments and tests relating to the course. You will also see the lecturer's evaluation or grade. This screen enables you to access the work you have submitted.

17 Logging out

After a session on a public computer it is important that you always log out, to make sure that no-one can work under your name in Blackboard. Click the button **[Logout]** at the top of the page.

18 Where can I get help with my questions?

If you have any questions and/or problems, go to the tab **[Support/Help]**. You can access this site on every Blackboard page. This will also tell you how to get in touch with the Blackboard helpdesk in your faculty.