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BlackBoard Dustings: A Year in the Life of a Blackboard Course

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About the Author

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Abstract

Abstract: This article describes the default "life-cycle" of a typical Blackboard course, and provides some suggestions about how you can actively manage your Blackboard course based on your needs and expectations.

Your Blackboard course goes through several phases between the time you request that it be created, to the time it is removed from the system. Here is a description of the prescribed timeline of a typical Blackboard course and also tips about how you can customize access to your course as it's function changes.

PHASE 1 - *Development* Phase - (begins at course creation through the start of the semester, and beyond?):

A Blackboard course is created at the request of a faculty member, who fills out and submits a Blackboard course request form at:

http://www.lehigh.edu/lts/teams/it/sblackboard/bbrequest.shtml

The course is created for a specific class and semester with a unique "Course-Id" number that identifies the department, course number, section, and semester. The new course can be created either as a copy of a course that already exists on the system, or as a new, empty course. The ability to "clone" an existing course allows you a convenient way to re-use content and a course structure that has been useful and effective in the past. Even if you do not initially request that an old course be copied into your new course, you can always manually copy and move items between all of your courses using the "Copy" option available in the Control Panel, or "edit" view, of the course. If you do decide to reuse your content, please be aware of any copyright restrictions on the content that might prevent repeated use.

If you do not want students to have access to a course before the start of a semester (perhaps you are still developing the structure and goals and adding content) make the course "Unavailable" until you are ready to use it:

CONTROL PANEL > SETTINGS > COURSE AVAILABILITY

PHASE 2 - *Current, or Active* Phase - (begins when students are enrolled in the course and have access and typically ends when the course is made "Unavailable")

New courses are automatically made "Available", so as soon as the official course enrollment information from the Registrar is sent to the Blackboard system, students enrolled in a course will have access to the Blackboard course. This automatic enrollment process only occurs for classes created for the current semester, which is indicated by the Course-Id. By default, courses remain "Available" and active throughout the entire semester. As indicated above, you can change this default behavior at any time by manually making a course either "Available" or "Unavailable" to your students.

PHASE 3 - *Unavailable* Phase - (course not affiliated with the current semester - but less than a year old and can easily be copied):

At the end of the semester, consider making your course "Unavailable" as soon as you are finished with it if there is no reason for students to continue to have access:

CONTROL PANEL > SETTINGS > COURSE AVAILABILITY

If you do nothing with course availability, students will have access to your course until sometime after the end of the semester, when you will receive a message that your course will automatically be made "Unavailable" on a certain date, unless you indicate otherwise.

Unavailable courses are kept on the system for at least a year. This time period serves two purposes, it keeps courses on the system long enough for incompletes to be "completed", and for courses only taught once a year, to be copied into new courses if requested. If you will be teaching a course with the same material in a period longer than a year in the future, simply put in a request for a new course to be copied from an existing course and indicate the semester in which it will be taught either by using the pull-down semester choices, or the the additional comments field.

PHASE 4 - *To Be Removed* Phase - (affiliated with a semester from over a year ago)

You can, at any time, request that your course be deleted if you are sure that you no longer need it:

http://www.lehigh.edu/lts/teams/it/sblackboard/bbdelete.shtml

If you do not request that your course be deleted, after one year, you will receive a message indicating that your course will be permanently removed from the system. We recommend that during this phase, you archive, or export your course for your own records and make sure to export a copy of the online gradebook (if you have used it) prior to permanent deletion.

For further information, contact your Instructional Technology consultant, or see the Instructional Technology website at:

http://www.lehigh.edu/lts/teams/it/

Blackboard-specific help is available at the following URL, or choose the "help icon" (question mark) at the top of every page within a Blackboard course:

http://www.lehigh.edu/blackboard/