What is Blackboard?

Blackboard is a Web-based course-management system designed to allow students and faculty to participate in classes delivered online or use online materials and activities to complement face-to-face teaching. Blackboard enables instructors to provide students with course materials, discussion boards, virtual chat, online quizzes, an academic resource center, and more. The degree to which Blackboard is used in a course varies. For example, instructors may supplement an on-campus class by putting their syllabus and handouts on their course sites. In contrast, other courses may be conducted entirely through Blackboard, without any on-campus sessions.

Why would a faculty member use Blackboard?

The tools within Blackboard enable instructors to provide easy online access to course materials that can be directed at a variety of learning styles. These same tools help instructors address the ideas raised in Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever.

Blackboard Encourages Contacts Between Students and Faculty

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of class is a most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students’ intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans.

The Blackboard Discussion Board provides a threaded discussion, which allows students and instructors the ability to share concepts, ideas, questions and answers. Think of it as a slow typed conversation.

One way to use a Discussion Board is to have students extend the in class discussion to outside/after class. If class ends before a student has a chance to speak, they can post their thoughts to the Discussion Board. Regardless of the time the light bulb comes on, a student can post their thoughts to Blackboard.

Another way to use this tool is for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Create a forum that allows students to see FAQ for the course. They may be able to help each other and you can post all questions/answers there instead of emailing to individuals.

You may find using a forum for exam-related questions very helpful as well.

Blackboard Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one’s ideas and responding to others’ improves thinking and deepens understanding.
**Group Tools:** Provide a collaborative area for student groups to discuss with a threaded discussion board, chat (synchronously) with group members, exchange files for review or additions, and/or send email to each other. Students today have many responsibilities and finding a time and place to meet can be very difficult. These Group tools allow all users to meet on their own timelines. Create a Discussion Board within each of several groups. Select a Group leader for each group. The leader is responsible to find a website on this week’s topic and post a link to and a review of the website. Is it valuable? Does it argue in favor of or against the topic? How does it support its arguments? How do we know the information on this website is accurate. Each student in the group is responsible to post a response, and the group leader is required to respond to each member. At the end of the week/module the leader is responsible to grade the participants. The role of leader is rotated through the group over the semester.

**Blackboard Collaborate:** Students and instructors may communicate on a topic in this web conferencing tool. Real-time communication with tools such as a whiteboard and screen sharing allow for collaboration and off-site office hours.

Start a Blackboard Collaborate session during your office hours so students can drop in without having to come to campus.

Instead of scheduling a classroom for a Saturday pre-midterm or pre-final extra help session, schedule a Blackboard Collaborate session. Students can drop in to ask questions about material and see the answers to what other students are asking.

Blackboard Helps Students Use Active Learning Techniques

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

**Interactivity:** Interactive applications such as the Wiki allow students to actively and inter-actively participate in creating new knowledge.

Post a text on the first page of the wiki and have students annotate the text by creating links from terms that need to be defined and explained to new pages that they create and edit.
Simulations: By simulating real laboratory and/or life problems/issues students are able to repeat steps without extra expense or danger to others. These simulations can be performed at home or anywhere there is internet access.

Search Merlot for a simulation that uses a visual representation to explain an important concept. Link to that simulation from your Blackboard site.

Blackboard Grade Center Gives Students Prompt Feedback

Knowing what you know and don’t know focuses your learning. In getting started, students need help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. Then, in classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive feedback on their performance. At various points during college, and at its end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how they might assess themselves.

Digital DropBox & Gradebook: With the collaboration of the Assignment feature and the Blackboard Grade Center, students can submit assignments, that instructors can return with comments and changes ([Microsoft Word Insert Comment and Track Changes features]). Once the final assignment is submitted, instructors can add the grade to the Grade Center. This way, the students are informed of their progress in the course and have ample time to adjust, if needed.

Discussion Board Grader

You can grade your students for their online participation and see each student's work concatenated all at once with these tools.

Blackboard Content emphasizes Time on Task

Time plus energy equals learning. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty.
Online Content: Providing content online allows students to review (syllabus, lectures, links, etc.) materials on their schedule. Access to PowerPoint presentations, old exam questions, homework answers, etc., provides students with study tools that can improve their grades.

Post last year's/semester's midterm/final in Blackboard as a self-study opportunity, so students can learn on their own what they know and what they need to work on.

Assessment Tool: Students are able to test their knowledge on practice exams to verify their understanding before taking the exam in class.

Create daily DYRT (Did You Read This?) quizzes to help focus students on reading and spending time on assigned tasks.

Blackboard Communicates High Expectations

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone — for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
**Blackboard Assignments**: Give clear and exact information for the assignment. You can also provide students with clear examples on excellent, average and poor performance. See also Collecting Turnitin Assignments.

**Blackboard Discussion Board**: Have students post their papers for peer evaluation during the developmental time. Then again after the final paper is turned in so that their peers can see how the paper progressed. Students are encouraged to create professional documents when they are published for others to view.

**Blackboard Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning**

Many roads lead to learning, Different students bring different talents and styles to college. Brilliant students in a seminar might be all thumbs in a lab or studio; students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily.

**Multiple Learning Styles**: Providing multiple content formats (text, images, sound, audio, animations, graphs, etc.) allow for students to find learning based on their preferred learning style. Many instructors tend to teach in the learning style they are accustomed to.
**Repetition:** Provide information about the course, assignments and exams in multiple locations of the course. In the Syllabus there is a list of Course Goals/Objectives. Repeat these goals/objectives with the assignment or content so that the student is directed in their learning path.

When you post an Announcement for the class, you can send it as an e-mail, so they get the same message twice.

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**Audio/Video:** Students benefit greatly by watching well done videos.

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**Why would a student use Blackboard?**

Not all professors use Blackboard. Those that do give their student access to online resources that wouldn’t otherwise be available to them. Below are just a few examples.

- Get access to course materials online: You can view and download copies of the syllabus, PowerPoint slides and more!
- Submit assignments online: No need to print out your assignments. Blackboard allows you to submit files electronically.
- Take tests online: Your professor may post exams online allowing you to take them at a time and in a place that is convenient to you.
- View grades online: Your professor can post your grades online so you have a record of your progress in a course.
- Get access to interesting multimedia: Your professor can post links to pictures and videos that will enhance the learning experience.
- Attend class during weather related emergencies: With Blackboard Collaborate and other remote tools, your professor can hold class even you can’t leave your house because of snow or other inclement weather.
- Get to know your classmates: With tools like discussion boards and blogs, you will be able to interact with your classmates in a whole new way. Ask them questions, share notes when you are out sick or just say hi!

Note: Not all professors will use all features of Blackboard.

**Can faculty members use Blackboard for groups other than classes?**

Blackboard classes can be configured for groups other than classes.
Departments have created sites for all of the Majors and Minors, so announcements can be posted, and students contacted for department events. The Psychology Majors club doubled their attendance, the first time the Blackboard site was used to e-mail all of the current majors and minors an invitation to the meeting.

Departments have created Curriculum Committee and Promotion Committee sites, so materials can be posted for, reviewed by, and discussed prior to meetings.

Who is using Blackboard?

Over five hundred instructors use Blackboard to reach over 10,000 students at Hofstra.

How to use Blackboard

Various knowledge base articles are available right here! Use the menu on the left or the search box at the top right of the page to find the topic you are interested in learning more about.

Where can I find additional resources?

Right here! Enter the word Blackboard in the search box above or use the menu on the left of the page to navigate various articles about Blackboard

Blackboard Training

Faculty: Training Classes for Faculty and Staff
Students: Contact Learning Support to schedule an in-person tutorial.

Where can I get help?

Faculty: Contact the Faculty Support Center
Students: Contact the Student Technical Support Center