Blackboard Quick Start Guides

Actively Engaging Learning Partners

Monitoring and managing learning outcomes for students is an ongoing challenge for instructors, administrators, advisors, parents and managers. Keeping all learning partners informed of the progress of students and being proactive to prevent failure maximizes the chances for student success. It also increases student retention by providing students with directed guidance throughout the learning process. Eliminating barriers to communication allows instructors to actively engage the student and any oversight partners such as an advisor or parent of unsatisfactory performance and can improve learning outcomes by stimulating early intervention.

ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Issue: Is the Early Warning System for negative feedback only? I want to find students that are performing above expectations and provide encouragement and affirmation!

Answer: Yes rules can be setup for positive reinforcement by changing the Criteria. As an example, an instructor can setup a Grade Rule that flags students that have scored 'Greater Than' 90 points on an Assessment or Assignment.

Issue: How can including other recipients of an Early Warning System notification have an impact on student performance?

Answer: Depending on the situation, the age of the student and other privacy issues, sending other educational professionals and parents Early Warning notifications can trigger intervention at an earlier time, preventing negative consequences. For example, a high school athlete fails a critical exam that could affect his eligibility requirements and college scholarship; the instructor can notify the team coach, the guidance counselor or a parent. This broad network of communication will help to ensure the athlete gets remedial help, extra study time, and has a support system available to check on progress. These steps when taken early enough can keep the athlete's grades up so that eligibility for playing on the team and the scholarship are not endangered.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

The Early Warning System is a tool used to communicate warnings to Students, Observers, or both that a performance problem is beginning to appear or has become more serious. Warnings can be generated based on graded performance, late or missing course work, or attendance within an online course. The Instructor can choose to communicate a particular warning to just the Student, the Student and a parent or advisor that is assigned as an Observer, or just the Student's Observer. In addition, the Instructor has control over the message each time a warning is communicated. The Instructor can use the default message or modify it to more accurately communicate the seriousness of the situation.

Students are flagged to receive Early Warning System messages derived from rules that are set by the Instructor. Rules are based on performance data in the system. There are three options for rules:

- **Grade Rule:** Identifies when student performance on an Assignment, Assessment, or manually graded item is equal to or below a certain level.
- **Due Date Rule:** Identifies when a Student does not complete course work when it is due. A Due Date Rule can only be used to track an Assignment or Assessment created through the Blackboard Learning System. Due Date Rules cannot be created for manually graded items.
- **Last Access Rule:** Identifies the last time a Student accessed the course online.

Once created and made available, rules need to be refreshed to check for events that will trigger a warning. To minimize possible performance and system allocation issues, rules are not constantly running in the background and instead run only when the instructor wants to get an update. To be proactive, regularly refresh the Early Warning System so that the latest data is reflected; this is particularly relevant during an exam period or when a year end project is due for example. When a threshold in an active rule has been reached, the Instructor has the flexibility to determine what the next step will be and then communicate that to the student and learning partners. Additionally, Instructors have the ability to view all notifications that were initiated from the Early Warning System through the Notification Log; this is especially helpful in situations of dispute or general auditing.

PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Performance Dashboard includes information about Early Warning System alerts when the Early Warning System tool is activated. The Early Warning Column shows the number of warnings and the number of total rules that may trigger a warning. Clicking on the data in this column will open the Early Warning System. To send a message, click Notify. From here the message can be customized for the particular notification; additional blind carbon copy recipients can be added, files can be attached, and a return receipt can be requested.

GRADEBOOK

The Early Warning System is designed to work closely with the Gradebook. Early Warning System rules are created against actual Gradebook Items and associated Course data. In particular, the Early Warning System can trigger an alert based on grades recorded in the Gradebook. Assignments or Assessments that are not completed by the deadline may also be used to trigger an alert.

The Review Rule Status page lists all the users in the course and identifies whether or not their performance meets the criteria for the rule and lists details regarding performance. For example, if an Instructor set a Grade Rule to trigger an alert for all users with a score less than 65 percent on an Assessment, those users with a score of less than 65 percent would show "Yes" in the Meets Criteria column. The page also shows when the user was last notified regarding their performance. Communicating an alert to users does not happen automatically. The Instructor must use the Notification Log to send a message. Messages sent by the Instructor can be customized so that they are more meaningful to the recipients.

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Observers are a unique set of users in the Blackboard Academic Suite who, when given permission by the course Instructor, have the ability to log into the system and obtain information on students and shadow them in their courses. Observers can be parents in a primary or secondary educational setting, academic advisors and administrators in any educational institution, and even managers in a corporate or government environment. The purposes for the Observer role are varied depending upon the situation, but overall, allowing observers into a course provides transparency into the education process and opens communication channels to mitigate any difficulties students have in time for successful intervention.

ISSUES AND ANSWERS

Issue: Is it possible to have both parents of a child become Observers?

Answer: Yes, both parents can have their own Observer account in the system and log in when they wish in order to observe their child.

Issue: Is it possible for parents to be able to observe all of their children?

Answer: Yes, with a single account, parents can observe one or many students without having to change accounts or sign out and sign back in.

Issue: As an advisor, I have many students to observe. Is there a way I can see all of them from one location?

Answer: Yes. By using the Observer Dashboard or the Observer Gateway (Community System), Observers can see the multiple students that they are eligible to observe. From this interface, it is easy to switch among the various students that are being shadowed.

OBSERVERS

Observers are user roles that are attached to other users; in most cases a parent or advisor attached to one or more students. Observers can view the same content as users they are monitoring but cannot modify or interact with that content.

The Observer role can be used to let parents of a student or an academic advisor monitor progress. Each Observer can be assigned multiple users so that a parent can observe all their children in the system or an advisor can view all their advisees in the system. Students can have more than one Observer such as both parents and a guidance counselor. The Instructor for each course can limit what Observers can see.

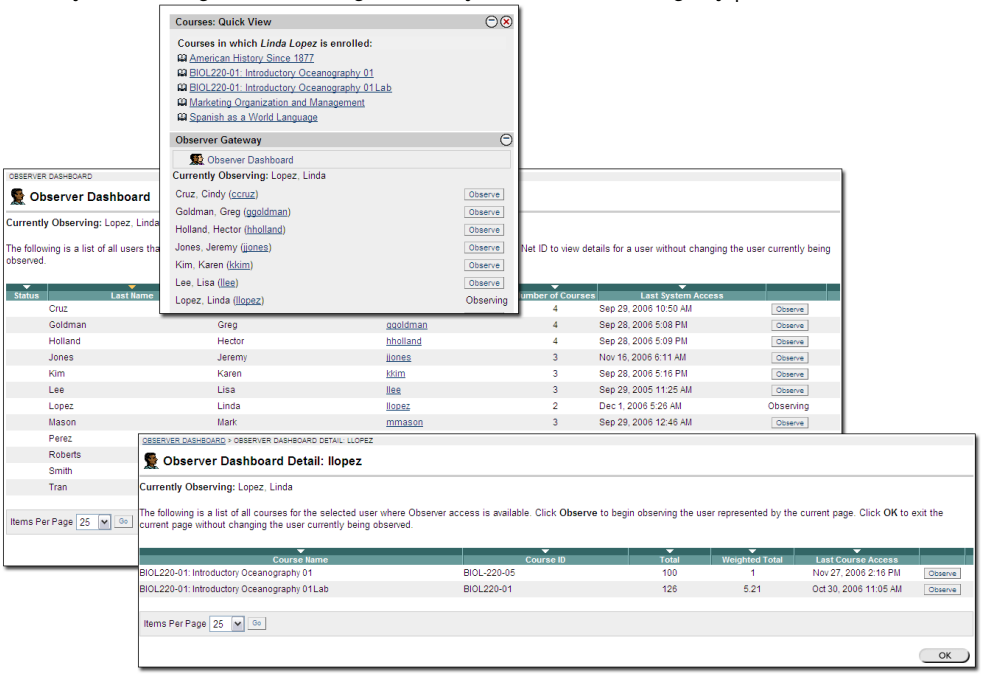
Observers can be added to the system individually or in bulk via the Snapshot tool. Users must have their System Role set to Observer in order to be associated to students. Observers are not able to enroll in courses as students. Observers can be viewed and linked or unlinked from users from the Manage User page in the System Administration Panel.

OBSERVER GATEWAY

Available with the Community System, the Observer Gateway is a module that can be added to the portal page of users. This module displays all the users an Observer is currently monitoring and facilitates quick switching between users to observe.

OBSERVER DASHBOARD

The Observer Dashboard is a system tool available to all Observers that lists all users eligible to be observed and facilitates switching between users. Basic details about each student course metrics are available through this interface to enable an Observer to get a quick snapshot of how everyone is doing without having to actually switch to observing any particular student.



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