



Blackboard

Blackboard Academic Suite™

Faculty Release Notes

Release 7, Application Pack 3
Blackboard Community System™
Blackboard Learning System - Basic Edition
Blackboard Learning System – Enterprise Edition
Blackboard Content System™
Blackboard Outcomes System™

Release Notes (173021en_US)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
New Features and Enhancements	5
Blackboard Outcomes System Upgrade	6
Support for right-to-left languages	7
Blackboard Learning Environment Connector	8
Content System Enhancements	10
Discussion Board Enhancements	11
Blackboard Academic Suite Changes	13
Compatibility Matrixes	17
End User Configuration Matrix	18
Supported Paths for Importing and Restoring Courses	20
Reference Materials	21

INTRODUCTION

About the Release Notes

The Release Notes provide Instructors with information about new features and enhancements to Application Pack 3, Release 7, of the *Blackboard Academic Suite™*. It also includes changes to existing functionality that may impact the way the system is currently used.

What is in the Release Notes?

The Release Notes contain the following sections:

- [New Features and Enhancements](#) – Describes new features in this release, as well as additional important enhancements that have been made to the system.
- [Compatibility Matrixes](#) – Explains dependencies between the new application and existing Blackboard applications in the field. Also, it includes information on which server configurations are supported with this release and which end-user browsers and operating systems are supported.
- [Reference materials](#) – Lists and describes reference manuals available for this release.

NEW FEATURES AND ENHANCEMENTS

Overview

In response to user feedback, Blackboard Academic Suite, Application Pack 3 (Release 7) introduces a number of new features and enhancements to the existing features.

This section reviews the new features in Application Pack 3 (Release 7), explains their default availability upon installation, and specifies Blackboard license requirements.

New features and enhancements fall into the following categories:

- [*Blackboard Outcomes System™ Upgrade*](#)
- [*Blackboard Content System™ Enhancements*](#)
- [*Discussion Board Enhancements*](#)
- [*Support for right-to-left languages*](#)
- [*Blackboard Learning Environment Connector™*](#)

BLACKBOARD OUTCOMES SYSTEM UPGRADE

Information Visibility

An immediate improvement to the Blackboard Outcomes System is the greater visibility of Outcomes information. Now, the module My Outcomes Evaluations can be enabled to be visible on the My Institution homepage. The Instructor can view and evaluate all Portfolios and Artifacts.

As well, throughout the Blackboard Outcomes System tab, the Instructor will be able to view existing Rubrics, Outcomes Portfolio Templates, Outcomes Artifact Templates, Course Evaluations, and Surveys. Each of these can be expanded to view the sub-contexts of the unit.

Home Page

The left navigation area of the Home Page has been redesigned, as well as the location and design of the Blackboard Content System, *Blackboard Community System™* and 360° View icons.

Discover Page

The Discover Page has been redesigned to provide the most relevant information by default. Helpful information accompanies each of the various items available on the Discover Page, with the added option to expand for further detail.

SUPPORT FOR RIGHT-TO-LEFT LANGUAGES

Overview

A new feature in the Blackboard Academic Suite allows Instructors to view the application from right to left so that using Arabic languages and the Hebrew language reflect the correct orientation of text on the screen. This feature will affect the entire Academic Suite, including all features and tools in the Learning System, the Community System, and the Content System (with the exception of those items listed below).

The right-to-left text function will be automatically applied to Blackboard Academic Suite when an existing right-to-left language pack is applied to the Blackboard Academic Suite.

Academic Suite sub-systems that do not support right-to-left text orientation

Some sub-systems and functions within the Blackboard Academic Suite are not part of right-to-left text orientation. These include the following:

- Making functional changes to Course Statistics
- Enabling right-to-left language support in the Collaboration Tools, including Virtual Classroom and Chat
- Engineering changes to any external service that feeds information to or from the Blackboard Academic Suite such as RSS
- Blackboard Backpack does not support right-to-left viewing.
- Any data that is entered as mixed orientation, some text formatted left to right and some formatted right to left in the same file
- The Visual Text Box Editor will not spell check for right to left.

Viewing data in a right-to-left environment

Blackboard is not responsible for how imported and exported data will be displayed to the user when it is viewed using third party applications that are not configured to view right-to-left languages or do not support right-to-left languages. For example, if the user decided to view an exported Arabic spreadsheet in *Microsoft® Excel* and the Arabic language pack has been installed, then Microsoft Excel will automatically reorder the text and the columns from right to left. Though, if the data is viewed in the file of another application, it may not have right-to-left support.

BLACKBOARD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT CONNECTOR

Overview

Blackboard Learning System™ - Vista Enterprise and *Blackboard Learning System™ - CE Enterprise* can now be integrated into the Blackboard Academic Suite. The Connector provides Instructors and Students with access to a set of powerful new features that will deepen and strengthen their experience within the Blackboard Academic Suite while maintaining their normal Vista or CE environment. All existing personalization features, Powerlinks, and authentication systems work as before within a rich array of useful and interesting Academic Suite functionality.

Interface Changes

The Blackboard Academic Suite environment includes a header frame with images and buttons customized by the System Administrator and tabs that navigate to different areas. Once integrated, each instance of Vista or CE will have its own tab. Clicking on a tab will open that area in the content frame. The tabs that are available to Instructors are determined by the systems that are installed and the system role. The most common tabs are listed below:

- **My Institution:** The **My Institution** tab contains tools and information specific to each Instructor's preferences. Tools and information are contained in modules. Instructors can add and remove modules from their My Institution tab. The My Institution tab is available for all licenses; however, only Blackboard Community System users have access to advanced, customizable modules.
- **Blackboard Learning Environment Connector:** The **Learning Environment Connector** tab provides direct access to Instructors' Vista or CE institution. A tool panel and four modules are available on the Learning Environment Connector tab for Vista and CE integrations. The information on each tab is specific to that Learning Environment. Multiple tabs may be present for users with access to multiple Learning Environments.
- **Courses:** The **Courses** tab links to the Blackboard Learning System. It contains the Course List module that lists Instructors' Blackboard Learning System Courses and the Course Catalog. All Blackboard Learning System and Blackboard Vista and Blackboard CE courses can be listed in the Course Catalog.
- **Community:** The **Community** tab lists Organizations specific to each Instructor, the Organization Catalog for the institution, and institution Discussion Boards. Instructors click on a link from the Community tab to access an Organization. The Community tab is only available with the Blackboard Community System.
- **Content Collection:** The **Content Collection** tab opens the Blackboard Content System when available. The Content System is a file repository with several sophisticated features for working with content. Instructors can access personal content, course, organization and institutional content based upon system settings and system role. Other content system features are available here as well including Portfolios, a Learning Objects Catalog, and a set of tools for locating and managing digital content.
- **Outcomes:** The **Outcomes** tab opens the Blackboard Outcomes System when available. The Outcomes System is a fully customizable application for supporting and coordinating systematic assessment processes throughout an institution.

Logging In and Out

All Instructors log into the system through the Blackboard Community System. Instructors who attempt to log in to MyWebCT by entering the URL in the address bar will be redirected to the Blackboard login page.



NOTE: Due to general browser cookie handling limitations in an integrated environment, Instructors may experience login inconsistencies when using an alias-based path and they may not be able to access Vista or CE material.

All Instructors log out using the Blackboard Community System **logout** button, which logs Instructors out of both systems.

Getting Help

Help for all Blackboard applications is provided through the **Help** icon located in the top header frame. **Help** is linked to a URL that has been configured by the system administrator to provide access to online resources to assist users.

Help for all Blackboard Vista and Blackboard CE applications is provided in the **My Features** tool panel on the integrated learning environment tag. In addition, most pages include a Help button at the top of the content frame that will direct Instructors to the page corresponding to the tool they are currently using.

Blackboard Community System

The Blackboard Community System enables educational institutions to build vibrant online communities and improve information flow. The system is deployed by institutions to develop an academic gateway, providing central access to course management systems, libraries, content management tools and student information systems.

Instructors can personalize available components to best meet their own needs. The system can also support educational and extracurricular activities.

Blackboard Content System

The Blackboard Content System is a file repository with several sophisticated features for working with content. It is fully integrated with the Blackboard Learning System and the Blackboard Community System and can create repositories for Blackboard Learning System and Blackboard Vista and Blackboard CE courses and Instructors as well as for Library and eReserves. For detailed information on using the Blackboard Content System, see the Blackboard Content System User Manual.

Blackboard Outcomes System

The Blackboard Outcomes System is fully customizable application for supporting and coordinating systematic assessment processes throughout an institution. The system supports and connects the academic and administrative assessment processes across an institution's many departments enabling the planning, measuring and improving of outcomes. Learning contexts (sections, courses) from Learning Environments can be directly associated to the Outcomes System for targeted assessment. Blackboard Outcomes System provides comprehensive set of tools and instruments for student and program assessment. For more information on using and administering the Blackboard Outcomes System, see the Blackboard Outcomes System User Manual.

BLACKBOARD CONTENT SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

Metadata

Metadata and its privileges are now displayed prominently in the Content System as a default icon in the **Tools** menu. Metadata forms organize content for an institution. In managing Metadata, an Instructor can facilitate the access to, and the use of, multitudinous documents, files, and content for one or many institutions; thus, improving the spread of educational content. As well, Instructors can now import or export items with their associated Metadata.

Instructors now have the ability to create, modify, and search for Metadata forms and their fields to efficiently organize content. As well, Metadata can be applied to content folders and not just individual files.

Metadata templates are setup with three default templates and an icon for custom templates. The IMS Metadata template has been enhanced with added multiplicity fields that allow a Instructor to add multiple values to one field. As well, Instructors have the privilege to modify some of the default templates' fields.

Recycle Bin

A new feature in the Content System is the Recycle bin. The Recycle bin stores deleted content items.

Instructors and users have several feature capabilities within the Recycle Bin. Instructors can search and access their previously deleted content items and restore them to Content Collection.

Instructors have the ability to enable or disable the Recycle Bin; restore permanently deleted items; modify and rename items; and search for items in the Recycle Bin

Archive/Restore

Instructors now have the ability to fully archive and restore content items, including their associated Metadata.

Search Tool

The Content System Search tool has been enhanced to yield more accurate search results, including the Content Collection, courses and organizations. Advanced Searches can be saved and shared with other Content System users.

Unique ID Tool

Upon upgrade to 7.3, the Unique ID Tool assigns a unique ID to every new item in the Content System. Links to the Content System files and folders are no longer stored as absolute paths in the database tables, and with the Unique ID Tool, Content System items may be moved freely within the application.

Upon upgrade to 7.3, and if Content System is being installed for the first time, a unique ID will be created for only new Content System items. To create IDs for Content System items created prior to the update, refer to the Update Instructions included in these release notes (see [Executing the Unique ID Tool](#)).

DISCUSSION BOARD ENHANCEMENTS

Course Discussions

Restoring the capability in release 7.1, the Instructor can again view the Course Discussions in a Tree View, in which the post titles to a particular thread are visible. The user must select the **Tree View** icon located on the right side of the Course Discussions page. Selecting a post from the Course Discussions page will navigate the user to the Thread Detail page and will display the post as well.

On the action toolbar, there are new icons. **Mark as Read** and **Mark as Unread** allow the Instructor to classify which forums have been read or not. The Search area has been rolled up into a graphic icon of a magnifying glass. Selecting this icon will drop down the search area. Within the Search tool, it is now possible to search by time. Also, **Subscribe** and **Unsubscribe** icons allow users to subscribe or unsubscribe to a forum.

Within the Thread table of the Course Discussion page, several enhancements have been made. Grade and Tag columns have been added to the page, as well as a **Grade** icon that allows the Instructor to navigate to Modify Grade Item page and grade the students' forum performance. As well, the Subscribe and Flag indicators columns have been added, allowing the user to see the subscribed and flagged forums. Also, the Date column includes the exact time of the latest change to the forum. Also, the number of unread posts in the Unread Posts column is a clickable icon that directs the Instructor to the text of these unread posts.

Collections

There are several new features on the Collections page. Atop the page is the Grade field and entry box for the Instructor. Within the action bar, like the Course Discussions page, there are icons for **Mark Read** and **Mark Unread**.

Within the Filter action bar, the user will notice a filter that includes filters for Author, Status, read Status, and Tags. As well, under this bar, the user can sort by a number of options, and choose the order in which they are displayed.

Within each post, the Instructor has the ability to **Reply**, **Quote**, and **Mark as Unread**, the preceding post. Also, there is now an area for Tags that displays the tags that correspond to a particular post. There is also an **Add** icon to allow Instructors to add tags.

Thread Detail

The Thread Detail page has been changed and enhanced. Now, within the action bar are the icons to **Subscribe** and **Unsubscribe**. As well, there are the icons to **Mark Read** and **Mark Unread**.

Also, a new field, **New Replies to my Post**, has been added. Clickable number links for Unread Posts and New Replies to my Post have been added and direct the Instructor to either the Unread Posts or the New Replies to my Post.

The new **Quote** icon is located within the action bar of a post. Selecting the icon directs the Instructor to the Reply to Post page, to reply to a post, and within the Message text box is included the text from the post to which the Instructor is responding.

Within a post, an Instructor can now rate a post based on a star rating system. The Instructor can also navigate to both the **Previous Post** and the **Next Post**.

Tagging Messages

Tags allow arbitrary message grouping independent of thread or thread status. Forum managers or Instructors can create and apply text labels of their own choosing to messages in a forum; other Discussion Board users can read, filter, and search messages using the tags, but cannot create new ones.

Modify Forum

Within the Modify Forum page, there are new, available Forum Settings. The Forum Moderator can select the Forum Availability date and time restrictions.

BLACKBOARD ACADEMIC SUITE CHANGES

The table below displays a quick look at the functional changes in Application Pack 3

COMPONENT – SUBSYSTEM/ LICENSE	CHANGE/NEW FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Discussion Board All Licenses	Course Discussions> Tree View	Displays the forums and their respective posts
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussions; Collections; Thread Detail> Mark as Read	Instructor may mark a forum, thread, or post as read.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussions; Collections; Thread Detail> Mark as Unread	Instructor may mark a forum, thread, or post as unread.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussions; Collections; Thread Detail> Subscribe	Instructor may subscribe to a forum, thread, or post.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussions; Collections; Thread Detail> Unsubscribe	Instructor may unsubscribe to a forum, thread, or post.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussion column: Add Tags	Instructor can add tags to selected Messages or Threads.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussion column: Tags	Displays any tags associated with a forum.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussion column: Grade	Includes a grade icon, or a Modify icon , or displays the grade.
Discussion Board All licenses	Course Discussion column; Thread Detail: Subscribe forum	Displays a visual indicator of the subscription status of a Forum or a Thread.
Discussion Board All Licenses	Course Discussion column; Thread Detail: Flagged forum	Displays a visual indicator for a flagged forum or a thread.
Discussion Board All Licenses	Course Discussions and Thread Detail Date columns: Time	The time of the most recent change to a forum and a thread.
Discussion Board All Licenses	Course Discussions and Thread Detail: Unread Posts – clickable number icon	User can select the number of unread posts to be directed to the unread posts.

COMPONENT – SUBSYSTEM/ LICENSE	CHANGE/NEW FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Discussion Board All Licenses	Thread Detail: New Replies to My Post – clickable number icon	Displays the number of new replies to a particular user's post. Selecting the number will direct the user to the text of the posts.
Discussion Board All Licenses	Thread Detail> Quote	Selecting this icon in a post will direct the Instructor to the Reply to a Post page, and will paste the text into the Message Box.
Discussion Board All Licenses	Thread Detail> Previous Post	Selecting this icon will direct the Instructor to the previous post in the thread.
Discussion Board All Licenses	Modify Forum page: time and date restrictions	Forum moderator can now set the time and date restrictions of a forum.
Blackboard Content System - Tools Blackboard Content System License	A new icon for Metadata Templates	Gives Instructors the ability to navigate to the Metadata page
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Add Templates	Allows Instructors to create and modify their own metadata template; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Manage Attributes	Displays the attributes or fields created and/or usable for Instructor for Metadata; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Modify	Allows Instructors to modify Metadata; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Copy	Allows Instructors to copy metadata; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Remove	Allows Instructor to remove Metadata; may be restricted on the System Administrator level

COMPONENT – SUBSYSTEM/ LICENSE	CHANGE/NEW FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Modify>Properties	Allows Instructors to modify the name and description of the template; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Modify>Form Design	Allows Instructors to modify the fields, labels, and organization of the form; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata Templates Blackboard Content System License	Modify>Availability	Modify the availability of the template; may be restricted on the System Administrator level
Blackboard Content System – Metadata templates Blackboard Content System License	Run Reports	Allows Instructors to run available reports
Blackboard Content System – Tools Blackboard Content System License	Workflow Activities renamed My Workflows	Accesses My Workflows page, where Instructors can organize and manage their Workflows; impacts all users of the content system
Content System – My Content Blackboard Content System License	Added Recycle folder	A storage area for deleted content items; all tool available to users for other content items are available in the Recycle bin.
Blackboard Content System – Recycle Blackboard Content System License	Empty Bin	Allows the user the ability to permanently delete content items from the system
Blackboard Community System – Blackboard Learning Environment Connector Tab Blackboard Vista/CE License with Community	Connector tab containing Connector modules	Allows Vista/CE Instructors to access their Vista/CE sections/courses and tools via the Bb AS Community System

COMPONENT – SUBSYSTEM/ LICENSE	CHANGE/NEW FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Blackboard Community System – My Institution tab Blackboard Vista/CE License with Community	Added Vista/CE sections/courses to My Institution Course List and Courses > My Courses	Allows Vista/CE users to enter their Vista/CE sections/courses from within the My Institution tab and the Courses tab.
Blackboard Content System – Courses and Users areas Blackboard Vista/CE License with Community and Content	Automatically create a Course/User folder when a Vista/CE Course/User is added	Allows Vista/CE users to take advantage of the Content System functionality through the Blackboard Community System Content Collection tab.
Blackboard Outcomes System – Learning System Associations Blackboard Vista/CE License with Outcomes	Vista/CE courses/users added	Allows Administrators to associate Outcomes System Sections to Vista/CE sections and to affiliate OS Person Records to Vista/CE users.

COMPATIBILITY MATRIXES

Overview

This section of the document includes information on the following:


- [End User Compatibility Matrix](#) – Reviews which end-user browsers and operating systems are supported with this release.

END USER CONFIGURATION MATRIX

End User Configuration Guidelines

End users must use a certified or compatible operating system and browser configuration with the *Blackboard Academic Suite*, Release 7.3.

		Windows® Operating Systems			Mac® Operating Systems		
		2000	XP	Vista Desktop	10.2	10.3	10.4
Microsoft® Internet Explorer® Web Browsers	5.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	5.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	6	C	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	7	N/A	P	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
Netscape® and Mozilla® Web Browsers	NS 7.1	C	C	✓	C	C	N/A
	NS 8.0	C	✓	P	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Firefox 1.0	C	C	N/A	C	C	C
	Firefox 1.5				N/A	C	✓
	Firefox 2.0	N/A	P	✓	N/A	N/A	P
Web Browsers Apple® Safari®	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	C	N/A	N/A
	1.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	C	N/A
	1.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A
	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓

KEY	
	Certified – fully tested and supported
C	Compatible – key application areas tested
N/A	Not tested – specified Browser is not supported for the Operating System
P	Provisional – will test on Beta versions of new platforms and browsers. Certification is dependant on release by 3 rd parties

* All configurations marked as Compatible and have undergone a limited engineering analysis to test areas of the *Blackboard Academic Suite* that may have browser issues. Additional information on known browser issues may be found in the Knowledge Base.

** Microsoft Windows 2000 supported configurations are considered compatible when run on Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows ME.

*** Gecko is the shared rendering engine at the heart of the Firefox 1.0, Netscape 7.1 and Mozilla 1.5 browsers, which are all considered compatible browsers. Only Firefox has undergone testing that qualifies it as Certified.

**** The Safari Web browser and the Gecko browsers for Apple do not currently fully support the Live Connect technology used by some features in the *Blackboard Learning System*. The Equation Editor, Collaboration tool and SCORM Content type may experience issues when these browsers are used. See the Knowledge Base articles 181-2429, 181-2428, 181-2431, 181-2432 for detailed information.

*****The preview version of Mozilla Firefox (version 0.10.0) is not supported.

SUPPORTED PATHS FOR IMPORTING AND RESTORING COURSES

Supported Paths for Blackboard Academic Suite Release 7

The table below identifies the supported paths for importing or restoring a course that was exported or archived from an earlier version. Certified paths are fully tested and supported by Blackboard. Compatible paths are not fully tested but should function correctly based on past performance.

SOURCE*	SUPPORT
Academic Suite Release 7	Certified
Academic Suite Release 6	Certified
Blackboard ML	Certified
Blackboard 5.5**	Certified
Blackboard 5.0**	Compatible
CourseInfo 4	Not Supported

*Paths for Importing and Restoring courses are not backward compatible. Courses may be Imported or Restored to a newer version, but courses from a newer version may not be Imported or Restored to an earlier version.

**Blackboard 5 and Blackboard 5.5 did not include an Archive and Restore function. Courses from these releases may be imported but courses cannot be restored with user data and interactions intact.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

About Reference Materials

A full suite of reference materials is available with the Academic Suite. All materials are located in the Reference Center at <http://behind.blackboard.com>. These materials include:

MANUAL NAME	DESCRIPTION
<i>Blackboard Academic Suite End User Manuals</i>	
User Manual	Reference manual detailing the tools and functions included in the platform from the general user perspective. This manual includes information on the <i>Blackboard Learning System</i> and the <i>Blackboard Community System</i> .
Instructor Manual	Reference manual providing detailed information about building and managing courses and organizations. This manual includes information on the <i>Blackboard Learning System</i> and the <i>Blackboard Community System</i> .
<i>Blackboard Content System End User Manuals</i>	
User Manual	Reference manual detailing the tools and functions included in the system for all end users. This manual includes information on the <i>Blackboard Content System</i> .