



Blackboard Instructor Reference Guide:

Managing Blackboard Courses between Semesters

This guide has been created to help instructors at Viterbo University understand how to manage their Blackboard courses between semesters as effectively as possible, without losing any work.

The Blackboard Course Creation and Removal Schedule

All on-campus courses offered at Viterbo University are automatically provided with their own Blackboard sites each semester. These Blackboard sites are added to and removed from our University's Blackboard system three times each year according to the following schedule:

1. Each March, courses for the upcoming Summer semester are added, and courses from the previous Fall semester are removed.
2. Each August, courses for the upcoming Fall semester are added, and courses from the previous Spring semester are removed.
3. Each November, courses for the upcoming Spring semester are added, and courses from the previous Summer semester are removed.

Automatic Enrollment of Students

All courses added automatically to our Blackboard system following the above schedule will manage their own student enrollments for you. This means that at the beginning of a new semester, all students enrolled in a given course will be added to that course's Blackboard site automatically. Also, if a student transfers into or drops out from a course even after that course has begun, then that student's enrollment will be updated automatically on Blackboard within 24 hours of the student's transfer or drop.

Exceptions to Automatic Enrollment

Not all Blackboard sites will have their student enrollments handled automatically. Any Blackboard site created by special request—including merged Blackboard sites, Blackboard sites created for entire departments or programs, or any Blackboard sites created for extracurricular activities—will require that you manually add all the necessary students enrollments to these sites yourself. This also means that you will need to manually update student enrollments in the event that a student transfers into or drops out from your specially requested Blackboard site.

Concerning Reuse of Blackboard Courses

No Blackboard course should ever be reused once its semester has come to an end. If such a Blackboard course is ever reused, then that course will be removed from the Blackboard system the next time courses are removed, in mid-semester. Instead of reusing Blackboard courses, instructors are encouraged to create and download archives of their courses each semester. Course archives can safely be reused from one semester to the next without causing any danger of lost work.

[Archiving Blackboard Courses](#)

As mentioned on the previous page, instructors are strongly encouraged to create and download archives of their Blackboard courses each semester. A Blackboard course archive is a singular file in which almost all the content from a Blackboard course is stored for later use. These archive files may be copied into new Blackboard courses at the beginning of each semester, effectively moving content from one Blackboard course into another. The best time to archive your Blackboard courses is at the end of each semester, after final grades have been submitted.

Content Stored in a Course Archive

The content stored in a Blackboard course archive includes all the content added to that course by its instructor. This includes documents, powerpoint presentations and assignments, as well as links to external websites, discussion board forums, gradebook settings, and tests.

Content not Stored in a Course Archive

The content not stored in a course archive includes any files or pieces of data related to the work of individual students. This includes student enrollments, documents submitted by students to the digital dropbox, messages posted by students in a discussion board, and the individual grades of students in the gradebook.

How to Create a Course Archive

Creating a Blackboard course archive involves a two-step process. In *Step One* of this process you will need to prompt the Blackboard system to prepare a course archive for download. In *Step Two*, you will need to actually download that archive to your desktop or to a flashdrive. If you fail to follow *Step Two*, and do not download your course archive to your desktop or to a flashdrive, then you will lose your archive along with the rest of your course when it is removed from the Blackboard system the next time courses are removed.

To create a course archive, you should try following these steps. First, enter your course's Control Panel and select the [Archive Course](#) link, located near the lower left corner of the page. On the page that follows, you should click on the [Archive](#) button, located near the upper left corner of the page. After that, you should press [Submit](#). At this point the Blackboard system will begin assembling an archive file for you. This completes *Step One*. The next paragraph will describe how to download your archive file once the Blackboard system has finished assembling it.

While your archive file is still being assembled, you should return to your course's Control Panel and wait about five minutes. After the five minutes are up, you should try clicking on the [Archive Course](#) link again, just as you did in *Step One*. If the archive file has been assembled successfully, then you should see a new link located in the middle of this page beginning with the name, "ArchiveFile". Try downloading this file to your desktop or to a flashdrive. Once you have done this, you will have completed *Step Two*. Your last task is to make sure that your archive file is stored somewhere memorable, where it will be easy to find again after a semester or two have gone by.

For a complete video tutorial illustrating how a course archive is created and downloaded, please try following this link: http://www.viterbo.edu/academic/titleiii/bb_tutorial/archiving/archiving.html#bottom

Importing Blackboard Archives

Blackboard course archives are not particularly useful by themselves. If you try to open one from your desktop, you will find that it is filled with a large number of files whose names and purposes are difficult to decipher. Do not attempt to open these files individually, and do not attempt to separate them from their original archive. The only way to make a Blackboard course archive useful again is by importing it back into Blackboard.

How to Import a Course Archive

Blackboard course archives should only be imported into empty Blackboard courses. The empty courses generated in anticipation of each upcoming semester are the perfect candidates for importing archives into.

To import a course archive into a new, empty Blackboard site, you should try following these steps. First, enter your empty course's Control Panel and select the ***Import Package*** link, located near the lower left corner of the page. On the page that follows, you should click on the ***Browse...*** button located near the top of the page, and then, in the window that pops up, browse for the course archive which you would like to import. Next, under the "***Select Course Materials***" section of the page, you should check all the available boxes. Lastly, you should press the ***Submit*** button.

After this, you will get a message informing you that the Blackboard system is currently importing your archive file into your Blackboard course. This process should typically take no longer than five minutes to complete. After the five minutes are up, you should try navigating through your course to confirm that all the content from your archive has been imported successfully.

For a complete video tutorial illustrating how to import a course archive back into Blackboard, please try following this link: http://www.viterbo.edu/academic/titleiii/bb_tutorial/importing/importing.html#bottom

Merging Courses

If you are interested in merging multiple sections of a given course together into a single Blackboard site, then you will need to send a special request to Isaac Kulka, at igkulka@viterbo.edu. When making such a request, always be sure to include the course and section numbers which you are interested in merging together.

Student Enrollments in Merged Courses

As stated above, merged courses are only created by special request. This means that, as with any other Blackboard sites created by special request, merged courses will not manage their enrollments automatically for you. Student enrollments in a merged Blackboard course must be managed by hand.

Concerning Reuse of Merged Courses

It is important that you do not reuse a merged Blackboard course once its semester has come to an end. Reusing merged Blackboard courses is dangerous for the same reason that reusing regular Blackboard courses is dangerous: they will be removed from the system the next time courses are removed the following semester.

Managing Unused Blackboard Sections

When a merged course is created for you, the original, separate sections of that course will not be removed from the Blackboard system. Instead, they will remain online for many months to come. If you are interested in learning how to remove any of these unused sections from your Blackboard homepage, please try reading over the *Managing your Blackboard Homepage* section of this document, found on the next page.

[Managing your Blackboard Homepage](#)

Each semester, many new courses will be added to your Blackboard homepage, some of which you may decide to use, and some of which you may not. As time goes by, unused courses may begin to clutter up your Blackboard homepage, making it difficult to tell your active Blackboard courses apart from the unused ones. You have the ability to remove these unused courses from your Blackboard homepage.

Removing Unused Courses from your Blackboard Homepage

To remove unused courses from your Blackboard homepage, try following these steps. First, log into Blackboard and locate the **My Courses** box, located in the upper right corner of your Blackboard homepage. Next, try clicking on the circular button with a pencil inside it, located in the upper right corner of your 'My Courses' box. On the page that follows, try deselecting the check-boxes located next to each course you would like to see removed from your homepage. Press the **Submit** button when you are finished.

For an illustrated example of how to remove courses from your Blackboard homepage, try following this link: http://www.viterbo.edu/academic/titleiii/other_files/bb_homepage.html

[Course Availability](#)

All courses in Viterbo's Blackboard system are marked as either available or unavailable. *Available* courses are accessible to students, while *unavailable* courses are completely invisible and inaccessible to students. Unavailable courses will always have the word, "*unavailable*," listed next to their names on your Blackboard homepage, while available courses will not.

Every Blackboard course added to our system is marked *unavailable* by default. There are no exceptions to this rule. This is useful for a number of reasons: first and foremost, this means that no Blackboard course will ever be made available to students before its instructor has had a chance to finish preparing it. This also insures that extra Blackboard sites (those not used during a given semester) will not confuse students by showing up on their Blackboard homepages.

When to Make Blackboard Courses Available

You should always be sure to make your active Blackboard courses available to students at the beginning of each semester. In some cases you may even find it useful to make your Blackboard courses available up to a week in advance of the current semester. No Blackboard course will ever be made available to your students until you take the action to make it available yourself.

To make a Blackboard course available to your students, try following these steps. First, open your course's Control Panel and select the **Settings** link, located near the lower left corner of the page. From the Settings page you should click on the **Course Availability** link, located near the top of the page. From the Course Availability page, where it reads, "*Make this course available to users?*" you should select: **Yes**. Lastly, don't forget to press the **Submit** button.

For an illustrated example of how to make your courses available, please try following this link: http://www.viterbo.edu/academic/titleiii/other_files/bb_availability.html

When to Make Blackboard Courses Unavailable

At the end of each semester you are strongly encouraged to make each of your Blackboard courses from that semester unavailable to your students. Blackboard courses which are not made unavailable at the end of the semester may confuse your students by continuing to show up on their Blackboard homepages even though those courses are no longer being used. To make a Blackboard course unavailable, simply follow the steps outlined in the previous paragraph and select, **No**, next to the question: "*Make this course available to users?*"

[Contact Information](#)

If you are in need of technical support related to Viterbo University's Blackboard system, please contact Isaac Kulka at igkulka@viterbo.edu or 608-796-3867.