Blackboard Executive Summary

Blackboard is a web-based course management system developed by Blackboard, Inc. and its partners. It is used by many educational institutions around the world.

Blackboard supports teaching and learning by the use of tools and has grown to house an impressive suite of tools covering the entire learning process. Blackboard tries to supply every possible tool that the user, whether it be instructor, student or observer, could possibly need throughout the entire learning process so that the user does not have to leave the Blackboard system.

A number of tools between Blackboard and EEE overlap. Blackboard also offers tools such as Journals and Virtual Classroom. Tools that are considered most essential to an LMS, such as Gradebook and Quizzes, are offered by both systems. Other tools, such as Calendar and Announcements, also overlap. Other Blackboard tools, like Blogs and Wikis, are not offered through EEE but rather through the UCI campus. In this way, the tool is available but not integrated with EEE and tools like Gradebook. Blackboard’s level of configuration offered to instructors for some tools goes to a very fine level of detail and control.

In both systems, many of the same tools are available to both students and instructors; however, the role of the user determines which features and settings are available. The Blackboard system administrator may also turn on/off access to tools and features. If the system administrator has turned on access to a feature, the instructor may be able to turn it off for students. The instructor can also control what tools and views the student sees. For instance, the instructor can determine which page or tool appears first on a student’s course home page. That level of control is not available with EEE.

Blackboard contains many gradable activities, assignments, blogs, discussions, journals, self and peer assessments, tests and surveys, wikis, etc., which are directly linked to the grade book. Group and collaborative work is supported by way of Groups and Sections, Self and Peer Assessments and can also be a gradable activity. The assignment, submission, testing, and grading circuit is tightly integrated and Rubrics are also woven into learning activities.

Of particular note, Blackboard has a SafeAssignments module which is a plagiarism detection service and an Early Warning System that alerts instructors to high risk students.

Blackboard offers a wealth of help documentation, through text, images and video.

Blackboard’s software is proprietary; however, developers can customize different aspects of the system. There is also high degree of customization and options available within each tool for the instructor to configure. There is a degree of customization available for both instructors and students.

EEE vs. Blackboard Toolset Comparison Chart

| ***Feature*** | ***EEE*** | ***Blackboard*** | ***Details*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Managing teaching assistant permissions** | Yes (Assistant Editor) | ? | Tool to add assistants and manage their tool permissions. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Archive of emails from instructors and TAs** | Yes (MyClassMessages) | ? | Email archive of class-related emails. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Customizable Pages** | Yes | Yes | Options to customize appearance of dashboards, pages, order of content, etc. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Announcements** | Yes (Announcements) | Yes (Announcements) | Tool to make class announcements to students. |
| Timed announcements (range of dates) | No | ? |   |
| WYSIWYG editor | No | Yes |   |
| Attachments | No | ? |   |
| Email notifications | No | ? |   |
| RSS URL | No | ? |   |
| Search | Yes | ? |   |
| Mark as Permanent | No | Yes |  |
| Images, Multimedia, Links | No | Yes |  |
| Re-order announcements | No | Yes |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Calendar** | Yes (Calendar) | Yes (Calendar) | A calendar with appointments such as classes or due dates of assignments. |
| Add any appointment? | Yes | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Calendar for recurring events** | Yes (MyPlanner) | Yes (Calendar) | A calendar for weekly recurring events. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Chat** | Yes (Chat) | Yes (Chat) | Real-time chat rooms between instructors and students. |
| Chat logs | Yes | Yes |   |
| Specific permissions | No | Yes |   |
| Multiple chat rooms | Yes | ? |   |
| Multi-course chat rooms | Yes | Yes |   |
| Private chat messages | No | Yes |   |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Class mailing lists** | Yes (ClassMail Manager) | Kind of (through the Send Email tool) | Management of mailing lists for easy email to the entire class. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Class websites** | Yes (WebsiteManager and its sub-tools) | No (but the Blackboard site is a website in itself) | Custom websites to display information, upload class files and assignments, etc. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Classmates** | Yes (Classmates) | Yes (through Roster tool) | List of students in the class (for students). |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Counter** | Yes | No | Counts web page loads. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Discussion** | Yes (feature of Class Mail Lists tool) | Yes (Discussions) | Class mailing list used for discussion purposes. |
| Can be moderated? | ? | Yes |  |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |  |
| Archive | Yes | Yes |  |
| Search | ? | Yes |  |
| Statistics | No | Yes |  |
| Create forums and threads | No | Yes |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Dropbox for uploading and sharing files** | Yes (DropBox) | Yes (Submission and Assignments) | File sharing tool for instructors to make class files available and for students to upload work. |
| Editable files on site | No | No |   |
| Desktop support | No | ? |   |
| Deadlines | Yes | Yes |   |
| RapidReturn-like functionality | Yes | Yes |   |
| Groups | Yes | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Gradebook** | Yes (GradeBook) | Yes (Grade Center) | Tool for instructors to input grades and (optionally) display grades to students. |
| Multiple gradebooks per course | Yes | ? |   |
| Import/export | Yes | Yes |   |
| Categories & weights | Yes | Yes |   |
| Grade distribution | Yes | Yes |   |
| Statistics | Yes | Yes |   |
| Access logs | Yes | Yes |   |
| Integration with other tools | No? | Yes |   |
| Different grade scales (per assignment) | Yes | Yes |   |
| Grade overrides | Yes | Yes |   |
| Drop grades | Yes | Yes |  |
| Automatic grading | No | Yes |   |
| Grading rubrics | Yes | Yes |  |
| Extra credit assignments | Yes | Yes |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Instructor and TA evaluations** | Yes (Evaluations) | No | Evaluations of instructors and teaching assistants initiated by them or their department. |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Internet bookmarks** | Yes (Bookmarks) | Yes (found in several places) | List of favorite websites or bookmarks. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Message boards or discussion forums** | Yes (MessageBoard) | Yes (Messages and Discussions) | Place for instructor and student discussion. |
| Gradebook integration | No | No |   |
| Moderation tools | Yes (in an upcoming update) | No |   |
| Security (passwords and access control) | Yes | Yes |   |
| Multiple courses per forum | Yes | No |   |
| User tracking | Yes | No |   |
| Email notifications | Yes | No |   |
| Attachments | Yes | ? |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Podcasts** | Yes (Podcasts) | No | Tool to make available audio or video podcasts. |
| RSS feed | No | No |   |
| File upload | No | No |   |
| URL link | Yes | No |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Profile page and/or social networking** | Yes (MyEEE Profile) | Yes (Profile) | Social networking feature with privacy controls so that only you or your connections (friends/contacts) can see photos, staff info, student info, social info, etc. |
| Privacy controls | Yes (but limited) | Yes |   |
| Social networking | No | Yes |   |
| Notification controls | No | Yes |   |
| Private messaging | No | ? | This is separate from the private messaging tool. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Quizzes** | Yes (Quiz) | Yes (Quiz) | Quizzes and tests. |
| Templates | Yes | ? |   |
| Saved Q&A (question pool) | Yes | Yes |   |
| Image support (within questions) | Yes | No |   |
| Attachment support (within questions) | No | Yes |   |
| Security | Yes (via enrollment restrictions and participation password) | Yes (via password) |   |
| Timed window | Yes | Yes |   |
| Feedback/release options | Yes | Yes |   |
| Late submissions | No | Yes |   |
| Multiple submissions (and limit) | Yes | Yes |   |
| Question randomization | Yes (randomize order) | No |   |
| Anonymous grading | No | Yes |   |
| Mark individual answers for review | No | Yes |   |
| Import | No | Yes |   |
| Creation with markup (option) | No | Yes |   |
| More options | No | Yes |   |
| Multiple question formats | Yes | Yes |   |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |   |
| Rubric | No | ? |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Room locator** | Yes (RoomFinder) | No | Tool to locate rooms on campus. |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Rosters** | Yes (Rosters) | Yes (Roster and Users) | List of enrolled students in the class (for instructor/TA use). |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Sign-up sheets** | Yes (SignupSheet) | Yes (available through and limited to Groups and Sections) | Tool for participants to sign up for items or choices. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Surveys** | Yes (Survey) | Yes (part of Tests, Surveys and Pools) | Tool for surveys. |
| Templates | Yes | Yes |   |
| Saved Q&A (question pool) | ? | Yes |   |
| Image support (within questions) | Yes | Yes |   |
| Attachment support (within questions) | No | Yes |   |
| Security | Yes (via enrollment restrictions and participation password) | Yes (via password) |   |
| Timed window | Yes | Yes |   |
| Feedback/release options | Yes | Yes |   |
| Late submissions | ? | Yes |   |
| Multiple submissions (and limit) | ? | Yes |   |
| Question randomization | ? | No |   |
| Anonymous grading | No | No (Surveys are not graded) |   |
| Mark individual answers for review | No | Yes |   |
| Import | No | Yes |   |
| Creation with markup (option) | No | ? |   |
| More options | No | Yes |   |
| Multiple question formats | Yes | Yes |   |
| Security (passwords and access control) | ? | Yes |   |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Tasks** | Yes (My Tasks) | Yes (Tasks) | Displays activities and assignments that need to be completed. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Wiki**  | Yes (Wiki) | Yes (Wiki) | Collaborative document creation. |
| Site-specific wiki | No | Yes |   |
| Access controls | Yes (UCInetID needed) | Yes (defines role) |   |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Adaptive Release** | No | Yes | Release content to student based on rules. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Basic Learning Tools Interoperability support** | No | Yes (BasicLTI) | Support for tools that use IMS Basic Learning Tools Interoperability standard. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Tools for displaying information** | No | Yes | A means of displaying information over a series of pages, like showing students how to do an assignment or a biology concept. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Content Areas** | No | Yes | Manage class content in one place. Customizable. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Address Book** | No | Yes (Address Book) | Tool to maintain contacts within Blackboard. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Assignments** | No | Yes (Assignments) | Tool to create assignments for students. |
| Cross-tool export | No | Yes |   |
| SafeAssignment | No | Yes |  |
| Submission history | Yes | Yes |  |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |  |
| Grading rubric | No | Yes |  |
| View instructor feedback | Yes | Yes |  |
| Extra Credit | Yes | Yes |  |
| Different submission types | ? | Yes |  |
| WYSIWYG editor | No | Yes |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Blogs** | No | Yes (Blogs) | Tool for blogging. |
| Customizable | No | Yes |  |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |  |
|   |   |   |   |
| **Built-in RSS feed viewer\*\*\*** | No | Yes (News) | Tool to display an RSS feed within the Blackboard site. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Built-in web content viewer\*\*\*** | No | ? | Tool to display an external website within the Blackboard site. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Contacts** | No | Yes (Contacts) | Tool for instructors only to look up contact information for teaching staff in course. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Custom site stylesheet** | No (on EEE, yes on EasyWebsite or AdvancedWebspace) | ? | Custom stylesheet to change the look of the site. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Early Warning System** | No | Yes | Generate notifications to instructor when student performance falls below set rules. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Email** | No | Yes (Send Email) | Send email from within Blackboard. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Equation Editor** | No | Yes  | Allows equations to be made within text editors. Editors available: WebEQ and MathML. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Evaluations (for reviewing work)** | No | Yes (Evaluation System) | A tool to evaluate student submitted work. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Glossary** | No | Yes (Glossary) | A list of terms and definitions. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Groups and Sections** | No | Yes (Groups and Sections) | Tool to create work groups. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Journals** | No | Yes (Journals) | Tool for creating and maintaining journals. |
| Search | No | No |  |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Learning Modules** | No | Yes (Modules) | Tool for posting course content in modules that can be released to students by a set of rules. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Lesson Plans** | No | Yes (Lesson Plans) | Tool for organizing course plans and contents; can be released to students by a set of rules. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Mashups** | No | Yes (Mashups) | Tool that supports content from sources such as Flickr, Slideshare, YouTube, etc. in standard image and video formats. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Portfolios** | No | Yes (Portfolios) | Portfolios are a means to display information (like a resume) or show work (like art and writing, just as you would in a normal portfolio). It has privacy/publishing controls, statistics, etc. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Post'Em support** | No | No | Tool supporting the Post'Em program, an external grades/feedback tool. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Private messaging** | No | Yes (Messages) | Private messaging from user to user on Blackboard. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Project site** | No | ? | A site (separate from a course site or portfolio site) that is used for collaboration on projects. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Reports** | No | Yes (Reports) | Generate reports with statistical information. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Rubrics** | No | Yes | A systematic scoring guideline to evaluate students’ performance. |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **SafeAssignments** | No | Yes (SafeAssignments**)** | Tool to check for student plagiarism. |
| Integrated with gradebook | No | Yes |   |
| Grading rubrics | No | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Section/discussion information** | Kind of (automatically associated through enrollment) | Yes (Groups and Section) | Information on sections and discussions. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Self and Peer Assessments** | No | Yes  | Tool to guide students in assessing their own work and that of peers. |
|  |   |   |   |
| **Site statistics** | No | Yes (Statistics) | Tool to generate site statistics. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Syllabus** | No | Yes (Syllabus) | Tool to display or provide a download for a syllabus. |
| WYSIWYG editor | No | ? |   |
| Attachment support | No | Yes |   |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Textbook** | No | Yes (Textbook) | Display course materials. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Virtual Classroom** | No | Yes (Virtual Classroom) | Set of tools to simulate a classroom. |
|  |  |  |  |
| Activity Logs | Mostly yes | Mostly yes |   |
| Participant's own activity | A little | Yes |   |
| Owner's logs | Yes | ? |   |
| Admin logs | Yes | ? |   |