What's new in the Ultra Experience?

Beginning with SU2018, UMBC’s Blackboard will receive monthly updates as part of Blackboard’s continuous delivery model. As a software industry standard practice, continuous delivery updates are small, may include maintenance, enhancements and/or new features, and are delivered on a more frequent and consistent basis.

Most enhancements are for Ultra courses, but any applicable updates for original Blackboard courses are noted in the table.

The most recent updates are posted to the top of this page. View previous updates to the Ultra Experience.

August 8, 2019 (v3700.7)

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<tr>
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<th>Ultra Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question pools &amp; random sets</td>
<td>To help build assessments quickly and encourage academic integrity, instructors can now create question pools in the Ultra Course View. With question pools, students receive different sets of questions to answer. Instructors can add questions from all existing tests, assignments, and question banks in their courses. In the Ultra Course View, question pools replace the Original Course View’s random blocks and question sets. Instructors can create as many question pools as they want and add, edit, and remove questions in the pools. Edits appear anywhere questions are used.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show/hide test answers</td>
<td>In Ultra assessments, instructors can decide if students see the answers to questions that were answered incorrectly. For example, instructors may want students to see which questions they missed on a multiple attempt assessment, but don’t want to show the correct answers. Instructors may also hide answers until all students complete their submissions.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultra organizations</td>
<td>New organizations may be created with the Ultra interface. Existing orgs can be converted to Ultra.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:

- Intermittent loading in Activity Stream on Ultra base navigation (dashboard).
- Assignments submitted by Students are properly rendered in the New Box View for inline grading.

**BUG FIXES:** These issues were corrected with this update.

- Ultra Discussion containing video content from LTI deep link doesn’t show the entire video preview. It forces it to be scrollable.
- When accessing Discussion Analysis in an Ultra Course, Analysis shows as pending for all Users.
- Discussion Board post counter is not showing all of a User’s posts.
- Cannot view Student attempts for Assessments after submission when the Student is using a different Language Pack than the Instructor.
- When grading an attempt for an Assessment, clicking the oval Rubric button leads to an error message.
- In Essay Questions of a Test, the Points/Save Answer box covers part of the Question Text on lower Screen Resolutions.

July 11, 2019 (v3700.5)

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<tr>
<td>Google Suite Integration</td>
<td>Users will be to access their UMBC Google storage from within their profile or directly upload content in the Ultra Course View.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:

- To ensure privacy, only instructor names—not instructor usernames—appear to students throughout the Ultra experience.

**BUG FIXES:** These issues were corrected with this update.

- Tests with exceptions will appear properly to students.
- Rubrics for group assignments in Ultra courses will now be visible to students.
- Disabled students will not appear in group assignments.
- Content items within iFrames should appear properly to students.
- When grading an item for more than 25 Students, the grades from the second page will no longer show up on the first page.

June 7, 2019 (v3700.3)
Parallel Marking

For higher stakes assessments, a double marking process is sometimes used in which each student’s submission is evaluated by two graders and a final grader reviews those evaluations to make the final decision on a student’s grade. This approach intends to reduce bias and is often paired with student anonymity. When setting up an assignment in the Ultra Course View, instructors can enable parallel grading and select non-student course members to act as graders and reconcilers. Instructors can also hide student names to prevent unintended bias.

This feature is known as Delegated Grading in an Original course.

Import external calendar to Blackboard

Instructors and students often use calendars to organize and keep track of events. Access to a course calendar is crucial to meeting deadlines and overall success. Having access to all events – both personal and academic – in one place helps keep everyone on track. In this release, users can synchronize external calendars with Blackboard Learn, building on the previously released capabilities.

Display course banner on Courses page

A new enhancement to the Courses page provides users with an option to view courses in list or grid mode. Stock images randomly display for each course card when grid mode is active. The banner image can be replaced by faculty who would prefer to personalize the course visual.

Original courses with existing banners will find those images are preloaded on the Courses page. The banner images uploaded through the Courses page will NOT pass over to the course regardless of whether it is Original or Ultra.

Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:

- Previously, the Courses page in the Ultra experience listed a user's oldest courses first. The order has been flipped and now the newest courses are listed first. If a user designates any courses as favorites, those courses still appear first in the list.
- The pages for Courses and Organizations are now available in list and grid mode. Instructors /leaders can personalize the banner image that displays with the grid card or use a stock image provided by Blackboard. The banner does not display in the course. Learn more: How do I customize my banner image on the Courses or Organizations page?

Bug Fixes: These issues were corrected with this update.

- When a student submit multiple attempts on a test in quick succession, the system’s responsiveness will no longer slow or stop.
- Ultra courses with longer names will no longer appear with unexpected symbols.

May 2, 2019 (v3700.0)

Student preview

Instructors want to be confident that their courses are well-designed and function as intended—before their students see them. Instructors can use student preview to review the course content. They can also validate the course behaviors, such as those that control course content availability or require a particular interaction from the students to be triggered. With student preview, instructors can experience their courses exactly as their students do.

Start student preview from anywhere within an Ultra course. The preview creates user in your course that you can use to view everything as a student would.

Question banks

With this release, instructors can now directly import question banks, including question pools that have been exported from Original courses and packages of questions that have been purchased from a publisher. These questions are then available for use and reuse across the assessments in that course.

As with any conversion from Original to Ultra, question types that are not yet supported are dropped during the processing of the imported file.

Individual feedback on group assignment

In this update, faculty can provide feedback for an entire group and individual feedback for each student. Group feedback is seen by all students in the group while individual feedback is only visible to the instructor and student.

Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:

- The Collaborate link, which previously said Course Room, is now updated to say Blackboard Collaborate on the Details & Action panel of the Ultra Course View.
BUG FIXES: These issues were corrected with this update.

- Students will be able to download assignment annotations without error.
- The Math editor in Original courses should no longer display broken images to equations.

April 4, 2019 (v3600.0)

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<tr>
<td>Share Bb Calendar with external services</td>
<td>In this release, users can synchronize their Blackboard Learn Ultra calendars to external calendars. Generate a URL to share course calendar details with an external service. Share the URL only with trusted sources. When you connect your Blackboard Learn calendar to an external calendar, all course events appear one year in the past and into the future.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Review Blackboard’s documentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Third-party information on Activity Stream | With this release, the Activity Stream more accurately reports on third-party content to keep everyone more up to date. Specifically, LTI and manual grade column notifications will update in the Activity Stream when:  
  - The item transitions from due to overdue  
  - The item’s due date is updated  
  - The item is deleted  
  - The item is graded  
  - The item’s visibility is changed | Yes | Yes | Review Blackboard’s documentation |
| Course Facilitator Role | New Facilitator role for courses, which contains a set of default privileges regarding course calendar, discussions, gradebook, announcements, materials, and groups. Course members can be granted this role to help maintain the pace of the course throughout the term or as needed.  
This release also includes two new granular privileges to grant a user the ability to create or delete a discussion in the Ultra Course View. | Yes | Yes | Review UMBC’s documentation |

Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:

- In this release, you’ll notice a redesigned create content menu when you click on the purple (x) to accommodate additional upcoming options in course content, gradebook, discussions, and documents.
- Users who subscribe to email notifications will notice Blackboard updated the message format. The Blackboard branding is smaller and the format is optimized for better appearance on more devices and email clients.
- Users can receive push notifications when someone responds to their discussion in an Ultra course, someone replies to their posts, an instructor creates a new discussion, or when participation deadlines are approaching.

BUG FIXES: This issue was corrected in this update.

- Renaming a course menu link in an Original course will no longer throw an error message.

March 7, 2019 (v3500.11)

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<tr>
<td>Assessment exceptions</td>
<td>Instructors can now grant individual students additional time to access an assessment, even if it is hidden to other students. Additional attempts may also be configured, again for an individual student on an individual assessment. In the future, Blackboard plans to introduce due date exceptions so that students who are granted extended access will not be marked late for submissions made after the original due date.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Already exists</td>
<td>Review Blackboard’s documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regrade questions</td>
<td>With this release, test questions can be edited in one place. These edits, along with any score adjustments, are automatically performed for all submissions that contain the updated question.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Review Blackboard’s documentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Enhanced discussion analytics**
To better inform grading and provide additional insight into the level of engagement in graded discussions, Blackboard added three new metrics to the Discussion Analysis area of the Ultra Course View. In addition to sentence complexity, critical thinking, and counts of responses and replies, graders can view statistics for the number of substantive posts, lexical classification (counts of content and functional words), and the percentage of word variation in a student’s posts for a given discussion.

**Granular notification settings for Activity Stream**
In this release, Activity Stream notification settings are more granular for students and instructors, giving them the option to choose which information they wish to receive. Settings have been reformatted so users can select to receive all notifications at a high level, like notifications for new discussions. Users can also choose to see updates about specific events or activity in their Activity Streams. For example, an instructor can choose to be notified when a blog entry is edited.

Existing settings are carried over and saved in the new format. Visual cues display if all, some, or none of the notification types are selected.

**Granular user privileges for course announcements and calendar**
Announcements: Individuals with these privileges can create course announcements in both course views. Additional entitlements allow users to view draft announcements in addition to posted announcements.

Calendar: Individuals with these privileges can add, edit, and delete course calendar events in both course views. In the Ultra Course View, individuals with these privileges can also add, edit, and delete office hours and course schedules.

Use Case: Faculty who have students working with the Supplemental Instruction-Peer Assisted Study Sessions (SI-PASS) program may request a custom role for those students, allowing them to post announcements while maintaining student privileges in all other parts of the course.

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### Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:

- A word count appears when drafting responses and replies in discussions in the Ultra Course View.
- Instructors can now rename an LTI link from the gradebook in the Ultra Course View.
- Unenrolled users can view announcements in unavailable courses.

**BUG FIXES:** These issues were corrected with this update.

- The Messages page in the Ultra Course View is now responsive for users on mobile devices.
- When copying an Ultra course using SIS, the new course duration was overwritten by the source course. Bb fixed the issue by excluding a duration on the course copy.
- Group submissions in the Ultra Course View now appear consistently in the gradebook.
- Instructors may have received an error message when saving course reports to the Content Collection. Bb fixed the issue.
- A synchronization issue caused unexpected behavior in custom language packs. Bb fixed the issue.
- Course messages with attachments sometimes resulted in an error message asking the user to contact their system administrator. Bb fixed the issue.
- Users may have received an error message when attempting to connect to OneDrive for Business through Blackboard Learn. The vendor has fixed the issue.

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**January 31, 2019 (v3500.9)**

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<tr>
<td>Support for Respondus Lockdown Browser in Ultra Courses</td>
<td>The LockDown Browser is a custom browser that locks down the testing environment within Blackboard Learn, which means that students are unable to copy, print, access other applications, or visit other websites during an online exam. It works seamlessly with Blackboard Learn and is built in to the assessment settings. When instructors configure an assessment to require the LockDown Browser, students will only be able to begin their attempts if they access the assessment with the LockDown Browser. After February, 6 2019, faculty can access this tool in an Ultra course by selecting the Settings area in a test or assignment.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Already exists</td>
<td>Review Blackboard’s documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search gradebook columns and categories</td>
<td>If an instructor needs to check on the status for a single gradebook column or create a simple, filtered view of a specific gradebook category, they can use the search feature. When they select a specific gradebook category across all students, there are additional search options to reduce the scrolling and visual scanning required to quickly verify or filter. Begin typing the title of a column or category in to the gradebook grid view search field. Search results include any columns, categories, or even students who match the search term or phrase. We've included a label within the search results to help distinguish among these three types of results.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Already exists</td>
<td>Review Blackboard’s documentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Push notifications to Blackboard App**

Push notifications for Learn Ultra will allow students to gain direct insight via this notification modal. Notifications may help students stay on top of new content added to their courses, new grades and feedback that have been created for assessed items, and due date reminders for upcoming assessments that need to be completed and submitted.

Note: The corresponding functionality in the Blackboard App will be made available in the coming months so Ultra Courses won't push notifications yet. Users in the Original experience are still able to receive push notifications.

**Miscellaneous Updates & Fixes:**

- To improve performance times and user experience, course messages no longer appear in the activity stream.
- Instructors are now prompted to name content they create in the Ultra Course View.
- Bb improved the logic for grading multiple choice questions when a student selects both correct and incorrect answers in the Ultra Course View.
- Bb improved the course import feature to preserve the content package's folder structure.
- Bb made several accessibility improvements in Ultra:
  - Improved the color contrast ratio for reorder and move icons on the Course Content page.
  - Added a stroke around the panel close button to comply with color contrast ratios.
  - Improved the hover and keyboard states for active elements to be more visually significant.

**BUG FIXES:** These issues were corrected with this update.

- When an instructor attached a file as feedback on a graded discussion, students encountered errors trying to download it.
- When an unread discussion post appeared as a link in the What’s New module, users encountered errors when opening it.
- Calculated questions using exponents in answers in the Original Course View were marked incorrect when students input an acceptable answer.
- Instructors encountered an error when trying to use anonymous grading for attempts still in progress.
- Removed the ability for students to edit graded group discussion forum titles and descriptions.
- Fixed a CSS error that caused text tagged with `<em>` HTML to appear on separate lines.

**January 3, 2019 (v3500.7)**

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Gradebook search &amp; pagination</td>
<td>The Ultra gradebook currently has the ability to search for students using the grid view. With this release, instructors can go to the submission list and quickly locate a particular student to check the status of submissions or access the submission itself. Additionally, Blackboard added pagination to the submission list. The default view is for 25 students, but instructors may also set the page to display 50 or 100 users. This setting is sticky, so a selection of 50 or 100 is retained when instructors leave the submission list and return later.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Already exists</td>
<td>Review Blackboard's documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converting learning modules to Ultra</td>
<td>In December, Blackboard brought the learning modules capability to the Ultra Course View. Starting with this release, learning modules are preserved in course copy, export, import, and restore operations. NOTE: When converting a learning module from the Original Course View to the Ultra Course View, the force sequence requirement is unchecked by default. Additionally, the file and folder structure may be flattened because the Course Content page only supports nested content two folders deep. Student activity in a learning module is removed when converting to Ultra.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Already exists</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated SafeAssig n originality report</td>
<td>The new Originality Report uses Blackboard's Ultra design and includes some new information about a submission's overall risk for being copied from another source. This new report interface is also more responsive for mobile devices and more accessible to screen readers than the old design.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Review Blackboard's documentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructors who make use of Item Analysis in Original courses recognize the benefit this report provides, specifically for reviewing the quality of assessment questions and improving assessments from one term to the next. However, many instructors are either unaware that this report is available or are not familiar with the term “item analysis” and don’t open the report. In the Ultra Course View, Blackboard updated the title to Question Analysis as a way to raise awareness of this powerful report and encourage its use.

Question analysis provides statistics on overall performance, assessment quality, and individual questions. This data helps you recognize questions that might be poor discriminators of student performance. Question analysis is for assessments with questions. You can also download the report with raw question data to analyze it or keep it for future uses.

### Miscellaneous updates & fixes:

- When you access individual students’ attendance record in the Ultra Course View, the date column has been renamed Meeting and now appears first.
- An updated version of the Vital Source Building Block (v3.101.2018040483) is bundled with this release.
- When viewing assessments that were graded using a rubric more than a year ago, users may have noticed a discrepancy between rubric totals and the grade displayed in the Grade Center. Raw data was not affected. Blackboard fixed the issue.

**BUG FIXES:** These issues were corrected with this update.

- When viewing assessments that were graded using a rubric more than a year ago, users may have noticed a discrepancy between rubric totals and the grade displayed in the Grade Center. Raw data was not affected.
- When an Ultra assessment was set to assign automatic zeros, the system wouldn’t log a zero score in the gradebook when a student had saved a draft but not submitted work.
- When the zoom in the browser is set to 175% or higher, the display overlaps and makes it difficult to select the desired link.
- An error may display when attempting to grade a Group attempt for an Assignment.
- When copying a Course with Groups and Group Discussion Boards, all of the Forums are Copied into the new Course even when the “Include only the Forums, with no starter posts” option is selected.
- The keyboard shortcut to cut text will capture more than the selected text. The keyboard shortcut for paste does not convey copied blank lines. This is only in environments/courses using the Ultra experience.
- The database record and the file both remain after the Assignment is deleted, though the file is no longer accessible through the course site. The database record and the file itself should both be removed. If the Instructor goes into the grade center and selects “View grade details” for the Student's submission, then clears the attempt, the file and database record will be removed.