How do I request a new tool or integration for Blackboard?

A wide range of technologies and resources are available to faculty at UMBC to support teaching and learning in various online or hybrid modes in synchronization with Blackboard. Trends and tools evolve quickly, and DoIT recognizes faculty interest in exploring or using these newer technologies. Departments and faculty may request the installation of Blackboard integrations for new third-party technologies, products, and services to support teaching and learning. These new instructional technologies need to be evaluated by DoIT staff before they can be adopted, especially if they must be integrated with Blackboard through a building block or Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI). Be sure to check the list of current integrations to make sure we have not already adopted the tool.

Planning Your Request

Allow at least 90 days for your request to be evaluated and implemented. A full semester is preferred for implementation to ensure the tool or resource is ready and functional. We cannot install a new tool two weeks before a semester starts or in the middle of a semester.

Why do you need so much time?

In addition to ensuring the tool functions as designed within Blackboard, DoIT staff require additional time to evaluate the authentication process with myUMBC, validate the security of student information and grades passing between Blackboard and the third-party, secure training for instructional technology staff, and prepare documentation.

General Questions to Ask Vendors

- How do the students register? Are they required to...
  - Purchase a license?
  - Create an account separate from Blackboard?
- How long do students have access to your platform after class ends?
- What will happen if a student switches sections or drops the course?
- Who do we contact if your platform doesn’t work or stops working?
- Who provides after-hours support for students?
- What training and support will you provide faculty and instructional technology staff?
- How does your platform support accessibility?
- What is the cost for UMBC?
- What other institutions use your platform?

Technical Questions for Vendors

- How is your integration developed?
  - Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) compliant with IMS Standards (preferred)
  - REST API
  - Building block (not compatible with Ultra courses)
- What information does your integration send from Blackboard to your tool? (e.g., first /last name, email, username, role, courseID)
- How do faculty add your integration to their course sites? (e.g., tool link or content links)
  - Does your integration support deep linking to content, activities, assessments, etc.?
  - Does your technical integration team provide custom LTI links to faculty each semester to place into the course shell?
- Does your integration support passing of grades back to the LMS gradebook?
  - How often does this data exchange happen? (e.g., daily vs. manual)
- Does your integration support master course templates, course copy, and parent-child course enrollments?
- Does your integration work with Blackboard’s SaaS environment?
  - Does your integration support the Blackboard’s Ultra Experience? If not, what is your roadmap?

  NOTE: This includes both the new Ultra dashboard interface and course view (as appropriate for the tool)

- Where is your integration hosted?
- Does your integration support single-sign-on (e.g., Shibboleth)?
- What analytics does your integration provide institutions?

Requirements for Engaging with Third-Party Vendors for Blackboard Integrations

DoIT staff should be involved during your demo and evaluation process so we can ask vendors questions about any possible Blackboard integration. Our staff will also be able to evaluate the tool and provide you with an honest assessment of its functionality for your expected use case.
Third-party integrations for Blackboard are typically hosted solutions, some involving an institutional contract and/or licensing fee. If a contract is required, you must follow all procurement and legal requirements. DoIT works closely with procurement and legal services to review all cloud service applications to ensure they meet applicable requirements and regulations, such as FERPA.

To initiate a new cloud service please submit a Software Request Form. If you have questions, please email Joe Kirby, kirby@umbc.edu.

The vendor should expect to offer a certain level of support to faculty/students and to DoIT system admins in the event the integration suffers a failure. Time estimates for implementation are influenced by vendor and instructor response times. We will do our best to meet a requested deadline, but lack of feedback, support, and unforeseen issues can impact the implementation timeline.

Depending on your requested integration, you should also plan to involve the Office of Student Disability Services to ensure the integration complies with accessibility requirements.

If students are expected to purchase the integration as part of a textbook bundle or in lieu of a textbook as a digital resource, please contact the UMBC Bookstore to ensure the ISBN is listed and/or to see if your integration may benefit from the Course Materials Initiative.

Making Your Request

Please open an RT ticket with Instructional Technology and provide the following information:

- Name of tool or service
- Version number, if available
- Vendor and website URL
- Sales rep contact information
- Cost, if known, and responsible party for payment
- Targeted date / semester needed
- Date(s) for testing
- Purpose of the tool or service and how it will enhance your teaching
- Courses(s) and instructors that will use this tool or service
- Approximate number of students in the course(s)
- References for other institutions who use this tool or service, preferably within the University System of Maryland

Department & Faculty Responsibilities

During the evaluation and implementation process, the instructor who requested the tool or resource will be designated as the point of contact with instructional technology staff and will be asked to:

- Assist with testing the tool or resource
- Communicate with instructional technology staff and the vendor as needed
- Notify students about using the tool or resource
- Provide feedback on workflow and documentation

If appropriate to UMBC’s Blackboard site, instructional technology staff will prepare specific documentation within the UMBC FAQs.

NOTE: DoIT will make every effort to thoroughly test a third-party resource before a new Blackboard update is installed -- however, there are circumstances when we will disable or uninstall a tool:

- If the tool no longer works with the latest version of Blackboard. As of the end of SP2018, we update monthly according to Blackboard's schedule.
- If we determine that the tool negatively impacting critical components of the system it is intended to otherwise support.
- If Blackboard advises us that a tool is causing compatibility issues within the cloud infrastructure.

We will make every effort to notify the campus community if this must happen.

Feedback: Correct or Suggest an Article | Request Help