

Blackboard®

Upgrading from the Q4 2016 to the Q2 2018 release? Check out what's new

Highlights of the Blackboard Learn™ 9.1 Q2 2017, Q4 2017 and Q2 2018 releases

The latest releases for Blackboard Learn 9.1 (the Original experience for managed and self-hosted institutions) have delivered many new features and enhancements that significantly improve:



User experience including engagement, mobility and accessibility



Efficiency and ease of use



Assessment and grading



Quality and infrastructure

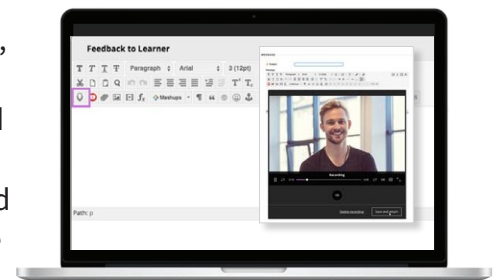


By upgrading from the Q4 2016 release to the Q2 2018 release of Learn, your institution will benefit from an environment that is easier to use, more responsive on mobile devices, higher quality, and more powerful – which means happier, more successful educators and students.

The following release highlights were delivered in the Q2 2018, Q4 2017 and Q2 2017 releases.

User Experience

Record audio and video feedback for students (Q2 2018) – Instructors and graders can increase student engagement by creating a personalized audio or video feedback recording by clicking on the microphone icon in the Content Editor. Students can easily access the recording without the need of a browser plug-in. This feedback functionality is supported in the following areas: Assignment, Test, graded Discussion, graded Wiki, graded Blog, graded Journal, and within a manual grade column. Recordings are stored in the cloud and do not utilize hosting storage allocation or local storage.



Brand color configuration (Q2 2018) – To align more closely with your institution's brand, brand configuration options are now supported when using the Learn 2016 theme. This includes brand color configuration, system color palettes, and navigation settings such as tab placement and frame height.

Course menu color support (Q2 2018) – Course colors can now be customized. Instructors and course designers can configure the course colors in the course control panel when using the Learn 2016 theme. The course menu will present in these colors in both desktop and mobile web browsers.

Greater responsiveness on mobile devices (Q2 2017, Q4 2017 & Q2 2018) – Instructors and students alike will enjoy an improved mobile experience as each release has introduced responsiveness

to additional areas of Learn. In the Q4 2017 release, system and course level navigation, Blogs and Journals were optimized for mobile devices. In the Q2 2018 release, Tests and the Learning Modules tool are now optimized for web browsers on mobile devices.

Blackboard Ally, a solution for better accessibility (Q2 2017) – Greatly improve content accessibility by integrating this new service into Learn. Ally provides instructors an accessibility score for their content and suggests ways to improve the accessibility of materials. Students can download automatically-generated alternative versions of uploaded files, such as accessible HTML, digital braille, and audio format files. Administrators can view accessibility scores of materials across courses and track changes over time to plan, measure, and improve accessibility. A Blackboard Ally license is required.



Additional accessibility enhancements (Q4 2017) ARIA landmarks have been incorporated in the course menu and the content area to better define the page structure and assist users with screen readers in navigating page elements. Additionally, the first-time user overlay has been removed to improve accessibility for users.

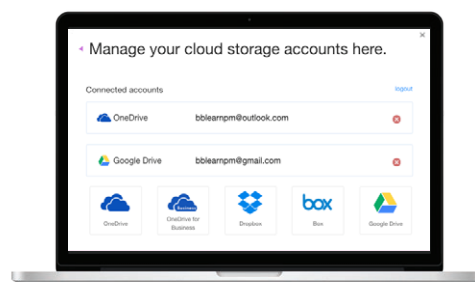
Chemistry notation support (Q4 2017) – The math editor found in the Content Editor now includes tools specific to chemistry, like an embedded periodic table of elements.

Blackboard app download module (Q4 2017) Increase student engagement by driving adoption of the Blackboard app for students. A new module called “Download Blackboard’s Student App Today” helps students discover and quickly download the app.

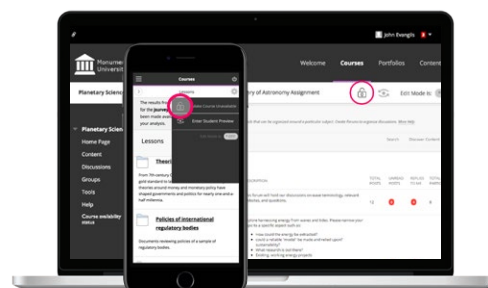
Collaborate Ultra sessions for groups (Q4 2017) Improve collaboration among students in a group by adding real-time, face-to-face web conferencing functionality. Instructors can choose to add Collaborate Ultra sessions to Group pages. A Blackboard Collaborate license is required.

Efficiency

Cloud storage integration (Q2 2018) Instructors can upload or link directly to documents from their preferred cloud storage solution when authoring content items or creating assignments in Learn. Students can also upload assignments directly from their preferred solution.



Course availability status (Q4 2017) – From the main course view, instructors and other privileged users can now easily see the availability of the course to students and quickly change the availability, saving both time and effort.



Discussion board “replies to me” (Q4 2017)

Keeping up with large discussion board forums is made easier by giving users a “New Reply” count and filter so unread replies to their posts can be easily identified and read.

Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) names and roles provisioning service (Q2 2018)

– This LTI service allows tools to request the course roster in order to create better end user experiences. For example, an assessment tool might request the roster to present instructors with grading progress information by showing students who have and have not submitted; or an interactive tool might allow creating groups of students from roster information.

LTI system tool updates (Q2 2018) – A new system placement type allows a tool to be added to the Tools panel that can appear in the My Institution or other module tab. This allows for integrating tools that might be accessed outside of the course context such as a library system or a media management tool.

LTI deep linking (Q4 2017) – The Content Item Message specification offers users a more seamless experience when linking or integrating with tool providers who also support this standard.

LTI improved launch experience (Q4 2017) LTI links now open in a lightbox within the course, rather than directing users to a new window or tab, creating a more seamless workflow for students.

Email tool recipient permissions (Q4 2017) Administrators now have greater control in defining the extent to which students in courses can contact one another using the Email tool. This eliminates the burden on instructors and drives greater efficiency for administrators.

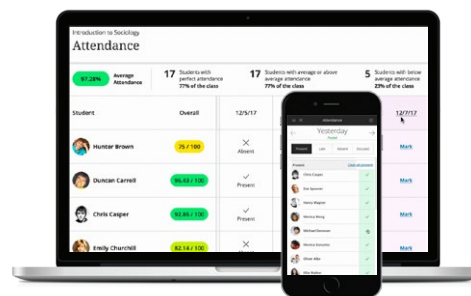
Additional drag and drop locations (Q2 2017)

The ability to drag and drop files has now been added to the Content Collection, Content Editor,

Blog, Journal, and Portfolio features. If the browser allows, users can also drag a folder of files and the files will upload individually.

Assessment & Grading

Attendance tracking (Q2 2018) – Instructors can now easily track attendance. For each class meeting, instructors can mark whether a student is present, late, absent, or excused. The attendance records appear in a single column next to other grades in the gradebook. On the Attendance page, profile pictures appear so instructors can easily identify students.

**Grade center enhancements** (Q2 2018)

When using the Learn 2016 theme, instructors will now be able to view full titles of Grade Center columns making it easier to distinguish between similarly-titled items. They can also view as many columns as the size of their window will allow and enter Grade Center full-screen mode to make the most of their desktop experience.

Additional attempts in anonymous grading (Q2 2018) – To better support anonymized assessment practice, instructors can now grant additional assignment attempts to students as needed while still maintaining the full anonymity of the process.

Clear multiple-choice selection (Q2 2018)

Students are now able to clear a selection from multiple-choice questions. This feature is beneficial when negative points are associated with incorrect answer choices.

Delete multiple gradebook columns (Q4 2017) – Instructors can now delete multiple gradebook columns at once making managing the gradebook even easier. When deleted, manual and calculated columns are removed completely; columns associated with gradable items are cleared of attempt and grade data, but remain in the Grade Center.

Grade display standardization (Q4 2017) To provide greater consistency, all gradebook columns and My Grades now support up to five decimal points, are not rounded, and are consistent for all display types (score, percentage, letter grade).

Submission receipts enhancement (Q2 2017) Students can receive a notification email for each assignment attempt with information about the submission including attached files. Students can also access receipts at any time on the My Grades page.

Outcomes Assessment: evidence sampling by demographic (Q2 2017) – When collecting and sampling previously-submitted student assignments for a secondary program evaluation process, assignments can now be sampled by student demographic information. Assessment coordinators can sample by the education level field or institution roles. Sampling by institution roles allows Boolean AND/OR selection for enhanced search.

Quality & Infrastructure

We are fully committed to delivering strong product quality and providing a stable, reliable experience for educators, students, and administrators. In these releases, we have:

- Updated the technology that Learn runs on to ensure a stable and secure product, including JAVA, Tomcat, SCORM engine, ActiveMQ, and more
- Made changes to simplify Learn upgrades and make them more reliable, including:
 - Continuing improvements to the new installer
 - Reducing code dependency issues that were found in prior maintenance processes to improve stability
 - Improving the maintenance process so that more requested fixes can be delivered more quickly to currently supported versions
 - Reducing downtime for upgrades and server startups
- Enhanced the password reset functionality, so the password reset URL sent through email now expires in 15 minutes for greater security
- Introduced support for Caliper Analytics for self-hosted institutions – a standard from IMS Global for exchanging activity data for analytics purposes (already available for managed-hosted institutions)
- Added new REST APIs as well as enhancements to previously-released web services
- Addressed the top client-reported issues that were affecting the largest number of users

For more details on the contents of each release, see the Release Notes on help.blackboard.com. Visit the [Blackboard Community](#) site to join other institutions in the [Upgrade Club](#). Plus, provide your product suggestions and vote on ideas for our upcoming releases in the [Blackboard Idea Exchange](#).