Organizing and Managing Content for Instructors

Introduction

The *Blackboard Content System* allows users to store, share, and publish content within personal user folders, course folders and institution folders. This document explains how to organize and manage content in ways that are beneficial to them and to other users in the system.

Prerequisites

This document is intended for users who are using the *Blackboard Content System* to manage files. Before referencing this document, users should be familiar with the Content System interface and they should be able to complete basic tasks. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- adding, moving, and removing items and folders
- searching for items

Contents

This document includes information on the following topics:

- Organize content in folders
- Organize folder permissions
- Tools for sharing and finding content
- Organize course folders

Organize content in folders

Before adding any content to the *Blackboard Content System*, users should plan out how they will manage their content. This will allow them to organize content in a way which best meets their individual needs.

Files in the *Blackboard Content System* are organized in a tree structure of nested folders up to, and including, the content area level. This means that each folder may contain other subfolders and files. The term "items" refers to files and folders.

A folder stores both files and other folders. Folders are automatically available to the user who added the folder but must be shared if other users are to view the folder and its contents. It is important to remember that all folders are contained within other folders up to the root (/) folder. Root folders are folders in which all other folders are placed. Content areas, such as Users, Courses, Institution, and Library, are simply folders stored under the root folder.

NOTE: The system does not allow subfolders with the same name in a single parent folder. For example, two folders named Group Projects may not be created in the top-level of the username folder. The system also does not allow files with the same name to exist in a folder.

Private content space and Public content space

Creating separate folders for personal content (private space) and folders that are available to other users (public space) is very helpful. This method allows the user to have certain folders available only to them, where they can store personal content. For example, one personal folder may contain papers and projects that are in progress, while another contains professional content that is not ready to be shared, such as resumes and cover letters for jobs. Additional permissions for these personal folders are not granted to anyone else.

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When a document is ready to be shared, it may be copied or moved to a public folder. For example, if an Instructor is working on a course document he or she can create the draft in a personal folder, and then move it to a shared folder when it is complete. The shared folder is shared with all users enrolled in the class (public space that is set to be available to only course members), and allows for collaboration.

Creating a private folder

A private folder is created in the same way as other folders in the *Blackboard Content System*, through the **Add Folder** option. The permissions granted on the folder determine whether or not it is private.

- In the username folder, a private folder is a subfolder that is not shared with any other users. A user may create a subfolder in his or her username folder and not grant any other users permissions to it.
- In a course folder, a private folder may be specifically for the Instructor, or it may also be accessible by users with other course roles. For example, a private subfolder may be created with permissions granted to the Instructor, Teaching Assistant, and Course Builder. This folder would not be available to any Students enrolled in the course.

Creating a Public folder

Similar to private folders, public folders are created in the same way as other folders, using the **Add Folder** option. The permissions granted on a folder determine whether or not it becomes to multiple users and groups of users. Any user with Manage Permissions may share the item with a wider audience.

- In a username folder, a public folder may be created and shared with a group of users collaborating on a project.
- In a course folder, a public folder may be created and shared with all users enrolled in the course. This folder would include course information or articles that the whole class needs to read.

Organize Folder Permissions

It is helpful if users organize folders in a way that allows them to manage permissions by folder, rather than by file. For example, create a folder that contains all files used in a group project. This way the entire folder may be shared with the group members, rather than trying to manage permissions on separate items stored in different folders.

Only Read permission should be added to a top-level folder, for example the username folder. Anytime a Permission is added or changed on the top-level folder, check any subfolders or files designated as Private and verify that additional permissions have not inadvertently been added that would expose protected information.

Sharing Folders

When adding folders and files to the *Blackboard Content System*, keep in mind which users and user lists the content will be shared with. Try to create folders in which all items are to be shared with the same users. When items shared with the same users are spread out among different folders, it may become very difficult to manage. For example, if the user plans on creating documents that will be applicable to all users at the institution, they should create a folder that will be shared with All System Users, then add the specific items to this folder.

Sharing files

Files are automatically available to the user that added the file but must be shared if other users are to view the item.

Files inherit permissions from the folder they reside in. This means that if a file is added to a folder that already has Read and Write permission for certain users or user lists, the those same users will also have Read and Write permission on the newly added file.

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Overwrite Option on Folders

When modifying or adding permissions to a parent folder, the user has the option to force all files and subfolders to inherit these permissions. For example, if the Read and Write permissions are added to the folder, and an item within the folder has Read, Write, and Remove permissions, Remove permissions would be removed from the file. All subfolders and files within the parent folder would be granted Read and Write permissions.

If this option is not selected, the files and subfolders are automatically granted any additional permission given to the parent folder, but existing permissions are not removed. For example, if Read, Write and Manage permissions are added to the folder, and an item within the folder has Read, Write, and Remove permissions, the permissions for the file would remain Read, Write and Remove, and Manage would be added.

After modifying permissions on a folder, the user may modify the permissions on an item, but these will be overwritten the next time permissions on the parent folder are modified. This is one reason storing items with the same purpose and audience in a single folder makes managing permissions much easier.

Tools for sharing and finding content

A number of tools are available to facilitate sharing content and searching for content that has been shared. These options are dependent on the level of the folder shared, for example granting permission on a top-level folder versus a subfolder. Remember that when a folder is shared, permissions are granted to all content in the folder.

Find Folder
The Find Folder option allows users to search for top-level folders they have permissions to, for example if another user has granted him or her Read permission on a username folder. When a user is granted permissions to a top-level folder, the Find Folder option allows the user to locate the folder and add it to his or her Content System menu, making is easy to access the folder on a regular basis.

Users may decide to share a top-level folder with another user, and then adjust the permissions on the content within, limiting the content this user may access. For example, grant the user Read permission on the username folder. Then open the folder and remove Read permission for the content this user should not view. The user may still use the Find Folder option, but they will only view specific content in the folder.

Search
Search allows users to locate all files and folders that have been shared with them. When a search is performed only those items to which a user has permissions will be returned. If permissions are granted on a nested folder (and not the top-level folder) the user may search for the folder and bookmark it; the Find Folder option may not be used on nested folders.

Go To Location
Go to Location allows users to go directly to a specific folder that has been shared with them in the *Blackboard Content System*. This time-saver allows users to enter the path to open a folder and Bookmark the location at the same time.

Bookmarks
Bookmarks enable quick access to frequently used content a without having to navigate through several folders. Bookmarks can be organized into folders and subfolders as needed by the user. This tool is helpful when permissions are granted on a nested folder, since the Find Folder tool may not be used.

Workflow Activities
If a user is expected to take action or respond to an item, it is helpful to send a Workflow Activity with the item. When a Workflow Activity is created users are selected to share the item with and

permissions are granted. An option may also be selected to send an email to these users stating that this item has been shared with them and that a Workflow Activity is attached to it.

Passes
Passes may be used to share a file with a user for a specific amount of time. This is especially useful for sharing files with users who do not have system accounts. When a pass is created, the user decides whether to grant Read or Read and Write permission to the file with the pass. When the time allotted for the pass is over, the user will no longer be able to access the file.

Portfolios
Portfolios allow users to collect and organize files into custom Web pages. These Portfolios can then be presented to individuals and groups of users. It is important that users consider the permissions granted to files that are linked to in a Portfolio. If another user has permissions (other than Read) to a file that is linked to a Portfolio, the file may be modified or removed, resulting in issues for the Portfolio users.

Organize Course folders

A course folder for each course appears by default under Courses. The default roles that have full permissions (Read, Write, Manage, and Remove) to this folder when the folder is first created are Instructors, Teaching Assistants and Course Builders. The Administrator may modify this default. For example, the Administrator may set it so that when a Course folder is first created, only Instructors and TAs have full permissions. It is very important to understand which permissions have been granted to the folder before proceeding with setting up subfolders and additional permissions.

Any user with Manage permission on the course folder can grant additional permissions on that folder to other users. An Instructor may want to grant Read permission to all Students in the course to the course folder, and Read and Write permission to a public folder created beneath the main course folder.

Storing single course content

The temporary nature of courses makes the course folder (tied to the Course ID) useful for storing content that is specific to a single course. If a course is removed, the folder tied to the Course ID is no longer accessible. If content that is stored in the course folder does need to be reused, options for copying and moving items are available.

It may be easier to store content that is used in multiple courses in the institution folder or the instructor's user folder. This also depends on how the Administrator configures the Institution folder and its availability. Keep in mind that if course-related content is stored in a user folder, and it has not been shared. This content will be unavailable if the user leaves the institution and is removed from the system.

Folder examples

Subfolders within the course folder may be used to store both private and public content. The following are some examples of folders that may be created in the course folder:

Private Folder
A folder shared with the Instructor, Teaching Assistant, and other applicable course roles that contain private course information, such as test and survey results. These users all have Read, Write, Manage and Remove permission on the folder.

NOTE: The Instructor may decide to retain the course folder as a workspace for the course, and not allow users to access any items in the course folder. Instead, the Instructor may link to Content System items from the course. In this scenario, the entire course folder would be a private folder.

Group Folders

Folders shared with course groups, which may be used as group collaboration areas. There are a few options for setting this up:

- Grant all Students in the course Read access on the top-level course folder. Remove Read permission for Students to all private folders. Add permissions for each group to their respective Group folder. This option allows Students to use the Find Folder tool to locate the Group folder.

- Grant each course Group permission to their respective Group folder in the course (do not grant any permission for course users to the top-level course folder). The Students may use Search, Go To Location, and Bookmarks to locate the folder.

Public Folder

Folder shared with all course users where they may access course related materials, such as the syllabus or reading list. There are a few options for setting this up:

- Grant all Students in the course Read access on the top-level course folder. Remove Read permission for Students to all private folders. Add permissions for all course users to the public folder. This option allows Students to use the Find Folder tool to locate the public folder.

- Grant all course users permissions to the public folder (do not grant any permission for course users to the top-level course folder). The Students may use Search, Go To Location, and Bookmarks to locate the public folder.

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Additional Documentation

Additional Blackboard documents can be found on the Behind the Blackboard extranet. Use the following URL to access Behind the Blackboard:

http://www.blackboard.com/products/services/support.htm

A login is required to access Behind the Blackboard. Users may create their own login for roles other than Administrator. Administrators must receive their Behind the Blackboard login from their Blackboard Account Manager.

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