Blackboard has been given a complete makeover with version 9, and the user interface is much more attractive. This is not unimportant – students are more likely to engage with an attractive, more usable website.

But the changes are not purely cosmetic - there are plenty of new features, and improved functionality. When you come to build your course in Blackboard you will find that the main steps are not drastically changed, but they take fewer steps to complete. So that's good news for teachers.

Initially you may need some time to get familiar with the new screen layout, but once you’re used to it, you should find the software much better to use - this makeover really has brought big improvements for staff and students.

Guides to the new features can be found on Blackboard's own On Demand site, at http://ondemand.blackboard.com

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**The Course Menu**

When your course is upgraded from version 8 to version 9, it will look different - because everything in version 9 looks a bit different - but fundamentally will remain the same. The menu will be the same colour and (with one or two exceptions - see below) the menu will contain exactly the same buttons or links.

**Empty Content Areas**

If your course has any Content Areas which are empty, you will see them marked with a small grey rectangle (as Course Information and External Links are in this example)

Students won't see those areas at all, until some content is put in them (see example on the left)

Note that if a content area contains some content, but this is all set as unavailable, students will still see this area on the course menu (even though when they click on the menu button they won't be able to see anything).

**Renaming menu items**

You no longer need to go into the Control Panel to make changes to your course menu. Just click on the down-arrow next to the button you want to rename.
Select **Rename Link**

Type the new name in the highlighted area, and click on the green tick to save your changes.

**Moving menu items**

You can now easily change the order of the buttons on your course menu. Just click on the two-headed arrow next to the button you want to move

then drag it to the required position.
Adding new menu items

Click on the + sign above the course menu then select the option you want e.g.

Create Content Area
Create a new area to which you can upload learning materials.

Create Tool Link
Add a link direct to a course tool such as a Discussion Board or Blog

Create External Link
Add a link from the course menu to an external website

Create Module Page
see next section

You can also add Subheaders or Dividers to the menu – see examples below.

Course Banners and Module Pages

If you had a banner on your Blackboard 8 course, this will not immediately be visible in version 9. Previously the default entry point (home page) for each course was the
Announcements area but, curiously, in v9 course banners do not display on the Announcements page.

You can select almost any other area of your course as the home page and the banner will display. The best suggestion is probably to set up a Module Page and make this the course entry point. Module Pages are a new feature, which can display a variety of user alerts and tools e.g. Announcements, Calendar, Tasks, To Do list.

Adding a Module Page
Click on the + at the top of the course menu and choose Create Module Page.

Call it ‘Home Page’ or whatever you want, and tick Available to users.

You can then drag the new Page to the top of your course menu.

Now go into your Module Page and add modules to it. You can just select whichever modules you want from a list – you’ll almost certainly want to include ‘My Announcements’ and ‘What’s New’.

You need to do one more thing. Go to Control Panel > Customisation > Style and under Select Course Entry Point select your new home page module from the drop-down list.

To view your new course home page click here. The course banner should now be visible.

Contacts
This is basically the same as Staff Information in previous versions.

Communication and Tools
In Blackboard 8 these were separate areas which potentially could be accessed both from the course menu and the Tools panel just below the menu. In 9.1 these areas are combined – by default you just get one Tools button on the menu. This provides access to course tools such as My Grades, Blogs and Wikis, and to communication tools such as Email and Discussion Boards.
If your v8 course had both ‘Tools’ and ‘Communication’ on the menu, both will still be there. As both will now lead to the same page of links you could safely delete one.

If your version 8 course did not have either ‘Tools’ or ‘Communication’ buttons you will need to add one – otherwise you'll be able to get to these features (through Course Tools in the Control Panel) but your students will have no access to them.

**To add a Tools button to your v9 course**

Click on the + sign above the course menu and select **Create Tool Link**.

Then from the drop-down list choose **Tools Area**.

You also need to type in a name (e.g. ‘Tools’) and select **Available to Users**. Then **Submit**.

You can use the same procedure – but selecting ‘Discussion Board’, ‘Blog’, ‘Wiki’ etc. – to add a button to your menu which will take users straight to that tool.
Changing your menu style

To change the appearance of your course menu go to Control Panel > Customisation > Style

Here you can
- select whether to display the menu as buttons or text
- change the colour scheme
- select the course entry point
- upload a banner

Courses – Control Panel

The Control Panel can now be found just below the main course menu. This means that you can access any part of the Control Panel from anywhere in the course.

Clicking the down-arrow expands the Control Panel so that you can see all the options available.
### Making your Course Available

Previously making your course available or unavailable took half a dozen clicks.

Now just expand the Control Panel so that you can see **Customisation > Properties**

Click to view the options, and under **SET AVAILABILITY** make sure that **MAKE COURSE AVAILABLE** is set to **YES**.

Press **SUBMIT**.

### Viewing / Adding course members

Click on **Control Panel > Users and Groups > Users**

The screen which appears shows all users currently enrolled on the course in Blackboard.

The Search box allows you to search for users who are already members of the course.

To add new course members click on **Find Users to Enrol**
On the next screen enter the username for the user you wish to add to the course (if you don’t know their username, click on Browse to search by surname or email address).

If you are adding another Instructor you can select this role at the same time as you add the user to the course.

**Courses – Adding Content**

Fundamentally, the process of creating Folders and Items and uploading files has not changed – once you’ve got used to the new toolbars you should find that things are laid out in a much clearer and more obvious way.

**Build Content**

In most cases you will add content via the Build Content menu.
Create: Item
As in previous versions – you can add text, upload or link to one or more files, insert images or media files.

Create: File
Choose this option if you simply want to upload or link to a file, with no descriptive text. The same option now exists for images, audio and video files.

New Page: Content Folder
This is the same as ‘Add Folder’ in previous versions.

Create: Learning Module
Previously known as ‘Learning Units’ but now with additional features. Learning Modules allow you to use standard Blackboard functionality to create online learning objects. You can include text, images and multimedia, and links to websites or other web resources. You can also specify whether students must view the content sequentially, or whether they can navigate the content in any order.

Create: Lesson Plan
Click on the More Help link to learn more. There is also a video tutorial at http://ondemand.blackboard.com/understand.htm

Create: Syllabus
Click on the More Help link to learn more.
**Mashups**  
New  
Simple tools to enable you to incorporate content from the web into your course – Flickr photos, YouTube videos and Slideshare presentations.

**Create Assessment**  
Allows you to add **Tests, Surveys** and **Assignments**. There are only minor changes to the way these features work.  
See the video tutorials at [http://ondemand.blackboard.com/assess.htm](http://ondemand.blackboard.com/assess.htm)

**Digital Dropbox**  
Changed  
This has been dropped in favour of the much superior Assignment tool.  
If you or your students had files in the Dropbox on version 8 there is a tool which allows you to recover Dropbox files in v9.

**Add Interactive Tool**  
This is where you can add Blackboard tools to your course areas: e.g. discussion boards, blogs and wikis; also third party tools such as Turnitin assignments and SCORM-compliant learning objects.

Blackboard now has its own  
- **Blogs**  
- **Journals** (for personal reflection)  
- **Wikis**

These lack some of the advanced functionality of the Campus Pack blog and wiki tools which we have previously used (e.g. no RSS feeds from Blogs) but have the advantage of being fully integrated with Blackboard.  
See the video tutorials at [http://ondemand.blackboard.com/communicate.htm](http://ondemand.blackboard.com/communicate.htm)

Staff are advised to make use of these Blackboard tools from September 2010, and to stop using the Campus Pack tools.
Content Collection

This is much improved, and much more fully integrated into courses. The problems we had using the Content Collection with Internet Explorer have also now been resolved.

You can of course still go via the Content Collection tab at the top of the screen, but from the Control Panel on any course you can quickly access content files

- for that course
- in your personal area
- in other courses and organisations of which you are a member
- from institution content folders

There is also a search box.

Course Files

New in 9.1 as you upload files to your Blackboard course, they are automatically placed in that course’s area of the Content Collection. This makes it much easier to see all the files you have uploaded to a course, to edit those files, and to share them with other courses or colleagues.

For more information, see the video tutorials at http://ondemand.blackboard.com/understand.htm

Uploading a single file

Click on Upload > Upload Files
Then browse to find the file you wish to upload.

![Upload File](image)

**Uploading multiple files**

There are several ways of doing this.

**Web Folders (WebDav)**

You can still use web folders to **Add a Network Place**

However the underlying technology, WebDav, is not currently supported by Microsoft Windows 7.

**Uploading multiple files and folders (Java upload tool)**

Click on **Upload > Upload Files**

On the next screen make sure that **Multiple Files** is selected.

![Upload Multiple Files](image)

You can **Browse** to find the files you want to upload. Or you can simply drag and drop files from any My Computer or Windows Explorer folder.
When done, press Submit.

Upload Package
Click on Upload > Upload Package

On your PC, create a zip file containing all the files you want to upload. Browse to select the zip file, then Submit.
When Blackboard uploads the zip file, it unzips the individual files, retaining your original folder structure. You can then link from your course to any of the individual files.

**Linking from your course to the Content Collection**

This is essentially unchanged from version 8. When attaching a file to a content item, instead of clicking **Browse My Computer** (to upload a file from your computer) choose **Browse Course Files**.

This opens the Content Collection in a new window. Browse to find the file or folder you want to link to, tick the appropriate box, then **Submit**.

You can if you wish select more than one item to attach, as shown below.
Grade Centre

The Grade Centre was a new feature in version 8 and is largely unchanged.

Anonymous Marking  
This is a completely new feature, and is turned on or off for each assignment or test in the Grade Centre.

To turn Anonymous Marking on, click on the down-arrow next to the Grade Centre column heading.

Then choose Grade Anonymously

For help see the Instructor User Manual under The Grade Center > Using the Grade Center > Entering Grades and the video tutorials at http://ondemand.blackboard.com/assess.htm

Course Communication and Collaboration tools

Discussion Boards, Email, SMS

These are all essentially the same as in version 8. All can be accessed from Course Tools on the course menu, or via the Control Panel.

Groups  

There are various changes to the way Groups can be set up. For instance Groups can be created which allow course members to self-enrol in the Group; you can even allow students to set up their own Groups.

See the video tutorials at http://ondemand.blackboard.com/communicate.htm

Blogs, Journals and Wikis  

As mentioned above. The best introduction to these new tools is provided by the video tutorials at http://ondemand.blackboard.com/communicate.htm
Help

The help provided by Blackboard has significantly improved.

Go to Control Panel > Help

- **Guide** opens the Blackboard Instructor Guide
- **On Demand** opens Blackboard’s “On Demand Learning Center” with a range of printed guides and video tutorials on 9.1

If you require further help, please contact blackboardhelp@tvu.ac.uk