How to engage students with the Blackboard Learn app

This guide describes how features of the Blackboard App and associated tools in course areas can be used to enhance engagement in teaching and learning.

What is the Blackboard Learn app?

The Blackboard Learn app is primarily designed for students to view and interact with their courses and organisations. The app compliments students’ use of Blackboard Learn on a desktop computer or laptop.

As well as making mobile friendly adjustments to your Blackboard course, you can make use of the complimentary lecturer app called ‘Blackboard Instructor’. Using the app in your teaching will engage students with the technology, as well as providing benefits to your teaching practice.

Benefits

- **Flexibility** - Students’ ability to access online learning materials and activities are increased; with the opportunity to engage in different environments (e.g. in transit, on location, inside and outside of the classroom).
- **Communication & organisation** - Students’ awareness of course activity is improved when they enable ‘Push Notifications’.
- **Interaction** - Students’ ability to participate in online activities is extended using discussion boards, video conferencing tools and mobile friendly tests.

You can use your **existing course materials** and content or **develop material specifically** with mobile use in mind, and take advantage of unique mobile features on the app.

**Think about using the app strategically** to enhance the use of key features in a course area.

Make use of mobile friendly course features:

- Announcements.
- Discussion boards.
- Campus Pack Blogs and Wikis.
- Mobile friendly tests and surveys. (see separate guide).
- Collaborate Ultra (video conferencing tool).

**Everything in your course may not need to be mobile friendly** but consider how students can access aspects of your course area with their mobile device and when this would be beneficial.
Limitations

- Turnitin assignments are not compatible with the app. However, Blackboard Assignments and tests will automatically appear in Due Dates. You can preview upcoming Blackboard Assignments and tests in the Instructor app.

- You cannot time release or edit the settings for an assignment from the Instructor app. Login to your Blackboard course using a desktop or laptop, to make any adjustments to assignment settings or adjust assignment instructions.

- There is a limited view of grade results in the student app. Detailed feedback showing inline grading for Blackboard Assignments or Turnitin submissions and Tests answers can only be viewed via Blackboard on a computer.
Mobile friendly features

Push notifications
Encourage your students to enable push notifications to receive alerts on their device when you post an announcement or make new content available.

Students have control over what items they are alerted to and how they receive these, using a combination of notification settings in Blackboard and on their device.

How to set up push notifications

On your computer, open Blackboard and:
1. Go to the Global Navigation menu and click on Settings > Edit notification settings.
2. Choose to Edit Individual Course Settings or Bulk Edit notification Settings.
3. In the Change Settings page, tick or un-tick the boxes under the Mobile column to choose what types of notification you receive.

Then on your mobile device:
4. Enable notifications on your mobile device in Settings (The location of this will differ depending on your device and operating system.)
Add Announcements

The Instructor App allows you to post course announcements, which are displayed to students via the Activity Stream in the Blackboard App (and Blackboard on their browser).

1. Enter the course area on your device and open Announcements.
2. Tap Create at the bottom of the screen.
3. Enter a Subject title and type your announcement in the text boxes provided.
4. Tap the Confirm to publish the announcement.

NB: You cannot time release or format the text of the announcement.
Discussion boards

Staff and students can participate in discussion boards, via both the Instructor and student Blackboard App.

NB: To enable discussion boards, you must firstly add a **Forum** in your Blackboard course using a desktop or laptop. Once a **Forum** is created, you can quickly add new discussion **Threads via the Instructor app**, to which students can make replies.

1. In the Instructor App tap on the **Discussions** link to see the list of **Forums** you have created in **Blackboard**.

2. Once you have selected a **Forum** in which to post discussions, simply tap **Start Thread** to generate the discussion topics within the **Forum**.
NB: You may wish to add the first reply to a new thread, to encourage students to participate.

NB: You may have several threads in a Forum. When creating a new thread it should be related to the Forum topic in which you are posting.

3. The Instructor app allows you and your students to add replies to thread posts.

Tap on the title of an existing thread, to view or participate in a discussion about the topic.
Mobile friendly tests

Use the Tests tool with mobile friendly question types to create a test that can be taken on a mobile device for formative assessment. The mobile test interface has been re-designed to take advantage of the functionality of mobile devices. **Only some of the question types are available to use for this purpose.**

Mobile friendly question types:

- Multiple-choice.
- Short Answer.
- True/False.
- Either/Or
- Essay

Read the accompanying guide on ‘Blackboard Tests Creating online assessment activities for your students’ for further details.

Groups

Students can access discreet group areas that have been set up for them and which include links to the tools that have been enabled for them to use. Tools that are not mobile compatible will open in the web version of Blackboard.

Further Help

Get answers to your questions about Mobile Learn at [https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Mobile_Learn](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Mobile_Learn)