

Faculty Tip Sheets

Using Groups in BlackBoard

BlackBoard allows you to put students into groups for collaboration on assignments. There are several tools available to groups to help them collaborate:

Discussion boards

This is exactly like the discussion board used for all students except it is limited to only the students assigned to this group. Students can only access the discussion board for their group and can not see posts made by other groups. Any questions that you want all groups to discuss must be posted individually in each group's discussion board. This can be done with a simple "copy & paste."

Email

This provides easy way for students to send email to everyone in their group. The sender sees a list of group members and can check off who should receive it or send it everyone.

File exchange

This is a place for students to share files with other group members. For example, if you ask the group to develop a PowerPoint presentation, the file exchange gives them a place to post the file for everyone in the group to access.

Collaboration

This tool allows for synchronous collaboration where all participants are online at the same time. There are two collaboration tools that are available here:

Virtual Classroom

This tool gives students access to a chat box that they can use to discuss an assignment. It also includes a whiteboard where students can brainstorm and share diagrams and drawings. The group browser allows students to visit websites together and discuss them in the chat window.

Lightweight Chat

This tool is an alternative to the Virtual Classroom and may be better for students who have a slow, dial-up connection. It only provides a simple text-based chat room where students can discuss topics in real time.

Students can complete their collaboration in groups and present their finished product to the entire class in the class discussion. Please contact our office if you'd like to see an example of how group assignments can be used with a class.

Team Sites

Team Sites provide instructors a way to create open-ended assignments within Blackboard. Team sites allow students to work cooperatively in groups as they seek to formulate, organize and present their solutions online in the form of websites.

Using an easy to use browser-based HTML editor, students collaboratively author web content, upload images, link to documents and external resources, all the while forcing them to think critically and analytically as they find, use and organize appropriate learning resources.

Team sites also provide instructors a rich set of assessment tools that allow an instructor to gauge the individual contributions of each student and to track the evolution of the group's response during the problem solving process.

