

Ultra and Original Feature Comparison

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This document captures some of the primary differences between Blackboard Ultra and Original Course view. It is focused on features that have historically been available to Syracuse University instructors in Original Course View, but have changed, been removed, or are incomplete in Ultra Course View.

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Request Ultra Courses

To evaluate or prepare for teaching Ultra courses, please register for the asynchronous [Ultra Course View Orientation](#).

Instructors who feel their Blackboard use is compatible with ultra courses can [submit a request for an ultra course](#) for the Spring 2023 semester.

New Features

The following features highlight some of the most important improvements provided by Ultra Course View.

You can now add a discussion anywhere you like in a course. This allows instructors to situate discussions directly alongside relevant course content. Discussion forums have been removed from ultra courses, but instructors can use folders to organize conversations in whatever way they like.

Instructors can enable progress tracking which allows students to track and see their interactions with course content. This helps students stay organized and to know what course content they've completed and what content has work remaining.

Discussion analytics provide information about student participation allowing you to see who has and has not been active in a discussion. Analytics can be viewed at the top level and by post, student, or group.

When creating items in an ultra course, an instructor can elect to enable a conversation associated with it. This allows students to post and reply to questions about the item for view by the instructor and students. These conversations are separate from discussions you create and do not appear on the discussions page.

An instructor's ability to filter and search the Grade Center is greatly improved. You can search by student name and filter by assignment status. The new gradebook also provides a comprehensive view of submission status and gradable items by student or by assignment.

Un-submitted can be set to [count as zero](#) in ultra courses after the due date has passed. Instructors no longer have to manually enter zeros for un-submitted work and students receive stronger indications of missing materials when they receive zero grades. You can still allow students to submit after an automatic zero is assigned and you can still grade as normal.

The new content editor creates more accessible content and includes enhancements like as MathML and copy/paste of LaTeX.

There is a new content type in ultra courses called a "Document." It allows instructors to author blocks of content that mix text and images with files that are displayed in the browser in-line with other text. Because the materials in a document are modular, it is easy to reorder and edit them.

In Ultra Courses, documents including PDFs and Microsoft Word Documents display in-line with other content with instructor control over how documents display and whether or not they can be downloaded by students.

Students can more flexibly navigate tests with filters that allow them to look at all questions of a single type or only see unanswered questions.

Changed Tools

Some features in Ultra Course View are significantly different than those in Original Course View. This list is not exhaustive, but highlights some notable differences between ultra and original courses.

New announcements are displayed as a pop-up immediately upon entry to a course. Announcements can no longer be set as the default course landing page — the content page will always be the default course landing.

There are new tools in ultra courses to give "Accommodations" at the level of the student rather than at the level of the test or assignment. This means that you can apply accommodation for a student once, and it will automatically be applied to other Blackboard assessments throughout the course.

The content editor is newly built and no longer relies on the Tiny MCE third-party tool used in Original Course View. Instructors should expect differences in the editing tools they find in the content editor and a new user interface.

In Blackboard original courses instructors would go to their old course to push their content into a new destination. In ultra courses instructors enter the course where they want the content to appear and then browse through old course to pull content into the new one.

The new copy tool allows instructors to copy an entire course as before. It's far better for copying individual folders or content items than the old tool.

Many items will copy successfully from original courses into ultra courses but some settings may not translate. Items copied from an original course to an ultra course should be checked carefully before being released to students.

It is easier than ever to batch-adjust the dates and visibility of items in an ultra course. These options are located under "Batch Edit" under then menu at the top of the Course Content area.

Rather than create forms in the discussion tool, instructors can place discussions anywhere they like in a course and group related discussions in folders. The Discussion tab at the top of the course provides a view of all discussion deployed throughout the course.

Instructors can still create graded discussion forums and require a contribution for seeing other posts, but some original discussion features are not yet available in ultra courses. Instructors cannot yet prevent students from editing or deleting their own posts, nor do they have the option of creating a moderated discussion.

Videos are inserted into ultra courses using a different tool than used in original courses. Kaltura videos deployed in original courses may break when copied to ultra courses and should be re-posted using the new tool. Once the item is newly created in an ultra course it will copy successfully to other ultra courses.

Blackboard is scheduled to release a number of enhancements to progress tracking from both the student and instructor perspective in 2022 and 2023.

All third-party tools, including textbook and publisher content are now found in the "Content Market" section of ultra courses.

Limitations

The following features are either not fully developed in ultra courses or will not be included them. Instructors transitioning from original to ultra course view should be aware of the following in case they depend on any of these features in their courses.

Name in Original	Name in Ultra	Notes	Status
Adaptive Release	Conditional Release	In original courses, instructors can release content when a student has made an attempt on an item, regardless of its grading status or score. In ultra, additional content is only released based on the grade an item receives. In ultra courses, if an assessment used as a condition, it must be graded before new content is released to the student.	Unknown
Blogs	Forthcoming	Blogs are not yet available in ultra courses.	Future Development
Content Collection	Content Collection	Users can add content to an ultra course from the content collection, but the content collection manager is no longer available inside of ultra course view. Instead it is accessed from the "Tools" area of the main navigation menu.	Final
Content Editor	Content Editor	The following are not yet available in the ultra content editor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emoticons • Find/Replace 	In Development
Course Duration	None	Course duration can no longer be edited by the instructor — it can only be changed by a system administrator.	Final
Course Links	Course Links	It is not yet possible to create a link from one area of an ultra course to an item created elsewhere in the course. By extension, you can not create a link in an Announcement that takes a student directly to a piece of course content.	Expected 2022
Course Menu	None	The course content page has replaced the course menu in ultra courses. Rather than create a separate menu instructors should structure their course content in folders and modules directly on the course content page.	Final
Course Reports	Embedded Analytics	Some items, such as assessments or discussions, have some analytics built into them. Course Reports as in original courses are no longer available, including view tracking.	In Development
Course Messages	Messages	In ultra course messages there is no subject line and there are no folders to organize course messages.	Final
Course Surveys	Forthcoming	This feature is not currently available in ultra courses. Instructors would have to use an alternate technology like Qualtrics , Google Forms, or Microsoft Forms.	In Research
Discussions	Discussions	Discussions are available but the feature is still being enhanced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board can be set for grading, but instructors may find the current grading workflow challenging. • Unavailable features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search • Subscribe • Moderate/Lock • Anonymous Posts 	In Development
Embed HTML	HTML Blocks	This is not currently available in our Blackboard system — ITS is exploring options for enabling it. Item embedded in Original Course View pages are unlikely to work in ultra. Users should re-post that content in the ultra course using the Content Editor or the Content Market.	Future Release

Folder	Folder	Ultra courses are limited to a nested folder depth of two. You can create a subfolder inside of a folder, but cannot add additional folders within a subfolder.	Research
Grade Center	Gradebook	<p>There are a number of changes relevant to the Gradebook in ultra courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors can define additional schemas but only one can be selected which applies to the entire gradebook. Instructors cannot create schemas to be applied to individual columns. • Unavailable features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tab to navigate • Missed deadline notification • Exempt grade • Grade history (coming July 2022) • Column statistics • Sort by first/last name (replaced by search) • Pass/Fail & Complete/Incomplete 	In Development
Groups	Groups	It is not currently possible to change group membership after gradable activities have begun.	In Research
Rubrics	Rubrics	<p>The following rubric features are unavailable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation report • Applying a rubric to a test essay question 	In Research
Send Email	Messages	Messages are the core communication in tool in ultra navigation and ultra courses. When creating messages and announcements, instructors can elect to send a copy by email to the recipients. Users can elect to enable email notifications for messages in their profile area of the main navigation.	Final
Tests	Tests	<p>Ultra does not yet support the full array question types that original courses do. The following question types are currently available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay • Fill in the Blank • Matching • Multiple choice (single and multiple correct) • True/False • Calculated Formula <p>Force completion is not recommended for use in original courses and will not be included in ultra tests</p>	In Development
Tool Availability	None	Instructors can no longer turn off individual tools in a course — the available tools are set at the system level by administrators.	Final

Removed Tools

The following tools are being removed from Ultra Course View; Blackboard has announced that these features will not be included:

- Achievements
- Contacts
- Flickr Embedding
- Glossary
- Lesson Plans
- Module Page
- Slideshare Embedding
- Tasks
- Wikis