

Blackboard Blogs

Instructors can cultivate collaborative learning and interaction between students, between students and their instructor, and with the course content through the use of Blackboard's blogs, wikis and journals tools.

Distinction between Blogs, Wikis, and Journals

- A **blog** (short for “web log”) is a type of website that is maintained by a single author or group of contributors. A blog is a collection of entries (or “posts”) of commentary, news or descriptions of events, and may include text, links, photos or video. The entries are most commonly arranged in reverse-chronological order, with the most recent post appearing on top. On the Internet, blogs are generally public to the world, although they may also be geared to smaller, more defined groups. Readers are able to respond to posts by leaving comments. One example of a group blog is Crooked Timber (<http://www.crookedtimber.org>), a political blog run by a group of academics from around the world. Good ideas for using blogs in teaching and learning include encouraging reactions to class readings, course content or current news events; or for following up on class discussions with relevant links or materials. NOTE: Blogs that are made ‘public’ in Blackboard are only available to the students registered in the course.
- A **wiki** is a series of linked Web pages collaboratively created by many authors. They are collections of information organized with one topic per page of the wiki, and are available to the world to read and often to write. One of the most well-known wikis on the Internet is Wikipedia (<http://wikipedia.org>). Wikis can be used in teaching and learning to build a glossary of terms, create a knowledge base, write a collaborative document, create a collection of clarifications or explanations, organize signups for class presentations, or show the steps for working out specific problems in a math or science course. They are extremely flexible, and like blogs, they can be set up so that only invited users can read them and/or post to them
- A **journal**, like a diary, is for recording personal reflections. By default, journals in Blackboard are private between a student and instructor, but they can be shared if the instructor wishes. Journals can be used to record student reflections on internships, service learning experiences, field work, or specific course assignments. They can also be a great addition to students’ e-portfolios.

How an Instructor Creates a Blog

1. From your course's Control Panel, go to **Course Tools** and select **Blogs**.
2. Click Create Blog.
3. Give your blog a name.
4. In the text box, add step-by-step instructions for your students; these could include specific instructions for the blog assignment and any desired formatting guidance. For example, you might want to include rubrics, model blog entries, a schedule of when students are expected to contribute, or other relevant details. *Note: You may also want to include these details in your syllabus.*
5. Set up blog options as desired:
 - a. **Blog Availability, Blog Date and Time Restrictions:** set as appropriate.
 - b. **Blog Participation:** Choose to make a single "Course" blog editable by all students, or make single-user blogs "Individual to All Students." (See "Should I create an individual or a course blog?" below). Note that by default, Blackboard will "Allow Anonymous Comments" unless you un-check it.
 - c. **Blog Settings:** Blackboard lists Blog entries according to when they were made; "Monthly Indexing" is usually simpler and less confusing for faculty than "Weekly Indexing" because it creates fewer entries. We recommend "Allowing Users to Edit and Delete Entries" because it allows students much more control over how their blog entries look and read.
 - d. **Grade Settings:** Choose whether or not you want to record blog grades in Blackboard. If yes, a column will automatically be added to the Grade Center.
6. Click **Submit**.

How to Add Blog Entry

As the instructor, if you would like to create the first Blog Entry, for instance if you are using the Blog for posting introductions and you would like to be the first to post your entry, here's how:

1. Click on the name of your blog to open it.
2. Click on **Create Blog Entry**. Give your blog entry a name and enter your blog content in the text box. Your students will also use the **Create Blog Entry** to add blog entries.
3. Click **Post Entry**, or **Save Entry as Draft** if you are not ready to publish it yet. Finished blog entries pages will be listed in the right-hand column of the wiki. All blog authors can comment on blog entries using the **Comments** button.

Sample Course Blog

Should I create an individual or a course blog?

When you create a blog, you have the option to make it an individual or a course blog. Both of these can be seen by all members of the course, but the posting options are slightly different:

- In a **Course Blog**, all course members can add entries and comments. Only the instructor can create a Course Blog and specify the topic to be addressed.
- In an **Individual Blog**, only the owner of the Blog can add entries, but all other course members can view and add comments. The instructor sets up individual blogs for students. The links to individual blogs can be found along the right side of the page.

We recommend selecting Course Blogs, as it allows all Course members to contribute and comment. If you would rather have students create private posts that only the instructor can see, we recommend using Blackboard's Journal tool.

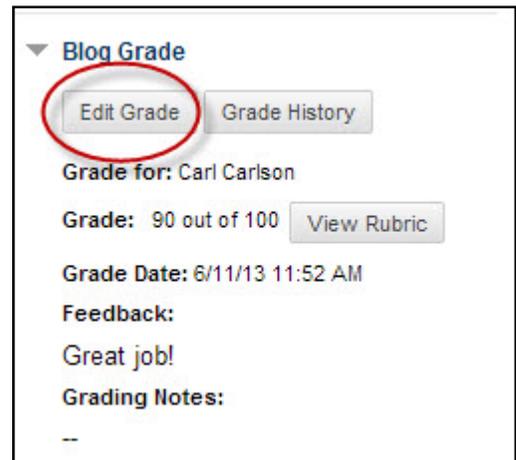
Important: Once you have created a blog, you **cannot** go back and change the blog type. Instead, you will need to delete the blog and create a new one.

Grading Blogs

If you choose to grade the blog, a column will be added to the Grade Center automatically. Instructors can assign an overall grade for the student's blog contributions. To grade a student's blog posts, you can either enter the grades through the Grade Center or directly from the blog.

To grade from the blog, do the following:

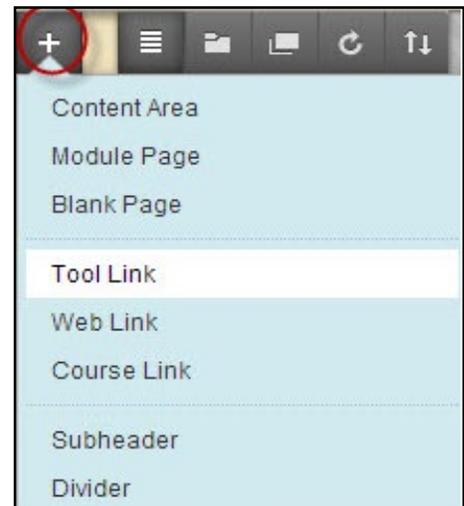
- Enter the blog that you wish to grade.
- Click on a student's name to access that student's blog posts.
- Click on the Edit Grade button on the right side of the screen.
- Enter the grade and any feedback, and click Save Grade. This will be a grade for the overall blog, not for individual posts.
- You can go back and edit the grade at any time. The grade will be saved in the Grade Center automatically.



Click the Edit Grade button

Adding a Course Menu Button for a Blog

- Select the plus sign at the top of your course menu.
- Select Tool Link.
- Give the button a Name.
- Under Type, select Blogs.
- Select "Available to Users."
- Click Submit. This will link to all course blogs.



Click the + sign in the upper left corner > Tool Link

It is also possible to add a specific blog to a course Content Area (e.g. "Course Documents" or "Course Information") by opening that Content Area, then choosing **Tools** → **Blogs**.

Getting Help with Technology at the University of Hartford

Faculty Center for Learning Development (FCLD)

FCLD provides consulting and instructional support to faculty and staff who are using technology in teaching and learning. The FCLD Faculty Lab in Mortensen 203a is available for faculty support and use and is equipped with instructional technology- related equipment including: PCs, Macs, scanners, and projectors as well as support staff. Faculty and Staff needing support with Blackboard or other instructional technologies, should contact FCLD.

Phone: (860) 768-4661 **Email:** fld@hartford.edu

Website: <http://www.hartford.edu/fld>

Student Blackboard Support

The following is student support for Blackboard only. All other support technical support issues need to be addressed to the Office of Technology Services (below).

Phone: (860) 768-4636 **Email:** bbsupport@hartford.edu

FAQ/Submit a Ticket: <http://www.hartford.edu/studentbbsupport>

Information Technology Services (ITS) Help Desk

For general computer and Internet/network support questions (not directly related to the classroom but rather passwords, Internet/email problems, Banner/Self-Service, campus Facebook).

Phone: (860) 768-4357 **Email:** helpdesk@hartford.edu

Website: <http://hartford.edu/ots>

Media Technology Services (MTS)

Faculty should contact MTS for assistance scheduling or implementing classroom technology (2-Way interactive video classrooms, Smart Podiums, laptops, etc.), for setting up WebEx accounts, or for scheduling and instruction for a wide variety of media equipment and resources like LCD data projectors, CD/cassette players, TVs and VCRs, digital video, and more.

Phone: (860) 768-4357 **Website:** <http://www.hartford.edu/mts>