

University of Central Arkansas Instructional Development Center

FAQs for WebCT/UCA Blackboard

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1. What are the Blackboard Development and Production servers? Unlike WebCT which was housed on one server, UCA Blackboard has two servers. The Development server is used to build each of your courses and allows you to save a copy of these courses as a backup for your active courses. (Note: This backup copy will only be available if you develop the course on this server.) It also allows you to experiment with Blackboard's new interface and features. Students will not have access to the Development server. The Production server houses the active course shells for the classes you are currently teaching and students are automatically enrolled via the Banner system. Both you and your students access these active course shells in URSA through the "My Courses" tab.
2. How do I get a user name, password, and a course shell on the UCA Blackboard Development server? Contact Tonya McKinney and request a shell for each course you wish to develop. For ease of response, Tonya prefers that you contact her by email.
3. What is the URL for the UCA Blackboard Development server? The URL for the Development server is <http://webctdev.uca.edu:8901>. Tonya McKinney will supply you with a user name and password. When you log in you will be able to see a course shell for each class you requested. Click on the course name to enter the shell.
4. How do I move my content from WebCT to the shell on the Development server? You must create an export file in WebCT, download it to your computer, and import it into the shell on the Development server. Instructions for this procedure are found in the Technology Help Files in the IDC URSA channel and are also covered in the WebCT/Blackboard conversion seminar.
5. Will my students have access to the course shells on the Development server? No. These shells are for your use only to develop your courses, maintain a backup for your active courses, and experiment with new functions.

6. Once I have built my course in a development shell, how do I move it to the UCA Blackboard Production server? Tonya McKinney is the only one who can move a course from the Development server to the Production server. It is recommended that you switch to active UCA Blackboard course shells only at the beginning of a term.

7. What information does Tonya need to be able to move the course to the Production server? For each course, Tonya will need the following information:

A. Your Name

B. Term requested (spring 2009, summer I 2009)

C. Course name and number (CHEM 1450, WRTG 1310, WRTG 1320)

D. URSA CRN (five digit Course Record Number - designates the section)

E. If you are teaching multiple sections of the same course, designate the courses to be combined. (This feature allows you to post to one course shell and the material will be present on the multiples.)

8. How will my students and I access the course in UCA Blackboard? Both you and your students will access the course through URSA. Log in to URSA and click the "My Courses" tab. All courses will be listed. Click on the course name to enter the course. If the course contains your materials that Tonya transferred, it will open to the course home page when you click on the course. If the course does not have a UCA Blackboard shell, it will open as an URSA course with several limited course management functions.

9. How do I modify or add new content to the course once it has been moved to the Production server? Once the course has been moved to the UCA Blackboard Production server and it appears in URSA, you should make all modifications on Production server only.

10. How do I move the course content from one semester to the next semester? Tonya will still need all of the information listed in FAQ #7 to create your new blank shell for the new semester. Once the shell has been created, open the new shell and you will view a screen called the "Assign Course Content" screen. Select "Copy content from another course" and follow the onscreen directions. Note: If you mistakenly create a "blank course", you can email Tonya and request that she copy the content for you. She will need the CRN for both semesters.

11. Where do I find "Help Files" for UCA Blackboard? "Help Files" are located in three places. Locate the IDC channel in URSA, scroll to the bottom, locate the drop down menu and select the appropriate file from the list. The identical files are also located in the UCA Blackboard URSA group and the IDC Website on the technology services page.

12. Can I move directly from WebCT to the UCA Blackboard Production server without constructing the course on the Development server? Yes. First, give Tonya McKinney the information to create your real course shells on the UCA Blackboard Production server in URSA. Next, follow the instructions in the "Help File" on exporting WebCT content and importing it into Blackboard. If you are an experienced WebCT user, you will probably have no difficulty with the new interface. However, it is highly recommended that you use the Development server first to build your shell and maintain a backup of the course. If you develop your course on the Production server, no backup will be available. Courses will remain on the active Production server for a period of one year before they will be removed.

13. Can you just change my CRN from last semester instead of giving me a new shell? No. Each CRN is tied to a semester code. Even if the CRN appears to be the same, it will be linked to a new semester code.

14. Will my CRNs automatically be sent to Blackboard each semester? No. You must email your list to Tonya each semester.

15. When do students have access to courses on the Production server? Sections are set to open with the date the term begins. If you need to open your course earlier or later, you can override this setting in your section. (Manage Course > Settings - Locate Administration Column and click on Learning Context. You can set several options.

16. How do I add other designers/instructors/teaching assistants to my courses? Since Blackboard gets all its information from Banner, each additional instructor must be added to the course in Banner. Department Chairs or secretaries will access SSASECT in Banner and make these assignments. Once they're added, the information should automatically be sent to Blackboard. If the additional instructors are not visible in 30-60 minutes, email Tonya.

17. Why are some of my students not showing up in Blackboard rosters? Sometimes information gets lost in the transition from Banner to Blackboard. Email Tonya with your CRN and the name(s) of the missing student(s) and she will re-send the information.

18. Why are some students unable to access my course content? In most cases, this involves a setting on the student's computer. Have the students run the "Check Browser" and "Browser Tune-Up". Also check the announcement on "My Blackboard Page" for "Problems accessing files in a course".

19. Why isn't the "My Computer" icon visible when I click on the files function? The functions associated with the "My Computer" icon involve the JAVA language. Go to the Internet and update your computer to the latest version of JAVA to solve this problem.

20. Why do I keep getting a message about a digital error? When you see this message, click "Run" and check the box beside "Always allow content from this website." You should no longer receive this message and the "My Computer" icon should be visible to allow you to upload files.

21. How do I make the Blackboard tools work for my class? First, you should check for the "Tools" Help File located in the "Technology Help Files" section in the IDC URSA channel to see if there is a file posted that would solve your problem. If not, contact the IDC for help.

22. What do I do when I get an error message, other than a digital error (#20.), especially if this error will not let me continue a feature or function in Blackboard? Take a screen shot of the error message, paste it into a Word document, add your comments or explanations, and email the completed document to tmckinne@uca.edu. To take a screen shot of the error, press the Print Screen button on the keyboard - usually located near the top, right corner of your keyboard. Open a Word document and paste the image into the document. Hit the <Enter> key a couple of times to allow some space below the image and add your comments. If your computer has a photo editor you may crop the image to contain only the error message and the screen to which it pertains before pasting it into the Word document. It is very important that your comments contain information regarding what Blackboard features or functions you were trying to use at the time of the error and whether or not you were able to complete the Blackboard process you were using. Also, be sure to notify your instructor by email of your difficulties. You might want to include the screen shot with a time stamp for your instructor.