

Communication in Blackboard



How to Use this Guide

This guide has been designed to help academic staff use key communication tools in Blackboard 9.1. It assumes participants will have completed the *Getting Started in Blackboard* workshop. Individual sandbox courses have been created in Blackboard in conjunction with this guide.

You can either access specific tasks or work through the whole document.

Purpose of this Document

The aim of this document is to introduce Blackboard 9.1 to staff who are interested in creating web-based learning and teaching content for their students.

Different Users of Blackboard

- Teachers/Instructors
- Teaching Assistants
- Students
- Course Designers/Builders
- Graders
- System Administrators

Learning Outcomes

When you have completed the tasks in this guide you should be able to:

- Use a variety of Blackboard tools to add course information.
- Use Blackboard tools for asynchronous communication.
- Use Blackboard tools for synchronous communication.
- Use some of the Web 2.0 communication tools in Blackboard.

Blackboard Resources

Blackboard provides a wide range of online resources for users that can be accessed within the learning management environment. The **Help** guide (in the Control Panel) and **On Demand** video tutorials are particularly useful.

More resources can be found on the PolyU wikispaces site - <http://blackboard-polyu.wikispaces.com/>. Everyone is free to add to this wiki.

The LMS Transition website also has useful information – <http://newlms.polyu.edu.hk>.

Contacts:

- **ITS:** itbb@inet.polyu.edu.hk
- **EDC:** etian@inet.polyu.edu.hk (Ian); and etjeni03@inet.polyu.edu.hk (Jenny)

Introducing the Course

You will use your Groupwise username and password.

1.1 Login details

Browse to: <http://learn.polyu.edu.hk>

Use your Groupwise username and password for entering Blackboard. You have been allocated the role of teacher in a sandbox (blank) course. You will also be enrolled as a student in another course.

The format of these workshops will be hands-on giving you an overview of how you can use different types of features within Blackboard.

1.2 Content files

In order to complete some of the tasks content files may have to be downloaded onto your desktop. More information will be given at the workshops.

Task 1. Using Blackboard Tools for Course Information

Learning outcomes

After completing these tasks you should be able to:

- add a course syllabus.
- use Blackboard tools for providing course information.
- share information using the Contacts page.
- enrol people onto your course.

Method

You will use **Blackboard tools/features** to add course information.

1.1 TASK: Adding a course syllabus

You will want to provide an online **syllabus**. This can be done in two ways. You can upload an existing PDF or Word file (which we did in Workshop 1); or you can create the syllabus within Blackboard.

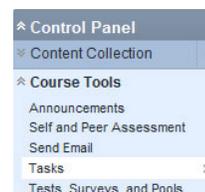
- Click on **Syllabus** from the Build Content drop down menu.
- View the options.



1.2 TASK: Adding tasks

Several methods in Blackboard allow teachers to keep students informed of important course information. In workshop 1 we looked at the Announcement and Calendar tools. You can use the **Task** tool to create a list of tasks students must complete. This could be useful for larger projects or assignments. A task list can help students keep track of things they have to do throughout a process.

- Click on **Tools** in the control panel (or course menu) to view the different tools in Blackboard. Select **Tasks**.
- **Create Course Task**. Give the task a name – e.g. *Assignment Topic*. Add a description: *Select your assignment topic. See the syllabus for the due date and specific instructions.*



Create Course Task

* Indicates a required field.

Cancel Submit

1. Task Information

* Task Name

Description Text Editor is: ON

Normal 3 Arial B I U abc x₂ x₂ [List Icons]

Path: body > p

Save as Reusable Object

* Due Date Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy

2. Task Options

* Priority

3. Submit

Click Submit to finish. Click Cancel to quit without saving changes.

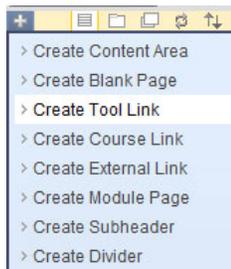
Cancel Submit

Note:

- Tasks can be assigned a priority of Low, Normal, or High
- By default, tasks are listed from highest to lowest and not by date.

1.3 TASK: Viewing Tasks

- Go to Home page and click on **My Tasks** module.
- Click on task title to access the **View Task** page. It displays all students' progress for that task.
- To view and edit the task it is a good idea to create a Tool link in the course menu. Name it *Tasks*.
- Click on *Tasks* in the course menu. You can now view and edit the tasks.



View Task

1. Task Information

Task Name	Chapter 3 Worksheet Due
Description	Worksheets and instructions are available in the Assignm
Due Date	Tuesday, August 18, 2009
Priority	High

2. Status

Alyssa Dubois	Not Started
Andy Farrell	Not Started
Ashby Cooper	Not Started

1.4 TASK: Adding personal information

Using the **Contacts** Tool you can provide students with your contact information as well as some personal details and a photo.

- Click on **Tools** in the control panel. Select **Contacts**.
- **Create Contact**. Add your profile information.
- Under **Options** add a photo. You can also add a personal web site.
- **Submit**.



Note:

- You can create a folder to organize profiles for your teaching assistants and guest lectures.
- The recommended image size is 150 by 150 pixels.

1.5 TASK: Enroling students onto your course

You can easily add students or other members of staff (as students) onto your course. This could be quite useful for testing your material.

- Click on **Users and Groups** in the control panel. Select **Users**.
- Click on **Find Users to Enrol**. Add three users to your course as students. (Use commas to separate names).
- **Submit**.



Users

[Find Users to Enroll](#)

Search:

<input type="checkbox"/>	NetID	First Name	Last Name	Email	Role	Observer	Available
<input type="checkbox"/>	etian <input type="checkbox"/>	David Ian	BROWN	etian@inet.polyu.edu.hk	Instructor		Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	sandbox_etian_student001 <input type="checkbox"/>	sandbox	STUDENT	sandbox_etian_student001@dummy.com	Student		Yes

Note:

- You can remove users from the course easily if they have been enrolled as students.

Task 2. Using Blackboard Tools for Asynchronous Communication

Learning outcomes

After completing these tasks you should be able to:

- use some of the Blackboard tools for communication.
- add a discussion forum to your course.
- send email (external).
- send messages (internal).
- create course groups.
- access groups.

Method

You will use asynchronous **communication tools** to add course materials.

In Blackboard 9.1 there are many different communication tools that you can use for your course to increase student motivation and participation. These tools can be used either synchronously (in real-time) or asynchronously (not at the same time).

- Click on **Tools** in the control panel (or course menu) to view the different tools in Blackboard.

To find out more click on **Help** in the control panel.

2.1 TASK: Accessing Discussion Boards & Forums

The **Discussion Board** – which is made up of **forums** - is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. The forums are used to organise **threads**. They are centrally located in the discussion board but can appear anywhere in the course.

Accessing Discussion Boards & Forums (in different ways):

- Click **Discussions** in the course menu or **Discussion Board** in Tools.
- Open Course Tools in the control panel and select **Discussion Board** from list.
- Click on the discussion board with the name of your course (if it has been created).
- Click on the forums inside the discussion board (if created).

Note:

- Course groups can have their own discussion boards.
- Discussions may be moderated and/or graded.
- Students usually do not have administrative privileges when participating in forums but some forum administration privileges can be given for group discussions.

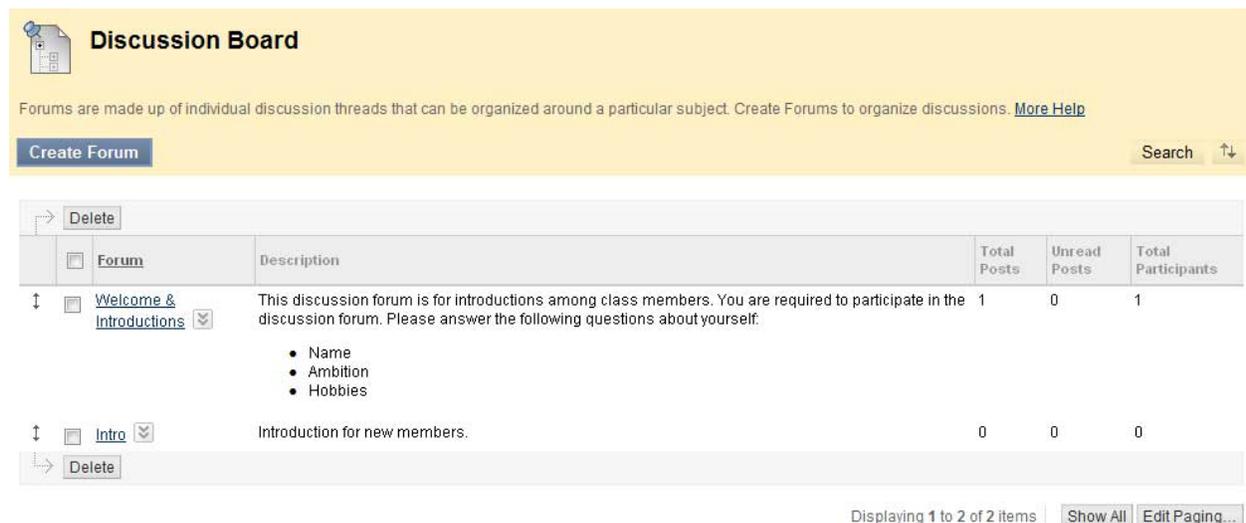
2.2 TASK: Creating and Editing Discussion Forums

Follow these steps to create a discussion board forum:

- See Task 2.1 to open discussion board page. Click **Create Forum**.
- Insert *Welcome & Introductions* as the **Forum Name**.
- In **Forum description**, type : *This discussion forum is for introductions among class members. You are required to participate in the discussion forum. Please give information about the following:*
 - *Name*
 - *Ambition*
 - *Hobbies*
- Make forum available to all users.
- In Forum Settings check **Allow File Attachments**.
- **Allow members to subscribe to threads.**
- **Include link to post.**
- **Submit** and return to discussion board page.

Note:

- Forums can be graded in the Forum Settings.



Discussion Board

Forums are made up of individual discussion threads that can be organized around a particular subject. Create Forums to organize discussions. [More Help](#)

[Create Forum](#) Search

Forum	Description	Total Posts	Unread Posts	Total Participants
Welcome & Introductions	This discussion forum is for introductions among class members. You are required to participate in the discussion forum. Please answer the following questions about yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name• Ambition• Hobbies	1	0	1
Intro	Introduction for new members.	0	0	0

Displaying 1 to 2 of 2 items [Show All](#) [Edit Paging...](#)

To edit:

- Locate *Welcome & Introductions* and click **Edit** from its contextual menu.

2.3 TASK: Posting a Thread in Discussion Forum

- In the **Discussion Board** click on the *Welcome & Introductions* forum.
- Click **Create Thread** button.
- Enter a title for your thread, and answer questions in the forum
- Attach file if required. **Submit**.

Forum: Welcome & Introductions

Organize Forum Threads on this page and apply settings to several or all threads. Threads are listed in a tabular format. The Threads can be sorted by clicking the column title or the caret at the top of each column. [More Help](#)

Create Thread Search Display

Date	Thread	Author	Status	Unread Posts	Total Posts
4/7/11 3:59 PM	hello	David Ian BROWN	Published	0	1

Displaying 1 to 1 of 1 items Edit Paging...

2.4 TASK: Sending an email

In Blackboard email messages can be sent to other users' external email addresses.

- In **Tools** select **Send Email**.
- Select link for intended recipient group.
- For **Select Users** or **Select Groups**, select the recipients in the **Items to Select** box and click the right-pointing arrow to move them into the **Selected Items** box.
- Type **Subject**: Blackboard training.
- Type **Message**: Blackboard training starts next week.
- **Submit**.

Send Email

- » **All Users**
Send email to all of the users in the Course.
- » **All Groups**
Send email to all of the Groups in the Course.
- » **All Student Users**
Send email to all of the Student users in the Course.
- » **All Teaching Assistant Users**
Send email to all of the Teaching Assistant users in the Course.
- » **All Instructor Users**
Send email to all of the Instructor users in the Course.
- » **All Observer Users**
Send email to all Observer users in the Course.
- » **Select Users**
Select which users will receive the email.
- » **Select Groups**
Select which Groups will receive the email.
- » **Single / Select Observer users**
Send an email to selected Observer users.

 **Select Users**

* Indicates a required field.

Cancel
Submit

1. Email Information

* To

Available to Select BROWN, David Ian	Available to Select <	Selected
Invert Selection Select All		Invert Selection Select All

From: David Ian BROWN (etian@inet.polyu.edu.hk)

Subject: Blackboard training

Message: Blackboard training starts next week.

A copy of this email will be sent to the sender.

Attachments: [Attach a file](#)

2. Submit

Cancel
Submit

Note:

- You cannot send email to anyone who is not a member of the course.
- Blackboard keeps no record of sent emails.
- Blackboard will not recognize files or email addresses with spaces or special characters.
- Always include content in the subject line.
- Email addresses are only visible if participants choose to make them visible (see Personal Information).
- Some email clients may identify Blackboard emails as junk so check user preferences to solve this issue.

2.5 TASK: Sending Messages

Messages can also be sent to course members using the **Messages** tool. This tool sends secure and private electronic messages within the course without relying on external email addresses. Both incoming and outgoing messages are saved in the Messages tool. Using the Messages tool encourages students to log in to their courses regularly.

- In **Tools** select **Messages**.
- Click **Create Message**.
- Click **To** to see list of course members.
- In the **Items to Select** box, select the recipients and click the right-pointing arrow to move them to the **Selected Items** box.
- Type **Subject**: *Blackboard training*.
- Type **Message**: *Blackboard training starts next week*.
- **Submit**.

2.6 TASK: Viewing Messages

- In **CourseTools** in the control panel select **Messages**.
- Open **Inbox** folder.

- Click **Subject** link to read message.

Note:

- Students are not notified if they receive new messages.
- Accounts are automatically created for each member of the course.
- User needs to create a folder to use the Move function after viewing message.

2.7 TASK: Creating Course Groups – a single group

The Course Groups feature allows instructors to create groups of students within a course to collaborate on work. These groups have their own area within the course. Groups can have their own Discussion Board, Blog, Journals, Wikis, and live chats. Group members can exchange documents, submit Group Assignments, send email to other Group members, and distribute tasks to keep the Group on track.

The Groups tool allows instructors to organize students into Groups of any size. Instructors can provide communication and collaboration tools that only Group members can access, such as a private File Exchange area, a Group Discussion Board, and a Group Journal. Each Group has its own space, or homepage, with links to tools to help students collaborate.

Groups can be created one at a time or in sets. The instructor can manually select Group members or allow students to self-enroll.

To create a single Group with manual enrollment:

- In the control panel select **Groups** in Users and Groups section (or in course menu).
- Select **Manual Enroll** from **Create Single Group** drop-down menu.



- On Create Group page type name: *Maths issues*.
- Give a description: *This group will look at maths-related tools in Bb.*
- Make **Group Available**.
- Check **Allow Personalization** to allow students to add personal modules to homepage (e.g. What's New and My Calendar).
- In the **Items to Select** box, select the members and click the right-pointing arrow to move them to the **Selected Items** box.
- **Submit**.

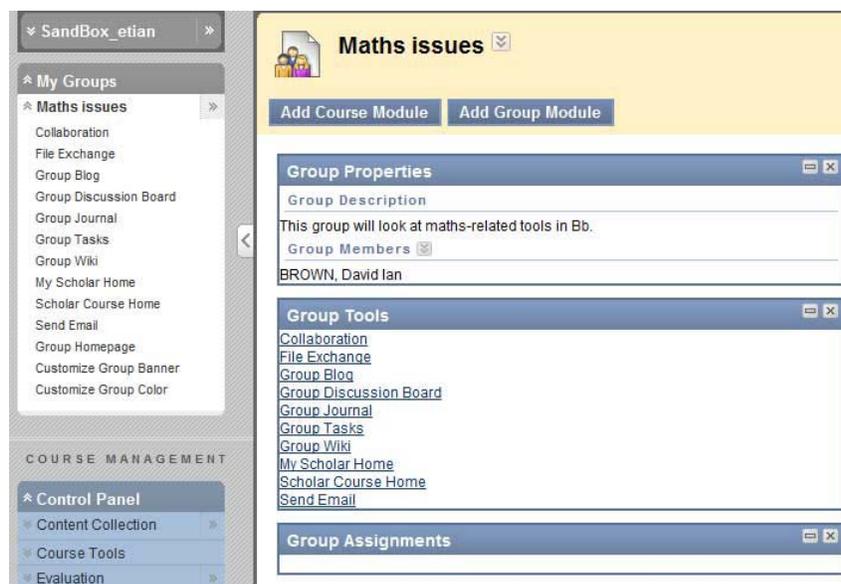
Note:

- Notice the **Grade** option and **Points possible** for **Blogs**, **Journals**, and **Wikis** to grade student submissions
- It is possible to edit name, description etc and customize page using contextualized drop-down menus.

2.8 TASK: Accessing Course Groups

Groups can be accessed in several ways:

- **Groups listing page link** – appears on the Course Menu. The Groups listing page lists all available Groups and sign-up sheets for Self-Enroll Groups.
- **My Groups** – appears following the Course Menu. If a student is enrolled in a Group, the area appears automatically.
- **Group Link** – a link to a single Group, sign-up sheet, or the Groups listing page made available in a course area.



Note:

- Notice the collaboration tools available for the Group.

Task 3. Using Blackboard Tools for Synchronous (Real-time) Communication

Learning outcomes

After completing this task you should be able to:

- Find the Collaboration tool.
- Participate in a chat session.
- Send private messages.
- Create chat sessions.
- Modify participant roles.
- Manage sessions.
- Create session recordings.
- View session recordings.

Method

You will use synchronous **communication tools** to add course materials.

3.1 TASK: Participating in Chat Sessions

The **Virtual Classroom** tool and the **Chat** tool form the Blackboard Learn **Collaboration** tool. Real-time collaboration sessions are useful in situations where users are unable to physically meet.

Chat is a virtual meeting space, where instructor and students can communicate with each other using **instant messaging**. It can be used, for example, for guest speakers or question & answer sessions; small group collaborations and brainstorming sessions.

Chat sessions can be for the duration of the course; or they can be used at any time. Student attendance for these sessions may be mandatory.

Follow these steps to participate in a chat session:

- Access **Tools** and select **Collaboration**.
- Click **Session Name** link (*Office Hours*) for available chat session.
- This opens up Launching Chat Tool.
- In the pop-up **chat screen** compose a message.
- **Send**





Note:

- Each course contains a default chat session titled Office Hours. You can rename or delete this default session.
- The chat session opens in a new browser window (and may take some time to load).
- Do not close the Launching Chat Tool page while chatting.
- Java plug-in is required for chat to run.
- Chat will not work if pop-up blockers are enabled.
- The Virtual Classroom tool includes whiteboard, chat panel, Course Map, and a QA area.

3.2 TASK: Sending Private Messages

Private messages can be sent by chat participants, including the instructor, to one or more participants. To send a private message:

- On the Participants list, select the recipient/s of your message.
- Click **Private Message**.
- Compose & Send.

Private messages appear with other messages in the chat display panel or they can be displayed in a separate panel. Private messages are always preceded by *Private Message from*.

3.3 TASK: Creating Chat Sessions

To create a chat session:

- Access **Tools** and select **Collaboration**.
- Click **Create Collaboration Session**.
- Type a **Session Name**: *Getting started in Blackboard*.
- Under **Schedule Availability** select start and end times.
- Under **Collaboration Tool** choose





Create Collaboration Session

Collaboration Sessions are real-time lessons and discussions. Two Collaboration Tools are available: Chat and Virtual Classroom. Chat is an exchange of text messages online. Virtual Classroom is a shared online environment where users can view links, share desktops, exchange files, and chat. Both types of collaboration can be recorded and saved for future review. [More Help](#)

* Indicates a required field.

Cancel Submit

1. Session Name

* Session Name

2. Schedule Availability

Select Dates of Availability Start After

Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

End After

Enter dates as mm/dd/yyyy. Time may be entered in any increment.

Available Yes No

3. Collaboration Tool

Choose Tool for this Session

4. Submit

Cancel Submit

Repeat **Task 3.1** to participate in this session.

3.4 TASK: Modifying Participant Roles

By default, participants are Active Users when they enter a chat session. At any time, the instructor can change the role to Passive. Passive Users can view the chat exchange, but can only contribute if they raise their hands and are granted permission by the Moderator (normally the instructor). The instructor controls chat sessions to a greater degree when users are passive.

To modify participant roles:

- Click **participant's name** in the chat pop-up window.
- Click an **icon** to activate or deactivate a user's permission to chat.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard Chat interface for a session titled "Office Hours (Moderator)". The top action bar contains buttons for "View", "Controls", "Clear", and "End". A red circle highlights recording buttons (a microphone icon and a document icon) on the right side of the action bar. A callout box labeled "Functions for managing chat" points to the "Controls", "Clear", and "End" buttons. Another callout box labeled "Buttons for recording chat" points to the recording buttons. On the right, a user list shows three roles: "Moderator" (with a globe icon), "Active User" (with a person icon), and "Passive User" (with a person icon and a hand raised icon).

	Moderator – modifies roles & grants permissions
	Active User
	Passive User – needs to “raise” hand to send message.

3.5 TASK: Managing Sessions

An instructor can use the functions on the Action Bar (see above) to manage the chat session.

- Click **Controls** to select which features each role can use.
- Click **Clear** to clear chat panel of all session participants.
- Click **End** to end session (and recording) and expel all users.

3.6 TASK: Recording Sessions

An instructor can use the recording functions on the Action Bar (see above) to create a transcript of a chat session. This can be beneficial if student participation is graded. Students can access recordings if they missed the session or if they want to review the ideas discussed.

Use either the topic discussed or the date of the session as the name so students can locate them easily. Multiple recordings can be made within one chat session.

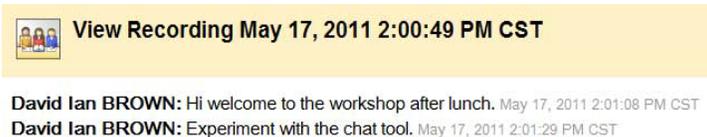
To record a session:

- After joining a chat session, click the **Begins recording** function .
- Type a name for the chat recording or use the default (start date).

3.7 TASK: Viewing Chat Recordings

To view recordings:

- Access **Tools** and select **Collaboration**.
- Click a session's Action Link to access the contextual menu.
- Select **Recordings**.
- Click name of recording.
- View the recording.



Task 4. Web 2.0 Communication in Blackboard 9.1

Learning outcomes

After completing this task you should be able to:

- Find the web 2.0 communication tools.
- Create a simple blog.
- Add a blog to a course.
- Post to a blog.
- Understand the difference between journals and blogs.
- Learn something about the wiki tool.

Method

You will try out some of the **Web 2.0 communication tools** to add course materials.

These tools of self-reflection, collaboration, and communication - journals, blogs, and wikis - give students the opportunity to share and construct knowledge. Students can benefit from comments from peers and the instructor as they interact, collaborate, and share information, resources, opinions, and ideas.

4.1 TASK: Accessing the Web 2.0 tools

- Click on **Tools** in the content panel. (You can also view them in **CourseTools** in the Control Panel.)
- To find out more click on **Help** in the Control Panel.



4.2 TASK: Creating a Blog

Blogs allow authors to communicate their knowledge and opinions to others. Course members can express their ideas and grasp of course content in a state of virtual proximity, and refine their thoughts as guided by the instructor or peers through comments. Blogs can facilitate critical thinking and knowledge construction, while supporting the learning that takes place in the online classroom. Blogs can be effective in helping learners develop communication skills while they express themselves.

To create a simple blog:

- Click on the link for **Blogs**
- Click **Create Blog** button.
- **Name** the blog: *Blackboard – first impressions.*
- Give some **instructions**: *This is a blog where everyone is free to share their thoughts about Bb.*
- Make blog **available**.
- Select **Course** for **Blog Type**.
- Select **weekly** for **Index Entries**.
- Look at other blog options.
- Look at grading options
- **Submit**.

4.3 TASK: Adding a Blog to a Course

To add a blog to a course:

- Open a **course** in the content panel (e.g. *Blackboard Training*)
- Select **Blog** from the Add Interactive Tool's drop-down menu.



- Check **Link to a Blog** and **highlight** blog (*Blackboard – first impressions*) in box.
- Click **Next**.
- Add a text description: *This is a link to our course Bb Blog page.*
- Make **available**.

This blog has now been added to the Blackboard Training course.

4.4 TASK: Posting to a Blog

Blog entries make up the content of a blog. Here are the steps for posting to a blog:

- Click on the blog **link** (e.g. *Blackboard – first impressions*).
- Click **Create Blog Entry**.
- Give blog entry a **title**: *What I Like About Blackboard!*
- Type a message: *I think the drop-down menus are cool.*
- Click **Post Entry**.



The posting can be viewed below.

4.5 TASK: Understanding Journals

A journal is a self-reflective tool that allows students to post their personal reflections about the course or discuss and analyze course related materials. Instructors can assign a journal to each student in a Course or Course Group that is accessible by only them and the student in order to communicate privately.

Journal assignments can help students make connections between their experiences as they create meaning and internalize learning. As students analyze and synthesize information, they are able to effectively learn the course content.

The steps for creating a journal, adding a journal to a course area and posting a journal entry are similar to that for blogs (see above).

4.6 TASK: Understanding Wikis

A wikis is a collaborative tool that allows students to contribute and modify one or more pages of course related materials, providing a means of sharing and collaboration. Pages can be created and edited quickly. Course members and the instructor can track changes and additions, while viewing the progress of individual contributions.

Course wikis are created by the instructor and any course member can add pages. Wikis can be graded.

More information about wikis can be found in Blackboard's **Help** in the control panel.

