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## BLACKBOARD FAQs

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### USING BLACKBOARD

#### What is a module?

Modules can be identified by the title bar at the top that includes the module name. They appear on the Blackboard portal entry page in the second and third columns. Some are required and others can be selected from a group of **additional modules**. You can **rearrange modules** and **choose a color scheme** for your main page.

#### How can I look at additional modules and add those I want to include in my view of the portal?

On the Blackboard page, click on the **Modify Content** tab in the upper right corner of the page. If you don't see the Modify Content tab, click on the Welcome or Blackboard tab to get to that page. The page includes a form that lets you select from a list of other modules available. Modules that are preceded by a red checkmark are required so you cannot remove them. Any that are unchecked, you may click on the checkbox to add. Any that are preceded by a black checkmark are optional so you can click on the checkbox to remove them. **Important:** You must click on the **Submit** button at the bottom of the page after you have made all of your selections or your changes will not be made. When you see the message "The page has successfully been customized", click on the OK button and your new Blackboard main page will be displayed.

#### Can I rearrange modules or change the appearance of the Blackboard main page?

On the Blackboard page, click on the **Modify Layout** tab in the upper right corner of the page. If you don't like the placement of any of your modules, you can use the form provided to move them to either the Left Panel window or the Right Panel window. Modules already in the right or left panel followed by an asterisk are required so they can only be moved but cannot be deleted. You also have the option of **changing the color scheme of your modules** on your main page.

**Important:** You must click the **Submit** button at the bottom of the page after you have made all of your selections or your changes will not be made. When you see the message "The page has successfully been customized", click on the OK button and your new Blackboard main page will be displayed.

#### How can I change the color scheme of modules on the Blackboard main page?

If you want to change the colors you see on your modules on your main page, you can do that by clicking on the **Modify Layout** tab in the right corner of the Blackboard page. If you don't see the Modify Layout button, click on the Welcome or Blackboard tab. On the Modify Layout page, select one of the color combinations in the Customize Theme section of the form.

**Important:** You must click the **Submit** button at the bottom of the page after you have made your selection or your color change will not be made. When you see the message "The page has successfully been customized", click on the OK button and your new Blackboard main page will be displayed.

#### How can I make sure to capture class/organization announcements and events?

We suggest you change your module display settings for your My Announcements and My Calendar modules to week view (e.g. post information for the last 7 days). Otherwise you will only see the information the day it is posted. To change your display settings for My Announcements or My Calendar:

- Click on the pencil icon in the My Announcements or the My Calendar module title bar.
- In the form that is displayed, change the display settings to the equivalent of 1 week's data.
  - For My Announcements: "Show Announcements for Last 7 days."
  - For My Calendar: "Show Calendar Events for This Week."
- Click the submit button.

You will know the change has been made when you see the phrase "Week View" appear in your

### When I make selections to customize my environment, I don't see the changes. Why can't I get this to work?

Blackboard uses a form-driven interface. When using a form, you must press the submit button at the bottom of the form after you make your selections. If not, your changes will not be implemented.

### When would I use the Set CD-ROM Drive link under Tools?

The Set CD-ROM Drive link should be used by instructors or organization managers who want to include links to off-line content on their pages. The off-line content generally comes from a CD or DVD. Under the link 'Set CD-ROM Drive', specify the drive letter (PC) or name (Macintosh) of the CD or DVD player on your workstation that contains your off-line content. Off-line content is content that is not uploaded to Blackboard.

### What is browser cache and why might I need to clear it?

So that your browser responds quickly when you request a page, a copy of the pages you request is stored on your hard drive so the browser can get them from your hard drive instead of going back to the server if you request the same page again. If you think the content of the page you are viewing may not be current and you have hit "Reload" or "Refresh" on your browser, the problem could be your browser cache setting. If it is not set to check the server to see if a new version of the page has been posted, that page may have been updated on the server but your browser is displaying an old version it got from the cache on your hard drive. You can either clear your cache so there are no files on your hard drive which will make the browser go to the server to get the page you request OR set your browser to always display the current version on the server. Also on a few occasions, your browser cache could become corrupted and then you need to clear it so your browser will work properly again.

Click on the link for the platform/browser you are using to see how to clear your browser cache and set your browser to display the most recent version of the web page.

|                   | Windows XP | Mac OS X   |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Internet Explorer | 7          | NR         |
| Firefox           | 2.0        | 2.0        |
| Safari            | NA         | 2.0<br>3.0 |

#### Legend:

NR = Not Recommended

NA = Not Applicable

'+' = or newer

### I am having problems with the chat and virtual classroom tools. What should I do?

If you are having problems with lightweight chat or the virtual classroom tool, please make sure that:

- You are using a **browser that supports these applications**.
- That you have the correct version of Java 2 installed.
- That you have only ONE version of Java 2 installed. If not, uninstall all versions and re-install the correct one.
- That any software you have installed to block pop-ups is either disabled or configured to allow pop-ups when using Blackboard.

If you have done all of these things and still have problems, you should **clear your JAR cache** and then trying using lightweight chat or the virtual classroom.

### What is JAR cache and why might I need to clear it?

Blackboard makes heavy use of JAR files. Java code for applets is stored in Java Archive or JAR files. When you use a JAR file, it is saved on your hard drive in your JAR cache so it does not need to be fetched from the server if it is needed again. This is done so your application will start up much faster. Like browser cache, your JAR cache can become corrupted. Clearing it will force the browser to go out to the server to download the JAR file before launching the application.

#### How to clear your JAR cache on Windows Vista:

1. On the Start Menu, select Control Panel.
2. Select the Classic View.

5. Under Temporary Internet Files, click the Delete Files ... button and click "OK" to confirm your request.
6. Click "OK" again to close the Java Plug-in Control Panel.
7. Close all browsers and other programs.
8. Restart your computer.

How to clear your JAR cache on Windows XP:

1. On the Start Menu, select Control Panel.
2. On the Control Panel, double-click Java to open the Java Plug-in Control Panel.
3. If it is not already open, click the General tab.
4. Under Temporary Internet Files, click the Delete Files ... button and click "OK" to confirm your request.
5. Click "OK" again to close the Java Plug-in Control Panel.
6. Close all browsers and other programs.
7. Restart your computer.

How to clear your JAR cache on Mac OS X:

1. On the hard drive, go to /Applications/Utilities/Java/
2. Launch "Java Web Start".
3. Under the "Java Web Start" menu in the top MacOS toolbar, select **Preferences...**
4. Click on the "Advanced" tab.
5. In the bottom pane, click on "Clear Folder".