

Planning and Building Your Ultra Course Transcript

In this presentation, we will discuss some of the best practices for planning and building the structure of your Blackboard course in Ultra Course View. We will also examine a few important Blackboard Ultra features that will help you organize and deliver your content. Developing a good Blackboard course should start with a good plan. You should consider planning and documenting the structure and basic content for your course before beginning to build, your goal should be to create a clear, simple, and consistent structure for your students.

One way to do this is with a course planning document. Pictured here is a simple course planning document that prompts you to document the structure, content, and assessments in your course. Another potential benefit of this approach is it allows you to reflect on the alignment between your planned objectives, the assessment of those objectives, and the content you plan to provide to help students achieve them. Consider dividing and grouping the course content into manageable sections or chunks for students to use. Common strategies for dividing the course content include by time, such as by week, by topic, or by content type, such as readings, presentations, and assignments.

The example on the right depicts a course subdivided by weekly modules using the learning module feature in Blackboard Ultra Course View. When you subdivide your course content plan to use consistent naming conventions, titles, and date formats wherever appropriate. Consider extending that consistency to the contents of those sections or chunks. This adds to predictability and ease of navigation for students. Note, these two Blackboard Ultra modules have similar internal structure. Once your course structure and content is planned, you can use the course content tools and features to build your course content.

Within the course content area of your Blackboard Ultra Course View course hover in the location where you want to add content. Many of the most common options for adding content are found by clicking the plus sign and then "Create." This will open the "Create Item" panel with options for course content, items like modules, folders, documents, links, as well as assessment and participation, and engagement items like tests, assignments, discussions, and journals. In terms of structuring your content, three of these deserve some special attention: learning modules, folders, and documents.

Let's take a look at each of these three options for organizing and presenting content. Blackboard Ultra learning modules and folders have some important similarities and differences. Both are used to group other content items including other folders, documents, links, assessments, and link to participation tools. Learning modules have several advantages, including features for optional or required sequential navigation and progress tracking. Blackboard Ultra learning modules are great choice for grouping and structuring your primary course content either by time, by topic, content type or any combination of these. They can contain any other kind of Blackboard content items, as well as folders. Learning modules also have key optional features that make them a great choice for any content meant to be viewed in a sequence or where progress tracking is helpful. Content viewed in learning modules can be viewed one at a time or by using the sequential navigation that is part of the learning module interface.

Folders, on the other hand, are excellent for grouping large numbers of similar resources where organization or sequence is less important and navigation is not necessary or desirable. The top

image is an example of a folder of research proposal samples. Folders are also useful for creating additional layers of structure inside of a learning module, grouping related items, and reducing scrolling, as depicted in the bottom image.

The last of our three special content items is the Blackboard Ultra document. This feature allows you to build dynamic content pages within your course that can contain a wide variety of content, including text, images, video embeds, and links to websites, documents and files. Ultra documents provide a palette for creating content directly in Blackboard that you might otherwise have had to display in a PDF or some other type of document or website. Ultra documents also allow you to embed custom HTML snippets, providing even more customizability and flexibility.

In this example, Dr. Rhode has used an Ultra document to create his "Your Instructor" page inside of his course. The interface for creating Ultra documents is intuitive and simple. For example, simply clicking the "Add Content" button gives us a clean and flexible rich text editor with basic text formatting and options for links, attachments, and special tool embeds.

As we've discussed in this brief presentation, as you prepare to design and develop your course in Blackboard Ultra Course View, consider planning and documenting your course structure and content before building in Blackboard. Dividing the content into manageable sections or chunks with an emphasis on ease of navigation and consistency. Consider using learning modules to provide the overall structure represented by your sections or chunks with folders for grouping related resources and providing additional layers of structure inside of modules. Finally, consider leveraging Ultra documents to create dynamic and interesting content displays that students can read and interact with directly in Blackboard.