



Blackboard Advisory Group Minutes: 11-30-2007

Social Sciences 113 (for Languages), 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Attending: Dan Graham, Brian Cooper, Peter Harrell, William Burig, Maria Parker, Antonio Carpio Juan, Bonne McManus, Ingeborg Walther, Premlata Vaishnav, Joan Clifford, Elise Mueller, Melissa Simmermeyer, Sandra Valnes Quammen, Laura Florand, Samantha Earp, Graciela Vidal, Lenore Ramm (note taker), Neal Caidin (convener).

1. Feedback from Languages Instructors

- Learning Objects blogs, within Blackboard are well liked, but could benefit from usability improvements, such as blogroll indicating which blogs have been updated, having a log of what each student did, the ability to add non-public comments and being able to share blogs across multiple course sites.
- Wimba Voice Tools are going to be rolled out in a pilot and then to the whole Duke Blackboard community. This tool provides many new features, including voice discussion boards and podcasts. Java has to be enabled in one's web browser. Demonstrated a Wimba Demo course site.
- Discussed the potential for a blog for the Duke community for discussing Blackboard and related technologies. This blog would be used as a method to distribute timely information, helpful hints and provide a mechanism for instructors to learn from one another. Privacy and access issues were discussed. This has been proposed within languages before and there will be a blog on the IMLTS website that will allow for entries to be incorporated into other feeds.
- Questions were asked about the flexibility of posting announcements and whether they could be automatically re-posted after regular intervals as reminders or posted to multiple sites at one time.
- Unfortunately, there is no way for us to determine what e-mail was sent and to whom. One option that is already built into Blackboard is Messages, which are purely internal to Blackboard.
- Attendees requested the ability to copy course materials, including threads from discussion boards and surveys responses, to multiple course sites at the same time.
- There were reports that students have difficulties remembering to submit their work to their instructors instead of just saving it.
- Discussed social bookmarking, including Blackboard Scholar. Bookmarks can be tagged can be tagged as appropriate for their courses or just of interest to the instructor.

3. Blackboard Upgrade

The Blackboard system will tentatively be upgraded to version 7.3 at some point after the spring semester. New features include multi-byte characters, which will require a multi-day downtime in order to convert the database. Assessments will allow a specific number or unlimited attempts. Other features include extra credit, spell check and an "early warning" feature to alert instructors when students are having difficulties.

4. Course Retention Policy

The course retention policy is now in effect, which means that courses starting with the Fall 2007 will be deleted after four years. Instructors can opt out of this deletion if desired and we will provide a convenient method for instructors to specify this. Courses created prior to that semester will be handled according to a process that has yet to be determined.

5. Safe-Assign

Future versions of Blackboard have an option for a plagiarism detection module, which checks for likely hits by searching in a database. It also allows students to use it for checking their own citations.