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Module 1: Introduction

Northern Kentucky University uses Blackboard as its course management system for online courses.

What is Blackboard?
Blackboard is a comprehensive e-learning software platform also known as a "learning management system" (LMS). Specifically, Blackboard is a software program installed on a server at NKU that helps instructors put courses—or course materials—online. Blackboard also provides tools that enable students to read class announcements, access assignments, take tests, and communicate with their instructor and other students in the course.

Tips for using Blackboard
Whether you are a first-time online learner or a veteran online learner, using the tips below will help you become a better learner in an online environment.

- **Become familiar with your course website.** Find the course syllabus. Navigate around the course (try the links to see where they go).
- **Log in to the course on a regular basis.** Check for new announcements or postings at least 3-4 times per week.
- **Participate in the Discussion Board and Virtual Chats as assigned.** These activities are part of your classroom experience.
- **Contact the NKU HelpDesk at (859) 572-6911, another classmate, or your instructor whenever you have a question or problem with Blackboard.**
- **Prepare for deadlines.** Technology is a wonderful thing when it works correctly. Remember, Internet connectivity may have disruptions in service. It is a good idea to plan ahead and leave extra time for connecting and downloading files to make sure that you meet your deadlines. Note: NKU’s Blackboard system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except for weekly system maintenance on Tuesdays from 12:15 a.m. to 1:15 a.m.

Module 2: Getting Started

Computer Requirements

- Computer with either Windows 2000 or Windows XP (Mac users need OS 10.2 or 10.3).
- Internet Access with either:
  - Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.2 or higher is recommended. (A free download is available at http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/default.asp) or Netscape Navigator 4.78 or higher. (Mac users need either Safari 1.0 or 1.1).
- Reliable E-mail account- Students automatically receive an NKU E-mail address when registered for classes at NKU. The NKU E-mail address is automatically loaded into Blackboard. If you prefer to receive email at a different email address, please set your NKU email to be forwarded to your preferred email account. To set email forwarding, go to NKU home at http://www.nku.edu, click WebMail, then click the link for Email forwarding.
- JavaScript must be enabled.
- Cookies must be enabled.
- If you wish to use the chat feature, Java must be enabled.

*Note: To check your computer and browser settings go to:* [http://browserdx.nku.edu](http://browserdx.nku.edu).

**ATTENTION AOL USERS:** Connect to AOL as usual, minimize AOL, and open a new Web browser (using either Internet Explorer or Netscape) before logging in to Blackboard.

Other Technical Requirements

- The ability to navigate the Web and manage multiple open windows.
- The knowledge of how to send and receive email
- The ability to open, close, and save files and attachments.
Special Plug-ins
Your instructor may require special plug-ins for your course that will allow specific types of content to play on your computer, such as video clips, PowerPoint presentations, pdf documents, and Flash animations. Go to http://browserdx.nku.edu to check your computer for the latest version of these plug-ins.

Module 3: Accessing Blackboard
To access NKU’s Blackboard site, click the Quick links drop-down list at the top of the NKU Home Page and select Blackboard from the list or you can go to http://learnonline.nku.edu.

Login and Password
1. Click the Login button on the NKU Blackboard Entry Page.

Welcome to Blackboard at NKU

2. When prompted, enter your Blackboard username and password and click Login. (Figure 2.2)

- Username: NKU email name (i.e. mousem – DO NOT include @nku.edu)
- Password: NKU password
- To check your NKU username or reset your NKU password visit http://www.nku.edu/password.

*Note: Use lowercase letters when entering a Blackboard username and password.

Your username and password are unique to you. Do not give anyone your Blackboard username or password. Your password allows Blackboard to recognize you as a unique person within the system. Blackboard attaches your identification to everything you do in the system. Your username will always stay the same in Blackboard but you may change your password.
Module 4: My Blackboard

When you successfully log in to Blackboard, you will see the Blackboard Gateway page (Figure 4.1) which is divided into subsections. The top section includes the Home, Help, and Logout links. The next section is the Tab region which includes the "My NKU" tab, Courses tab, and Academic Web Resources tab.

The My NKU Tab

Tools- The Tools area on the left-hand side of the page allows you to review Announcements, Calendar Events, Tasks, and Grades for all your courses through a single link. The Tools area includes:

- **Announcements** - View important messages on the Announcements page.
- **Calendar** - Manage courses and other events through the Calendar
- **Tasks** - View tasks posted by instructors or yourself.
- **My Grades** - Check grades and performance statistics from the Check Grades page.
- **Send Email** - Access email functions for specific courses through the Send email page.
- **User Directory** - Lists Blackboard users who have chosen to make their information publicly available.
- **Address Book** - Store contact information in the Address Book.
- **Personal Information** - Manage personal data and privacy settings. The Personal Information area is one of the first areas that you should visit the first time that you log into Blackboard. The Personal Information area allows you to:
  - **Edit Personal Information** - Users control the information that appears in your account profile.
  - **Change Password** - The first time you login to Blackboard, you will need to change your password to something that will be easy for you to remember.
  - **Set Privacy Options** - Users must choose whether or not to make information available through the User Directory and what information will be displayed. The default setting excludes the user profile from the User directory.

- **My Announcements** - lists current announcements for each course you are enrolled in.
- **My Calendar** - lists calendar events for today.
- **My Courses** - lists all courses you are enrolled in which are using Blackboard. To enter a course, click on the course link for that course.
- **My Tasks** - lists all assigned tasks which are due today.
The Courses Tab

Course List- Lists all courses that you are enrolled in that are using Blackboard. All courses are not listed automatically. Instructors must make courses “available” if they choose to use Blackboard. Your courses are listed under “Courses in which you are participating”. To access your course, click the title link next to the book. The Blackboard course ID and the Instructor are also listed.

Course Catalog- Here you’ll find the Blackboard system catalog. This catalog is not identical to the college catalog because some instructors choose not to put their courses online.

Academic Web Resources Tab
Provides you with the ability to access Web-based resources.

Module 5: Course Content
After clicking on the title link to your course as shown in Figure 4.2, you are now at your course Web site. Navigation links appear along the left-hand side. The content area will appear on the right. The names of the content areas in a course Web site are configured by the instructor and therefore may vary.

Announcements
The Announcements page is the default page for each course. It will show announcements that have occurred in the last 7 days for this course and only this course. Students may choose to view announcements that were entered today only, within the last 30 days or all announcements by linking on the corresponding tab on the Announcement page.

Northern Kentucky University
The following areas may or may not be utilized by your instructor. They are listed here to provide you with an overview of how these areas are commonly used.

**Course Information or Syllabus**

The Course Information or Syllabus page is where you can find the syllabus of this course, course and university guidelines, grading policies, etc. as related to this course.

**Faculty or Staff Information**

This area gives you information about the instructor for this course.

**Course Documents**

This is another course content area. The instructor can post course lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, course documents, and other course content in this area. Some documents may not display initially on your computer. For example, a PowerPoint presentation will not open on your computer if you do not have PowerPoint installed on your computer. (If you do not have PowerPoint, you can go to [http://www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) and download a free PowerPoint viewer.)

**To open a folder or a file:**

Click on the title of the folder to open it.

Click on the name of the file you wish to open.
Assignments
Your instructor may create Assignments for you to complete online. Links to these assignments will appear within a content area, and may contain some basic instructions with a View/Complete link.

To complete an assignment:

1.) Click the View/Complete link.

![Assignment 1](image1)
Submit your paper here.
>> View/Complete Assignment: Assignment 1

Figure 5.5

2.) Click the Browse button on the Upload Assignment page to locate the file that you want to attach. (Attach your assignment here just like you would attach it to an email.)
3.) Add your Comments for the instructor in the text box (you must type something in the Comments box.)

![Upload Assignment: Assignment 1](image2)

Figure 5.6

4.) Click the Submit button.

*Note:* You can check on the grading of this assignment by revisiting the View/Complete link in the course or using the View Grades tool.
Assessments

Quizzes - Quizzes in Blackboard are automated. They can be graded and give automatic feedback (if the instructor has chosen these options). Quizzes may be listed individually or your instructor may choose to organize quizzes in a folder(s).

To Take a Quiz:

1.) Click on the quiz title. You will be asked “Are you sure you want to take this quiz now?” Most instructors set up their quizzes so that they can only be taken one time (i.e., one attempt). If you click OK, the quiz will open. Once you click OK, you are committed to taking the quiz at that time.

2.) Click OK.

3.) Now your quiz will be displayed. If your instructor has placed a time limit on the quiz, a counter will appear on the status bar (lower left corner of figure 5.8).

4.) Once you have completed the quiz, scroll to the bottom and click Submit (lower right corner of Figure 5.8). If you do not click Submit, your results will not be sent to the server and you will not receive a grade. Do not double-click the Submit button.

NOTE: Do not surf the Internet in the same browser or hit the Back button on the browser that you are using to take the test. These actions may break the connection with the server and you may not be able to submit the test.
Module 6: Communication Tools

Communication
Blackboard provides several tools under the Communication link on the navigation menu which allow you to communicate with faculty and other students within the course. Your instructor decides which Communication Tools are available in your course.

Some popular communication tools include:
• Send E-mail
• Discussion Board
• Collaboration (Virtual Classroom)

Send E-mail
The following functions are available from the Send E-mail page:
• **All Users**: Sends email to all students and instructors in the course.
• **All Groups**: Sends email to all of the groups in the course.
• **All Teaching Assistants**: Sends email to all of the teaching assistants in the course.
• **All Instructors**: Sends email to all of the instructors in the course.
• **Select Users**: Sends email to a single user or selected user in the course.
• **Select Groups**: Sends email to selected groups in a course.

For security, email addresses are placed in the mail message’s Bcc: (Blind Carbon Copy) field.

**Note:** The Send Email feature in Blackboard is not an email program. It cannot receive emails and it does not save copies of sent messages. Messages sent via the Send Email feature are sent to the recipient’s NKU email address. (NKU email can be set to forward to a preferred email account at [http://webmail.nku.edu](http://webmail.nku.edu/).)
Discussion Board
Discussion Boards offer asynchronous communication, meaning students and instructors do not have to be available at the same time to have a “conversation”. The Discussion Board is a threaded discussion forum which means that a person can create a new question or thread if permitted by the instructor or respond to an existing question.

To participate in a Discussion Board:
1.) Click on the Discussion Board navigation link or the Discussion Board link found by clicking the Communication navigation link. (Figure 6.1)
2.) Click on the Discussion Forum title of your choice (Figure 6.3). The underlined text or the link must be clicked to view the discussion area of the forum.

3.) In the Threaded Discussion area, you will find the following:
   - Add New Thread- Click this button to add a new thread. (Note: Your instructor may choose to turn off this feature.)
   - Discussion Topic- Click this link to display the threads and respond to them. In Figure 6.4 the topic is What do you think?
   - Show Options- Here you can select or unselect threads so that you can mark them as Read, Unread, or Collect them to display on a single page.
   - Expand All, Collapse All, and Search- Here you can expand the list and collapse the area for easier navigation. Search allows you to explore the area for key words.
   - Sort By- You can sort by Author, Date, or Subject.

4.) Once you click on the thread, the question will appear. Click the Reply button to respond to the thread.
Enter your response in the **Message** text box. Your instructor may choose to allow the following options:

- a. Allow anonymous posts
- b. Allow author to edit message after posting
- c. Allow author to remove own posted messages
- d. Allow file attachments
- e. Allow new threads

5.) Click **Submit** to post your reply.

**Collaboration**

Collaboration Tools allow the instructor(s) and students to have “conversations” online by participating in real time lessons and discussions. This type of “conversation” is synchronous, meaning the people having the “conversation” do have to be online at the same time.

**Technical notes:** You must have Java and JavaScript enabled on your web browser to run the Collaboration Tools.

**Java Plug-In:** The Java 2 Run Time Environment 1.3.1_04 or higher is required to use the Collaboration Tools. This Java Plug-in should download and begin installation automatically after clicking the **Join** button the first time. If the plug-in does not download automatically, click the Java Plug-in link on the Collaboration page to begin the download.

**Popup Blockers:**

**AOL users:** Connect to AOL as usual, minimize AOL, and open a new Web browser before logging in to Blackboard. (Internet Explorer 5.2 or higher is the recommended Web browser.)

To enter a **Collaboration** session from inside your course:

1.) Click on the **Communication** link on the navigation menu (or a customized link that your instructor has created) and then click **Collaboration**.
2.) Click **Join** next to the session that you wish to join (only click one time).

There are two types of Collaboration Sessions: the Lightweight Chat and Virtual Classroom

- **Lightweight Chat** - a text-based chat tool that allows a group of users to conduct an online session through text-based messages.
- **Virtual Classroom** - consists of all of the functionality included in the Lightweight Chat in addition to a group browser, whiteboard, course map, and question/answer forums.

When scheduling a collaboration session, your instructor should inform you which session type they will use.

**Figure 6.8**

**Note:** You will see an indication that the Virtual Classroom is loading (see illustration below). **Be patient.** Depending on your connection speed, it may take a few minutes for the Virtual Classroom Java applet to load and launch. It will launch in a new window.

**Figure 6.9**

Do not click here - this takes you back to the "Collaboration Sessions" page above.
3.) The Virtual Classroom is divided into two main sections. (See Figure 6.1)
   a. Classroom Tool area which includes: Course Map, Whiteboard, Group Browser, and Ask Question box.
   b. Chat Area- This is where the actual communication takes place.

   Figure 6.10

   Drawings/Course Materials/Web pages are displayed here on the Whiteboard.

   Classroom Tool area

   Chat Area

   Type your message here

4.) Click in the Compose bar to type a message and then click **Send**. Your message will appear on the Chat Area just above the Compose bar.

5.) Close the Virtual Classroom window by clicking the \[\times\] in the upper right corner.

**Note:** The Lightweight Chat tool functions in the same manner as the Virtual Classroom tool, but provides only a chat area.
Module 7: Student Tools

The Student Tools area, like the Communication Tools, is customizable by course based on instructor preference. All of the options listed below may not be available in your course. Student tools allow for such actions as: checking your grades, building your own course homepage, and viewing the online student Blackboard manual.

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<th>Function</th>
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<td>Store contact information about fellow classmates here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>Listing of course events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Drop Box</td>
<td>Electronic file exchange between instructor and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit Your Homepage</td>
<td>Build and modify your course homepage which is accessible through the Roster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Blackboard</td>
<td>Notepad area to add personal course notes that will be saved in the course site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>Edit personal information, change password, and set privacy options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Manual</td>
<td>Online resource guide to all of the functions and features of Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>Listing of course related tasks created by the instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View Grades</td>
<td>List of personal grades for this course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

View Grades

To View Grades:
1.) Click the Student Tools or Tools navigation link.

2.) Click the View Grades link.
3.) Click the Grade for an Assessment or Assignment which was created and submitted within Blackboard to see additional information about that gradebook item.