

## Improvements in Blackboard as a result of a UT wide survey of the use of the digital learning environment

CES Information management

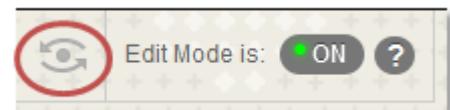
Last (academic) year a survey has taken place regarding the use of the digital learning environment of the UT, including Blackboard. As a result of the outcomes we have applied some changes in the configuration of Blackboard (as of 24 August 2015) - within the options that Blackboard offers. This is done with the purpose of offering a solution for the following frequently mentioned problems:

1. For a number of tools an instructor can't see what a student sees (some people are aware of the existence of the faculty test account but consider the use of that account not handy).
2. It is not really possible to make certain information in a course publicly available, creating access for people not enrolled in the course or not even having a Blackboard account.
3. The Blackboard interface is very cluttered, is it possible to have less tools visible?

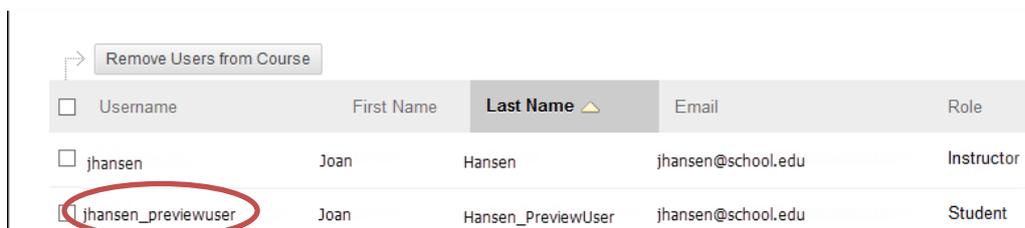
Below you can read what the improvements are.

### 1. Student preview: view your course as a student

The 'Student preview' function allows you to view your course the way a student sees it, and take actions that only a student can (such as submit assignments, do a test, enroll for groups). You can activate the Student preview by clicking the Student preview icon (next to the Edit mode switch). If you have activated the Student preview, other instructors don't automatically see the course in Student preview at that time; you only activate it for yourself.



When switching the Student preview on, a preview account is created and enrolled in the course with the student role. The (user)name of the preview account is your own (user)name, appended with '\_previewuser'. This account is visible in the course in all parts where regular students are visible (Users, Groups, Grade centre, E-mail). If other instructors in the course use the Student preview, they will get their own preview account.



Remove Users from Course					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Username	First Name	Last Name ▲	Email	Role
<input type="checkbox"/>	jhansen	Joan	Hansen	jhansen@school.edu	Instructor
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	jhansen_previewuser	Joan	Hansen_PreviewUser	jhansen@school.edu	Student

You can end the Student preview by clicking the button 'Exit preview' in the yellow bar. When leaving the Student preview you are asked if you want to delete the preview account and all associated data (such as submitted assignments), or if you want to keep the account and data. The first option is recommended, unless you want to view or change data of the

preview account afterwards with your instructor role. For example: you want to know how a student sees feedback and grades in My Grades.

1. You submit an assignment on behalf of the preview account
2. You exit the Student preview, selecting the option 'Keep the preview user and all data'.
3. You grade the assignment and provide feedback.
4. You activate the Student preview again and examine My Grades.
5. When leaving the Student preview after that, you select 'Delete the preview user and all data'.

Why the recommendation to delete the preview account each time? Because a preview account is treated by Blackboard in the same manner as a regular student and therefore will be enrolled in groups when using random group enrollment and also will receive mails that are sent to 'All students'.

Tips:

- You can always see if a preview account is enrolled because the Student preview icon then contains a green dot in the middle 
- In 'Settings ' you can set your default choice for leaving the Student preview
- If needed, you can remove preview accounts of other instructors in the course in the same manner you remove a regular user.

Please note:

- If you leave the course while the Student preview is active, it will also be active the next time you go to the course.
- Keeping and deleting of the preview account is restricted to the course: if you keep the preview account in course A and exit the Student preview in course B through the option 'Delete', the preview account will remain in course A.
- Known issues that only occur in Student preview and not for regular students: on the right you see a double scrollbar; you can submit an Ephorus assignment but it is not saved in Blackboard and checked by Ephorus; while doing a test the 'Question completion status' bar sometimes covers buttons and text.

## **2. Anonymous access to a course / organisation (guest access)**

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It is now possible again to make (parts) of a course anonymously accessible, i.e. accessible for persons that are not enrolled in the course or even don't have a Blackboard account. In Blackboard that's called 'guest access' and it's **not activated by default** in a course/organisation. If you want to have your course anonymously accessible you have to activate it yourself (see instructions below).

If guest access is enabled, someone can get access in the following manners:

- Everyone with a UT Blackboard account can click on the course in the course catalogue to get access (same applies for an organisation in the organisation catalogue).

- Anyone without a UT Blackboard account can get access if he uses the URL of the course.

The course **cannot** be found by searching in Google or other search engines.

Someone anonymously accessing a course can only read content, it's not possible to add content (for example submit an assignment).

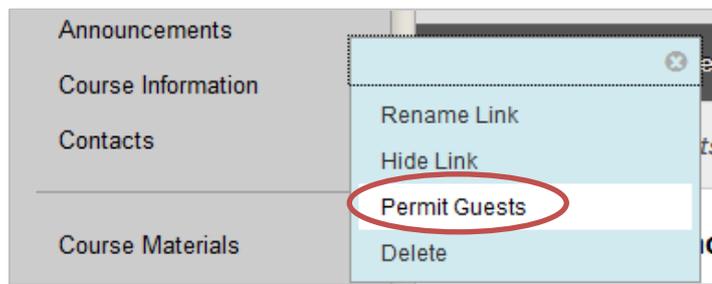
Blackboard only allows anonymous access for Announcements, Contacts, Calendar, Glossary and content area's. Content area's are menu items such as Course information, Course materials, Assignments, Extra materials, or generally speaking all menu items where you can add content through the buttons Build content, Assignments and Tools. You can select yourself which content areas are accessible for guests.

How to allow guest acces in your course/organisation?

1. Go to Control panel > Customisation
2. Click Guest and Observer access
3. Select 'Yes' for Allow Guests.
4. Click Submit

[step 5 through 7 can be skipped in courses with course ID starting with 2015 or higher]

5. Click Tool availability in the Control panel
6. Check the boxes in the column 'Visible to Guests' for the tools that should have guest access.
7. Click Submit
8. Now you still have to select the option 'Permit Guests' *for each menu item* that you want to have accessible for 'guests':



### **3. Not frequently used tools are made unavailable by default**

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To have less cluttered menus in a course, we have made the tools that are not frequently used unavailable by default\*. It concerns:

- Blog
- Chat
- Collaboration
- Document package
- Glossary
- Journal

- Learning Module
- Lesson Plan
- Mobile compatible test
- Performance dashboard
- QMP Assessment
- Retention Centre
- Roster
- Rubrics
- Syllabus
- Virtual Classroom
- Wiki

Please note: items that were created before with those tools can't be viewed as well as long as the tool is unavailable.

*\* If you want to use them, you can activate them yourself:*

1. Go to Control panel > Customisation
2. Click Tool availability
3. Find the tool in the list and select the corresponding box in the column 'Available' or the column 'Available in content area'.
4. Click Submit.