



Customizing the User Interface

Introduction

Designing the user interface for the *Blackboard Content System* is an important part of preparing the system for users. The Administrator manages the customization of the user interface separately from the availability of tools and actions in the system. Nearly every aspect of the Content System Menu may be made available or unavailable on the system, controlled independently of displaying the tool to users. Deciding the best way to display the Content System Menu will greatly influence the way users employ the system.

Prerequisites

This document is intended for Administrators to use while considering the setup and design of the user interface for the *Blackboard Content System*. Before referencing this document, users should be able to identify areas and tools of the *Blackboard Content System*. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Content areas, such as My Content and Course Content
- Tools, such as Portfolios and the Learning Objects Catalog
- Actions that can be performed on an item, appearing in the action bar of the Content List

The *Blackboard Content System* must be enabled in order to view any changes. To enable the system, follow the steps below:

- Step 1** Select **Settings** in the Content System area of the Administrator Panel.
- Step 2** Select **Feature and Tool Availability**.
- Step 3** Select **Yes** for **Content System Availability**.

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Tools and Actions

Each type of activity in the *Blackboard Content System* is considered an action or a tool. An action is performed on an item stored in the *Blackboard Content System*, such as Copy, Move, or Remove. A tool is an operation or series of actions, and is displayed in the Content System Menu (the left frame of the browser). Examples of tools include Portfolios and the Learning Objects Catalog.

Customizing tools and actions

Tools and actions may be customized and controlled system-wide. This table lists tools and actions, their locations in the *Blackboard Content System*, and how their appearance may be customized.

Tool or Action	Display Location	Customize Display Options
e-Reserves	Sub-folder of Library under section with default name Institution Content	Rename Shortcut
Learning Objects Catalog	Toolbox in the Content System Menu	Rename shortcut and tool; Choose color of header and text
Portfolios	Toolbox in the Content System Menu	Rename shortcut and tool; Choose color of header and text
Virtual Hard Drive	First area in the Content System Menu, called My Content by default	Rename shortcut and tool; Choose color of header and text
Action bar buttons (ten operations)	Action bar above the Content List	Choose to display each button including Web Folders, Add Item, Add Folder, Copy, Move, Remove, Workflows, Email Items, Bookmark Items, and Download Items

System Availability versus Display Options

All of the tools and actions in the *Blackboard Content System* may be made available or unavailable system-wide. Administrators also control which users see the tool and the appearance of the tool (such as font and color).

System availability of a tool is controlled from the tool link in the Content System area on the Administrator Panel. Administrators using the *Blackboard Portal System* may make tools available to everyone on the system or only to users with specific Institution Roles. The Display Options page allows Administrators to control whether a tool appears on the Content System Menu. Administrators may also customize the appearance of a tool on the menu. The following table explains these concepts:

	What is this?	How is it managed?
System Availability	Make the tool available or unavailable for the entire system.	Each tool has its own link in the Content System area of the Administrator Panel
Display Options	Choose to hide or display a tool or item and select its appearance	Administrator Panel > Display Options (In Content System area)

Managing the Folder and Shortcut Views

There are a variety of tools available in the *Blackboard Content System*; each of these tools is represented on both the Shortcut View and the Folder View. The Folder View displays more information at a glance, while the Shortcut View provides only high level options. Both the Shortcut and Folder Views allow the Administrator to customize the label for each tool. The Folder View also allows the Administrator to customize the color of the header and label for each tool.



Best practice: The label for a tool may be different on the Shortcut and Folder views, but usability and support may be improved by using only one name for both views.

Where do I find these options?

Follow the steps below to manage the display of actions on the Action Bar:

- Step 1** Select **Display Options** in the Content System area of the Administrator Panel.

- Step 2** Select **Content List Display Options**.
- Step 3** Select **Yes** for each action that should display in the Action Bar.

Managing operations on the action bar

The Administrator may also customize which actions are displayed on the Content List. Actions that may be performed on items in the list appear in the Action Bar. Examples include Web Folder, Copy, Remove, and Workflow Activities. Web Folders is a tool and an action item. The display of this button on the action bar is selected on the Content List Display Options page, but system availability of the tool is handled from the Web Folders link in the Administrator Panel.



Best practice: If Web Folders are made unavailable on the system, it is good practice to remove that action item from user view on the action bar.

Where do I find these options?

Follow the steps below to change the name of a tool in the Shortcut View:

- Step 1** Select **Display Options** in the Content System area of the Administrator Panel.
- Step 2** Select **Manage Shortcut View**.
- Step 3** Click **Manage** next to the tool. The Properties page for the tool appears.
- Step 4** Enter the new name for the tool in the **Shortcut Name** field.

Follow the steps below to change the name of a tool in the Folder View:

- Step 1** Select **Display Options** in the Content System area of the Administrator Panel.
- Step 2** Select Manage Folder View.
- Step 3** Click **Manage** next to the tool. The Properties page for the tool appears.
- Step 4** Enter the new name for the tool in the **Header Name** field.

Follow the steps below to change the color of a tool in the Folder View:

- Step 1** Select **Display Options** in the Content System area of the Administrator Panel.
- Step 2** Select **Manage Folder View**.
- Step 3** Click **Manage** next to the tool. The Properties page for the tool appears.
- Step 4** Select the colors of the background and text in the Header Color section.

Factors to consider during customization

To determine the best display options for the *Blackboard Content System*, consider the user interface elements from the perspective of the affected user groups and institution standards.

Institution

Color

Most institutions have an established identity that includes a set of colors. The Blackboard Academic Suite allows for color customization throughout, including the Content System Menu. It is recommended to make color selections for all tools at one time, even if you plan on rolling out the use of some tools later. This will make color selection a one-time task.



Best practice: Highly contrasting colors make text easier to read. If an institution's colors are not easy to read against one another, consider using black or white with the colors.

Tools

Consider policy decisions that may affect the use of certain tools on the system. Portal clients may consider making tools available to particular Institution Roles based on policy decisions and rollout plans for the system.

Regulations

Consider any regulations that your institution has placed on file-sharing, use of certain types of files due to copyright laws, or hard drive space and availability. Discuss these regulations with interested parties prior to setting up the *Blackboard Content System*.

Terminology

When displaying a tool for use, consider any institution naming conventions that may be appropriate. For example, if the institution uses the term Class instead of Course, an appropriate name for that area may be Class Content; if the institution has been growing its Learning Objects Catalog by another name, use that name for the toolbox header and shortcut label.

Instructor, Course Builder, Librarian, Catalog Manager, Learner

Access

When setting the availability of tools, consider users who may need to access the tool before it is ready for consumption by general system users. For example, when rolling out the Portfolio tool, you may choose to only provide access to a pilot group of users, such as Professors (this option is only available in the *Blackboard Portal System*).

Additional Documentation

Additional Blackboard documents can be found on the Behind the Blackboard extranet. Use the following URL to access Behind the Blackboard:

<http://www.blackboard.com/products/services/support.htm>

A login is required to access Behind the Blackboard. Users may create their own login for roles other than Administrator. Administrators must receive their Behind the Blackboard login from their Blackboard Account Manager.

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