Create and Grade an Assignment in your Blackboard Vista Course

This documentation will walk you through the process of creating an assignment in your Blackboard Vista course. This documentation follows the steps included in the accompanying video, which demonstrates the creation of an assignment where the recipients are groups (created first with the Group Manager tool), rather than an assignment that has individual students as recipients. In the video demonstration you will be able to follow these steps:

1. An assignment is created with the Assignments tool, and then various properties associated with assignments are examined.
2. Next, three groups (which had previously been created earlier with Group Manager) are designated as the assignment recipients.
3. A link to the assignment is added to the course (in a previously created learning module).
4. We navigate to the Student Tab and submit the assignment just the way a student would submit it on behalf of their group.
5. We navigate to the Teach tab and use the Assignment Dropbox to grade the assignment.
6. Finally, we return to the Student View to see how a student would check their assignment grades.

Create an Assignment

- Begin in the Build tab and click the Web Links button.
- You should see the Assignments button on the Course Tools menu. If you don’t see this button, you can make the tool available by clicking on the Manage Course button, clicking the Tools link and the selecting the Assignments tool, and clicking Save. This will make it available on the Course Tools menu.
- Click the Assignments button.
- Click the Create Assignment button.
- Enter a Title for the assignment and a Description. The description is displayed to both section instructors and to students.
  - IMPORTANT NOTE: Text entered in the Description field ONLY displays if the assignment is provided as a “stand-alone link” on the Home Page or in a folder. If the assignment is ONLY available as a link in a Learning Module, this text will NOT be available to students!
• **Item visibility:**
  - Decide if you want this assignment to show or not and if so, click the Show Item radio button.
  - Note that an assignment cannot be visible unless it has been assigned to an individual or groups of students (see Assignment Recipients field below).

  - So for example, if you are creating an assignment that will be assigned to groups of students, but you have not yet created the groups using Group Manager, you will not be able to show the assignment—in that case, you would have to go back later and change this property to “show item”. Similarly, if you select “Decide Later” as the Assignment Recipients property (below), that must be changed for the assignment to be visible to students.

• **Instructions:** Type in any instructions you wish to provide to the students, or you can simply use the Add Attachments button to attach a separate document with detailed instructions. I’m going to type in a very short set of instructions. NOTE: Unlike the assignment Description field (as discussed above), the assignment instructions display to students regardless of how the assignment is provided to students (i.e., as a link on the Home Page or in a folder, or in a learning module).

• **Student Submission format:** If your students will need to submit some kind of document, such as a Word document or a PowerPoint to meet the requirements of the assignment, be sure to click the Text radio button. The Web site option is if students are submitting a zip file archive that includes a number of HTML files that are all linked to each other. In this example, my students will need to submit a document along with their assignment, so I will select the Text radio button.

• **Assignment recipients:**
  - Choose the Decide later option if you are creating the assignment as a draft, if you are working in a development shell that does not yet include registered students, or if the assignment will be a group assignment but you have not yet created the groups. As discussed above in Item Visibility, an assignment MUST have recipients to be “visible” to students.
Choose the *All Students individually* option if each student in the class is going to be submitting their own personal assignment, and receiving an individual grade. One additional alternative to this option is that students can be graded individually, but they can work on the assignment in groups, using instructions that are specific to each group. In this case, you could click the *Create additional sets of instructions for groups of students* checkbox, and then select the groups you had created earlier.

Choose the *Groups of Students* option if you not only want students to work on the project in collaborative groups, but if you also intend to GRADE the students as a group—in other words, every student in the group gets the same grade—although instructors should note that they can change an individual student’s grade later if they need to. If you choose the *Groups of Students* option, you need to ensure that each group of students knows that they must designate ONE of the students in their team to submit the assignment on behalf of everyone in the group.

- If you select *Groups of Students*, a new window will open. Click the checkbox in front of each of the groups you want as the assignment recipients, then click *Save*.
- As discussed above in Item Visibility, if your groups are not yet created, you will have to create and then assign groups for the assignment to be “visible” to students.

**Dates:** Enter the *Due Date* when students must submit the assignment in order to avoid having it marked “Late”. Be sure to enter the *full four-digit year* in the date—*don’t abbreviate* the year (i.e., 3/30/09). The *Cutoff Date* is the date after which students can no longer submit their assignment; assignments submitted after this date are marked “missed”.

**IMPORTANT NOTES about Due Dates and Cutoff Dates:**

- **WARNING!** If you change the *Due Date* of an assignment AFTER there have been student submissions of that assignment, you will delete any submissions that students have completed.
- Blackboard will flag submissions in bold with "LATE" and that is what you can use to enforce the late penalties stated in your Syllabus.
- You CAN change a Cut Off date without affecting submissions.

**Grading:** When you create an assignment and designate that it will be graded, the Assignment tool will automatically create a new grade column for that assignment in the Grade Book.

- If you want the assignment to be graded, put a check in from of the *Allow the assignment to be graded* option.
- In the *Grade Book column title* field, it’s a good idea to use a consistent abbreviation scheme as the naming convention for your assignments, e.g. Mod4_assgn1.
Check the *Release grade to student in My Grades* if you want the grade to be *released* to the student right after it’s been graded.

Selecting the radio button for *Numeric grade: Out of* option is the best one to use if you plan to use calculated columns in Grade Book to total up multiple column values.

Entering a points value does NOT restrict the actual grade you assign. It simply tells students what the total points are for that assignment. However, if an instructor wanted to award extra points when they graded a student, they could.

**Goals:** If you have used the Goals tool to create specific goals for your course, you can associate the assignment with any of them using the Select Goals button.

**More Options:**

**Taking Back Submissions:**
Use the options in this section to decide if you want your students to be able to take back and correct assignment submissions. You can also decide whether students as well as instructors can publish submissions. “Publishing” a submission means that the instructor makes assignments that students have submitted visible to everyone else in the class. We recommend that you select the option that only permits instructors to publish assignments. You can also determine whether instructors are notified via email whenever a student submits an assignment.

Once you are done, be sure to *Save* your assignment properties.

**Create a Link to Your Assignment**

- Once you have created your assignment, you will usually want to create a link to it somewhere in your course. To do this from the Assignments tool:
  - Click the checkbox in front of an assignment and then select your target location (Home Page, a folder, or a learning module) from the *Create Link on* dropdown menu, then click on the green *Go* arrow.
  - A link to the assignment will be added to that location. You will receive a confirmation message that this has occurred.

**Submit Your Assignment as “Demo Student” from the Student View Tab**

Before you can grade an assignment, a student must first submit that assignment.
• If you selected *All students individually* as you Assignment Recipients, then each student will submit his or her assignment, and they’ll get graded individually.

• If you selected *Groups of Students*, then one student in each group needs to be elected to submit it on behalf of his or her group.

• To submit the assignment you created, go to the **Student View** tab and submit this assignment as the “Demo Student” in your class. (Hint: If it was a “group assignment” and you don’t see the link to the assignment, it’s probably because you forgot to add “Demo Student” as a member in one of your groups!) this, I’ll go to Group Manager and look at the membership of my groups.

• Assuming that you DO see the assignment link, just open the assignment, enter a comment to the instructor, and then click the **Submit** button. That’s all there is to submitting an assignment!

**Grade the Assignment in the Assignment Dropbox**

Next, we’ll put our “instructor hat” back on, and go and grade this assignment. Note that we recommend that you grade assignments in the Assignments Dropbox, NOT in the Grade Book. This is because the Assignment Dropbox offers you several grading options that you wouldn’t have if you graded directly in Grade Book. Also, you can enter feedback comments to the students about their submission in the Assignment Dropbox, which you could not do if you went directly to the column for the assignment in the Grade Book.

• From the **Teach** tab, scroll down to **Instruct or Tools**, and click on the **Assignment Dropbox**.

• The **Assignment Dropbox** has several tabs—Submitted, Not Submitted, Graded, Published, and **All**. Look in the **Submitted** tab.

• Click on the assignment title submitted by Demo Student to open it.

  o **Note:** If it was a group assignment, you can see all the members of the group, and read the comments entered by the student who submitted the assignment. You can also open and then save any attachments sent along with the assignment.

• Lower down on the form, there are three **Save Options**.

  o **Return to student for further editing**
Save for further review and editing
Return graded submission to student with the following grade. Be sure to enter the correct number of points!

- Select the option you want and Save the form. You might want to try grading your sample assignment.

- The grade you enter in the Assignment Dropbox form sends the grade directly to the associated grade column for this assignment in Grade Book. If the assignment had groups as recipients, all students in each group will get the same grade—however, you can go in and override individual students’ grades in Grade Book if you wish. To check the grades that were sent to the Grade Book, just go to the Teach tab, go to Instructor Tools and click Grade Book.

Check Your Assignment Grade as “Demo Student”

- Finally, in order to show you how your students might check their grade on this assignment, and the comments from their instructor, click once more onto the Student View tab.

- Click on the My Grades button. (Note: If you don’t see this, you’ll need to go to Manage Course and make that tool available to your students!)

- Demo Student should see the grade that awarded for the assignment in My Grades. (Hint: If you don’t see a grade listed, you should go back to the Teach tab and click on Grade Book and be sure that you have released the Grade Column.)

- The student can also go and look at the assignment submitted and read any comments from the instructor. They can do this by going back to the learning module where the assignment was linked, or by going to the Assignments tool if that’s available to them on the Course Tools menu.

This completes the process of creating an assignment, adding a link to the assignment in your course, submitting an assignment as a student, and grading the submitted assignment in your Assignment Dropbox. Now it’s your turn! See if you can create some individual or group assignments in your own course!