New Features in Blackboard

The upgrade to the latest stable Blackboard release in December 2014 provides several new features to benefit both instructors and students. The top new features are outlined below.

SafeAssign Integration

SafeAssign is now integrated within the Assignment tool in Blackboard. Instructors no longer have to create a separate SafeAssignment in order to check for plagiarism. This provides more seamless integration for instructors, allowing for any assignment to be processed via SafeAssign simply by checking the SafeAssign option under **Submission Details** when creating an assignment. Another benefit is that inline grading can now be used for SafeAssignments that are submitted in .doc, .docx, and/or .pdf formats. The SafeAssign originality reports have also been enhanced with a new look and feel.

Student Preview

A new **Student Preview** option has been added to Blackboard. Now, using Student Preview, an instructor can view the course **exactly** how a student would see it. This is done by allowing the instructor to easily transition into and out of a system-managed preview account that is automatically enrolled in the course as a student. Access to this student preview account is granted by clicking the **Student Preview** icon in the top right corner of a course page.

Anonymous and Delegated Grading

When creating an assignment, instructors can enable **anonymous grading** to eliminate bias towards students when grading assignments. Instructors can also share grading responsibilities with teaching assistants, graders and other instructors by **delegating grading** responsibilities. Users serving as delegated graders will only see the specific assignment attempts which they have been designated to grade.

Significant Figures

In **calculated formula questions**, instructors can now define the number of significant figures required in the automatic generation of answer sets and in the automated grading process. In the past, instructors could only specify the number of decimal places.

My Grades

The look and feel of the student **My Grades** view has been updated. Students can control the presentation of scores by the last activity, due date, or Grade Center alignment. They may also select filters to narrow down the number of rows displayed. Feedback is also included inline, so the student no longer has to click to view feedback.

Quick Links

The **Quick Links** tool significantly improves the navigation experience for keyboard-only users. This tool can be quickly accessed on any page using a link in the upper left-hand corner of the page, or by a keyboard shortcut (Control+Alt+L). It allows the user to select a landmark or heading on the page and jump directly to that location, and highlights keyboard shortcuts that exist for that page.

Achievements

A new achievements tool makes it possible to add recognition to courses by offering badges for course progress.

Grade Center Enhancement

There are several small Grade Center enhancements. It is now possible to adjust the total points possible for a test, instead of being limited to the automatic total based on test questions. For tools that support multiple attempts (such as Assignments and Tests), the option for "Score Attempts Using" is now included on the options page when setting up the Assignment or Test.

Groups Management Enhancement

This update to Groups simplifies the process of creating and managing groups. Instructors can now manage all course groups at once from the "All Groups" page, including deleting multiple groups at once, creating Grade Center Smart Views, and enabling or disabling Group Tools.