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Introduction

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is a real-time video conferencing tool that lets instructors add files, share applications, and use a virtual whiteboard to interact. Unlike Blackboard Collaborate, Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is browser based and so does not require additional software downloads.

It is highly recommend that you review the Collaborate Ultra materials and practice prior to creating an open session. Practice and experiment with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to discover how this tool can suit your course and your students’ needs.

Browser Support

Because Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is based on modern web technologies, you don't need to install Java or a launcher. However, it is necessary to have fast internet for using the recommended browsers.

Currently Blackboard recommends using Google Chrome™ or Firefox® (versions 49+), but please refer to Blackboard’s browser support link for an updated roster.

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra inside of eLearning

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is now an eLearning Course Tool. This means that you access Blackboard Collaborate Ultra with the following steps:

Step 1: Go to your course’s Control Panel and select Course Tools.

Step 2: From the Course Tools dropdown menu, select Blackboard Collaborate Ultra.

Creating Sessions

eLearning has two types of Blackboard Collaborate sessions, Course Room and Scheduled Session. Although they both have the same tools and permissions, they have different access options. Each course has only one Course Room, and unless it is locked. Anyone with a link to the Blackboard Collaborate Ultra page can enter a Course Room. However, if a Moderator is absent, the Course Room Attendees cannot do anything.
By contrast, a **Scheduled Session** appears for a set duration, although sessions can be set to repeat, once the session expires, it no longer appears for Participants or Moderators to access.

Note: the **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** Sessions page below shows the **Course Room** and upcoming, or current **Scheduled sessions**.

![Sessions Table](image)

**Note:** Only active scheduled sessions are underlined.

**Creating a Scheduled Session**

There are a number of reasons you may want to create scheduled sessions when you have a course room. Two examples are:

**Supervised sessions:** When the course room is unlocked, anyone can join the session at any time. Instructors don’t have to be present for students to join the session. If you don’t want students to join a session unsupervised, lock the course room and create scheduled sessions.

**Multiple sessions at once:** If you want to run multiple sessions at the same time for students to use as virtual study room, for example, you can create multiple sessions for the different groups to join.

To create a session from the **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** tool. Select the **Create Session** button on the left or, if your page does not have any scheduled sessions, in the middle of the page.
Step 1: Type a meaningful name for the session. This helps students find the right session.

Step 2: Set the date and time the session starts and ends. You can choose to keep a session open or repeat.

You can also select if students can enter the session before the start time. Collaborate uses your computer’s local time zone for session start and end times.

Step 3: Type a detailed description of the meeting. This helps students prepare for the session.

Optionally, open Session Settings and decide if users can:

- Have upgraded roles
- Appear anonymous in recordings
- Download recordings
- Share profile pictures
- Use audio, video, chat, and editing tools
- Use their phone for session audio
- Have private monitored or limited chats

Step 4: When finished, select Save.
Students can join the room from the **Course Menu**. They can also join from any **Collaborate Ultra** links you've added to a course content area.

When you add Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to your course content, it links to the tool, not a specific session.

To help your students find the session you want them to join, tell them the session name in the link name or content editor.

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**Launching a Course Room**

**Step 1 and 2:** When you click on **Get launch link**, select **Join Course Room**.

![Image of Course Room](image)

**Launching a Scheduled Session**

**Step 1 and 2:** When you click on the session option’s link, also select **Launch session**.

![Image of Scheduled Session](image)

**Note:** Students and instructors can also select the name of the scheduled session.
Upon entry, first time users have the option of following a short tour of the **Collaborate Ultra** layout prior to audio video setup.

**Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Audio Video setup**

First time **Blackboard Collaborate** users receive a quick tour that concludes audio and video setup. To access the audio video setup with the **Tell me about Collaborate** tour:

**Step 1:** Select **Next** under each explanation.
Step 2: At the end of the tour, select **Start audio and video setup**.

Step 3: When the **Audio Test** appears, **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** prompts you to speak. If the audio bar moves, select **Yes- It’s working**.
Step 4: If Blackboard Collaborate Ultra detects both audio and video, a message appears to encourage selecting the Share Audio and Share Video buttons. Select Close to complete audio video setup.

Note: Moderators can prevent Participants from speaking by selecting Mute All command in the Attendees panel or by muting individual participants.

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Telephony

Telephony in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra enables you to communicate with other session attendees via telephone while continuing to use your computer for all other session features.

To use Telephony as a session attendee:

Step 1: Log in to the session.

Step 2: Access the Session Menu, the tab located at the upper left-hand corner of the screen.

Step 3: Click the Use your phone for audio. Link to generate a call in number and pin.
Note: Even when using telephony, users still control their audio transmission through the interaction bar within the Collaborate interface. The microphone indicator for telephony users is replaced by a receiver icon indicating to users which audio method they are using.

Step 4: User must click out of the prompts in order to close the dialogue box.

Step 5: Click the indicator to mute or transmit telephony audio.

Note: The Telephony indicator also appears next to the attendee’s name in the Participants panel.

Managing Permission in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Session Settings enable Moderators to specify settings specific to audio and video transmission and engagement options such as Chat and Whiteboard permissions.

To change Session Settings:

Step 1: From the Collaborate Panel Select the My Settings

Step 2: From the Collaborate Panel Select the My Settings button and then scroll to Session Settings.
Understanding Permissions
As the Moderator, you may choose to disable or enable these permissions at the Global level, meaning assigning these permissions to all Participants at any time.

From this area, Moderators may also disable profile picture display for other roles in the session by marking the **Only show profile pictures for Moderators** checkbox.

- **‘Share audio** - If the permission is disabled, attendees can still hear transmitted audio but the Audio Indicator is removed from the bottom of the Media Space.

- **Share video** - As with audio, if the permission is disabled, attendees can still see transmitted video but the Video Indicator is removed from the bottom of the Media Space.

- **Post chat messages** - Allows Participants to enter chat messages in the session. If the permission is disabled, attendees can still see messages posted prior to the setting change but the text area in the Chat panel is replaced with a notification that the chat feature has been turned off.

- **Draw on whiteboard and files** - Allows Participants to use the Content Editing tools in the Media Space. It doesn't allow them to load content, which requires Moderator or Presenter privileges. If the permission is disabled, Participants can still view shared content

**Notifications**
Attendees are notified of permission changes. If attendees have already joined the session when the Moderator removes a permission, participants see a post reporting the change.
Likewise, if the permission is enabled while attendees are in the session, the default notification settings will display a visual notification alerting participants that they may now use the feature.

**Note:** If the permission is disabled before attendees join the session, no notification is displayed.

**Recording Blackboard Collaborate Ultra**

Moderators have the ability to record sessions as an MPEG 4 file. Recordings are stored on the Blackboard Collaborate with playback is available via a link, sent to the session Moderator after the recording is available.

Session recordings display the content in focus during the recording and include the room audio, share content, the active speaker video/avatar and time-synchronized captions or subtitles if provided during live session.

**Start and Stop a Session Recording**

Moderators can start and/or stop the recording at any time during the session.

To start recording your session:

1. **Step 1:** Select the **Open Session Menu** button on the upper left corner.

2. **Step 2:** Click **Start Recording**, located in the Session Menu.
The **Start Recording** option changes to read **Stop Recording** to indicating the recording is in progress.

**Blackboard Collaborate** notifies session attendees that the session is being recorded in several ways.

- Visual notifications are enabled by default and a notification dialog displays indicating that recording has started and/or stopped.
- Collaborate also indicates recording is in progress by placing a recording icon next to the Session Menu.

At any time during your session, you can stop the recording by clicking the **Stop Recording** option in the **Session Menu**. You can start and stop the recording as many times as you like during your session. **Blackboard Collaborate** notifies session attendees that the recording has been stopped by displaying a notification dialog as well as removing the recording notification icon from displaying on the **Session menu** dropdown.

**Accessing Recordings**

Each time a Moderator starts and stops recording during a session, a separate, sequentially named recording is created and an email is sent to the session Moderator.

**Steps 1 and 2:** Select the tool menu. Select **Recordings** for a list of all recordings.
Playing a Recording

The recording link can be shared with session attendees, posted to the eLearning course, or otherwise distributed to desired viewers.

**Step 1:** Select the name of the recorded session or select the **Recording options** menu to choose play options.

When the recording appears, use the **Playback Controller** panel at the bottom the window to start, stop, pause, resume, and navigate through the recording.

Open the **Chat panel** to see the complete chat history of the **Everyone** channel during the recorded session.

As the recording plays the chat messages posted highlight so you can see what was being said during that moment. You can also navigate to a specific location in the recording by selecting a chat message time stamp. If a message is faded, you haven’t reached that part of the recording yet.

**Note:** Captions are only available in recordings when captions were used during the live session.
Using Chat in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

The Chat panel enables you to exchange text messages with others in the session and express yourself using emoticons.

To view this pane, click on the **Chat** icon located in the Collaboration Panel Bar.

This icon also displays the number of new chat messages since you last viewed the panel and will dynamically adjust as attendees enter messages.

**Chat Permissions**

The Chat permission allows Participants to enter chat messages in the session. By default Participants have permission to use this feature, however, session moderators can disable this permission for all participants.

If the permission is disabled, attendees can still see messages posted prior to the setting change but the text area in the Chat panel is replaced with a notification that the chat feature has been turned off.

To enable/disable global chat permissions:

1. **Step 1:** Access **Collaborate Panel**, and select the gear icon for **Session Settings**.

2. **Step 2:** Mark/unmark the **Post chat messages** permission.

**Note:** If attendees have already joined the session when the Moderator removes the chat permission, a visual notification alerts participants to the change.

If the permission is disabled before attendees join the session, no notification is displayed.

Likewise, if the permission is enabled while attendees are in the session, participants see that they may now use the feature.
Chat Channels

Different conversations within the chat panel take place in separate thread areas called channels. The Chat panel separates these channels into several areas depending on the type of chat.

The **My Chat Channels** houses channels that the user is directly involved. This includes the **Everyone** channel, chats with individuals, and for **Moderators**, the moderator channel.

The **Everyone** channel is the main room chat area; all users can view messages posted to this chat. This is also the only channel currently included in recordings.

The **Moderator** channel allows all session moderators to chat, as a group, outside of the main room channel.

**Supervised Channels**, when enabled, allow users to chat with another participant in the session. Supervised private chats create channels that only appear to the moderators and those involved.

The **Inactive** channel appears when someone leaves a supervised chat. When this happens, the participant that left the session becomes italicized.

From this view, users can also see which chats have unread messages, indicated by red numbers, and how many messages each contains, with the number icon next to the specific chats.

**Post a Chat Message**

If the session is being recorded a notification displays at the top of this channel window.

New Chat messages appear at the bottom of the Chat panel, but you only see chat messages when who join a session.

Messages entered by a Moderator display in blue, i.e. Gabby, while a user’s own message, i.e. June, appears in gray.
To post a chat:

**Step 1:** Enter a name in the Chat search field or select **Everyone**.

[Image of chat interface]

**Step 2:** Click your cursor in the text area and type your message and then Press Enter or Return on your keyboard.

Optionally, click on the down arrow next to the smiley face to add emoticons.

[Image of chat interface]

To switch between chat channels, use the Previous Panel arrow located at the top of the panel. When new messages appear in a channel other than the one currently being viewed, a notification icon displays next to the arrow.

[Image of chat interface]

Chat messages contain a timestamp for each post, along with each participant's name and profile picture.Clickable links can be added to the chat using keyboard shortcuts to copy a URL out of the browser and paste it in to the text area. To view all chats, select the **Previous Panel** link.
Supervised Private Chat

Chats can be moderated, but this option must be selected BEFORE the session starts. The session can be edited before the session begins, to allow supervised chat, but not during a live session. Users can begin a private chat with another participant in two ways.

To begin a private chat from the Chat panel:

**Step 1:** Return to the main Chat Panel display to view all open chat channels.

**Step 2:** Use the Find someone to chat with text box and type in a participant’s name. Simply select the user from the names that display and begin chatting.

To start a private chat with another participant starting in the Participants panel:

**Step 1:** Go to the Participant Panel.

**Step 2 and 3:** Select the Controls ellipsis next to the user’s name on the Participant Panel and select Send a Chat message.
A notification displays on supervised private chats letting participants know the chat is being monitored. These channels display under the supervised chat heading on the main Chat panel.

Share Content
Blackboard Collaborate Ultra has grouped all commands for students to interact or view materials shared by the Moderator or Presenter under the Share Content command.

From the Collaborate Panel select Share Content to Share Files, Share Applications, Whiteboards, Polling, and Breakout Rooms.

Using Whiteboard in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra
The Whiteboard is used for collaboration between session attendees, who can interact with the content using the whiteboard tools.

Share a Blank Whiteboard
To begin using the Whiteboard:

Step 1: Click the Open Collaborate panel icon in the lower, left-hand corner of the screen.
**Step 2 and 3:** Click the **Share Content** icon at the bottom of the panel that appears. From the Share Content options, select from **Share Blank Whiteboard**.

**Step 4:** To stop sharing, click the Stop Button that appears in the upper, right-hand corner of the Media Space.
**Note:** Once sharing begins, users can use the **Show/Hide View Controls** toggle to display resizing tools. The Media Space view is user specific so zooming in on your view does not zoom the view for attendees. From left to right:

- Hide View Controls
- Zoom in
- Zoom out
- Best Fit
- Actual Size

When content is being shared, the Media Space display adjusts dynamically to feature the content share as a primary focus. Within this view, the speaker’s video or avatar displays on the right. Users can swap the primary display from the content to the speaker by clicking on the picture-in-picture frame to swap it with the larger one.

**The Content Editing Tools**

The Content Editing Tools, which appear in the upper left corner of the Media Space, include:

- Select
- Pointer
- Pencil
- Shapes
- Text
- Clear
- Colors (When Pencil is active)

The **Draw on whiteboard and files** permission is granted to Participants by default, enabling them to see and use these tools. As a Moderator, you can use all the available Content Editing tools even if the permission has been disabled for Participants.

**Saving the Whiteboard**

**Whiteboard** content does not remain if a Moderator or Presenter navigates away from the board. In order to preserve whiteboard content. To save the Whiteboard page:

**Step 1:** right-clicking on the board and selecting **Save image as**...
Because these files save use the .png format, they can be uploaded for later, through the File Share.

**Note:** Multiple whiteboard pages are not function yet. In order to create a blank canvas for additional work, use the Refresh Whiteboard function available in the Whiteboard Tools.

Best Practices for Using the Whiteboard Feature

- Create interactive Whiteboard activities to engage participants.
- Conduct brainstorming activities on the Whiteboard.
- Save the Whiteboards to share outside of a session.

Share Files in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

File Share allows you to upload content with drag-and-drop at any point during your session. Content Editing tool availability allows for real-time annotation of shared files.

Moderators can open a session at any time and load the files they want to share. These files stay in the session until deleted by a moderator. Load them and reuse them as often as you want. File share supports the upload and display of several file types including .PPT, .PPTX, .PDF, .PNG, .JPG/JPEG, and .GIF.

Upload a File for Sharing

To upload a file to the system for sharing:

**Step 1:** Click the Open Collaborate panel icon in the lower, left-hand corner of the screen.
**Step 2:** Click the **Share Content** icon at the bottom of the panel that appears.

**Step 3:** Select **Share Files**.

**Step 4:** Upload files by dragging-and-dropping them on the Add Files Here box. Iconography displayed on the upload in progress will let you know the progress of the added file.

**Step 5:** Once files have been delivered to the Collaborate system by Box, the file name and thumbnail will appear in the Share Files list.

**Step 6:** If desired, click the **Trash** icon next to an uploaded file to delete it.
Share Files

To share a file:

**Step 1 and 2:** Click on one of the available files and click the **Share Now** button at the bottom of the window.

**Step 3:** Select the slide or page you wish to display from the Slides panel to begin the share.

**Step 4:** Once the current slide appears in the navigation arrows appear below, use the arrows flanking the **file title** to move forward and backward.

Moderators, presenters and, if allowed, participants may employ the Content Editing tools to annotate the shared file. As a Moderator, you can use all the available Content Editing tools even if the permission has been disabled for Participants.
Application Sharing with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Application Sharing allows users to share their desktop or a software application during a web conferencing session. Hosting an Application Share is only supported in Web Real Time Communication (WebRTC)-enabled browsers, Chrome and Firefox. However all participants can view the app share regardless of whether they are using a WebRTC-enabled browser or not.

Application Sharing is useful for sharing what you are looking at on your screen with the people you are meeting with. For example:

- Share a student’s assignment (Word file) and make changes in real time
- Help a student who is having difficulty understanding how to create formulas in Excel
- Demonstrate the steps for logging into YouTube and posting a movie

Application Sharing

Any session attendee with Moderator or Presenter roles can use Application Share. Before you can conduct an Application Sharing session, first open all the application files you want to share.

To start a share:

**Steps 1:** Click on the Share Content icon located at the bottom of the Collaborate panel.

**Step 2:** From the Share Content options, select Share Application.
Step 3: Elect to share either your Entire Screen or Just an Application and then select the view you would like to Share.

Step 4: Click the Share button.

As you navigate through the application, all participants will see your mouse move and the changes as they are being made to the displayed content. The service is fully secure and you are always in control of what is shared and when. While running an Application Share, a host can continue to use the program or desktop as usual.

Step 5: To stop sharing, click the Stop button that appears in the upper, right-hand corner of the Media Space.

Giving Attendees Application Sharing Permission

By default, Participants do not have the permission to use Application Sharing. The Moderator may promote an attendee to either the Moderator or Presenter role, via the Moderator Control menu, in order to allow them Application Sharing permissions.

Step 1: Mouse over an attendees’ name in the Attendees Panel to display the Moderator Controls toggle.

Click the toggle to display the Moderator Control options.

Step 2: Select the new role, Moderator, Presenter, or Captioner.
Create polls with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

You can use a poll that gives attendees yes or no as their response choices. You can also select to give attendees two, three, four, or five responses to choose from.

**Step 1:** Open the Collaborate panel, the purple tab on the bottom right.

**Step 2:** Select Share Content.

**Step 3:** Use an image, PowerPoint®, or the whiteboard to show your poll question and the numbered choices with related responses.

**Step 4:** Select Polling.
Step 5: Select the type of poll you want to use.

Note: If you choose the 2 Choices poll, have two choices so attendees can choose between 1 or 2 as their response.

Only Yes/No choices, or choices listed numerically are available.

Step 6: Select Start.

Upon selecting Start, the poll immediately opens.
Monitor your poll

Immediately after starting your poll, you can see an overview of poll responses. After you start the poll attendees are asked to make a choice. All they see are their response choices. Moderators can also respond to the poll but, you are counted in the No Response count.

Moderator view

Attendee view

However, if you want to see how each attendee responded, or even who hasn't responded, go to the Attendees panel.
The polling overview can be hidden. By selecting the **Close**.

Open it by selecting the **Polling** icon on the bottom.

**Note**: The polling icon also shows the choice you selected.

From here you can choose **to Show Responses** to all attendees or **End polling**.

Once **Show Responses** is selected, **Hide Responses** appears to hide the results from attendees.

Attendees see their own choice after they make a choice. They don't see the poll results unless you share the responses. Attendees do not see how anyone else has responded.
Breakout Sessions in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Moderators can create and assign breakout rooms for group work. When participants are in a Breakout Room, they have Whiteboard tools just like the Main room. Moderators can view any page in any public Group at any time, but other Participants can only view the pages in their current Room. If a Moderator navigates to a page in a different Room, the other Participants remain on their current page in their own Room's Group.

To create Breakout Rooms, take the following steps:

**Step 1:** Select the Share Content button on the bottom right.

**Step 2:** Select in the Interact section, Breakout Groups.
By default all participants appear in the Main Room.

You add or delete groups by selecting the plus sign or the trash can icon.

Group names can be changed by selecting the name and then typing a new name.

**Step 3:** Click and drag the person to place in the desired group.
**Note:** You can also distribute participants by selecting the **Attend Controls**, i.e. the three dot button, and choosing the correct group from the drop down menu.

**Optional:** **Blackboard Collaborate Ultra** allows Attendees to switch groups, but once this is option is active, Moderators have to manually revoke this option.

**Step 4:** Select **Update** to save changes.
Once a **Break Group** is created, all attendees see the participants in their group with the Attendee Panel.

![Attendee Panel](image)

**Breakout Groups** can use the Share Content options, **Share Blank Whiteboard**, **Share Application**, and **Share Files**. The example below shows a **Whiteboard** share.

![Whiteboard Share](image)

**Note:** At this time, Moderators cannot copy **Breakout Group Whiteboards** to the **Main Room Whiteboard**. Also, group chats are not recorded.
Step 5: To end a session, Moderators can select the End Breakout Groups button in the Attendees or the Share Contents Panel.
Checking Attendance in Blackboard Ultra

The **Session attendance report** provides an overview of when participants joined and left sessions. It also gives you an idea of how long participants were present in the session on average.

To find and review the session roster:

1. **Step 1:** Click on **Session Options**, the circle with the three dots.
2. **Step 2:** Click on the **View reports** option in the menu.

There may be several reports depending on how much the session room has been used.

3. **Step 3:** Select the View reports icon again to see the full report.
Step 4: Select a View Join Details icon to view when and how long people joined the session.

Step 5: Select Printable to print the page.

The printable page shows all the attendees participation.

Note: Although both Course Room and the Scheduled sessions can both generate Attendance Reports, only Course Room reports are available well after a session ends.

Scheduled sessions attendance reports are only available for a short time. Moderators need to save the Attendance Report after everyone leaves the session and before the session is no longer listed in the session list. This report disappears once a scheduled session ends and is recorded or the eLearning page is refreshed.