Collaboration Tools

Overview

The Collaboration Tools allow users to participate in real-time lessons and discussions. Examples of these sessions include real-time, online classroom discussions, TA sessions, and live question and answer forums. Archives of previous sessions are also available for review. Guest speakers can also lead sessions using the Collaboration Tools. Users can search for and join Collaboration Sessions and view session archives.

Collaboration Tools

The following Collaboration Tools are available.

Tool	Description
Virtual Classroom	Users engage in a real-time discussion with other users, access the Web, and engage in question and answer sessions. Users may also access the Whiteboard to display text and images.
Chat	Chat is part of the Virtual Classroom. It can also be accessed separately. Chat allows users to open just the chat function.

Java Plug-in

The Java 2 Run Time Environment is required to use the Collaboration Tools. The plug-in may be downloaded from the page that appears when a user joins a Collaboration Session, or may be found at http://java.sun.com/products/plugin/index.html. Blackboard recommends using version 1.5 of the Java 2 Runtime Environment, however, the Collaboration Tools will also work with version 1.4.

Take care to uninstall any existing Java plug-ins before installing a new version.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Collaboration Sessions page.

1. Click **Communication** on the Course Menu in a Course.
2. Select **Collaboration**.

Functions

The following table describes the functions available from this page.

To . . .	click . . .

To . . .	Click . . .
filter the sessions listed on the page	the arrow next to the drop-down list and select the type of session to display. Click **Filter**. The filters include: • **Show All** – The default filter that displays all of the Collaboration Sessions. • **Open Rooms** – Displays all of the sessions that are in use. • **Rooms with Archives** – Displays completed sessions that have an archive. • **Rooms Available in the Future** – Displays sessions that are scheduled to take place in the future.
search for a session	the **Session Name**, **Start Date**, or **End Date** option and then enter a value in the field. Click **Search**.
enter a session	**Join** next to the session.
access the archives for a session	**Archives** next to the session.

User Roles

There are two roles available for users in Collaboration Sessions: Passive and Active. The Session Admin controls user access and functionality during a Collaboration session by assigning Passive or Active roles. For example, Session Admins determine which users can chat, send private messages, or ask questions during a session by assigning specific Access Rights to the different roles. The Student icon will appear in the Role column next to those Students who are Active.

Student roles can change throughout the Collaboration Session. Users who are Passive, but would like Active rights, can signal the Session Admin by clicking the hand icon. The Session Admin then makes the user Active.

Macintosh and the Collaboration Tool

Macintosh users running OS X and Netscape should run Netscape 7. When opening the Collaboration Tool, Netscape may put the tool in the background. If this happens, check under the **Window** menu for the Collaboration Tool. Netscape 6.2 does not work well with the Collaboration Tool and should be replaced with Netscape 7. For those users that wish to use Safari, be aware that Pop-Up Window Blocking must disabled.

Macintosh users running OS 8 or OS 9 must use the Accessible version of the Collaboration Tool. See below for more information on running the Accessible Collaboration Tool.

Accessible Collaboration Tool

An accessible version of the Collaboration Tool is available. Users running Macintosh Operating System 8 or 9 should also use this version.

A link to this version appears when **Join** is selected on the Collaboration Sessions page. This link will open the Accessible version of the Collaboration Tool. Links to items that appear in the Virtual Classroom, such as items in the Course Map and Group Browser, will appear in this version. Documents created on the Whiteboard may be viewed if the Session Admin takes a snapshot. A link will be created to the snapshot for users to view.

The sound of a door opening or closing will be audible to all participants when a user enters or leaves a session through the accessible version.

Collaboration Sessions

Overview

The Collaboration Session page is used to manage the Collaboration Tools available in the *Blackboard Learning System*. From this page the Instructor can access all of the Collaboration Sessions for the course, including those that have already taken place and are archived and those that are scheduled for the future. Instructors can also schedule new Collaboration Sessions and make changes to those already scheduled from this page.

Find this page

Click **Collaboration** in the Course Tools area of the Control Panel.

Default Collaboration Sessions

Each course and organization begins with two default Collaboration Sessions. The Lecture Hall is the default Virtual Classroom, and Office Hours is the default Lightweight Chat. These default sessions can be removed. Removing a session is irreversible.

Functions

The following functions are available from the Collaboration Sessions page:

To . . .	Click . . .
create a new Collaboration Session	Create Collaboration Session. The Create Collaboration Session page will open.
filter the sessions listed on the page	the arrow next to the drop-down list and select the type of session to display. Click Filter. The filters include: • **Show All** – The default filter that displays all of the Collaboration Sessions. • **Open Rooms** – Displays all of the sessions that are currently being used. • **Rooms with Archives** – Displays completed sessions that have an archive. • **Rooms Available in the Future** – Displays sessions that are scheduled to take place in the future.
search for a session	the **Session Name**, **Start Date** or **End Date** option and then enter a value in the field. Click **Search**.
enter a session	**Join** next to the session. The Virtual Classroom or Chat for that session will open.

To . . .	click . . .
access the archives for a session	**Archives** next to the session. The Session Archives page will appear.
change the name, availability, or tools used during the session	**Manage** next to the session. The Modify Collaboration Session page will appear.
delete a session	**Remove** next to the session. This action is irreversible.

Create/Modify Collaboration Session

Overview

Instructors create new Collaboration Sessions using the Virtual Classroom or the Chat from the Create Collaboration Session page. Instructors can schedule sessions for specific dates and times. The Create Collaboration Session page and Modify Collaboration Session page function in a similar manner. The Create Collaboration Session page opens with empty fields while the Modify Collaboration Session page opens with a session already populated.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Create Collaboration Session page or the Modify Collaboration Session page.

1. Click **Collaboration** in Course Tools of the Control Panel.
2. Click **Create Collaboration Session** on the Collaboration Sessions page or click **Manage** next to a Collaboration Session.

Fields

The table below details the fields on the Create Collaboration Session page.

Field	Description
Name Your Session	
Session Name	Enter the name of the new session.
Schedule Availability	
Select Dates of Availability	A Start and End date and time for the Collaboration Session can be set but is not required. If these are not selected then the session is always open and available for users.
Available	Select **Yes** to make the session available.
Collaboration Tools	
Choose a collaboration tool for this session	Select **Virtual Classroom** or **Chat**.

Virtual Classroom

Overview

Users can ask questions, draw on the whiteboard, and participate in breakout sessions from the Virtual Classroom. The Session Admin establishes which tools in the Virtual Classroom users can access.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Virtual Classroom.

1. Click **Communication** on the Course Menu.
2. Select **Collaboration Tools**.
3. Click **Join** next to a Virtual Classroom session.

Virtual Classroom areas

The table below details the areas of the Virtual Classroom.

Part	Function
Menu Bar	Allows the Session Admin to control the Virtual Classroom. This includes managing participation, monitoring breakout sessions, and ending the session.
Classroom Tool box	Includes all of the tools used during the Virtual Classroom session. This includes searching for Web sites, asking and answering questions, utilizing the Whiteboard, and accessing the Course Map.
Chat	Allows users to compose messages, raise their hands to ask questions, and activate private messages.

MENU BAR

Overview

All users have access to the options on the Menu Bar. The functions available in the Menu Bar include:

- **View** - Choose an option for viewing Personal Messages in the Virtual Classroom.
- **Clear** - Clear the session display.
- **Breakouts** - Create a breakout room for a group of users.

View

Select **Show in-line** to view private messages within the chat area. Select **Show in separate frame** to view private messages in a separate window.

Clear

Clear erases the users chat display.

Breakouts

Select the checkboxes for the users who will participate in the Breakout session. Users may only join a Breakout session if they are selected by the creator of the Breakout session.

Users who enter a Breakout session are still active in the main Virtual Classroom Session. If a Breakout session is closed users are still active in the main session. Breakout sessions default to the same settings as the main session.

CLASSROOM TOOL BOX

Overview

If granted access to these tools by the Session Admin, users can use the Whiteboard, access Web sites, and view the course map.

The Classroom Tool box appears on the left side of the Virtual Classroom. To begin using items in the Tool box click the name of the tool.

Tools

The following tools are available in the Classroom Tool box.

TOOL	DESCRIPTION
Whiteboard	Enables users to present different types of information as they would on a blackboard in a classroom.
Group Browser	Enables users to collaboratively browse the Web.
Course Map	Enables users to browse the Course Contents while they are in a Virtual Classroom.
Ask Question	Enables users to ask questions during the session.
Question Inbox	Enables users to answer questions submitted by other users during a session.

WHITEBOARD

Overview

The Whiteboard enables users in a Virtual Classroom to present different types of information as they would on a blackboard in a classroom. Using the tools in the Whiteboard Tools palette, users can draw images, type text, and present equations. The Session Admin determines whether or not this function is made available to users.

Functions

The table below details the tools available for use on the Whiteboard.

TO . . .	CLICK . . .
select an item	the **Arrow** tool. Then click on an item for selection. The following may be performed on selected items: • Enlarge: Click one of the small black boxes that surround the item and drag it to the desired size. • Move: Click the item and move it to the desired location. • Cut: Click the Whiteboard item. Then click the Cut icon. • Copy: Click the Whiteboard item. Then click the Copy icon. • Paste: Click the Whiteboard item. Then click the Paste icon. • Delete: Click the Whiteboard item. Click on the selected object. Then click the Delete icon. • Group items: Click the Whiteboard items. Then click the Group icon. • Ungroup: Click a Whiteboard item in a group. Then click the Ungroup icon. • Bring front: Click the Whiteboard item. Click on selected object. Then click the Bring to front icon. • Bring back: Click the Whiteboard item. Click on selected object. Then click the Send to back icon. • Select all figures on the Whiteboard: Click the Selects all Figures icon.
draw free hand	the **Pen** tool. Choose the color of the pen in the **Fill Color** drop-down list.

To . . .	click . . .
enter text using the keyboard	the text tool (**T**) then the Whiteboard area. A Whiteboard Text Input box appears. Type the text in the box and click **Insert**. Use the options in the Tools palette to select color, font, and size.
draw a straight line	the **Slanted Line** tool.
highlight something with an arrow	the **Pointer**.
draw a square	the **Square** tool. Choose the color of the square from the **Fill Color** drop-down list.
draw a circle	the **Oval** tool. Choose the color of the circle from the **Fill Color** drop-down list.
input an equation	The Math and Science Equation Editor icon (∑). The Equation Editor will appear. Input the equation and click **Insert Equation**.

GROUP BROWSER

Overview

The Group Browser enables users to collaboratively browse the Web. This tool opens a URL that is viewable by all users. URLs used in the session will be recorded in the archive if one is created. The Session Admin will determine whether or not this function is made available to users.

Functions

The table below details the available functions in the Group Browser.

TO . . .	CLICK . . .
open a Web site	type the URL in the **Enter Address** field.
choose where to display the Web site	**Display To Class** to display the window in the Whiteboard or click **Preview in New Window** to open the Web site in a new browser window. The preview window will only be displayed to the user that opened it.

CONTENT MAP

Overview

The Content Map enables users to browse the course while in a Virtual Classroom. By default, the Session Admin has access to operate the Content Map. Users must have Active privileges to use the Content Map in a Virtual Classroom.

Functions

The table below details the available functions in the Content Map.

To . . .	CLICK . . .
display an element on the map to all users	the course area in the Content Map and select **Display To Class** in the drop-down list.
display an element on the map in a separate window	the course area in the Content Map and select **Preview in New Window** in the drop-down list. The new window is only visible to the User who opens it.
refresh the Content Map during a Collaboration Session	**Refresh Tree** in the drop-down list. This will update the Content Map to match the Course Menu.

Ask Question

Overview

Users are able to ask questions during the session. As users submit questions during the session the Session Admin can view and respond to them.

Note: Only users who have an Active role can ask questions.

Ask a Question

To ask a question, select **Compose** in the Ask Question area. Enter the question in the text box and click **Send**.

Question Inbox

Overview

Questions from users are sent to the Question Inbox during the Virtual Classroom session. The Question Inbox is used to manage and respond to questions during a Collaboration Session.

Function

The table below details the functions available in the Question Inbox Tool.

To . . .	Click . . .
respond to a question	the Username in the **From** list and click the **Respond to Question** icon. The Respond to Question pop-up window will appear.
delete a question	the Username in the **From** list and click the **Delete** icon.
view only questions that have not been answered	the checkbox next to **Show unanswered only**.

Respond to Question fields

The table below details the fields on the Respond to Question pop-up window.

Field	Description
Question	Question that was submitted.
Response	Enter the response to the question.
Private	Select this check box to make the response to the question private. If marked private, the response will only be sent to the person who submitted the message.

Chat

Overview

The Chat allows the users to interact with each other via a text-based chat. Chat is part of the Virtual Classroom. It can also be accessed separately.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open a Chat:

1. Click **Communication** on the Course Menu.
2. Select **Collaboration Tools**.
3. Click **Join** to next to a Chat session.

Functions

The table below details the functions available in the Chat.

To . . .	then . . .
enter a message for the class to read	type the message in the **Compose** field. Click **Send**. The message will appear in the chat area. There 1000 character limit for chat messages.
become an Active user	click the hand symbol. A hand appears next to the Username. The Session Admin clicks on the hand to make the user Active.
view user information	Select a Username in the Participant list and then click **User Info**.
send a private message to a user	Select a Username in the Participant list and then click **Private Message**.

Private Messages

Overview

Users can send private messages to each other if the Session Admin enables this tool in the Session Controls. Private messages are not recorded or archived.

User Information

Overview

The User Information pop-up window displays personal information about a user such as name, email address, and any other information the user has chosen to add to their profile.

Click **User Info** in the Chat area and the User Information pop-up window will appear.

Send a Private Message

Click **Private Message** to send a message to the user. The Compose Private Message pop-up window will appear.

RECORD MENU

Overview

Virtual Classroom and Chat sessions can be recorded and archived. Archive recording can be started and stopped, as well as paused and un-paused by the Instructor during the session. A session can have more then one archive. If the Instructor selects **End** to stop a session then the recorder will automatically stop recording the session.

Record menu

The table below details the buttons that appear on the Record menu.

BUTTON	DESCRIPTION
Start	Click **Start** to begin recording a session. The user will be prompted to name the archive.
Pause	Click **Pause** to pause a recording once it has started. Click this button again to u-pause the recording and begin recording again. Pause and un-pause will be marked and timestamped in the archive.
Stop	Click **Stop** to end recording the session. When **Stop** is selected the archive is completed and a stop marker and time/date stamp will be included at the end of the archive.
Bookmark	Click **Bookmark** to insert a bookmark anywhere in the archive of the session.

Recording the Whiteboard

The **Snapshoot** button in the Whiteboard Tool bar is used to record the Whiteboard in the archive. The Instructor clicks the **Snapshot** button to record an image of the Whiteboard. The image of the Whiteboard in the archive corresponds with when it was recorded. The **Snapshot** button cannot be activated unless the session is being recorded.

Session Archives

The Instructor must make an archive available before Students can view it. For more information see Archive Properties.

SESSION ARCHIVES

Introduction

Session Archives allow users to review Collaboration Sessions. Sessions are archived by date. Sessions will not appear until the leader of the session has stopped recording.

	NOTE: If an Instructor does not stop the archive and exit the Collaboration Session, the archive will not end and no information will be recorded in the Archive Duration column. Only when the leader stops recording or ends the session will the archive stop and the duration display.

Find this page

Follow the steps below to access the Session Archives page.

1. Open **Collaboration** in Course Tools on the Control Panel
2. Click **Archives** for a session.

Functions

The table below describes the functions available on this page.

TO . . .	CLICK . . .
search for an Archive in the Collaboration Session	the **Archive Name** or Creation Date option in the **Search by** field. Enter the name of the archive or the date it was created in the field and click Search.
open an archive	the archive under the Archive name column.
change the name or availability of an archive	**Manage**. The Archive Properties page will appear.
remove an archive	**Remove**. This action is irreversible.

ARCHIVE PROPERTIES

Introduction

The Archive Properties page allows the Instructor to change the name and availability of an archive session.

NOTE: Archives are available to Students by default

Find this page

Follow the steps below to open the Archive Properties page.

1. Click **Collaboration** in the Course Tools section of the Control Panel.
2. Click **Archives** for a session.
3. Click **Manage** for an archive.

Fields

The table below describes the fields available on this page.

FIELD	DESCRIPTION
Edit Archive Name	
Archive Name	Enter or modify the name of the archive.
Availability to Students	
Available	Select **Yes** and Students will be able to view this archive. Select **No** and this archive will be unavailable to Students.