MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE *of* PHARMACY *and* HEALTH SCIENCES

Blackboard Learning Management System Use Policies & Procedures

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1 PURPOSE

This document is intended to inform the MCPHS community about the policies and procedures for the use, management, and operation of Blackboard Learn. Blackboard Learn is the University's learning management system (LMS) that allows instructors to develop and deliver course materials online and allows students to participate in learning activities in online course shells.

2 DEFINITIONS

Building Block: The "old" tool utilized to integrate separate tools or feature enhancements to Blackboard. Building blocks will no longer be available as of January 1, 2024, with some exceptions. We, as well as various vendors, are working on updating these to LTIs.

Child Course: The Child courses contain separate rosters for each section. Instructors see the Child courses in their course list, but they cannot use them for anything. Content added to a master course does not appear in child courses and the child courses cannot be made available to students.

Course Availability: Courses have 3 different states they can be in:

- **Available/Open:** the course is visible to students, and they can interact with it.

- **Unavailable/Closed:** When you select a course as closed, it continues to appear in the course listing, but students cannot access it. When Close Course is not selected, the course is open, and students can access it. This function previously was called Open/Private and found in the Details & Actions panel.

- **Completed:** When the course is completed, students can access the content but cannot participate. Additionally, you can no longer make any changes once a course is completed.

Course shell: A course shell is automatically created for each course, each semester, based on what information is entered in the SIS. Course shells are "empty" and can have content either copied or imported into them from previous semesters. We can also load in "templates" to build out courses from. Additional course shells can be manually created to provision development areas for instructors.

Cross-Listed: Cross-listed courses might be requested by a Dean or Program Director of an academic program. Initiated via the Registrar's office when it is a situation of the same professor teaching the same material at the same time. It can also be a location cross, for example, a course that is being taught both online and in-person.

- For example, a distance education course is taught in both Worcester and Manchester on Tuesdays & Thursdays at 11am. Another example is if a course has 100 seats, and 20 seats are reserved for students of different majors.

- The process will cross-list students from each section and create a <u>new course shell</u> within Blackboard, and have all enrollees listed in 1 course.

- Faculty need to create an export of the shell that they have developed any content in, or an archive if there have been any student work submissions if cross-listing occurs after the semester starts.

The process for cross listing a course is to contact the Registrar. They will perform the function in Colleague, and the cross-listing will appear in Blackboard within 24 hours.

Delete(d): The data (i.e.: user profile, course, or organization content) has been removed from the system. Deleted content is backed up in "cold storage," whereby archives are stored in offline repositories indefinitely to meet legal and accreditation data retention policies.

Development Shell: These are course shells that are a course that is intended to be the main repository for a specific course code (ex. BIO.110). The intended practice is to build out the course in the development shell, then it can be copied to the relevant course. All changes can be made to this course between offerings to ensure that the course content is updated regularly. They have also been called Staging Shells. These must be requested via a ticket and coordination with Instructional Support.

Disable(d): The data is still in existence on the system; however, the content and/or user profile are not accessible. For example, students are never removed from a course when their access is disabled so that their work is preserved, however the student will not be able to access the course or its content.

Instructional Support team: The Office of Instructional Support provides guidance and support for faculty on Blackboard course management and best practices.

Instructor of Record: the primary faculty responsible for a course, as listed by the Registrar's Office (RO) in Colleague. For changes or updates to the Instructor of Record, requests must be submitted through the RO. Updates will take up to 24 hours to process into Blackboard once completed by RO. To submit grades for a course, the user must be an Instructor of Record for that course.

LTI: Acronym for "Learning Tool Interoperability," integrates separate learning tools into the Blackboard Learn LMS. LTIs can range in purpose and will need to be continually supported and updated.

Learning Management System (LMS) Administrator: This role is responsible for the integration between the Registrar's data feed and the Blackboard environment; course

and user creation; maintenance and support for the platform as a whole; and all relevant responsibilities working with all departments that interface with the platform.

Master/Parent course: The Master/Parent course contains all content, student enrollments, assignments, tests, and all grading happens only in the master/parent course.

- Students see only the master/parent course.

- All students enrolled in the course see the same content, receive the same tests and assignments, and have the same total points possible.

- For courses with many instructors and sections, a coordinator can organize and maintain the content that multiple instructors will use in the master/parent course, ensuring continuity and consistency across sections.

Merged: Merged courses will merge **only the course shells in Blackboard,** and this is done at the request of a faculty member, typically to reduce the number of shells being maintained by the faculty. This merge type is being discontinued in the near future, so transitioning to Parent/Child merge is preferred.

- Course merge requests should be done once the empty course shells appear in Blackboard but *before* the faculty begin to populate the shell with content.

- Once a course merge is requested, **only the course shells in Blackboard** are merged. Faculty will still have "individual" course sections appear in Self Service or grading rosters appear in the Grade Entry System.

- For example: if there are 250 students enrolled in 10 different lab sections, the course shells can be merged into one course shell to make managing the labs less burdensome for the faculty members. The course merge process will **disable** the individual sections in Blackboard and create a completely new shell with a suffix of ".MERGE."

- If faculty request a course merge from Information Services *after* they have populated one of the course shells with content, the faculty member is responsible to create an export of any content creation or an *archive* if any work has been submitted by students.

Organization: Like courses, a closed content area that individuals need to be enrolled in to have access to, where groups can share content, have discussions, messaging, and assessments, etc. Organizations are used for special or academic interests that do not have official grades for them. Organizations must be requested via a ticket and reviewed by the Instructional Support before being created. Organizations run continually and are not affected by course retention policies. They may be reviewed periodically to determine usage but are not automatically removed after a period.

Production environment: Our actively used Blackboard site, which students and staff can access. Upgrades are pushed automatically by Blackboard once a month, typically on Thursday nights. We push updated integrations manually as needed during Information Services maintenance windows.

Parent/Child Merge/Course Relationship: The parent/child relationship allows students to complete the same coursework at independent of section, allowing instructors to use the same content for multiple sections, mitigating the need for multiple course shells. These courses are always displayed together.

Proficiency Term/Courses: This term and associated courses are separate from the normal semester terms. These are created around the same time as the Summer term and are used to determine registration for certain courses in the Fall term. Proficiency term courses have a PRF prefix distinction.

Sandbox Shell: A course shell created for a faculty/staff member in order to explore the features of Blackboard without affecting a live course.

SIS (Student Information System): The SIS used by MCPHS is Colleague. The SIS is managed by the RO and manages details about courses including enrollments and grades. The SIS is the system from which data regarding course creation and enrollments in Blackboard is fed from.

Template: These are course shells that are designed to be applied to several courses to provide a standardized starting point for instructors to build their course content. These must be requested via a ticket and coordination with Instructional Support. Instructors should check with their department for guidance on standardized templates.

Test and/or Staging Environment(s):

- The "Test" environment is a small-scale sandbox environment meant for activities like testing integrations and authentication. It is designed to have less than 20 users and does not have any service level guarantees for uptime.

- The "Staging" environment is designed for testing software upgrades or modifications to software configuration before implementing these changes in a production environment. The Staging environment allows for more "real-life" testing, as it contains an exact clone of production data. The Staging environment has a 99.7% guaranteed uptime service level agreement.

User: Any individual with a Blackboard Learn account. Users may have various system and course-level roles. Typical users include students, instructors/faculty, administrators, or Instructional Supporters.

3 POLICIES & PROCEDURES

3.1 ACCEPTABLE USE & MISUSE

All users must follow these policies and procedures. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action as per the MCPHS policy.

Acceptable behavior

- All users granted access to Blackboard Learn must adhere to the behavior standards outlined in the MCPHS Student Handbook (for students) and Employee Handbook (for Faculty/Staff)

- Individual instructors may also elect to set standards for behavior that exceed these minimum requirements on a course-by-course basis.

- Specific information can be found in the Employee Handbook from page 41 to 47.

Examples of Misuse:

- Instructors are not permitted to use MCPHS University's Blackboard Learn system for purposes other than university-affiliated activities.

- Sharing login credentials with others

- Uploading copyrighted or inappropriate material. Reach out to the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) for guidance on using copyrighted materials.

- Attempting to bypass security systems

- Allowing another user to access your account

User Support and Training

- Information Services is responsible for any technical issues and manual user account enrollments.
- Instructors are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Blackboard LMS through a combination of
- Blackboard's Official training resources
- Instructional Support's learning resource repository
- Practice with a Blackboard sandbox that can be provided upon request.
- Scheduling a training session with Instructional Support to assist with a specific area of concern.
- Administrative support from within their department for department specific standards, practices, and general familiarization with how the department uses their courses.

Artificial Intelligence Usage

- There are several tools built into Blackboard that utilize Artificial Intelligence/LLM Tools (A.I.) These tools are approved for use by Faculty/Staff to create resources for students to use and are supported by Instructional Support and the LMS Administrator.
- Instructional Support and the LMS Administrator do not support any other A.I. tools, though we do not prohibit their use now, provided they comply with all other MCPHS policies and procedures. Any A.I. features or tools within Blackboard will be evaluated by our operational taskforce and then vetted through our Blackboard Governance group prior to implementation and official MCPHS endorsement.
- A.I. content should be disclosed if it is used without any alteration or human intermediation between the content being created and it being posted. All content must be reviewed by the user prior to use.

Student Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Log in regularly and participate in course activities
- Follow netiquette guidelines for respectful communication
- Submit original work and uphold academic integrity
- Notify instructors of accessibility needs or technical issues

Violations of these expectations may be addressed through the Student Code of Conduct.

Student Handbook

Student Authentication Policy

Acceptable Use Policy

Best Practices

Technology Requirements

Mobile Usage

We support Blackboard access from a mobile device, either from a browser or the official app (preferred, Google Play / App Store), except for specific instances where the assignment, assessment, or content item requires a laptop device.

3.2 DATA PRIVACY AND FERPA COMPLIANCE

Blackboard Learn is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

(FERPA) and institutional data privacy policies. All user data, including grades, submissions, and personal information, is protected under these regulations. Faculty and staff must not share student data outside of the LMS or institutional systems without proper authorization.

3.3 ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

User accounts

- All current MCPHS University students and faculty are assigned an account on the Blackboard Learn system. Staff must request an account via a ticket. Account access continues for 180 days (about 6 months) after graduation for matriculated students. Non-matriculated students will lose access to Blackboard once they have no active courses registered to their account.

Account creation

- Blackboard Learn accounts are automatically created for students and faculty after they have matriculated or have completed HR processing. New accounts may take up to 24 hours after approval before appearing on Blackboard. Staff accounts require a Help Desk request to be created.

User access and login

- Users access Blackboard Learn with their MCPHS-provided username and password credentials, provided by the Information Services Help Desk. This process uses Single Sign-On, which will direct the user to an Office365 login screen where they enter their credentials before being redirected to the Blackboard home page.

- Access to an individual academic course is limited to enrolled students, the instructor of record, any co-instructor(s), and any additional users authorized by the instructor, the department chair/director, or dean.

- Users may be added or removed from a course manually by Information Services only.

  - Student enrollments cannot be added manually to courses automatically created by the Registrar. All missing student enrollments will need to be corrected by the Registrar.

  - School of Professional Studies (SPS) student enrollment issues should be directed to the SPS department.

Populating courses with enrolled users

- Blackboard Learn enrollments are processed two to three weeks before the start of the semester and daily throughout the add/drop period. Enrollments are based on registration data from the SIS. Enrollments cannot be run during Finals week.

    o Any enrollments that need to process outside of this timeline should be requested at least 7 days prior to their required enrollment date via a Help Desk ticket.

- For SPS self-paced courses, students are populated once registered in our SIS on an ongoing basis

Process for manually adding users to courses

- Additional users can be manually added to a course at the request of the instructor of record, or appropriate department chair/director and/or dean, via the Information Services Help Desk.

Automated disabling of students from courses

- Students who withdraw or drop a course will be automatically disabled in a Blackboard Learn course within 24 hours of the change in the SIS.

- For students who are disabled from a course based on their own withdrawal or other holds on their accounts, the data of the student assignment submissions, grades etc. thus far in the semester are retained and can be retrieved, either when the access is again granted or as requested

- For SPS self-paced courses, once a final grade is submitted to Colleague, course access is disabled for students

3.4 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The policies herein are proposed, discussed, and voted on by the Blackboard Governance Group. Each department that interfaces with Blackboard has a representative member along with ambassadors for larger departments. This group meets at least three times a year for larger discussions, while emergent and minor issues are voted on as needed between larger meetings.

4 ACCESSIBILITY

Federal and State Accessibility Requirements

- Although the Blackboard Learn software program is compliant with federal and state accessibility requirements, not all uploaded content or features used (colors, themes, etc.) in Blackboard Learn are compliant.

- [Instructors are required](#) to make their uploaded content and materials accessible to users with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).

- [The Office of Student Access and Accommodations (OSAA)](#) provides support for students with disabilities.

- The [Office of](#) Instructional Support provides guidance and support for faculty to create accessible content. Video content is automatically captioned when uploaded to Kaltura Media Center

- Instructors may request machine captioning for content generated prior to September 2021; instructions are available via the Office of Instructional Support

- Machine-generated captions are not 100 percent accurate and need to be reviewed/edited to ensure they meet accessibility requirements for students with documented need for accommodation.

Blackboard Ally

- [Blackboard Ally](#) is a feature enabled throughout Blackboard Learn, designed to help instructors make their digital course content accessible for students and provide students with alternative formats with which to engage with materials.

5 COURSE MANAGEMENT

5.1 COURSE SIZE LIMITS AND BEST PRACTICES

- There is no course size limit; however, courses in excess of 10 GBs may be identified for remediation to reduce size. Instructional Support has guidance on best practices for courses.

5.2 INDIVIDUAL COURSE FILE SIZE LIMITATIONS

- The maximum size for a single file upload on Blackboard is 100 MB when uploading assignments and digital files.

- Large multimedia files should be linked to available media repositories or authorized cloud storage locations.

5.3 CREATION SCHEDULE FOR NEW COURSES

- Fall courses will be created no later than July 20th of the respective year.

- Spring courses will be created no later than November 20th of the respective year.

- Summer courses will be created no later than April 20th of the respective year.

- SPS Term self-paced courses launch on July 1 each year, but course sections and shells are created in January. There are exceptions made in the instance of over-enrollment in a course, or if a new course is developed.

- Prerequisite Courses/Exams will be created by the Registrar in April and created on Blackboard no later than May 20th of the respective year.

- Students are enrolled in courses a week before courses begin. Enrollment changes continue to be processed daily through the end of the Add/Drop period. Enrollment changes thereafter are automatically synced to Blackboard within 24 hours.

5.4 COURSE ID NAMING CONVENTIONS

Our courses are created with specific course ID naming conventions, some of which are straightforward, and others that need clarification. Below are our standard naming conventions.

Example Course – **2025FA.BOS.BIO.101.A**

Let's break this code into its separate components which are separated by periods in the course ID.

2025FA (Term) – this segment designates the term, **YEAR** followed by a semester code (**FA**, **SP**, **SU**). It can also refer to the Proficiency term (**PRF**), or designate a School of Professional Studies course (**SPS**).

BOS (Location)– this segment designates the location of the course (**BOS, WOR, MAN, ONL**)

BIO (Subject Code) – this segment designates the subject code.

101 (Section Code) – this segment designates the section code.

A (Section and Misc Identifier) – this segment designates the section (if there are multiple). Other appended items here include Cross-Listing (**X**), SPS course with registration in Elevate (**E**), Clinical (**C**), Section number (if the section is identified by number and not letter).

There are several other naming conventions for courses manually created: These are generally identified because they start with **BB.**

Development Shell/Template – starts with **BB.DEV.ULTRA.**

Sandbox Shell – starts with **BB.SANDBOX.ULTRA.**

Practice Shell – starts with **BB.ULTRA.PRACTICE.**

Faculty Resource Shell – ends with **.FACULTYRESOURCES**

5.5 SANDBOX AND DEVELOPMENT SHELLS

To encourage best practices and facilitate quick course creation turnaround, we provide development shells and sandbox shells in Blackboard upon request. In order to create these, we require the following information:

Non-academic/development course shells refer to a course on the Blackboard system that is not a formal MCPHS course.

- Development/Sandbox courses are set up for faculty and staff who would like to develop a new course, complete training opportunities, or explore new features and functions.

- A development or Sandbox course shell may be requested by faculty and staff by submitting a request to the Information Services Help Desk. Included in the request must be the course ID and course name for development shells.

- The maximum turnaround time for development course requests is 5 business days.

- Development course shells will follow the automated deletion process timeline and will be deleted if the course has not been accessed in the past 3 years.

- Courses that are not used for development or as a sandbox can be requested by submitting a ticket that includes the purpose of the course. These requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

5.6 COPYING COURSES

- The instructor of record can copy the content of one course into the shell of a newly created course in which they have an instructor role. **Note**: We highly recommend working with Instructional Support to copy items to ensure all items work as intended after the copy.

- The Office of Instructional Support may assist in processing course copying activities or provide training to applicable departmental representatives

5.7 COURSE ROLES

User accounts are provided roles within each course to determine their level of permissions. Below is a simplified overview of the roles and their privileges:

Course Role	Privileges
Student	This role is the standard role users matriculated in a course will receive, allowing them to receive a grade for the course and interact with all content made available by the instructor.
Instructor	Full access to the course content tools and areas. Limited access to administrate the course (cannot edit users, create or delete courses, set certain course settings.)
Owner	Like the Instructor role but can add users.
Grader	A limited version of the instructor role that can grade assignments, but cannot add, edit, or remove content.
Tutor	A limited version of the instructor role that can view content, but cannot grade, add, edit, or remove content.
Teaching Assistant	Functionally like an instructor but will not be shown on the instructor list and cannot manage some course administrative settings, such as course availability.
Viewer	This role can view material within an available course but cannot submit assignments or receive a grade.
Instructional Designer	This role is a limited administrator role that allows the Instructional Support team to assist with course administration and content.
Course Builder	Can create and edit content, but cannot access the Gradebook

5.8 EXPORTING COURSES

- Instructors of record can export a course as a whole or with partial content.

- This feature creates a zipped format of the course content that can be imported to create a new course without any users or user interactions with the course.

- The export only includes manually selected criteria and is an alternative to the course copy process. If you plan on importing the course be mindful of the

options selected. We encourage working with an Instructional Supporter for this process.

5.9 ARCHIVING COURSES

- The instructor can archive their course at any time and is encouraged to periodically create a manual archive of each course in case of future data retrieval needs.

- Archiving a course does not delete the course from the system.

- Archives create a permanent record of a course, including all content and user interactions.

- An archived course in a zipped format may be restored into the Blackboard Learn system by contacting the Information Services Help Desk and requesting a course restore.

5.10 COURSE RETENTION POLICY

- Blackboard courses will remain in the system for 5 years from the last day of the semester in which the course was taught (e.g., a course taught in FA 2021 will only be eligible for deletion after December 2026).

- Each year, courses eligible for deletion will be deleted on or around December 15.

- On the previous 45-day prior time limit, an email reminder will be sent to Faculty-All by the Office of Instructional Support of the upcoming course deletion timeline.

- Additionally, on that same day, email notifications of impending course deletions will be sent to each instructor.

- Instructors will have until 15 days prior to deletion date to email the Information Services Help Desk and request that a particular course be retained for an additional year.

- Instructors wanting to save a copy of their courses before December 15 may do so by using the archive or export features in the control panel

- Courses deleted from Blackboard will be retained on MCPHS servers for archival purposes. A request by a Dean or Department Chair can be submitted to the Help Desk if a course needs to be restored to Blackboard.

5.11 Recovery and Continuity

Blackboard Learn is backed up nightly and hosted in a secure cloud environment. In the event of a system outage, MCPHS will notify users via email. Archived courses can be restored upon request to the Help Desk, subject to data retention timelines.

Courses are archived every morning for courses that have had activity within the past 24 hours. These archives are maintained for 30 days, after which they are no longer available for recovery.

Courses deleted from Blackboard will be archived to MCPHS servers in their final state, unless otherwise specified by the course instructor/owner. These course archives are held for at least 10 years, after which they may be deleted entirely.

5.12 CANCELLED COURSES

- Courses that are cancelled will be removed within 24 hours if the changes are made during the student enrollment and add/drop period (2-3 weeks prior to start of semester through add drop)

- For assistance recovering the course content, please contact the Information Services Help Desk during that semester.

5.13 COURSES NOT ON REGISTRAR COURSE LIST

Due to certain course offering timings, non-standard course length, or other extenuating circumstances, some courses are manually created for credit courses. These exceptions must be approved by the LMS Administrator, Registrar, and Information Services. To standardize the course creation process, these exceptions are limited; are earmarked for discussion between the Registrar and LMS Administrator to bring them under an existing/new course term; and must be requested ahead of time via a support ticket by the course instructor, department administrative assistant, program director, or dean.

5.14 COURSE AVAILABILITY SETTINGS

- By default, all newly created courses in Blackboard are "unavailable/closed" to student users.

- Instructors are responsible for opening their course shell to students prior to or on the 1st day of the semester, by making the course "Available/Open" via the course availability toggle with the course settings screen.

- Course Terms exist within Blackboard, but at this time they do not dictate when courses become available or unavailable to students.

- SPS courses are removed 6 months after each SPS term

- Courses can be marked as **Completed**. When the course is completed, students can access the content but cannot participate. Additionally, you can no longer make any changes once a course is completed. This option is preferable, as it prevents unintended changes and preserves the content in its state at the time for accreditation review activities.

5.15 Course Merging

- In specific instances, multiple Blackboard Learn courses may be merged.

- Course merge requests must be requested at least 1 week prior to the start of the semester.

- Standard merge requests must occur before any course content is added – content loss will occur during the merge process and will not be recovered.

- Parent/Child merge requests do not delete content; however, a Parent shell must be assigned that will host the content (an existing course can be selected, otherwise a new one will be created).

- Each request must be submitted to the Information Services Help Desk for review and processing.

6 Integrations and Tools

Background

As an online digital software platform, Blackboard Learn allows for the integration of 3rd party tools from vendors to enhance functionality and increase engagement.

Examples of 3rd party integrations include (but are not limited to):

Kaltura, McGraw-Hill, Pearson, GoReact, Labster, TurningPoint

6.1 Faculty Evaluation & Exploration

Faculty are encouraged to explore and evaluate tools that may enhance teaching and learning activities within their courses and curriculum. It is important to understand that not all tools will be acceptable or available for our infrastructure.

When exploring possible new integrations, it may be helpful to utilize the Rubric for eLearning Tool Evaluation to determine if there are significant enhancements the tool will bring to the environment versus a "nice to have" feature set.

6.2 REQUEST PROCESS

Requests for third party tools can be made by filling out this form and reaching out to our Academic Technology Officer, Daniel Jamous.

Requests must be made at least 6-8 weeks in advance of potential availability in a course.

Your request will need to include:

1. The purpose of the request that includes substantial alignment with the University's strategic priorities and goals

2. Pricing, funding, and support information

3. Vendor representative information

4. Ideally, integrations will add value to all users of Blackboard Learn, and if other interested instructors or programs have been identified – please include their information as well. Single-course integrations are discouraged and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

6.3 IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The process for adding a new tool to Blackboard Learn:

1. Stakeholder request submitted through https://mcphs.service-now.com Instructional Support queue and assigned to Instructional Technology Specialist

2. Research by Academic Learning Management System Administrator on the tool

3. Approval by Blackboard Learn Working Group to proceed with testing the tool

4. Testing of the new tool by Information Services, Instructional Support, and stakeholders

5. Upon successful testing and documentation, the tool will be added to Blackboard Learn

This process may take several months to complete, and submission of a request does not guarantee implementation.

6.4 EXAMSOFT POLICY

The LMS Administrator manages the import and sync of courses from Blackboard to the Examsoft platform, as well as user management. These are manually processed and must be requested at least a week prior to the course start date via a support ticket.

Content is synchronized between Blackboard and Examsoft daily at 2 AM EST.

Course administration within Examsoft is the responsibility of the instructor and/or the administrative assistant for the department. Instructor and student support is provided by the Examsoft support site, with additional support from Instructional Support (for training issues) and the LMS Administrator (for technical issues related to the Blackboard platform.)

Student users are automatically synced to Examsoft.

Faculty/Staff accounts must be requested via a ticket if this is their first time using the system. The account will be created within 48 hours.

7 ORGANIZATION REQUESTS

Background

Blackboard "Organizations" are empty course shells that can be used to support the educational or administrative needs of the University. Organizations are similar to course shells and have the same look and feel as well as available tools to enhance the content contained within them.

Like a course, organizations provide a central location for participants to share documents and collaborate in a variety of ways—all within a familiar environment.

It is important to note that organizations:

- Cannot be used for credit-based courses
- Must be requested by full-time faculty/staff (faculty advisors must request on behalf of student organizations)

7.1 COURSE VS. ORGANIZATION QUICK COMPARISON

	Course	**Organization**
Purpose	As the primary, or supplementary, space for credit-based courses.	As a catch-all for a meeting space/resource hub/other purpose that is not supported by other MCPHS services.
Course Creation/Provisioning	Created automatically based on Registrar data, or manually as needed	Created only upon request and after a suggested

		meeting with Instructional Support
Accreditation	Can be used for credit-based courses	Can not be used for credit-based courses.
Enrollments	Automatic (unless the course is manually created)	Manual enrollment must be requested via a ticket.

7.2 REQUEST PROCESS

1. Faculty may submit a ticket via our service portal to Instructional Support. Ideally, a session would be scheduled with an Instructional Supporter prior to submitting the ticket to determine whether an organization is the best resource for the desired outcome.

2. Please provide contact information as well as overall expected outcomes for the use of the shell.

3. Requests will be reviewed by the Office of Instructional Support to ensure that an organization is the appropriate space for the request. A request will then be submitted to the Information Services Help Desk for the organization to be created.

4. Upon creation, the requestor will be contacted by Instructional Support to provide support and guidance on effective design and delivery of content within the shell.

7.3 TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION

Organization requests may take up to 5 business days for completion.

7.4 ORGANIZATION ROLES

Organization Role	Privileges
Participant	This role is the standard role users matriculated in a course will receive, allowing them to receive a grade for the course and interact with all content made available by the instructor.
Leader	Full access to the course content tools and areas. Limited access to administrate the course (cannot edit users, create or delete courses, set certain course settings.)

Owner	Like the Instructor role but can add and remove users.
Guest	Can only view content. Cannot submit assignments.
Assistant (TA)	Similar to Teaching Assistant. Can help manage content and communications.
Instructional Designer	This role is a limited administrator role that allows the Instructional Support team to assist with course administration and content.

8 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESOURCES

8.1 TRAINING DOCUMENTS AND LINKS

Blackboard instructor documentation.

Blackboard student documentation.

Reach out to **Instructional Support** for additional assistance.

8.2 INCIDENT REPORTING & ESCALATION

To report an issue or request technical assistance, please submit a ticket via our service portal.

We will respond to your request within 24 hours and assign it to the relevant team. Turnaround time will depend on the nature of the issue.

8.3 OUTAGE AND MAINTENANCE NOTIFICATIONS

In the event of a major service interruption impacting all users, either for an LTI or Blackboard platform, a notification will be posted on the Blackboard institution page. If the outage is severe, or the Blackboard platform cannot be reached, an email will be sent indicating the outage.

8.4 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

Request Type	Resolution Time
Account issue	24-48 hours
Add user to course	24-48 hours

Bug Report and Resolution	Reported to Blackboard within 48 hours; resolution dependent on Blackboard's timeline for updated release.
Maintenance Release Schedule for Blackboard Platform	Monthly, usually the first Thursday of the month
Credit Course Creation	24-48 hours
Non-Credit Course Creation	2-7 days