# Canvas - Blackboard Comparison: Instructor Guidebook

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Canvas Overview

Accessing Canvas
Canvas at Kent State is available at [kent.instructure.com](http://kent.instructure.com). Canvas will also be accessible from Flashline.

Canvas Dashboard

1. **Global Navigation.** Visible throughout the Canvas experience with links to the Dashboard, Courses, Calendar, Inbox, History, Commons, and Help.

2. **Dashboard View & Card View.** Canvas courses are Published (visible to students) or Unpublished (not visible). Course cards can be customized with colors and graphics.

3. **To Do.** Students and Instructors can quickly access To Do items such as assignments to complete (students) and to grade (instructors).

4. **Coming Up.** Preview of upcoming assignments and activities.
1. **Course Navigation Links.** Canvas provides consistent, essential course navigation. Items not visible on the navigation will not be seen in the course, but can be accessed by the Instructor.

2. **Home Page.** There are several options for a Canvas Home Page. The image above showcases the Kent State Online template homepage with an embedded course-orientation video.

3. **Student View.** Preview course materials as a test student.

4. **Home Page Sidebar.** Access key tools and settings from the sidebars featured on the homepage.

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**Course Status**

- **Unpublished**
- **Publish**

**Course Status (Not Pictured).** Canvas courses are Unpublished (not visible to students) or Published (visible). Once students submit materials to a Published course, it cannot be Unpublished. Course Status is not pictured above, as the course has been Published, and students have submitted course materials.
**Canvas Tools**

Canvas is known for **intuitive and innovative tools**! Canvas combines the comfortability of a familiar toolset with the opportunity to explore new and advanced features for designing and delivering a variety of courses. The list below provides an overview of each Canvas tool with a link to the Canvas Community for more information. For comparison, former Blackboard tools are noted in parentheses.

**Announcements**

Users can receive notifications via their preferred communication mechanism, which to date includes Facebook, Twitter, email, text messaging, and notifications via the app if installed.

- Canvas allows students to comment or like an announcement if the instructor enables the setting.
- Announcements appear on the User Dashboard, and on the Course Home page depending on what type of Home Page the instructor has set up for the course.
- Canvas has the ability to add RSS feeds.

**Assignments**

Discussions that are setup as graded will also appear on the Assignments page. Manually created gradebook items from Blackboard will NOT appear in the assignments page in Canvas unless the instructor manually imports their Blackboard exported Grade Center.

- Canvas uses a SpeedGrader which provides inline grading. Instructors can comment, markup, and grade a document without downloading a student’s submission.
- When an assignment is created, it is added to the Assignment page, Syllabus, and Calendar. If updated, all links are updated automatically.
- An Assignment must be created to create a column in Grades (ie, Gradebook).
- Interactive rubrics can be used for grading.
- Students can submit multimedia assignments, URLs, type text directly into assignment submissions, and even use Google Drive as a source for loading files.
- Instructors can limit the types of files that are allowed to be uploaded.
- Instructors can leave voice and video comments for students to review.
- Peer review assignments, much like Blackboard’s Self and Peer Assessment tool, can easily be created.
- Moderated assignments are also available.
- Turnitin (plagiarism software) is integrated as an LTI External Tool in the Assignments section.
- Assignment Groups allow an easy way to set up weighted grades, dropping the lowest grade, or dropping the highest grade.

**Assignments with Peer Review (Self and Peer Assessments)**

The Self and Peer Assessment Tool was unique in Blackboard from many other tools and allowed instructors to create specific tasks for assessing student learning.

- Peer Review is a feature of the Assignment tool in Canvas.
• Self-Assessment can be achieved in a variety of ways including using the assignment tool with feedback or having students submit a quiz with varying point values assigned that correlate to self-assessment criteria.

**Attendance**
The Roll Call Attendance Assignment can be edited, and then excluded from grading by editing assignment settings in the same manner as any other assignment.

• Easily record attendance based off a class list or seating chart.
• An assignment will automatically appear in Assignments titled “Roll Call.”
• The percentage that displays is automatically updated as days progress depending on whether the student is present or absent.

**Calendar**
Assignments can be created and deleted directly from the calendar for any course, though this approach is not recommended; instead, create assignments within a course module. Any assignment deleted from the Calendar directly will delete the corresponding assignment within the course.

• The Calendar feed link can be copied into Google Calendar.
• Due dates set on Assignments automatically display on the Calendar.
• Items on the calendar, including Assignments, Quizzes, or graded Discussions that contain due dates, automatically update all associated objects with that item in various areas of the course.
• Instructors and students viewing the calendar can view one or all of their course related calendar items in a single view.
• Each user has a personal calendar for non course-related events.
• Calendar items are automatically listed at the bottom of the Syllabus tool inside each course.
• The calendar has a scheduling tool.

**Canvas Teacher (Blackboard Instructor)**
There are two Canvas Apps, one for teachers (Canvas Teacher) and one for students (Canvas Student). Apps are free for and available for iOS and Android.

**Collaborations**
Provides a way for instructors to integrate the use of Google Docs within their course. Collaborations allow users to collaborate on a single instance of the same document.

• Each collaborator will need a Google account and will need to connect Google Drive as a registered service in Canvas
• Limit of 50 users that can collaborate on a single Google Doc
• All users can view and edit the document at the same time

**Course Import (Course Copy)**
The Course Import tool allows content to be imported (copied) into another Canvas course.
• In Blackboard, instructors accessed a previous course and copied content into a new course (e.g., access Fall 2020 course; copy into Fall 2021 course).

• In Canvas, instructors access a new course and import content from a previous course (e.g., access Fall 2021 course; import Fall 2020 course).

• Essentially, this import/copy workflow operates in the opposite direction in Canvas, compared to Blackboard.

Discussions
Discussions setup to be graded will also appear on the Canvas Assignments page and in Grades (i.e., Gradebook).

• Can require users to post to the discussion before viewing.
• Instructors and students can easily view and filter posts.
• Receive notifications via social web services, text messaging, and more.
• Group discussions are more seamless in Group Pages.

Files
Files allows you to store files and assignments within Canvas. You can upload one or multiple files, view all details about your files, preview files, publish and unpublish files, set usage rights, and restrict access to files.

• Everything uploaded or copied into Canvas Files is accessible to students by default but can be changed.
• You can create folders to organize materials.
• Folders and items are available (i.e., published) to students by default; however, they can be locked or released at an instructor-determined date or time.
• File access can also be controlled by using Canvas Modules.
• Instructors can upload multiple files, and then drag & drop files into folders.
• All files in this area can be downloaded as a zip file.
• You can upload a zip file into the Canvas Files area and Canvas will unzip it for you.

Grades (Grade Center)
An assignment MUST be created to create a column in the Gradebook. NOTE: Discussions that are setup as graded will also appear on Assignments and an item will be added in the Gradebook.

• Columns are sortable.
• Grades can be weighted.
• Instructors can curve grades.
• SpeedGrader is available through the Gradebook.
• The SpeedGrader tool displays submitted assignments, grading rubric, and media commenting in a single interface, which does not require downloading student file submissions.
• Instructors can message students who have yet to submit an assignment or who scored less/more than an instructor set criteria.
• Submissions are viewable online or downloadable.
• Comments for assessment feedback can be text or media-based.
• Students can message instructors within the grade column.
• Columns representing set Assignment Groups are shaded and located, by default, on the far-right side of the gradebook.
• Students are able to enter “what-if” scenarios to calculate hypothetical grades.
• Unpublished Assignments will not appear in the Gradebook.
• The Gradebook will not allow an instructor to enter Group Assignment grades for a student not within a group.

Groups
If you move a student from one group to another after grading a group assignment, they will likely carry that grade with them into their new group. Changing group names or collapsing groups after the add/drop date has passed may create issues. Deleting a group site with student submissions inside of it will also delete that work from Canvas (and could be unrecoverable).

• Groups have access to nearly every course tool including Announcements, Pages, Files, Discussion, Conferences, and Collaboration.
• Access to Groups for instructor moderation seems more intuitive than many other platforms.

Inbox (Email)
A message is sent to students for every published assignment. Encourage students to review their notification settings prior to the start of the semester and change the settings to their liking and so that they aren’t overwhelmed by messaging from Canvas.

• Private messages appear in your Inbox within Canvas; notifications will push out to Email, Twitter, Facebook, Text Message, depending upon your selection.
• Discussion responses can be accessed from Inbox.
• Messages can include file attachments, webcam recordings, media uploads, or plain text.
• Conversation messages are also generated by a comment made by a student or instructor on an assignment.
• By default, students receive email for every announcement and message; however, students can control in a granular way how and when they receive messaging.

Modules (Content Folders; Learning Modules)
IMPORTANT: Folders do not exist in Canvas courses, only in the Files area. Modules are the equivalent tool that can be used to organize content, files, assignments, collaborations, quizzes, etcetera within Canvas.

• Collapsing a Module for the instructor does NOT collapse that module for students.
• For content within a Module to be visible, the entire Module must also be published.
• Modules are similar to folders and behave much the same way Learning Modules did in Blackboard.
• Instructors can drag and drop items within a module.
• Users can expand and collapse a module at anytime.
• Completion requirements can be set for each individual item within a module.
• One Module can be set as a prerequisite to another module.
• Modules can be setup to force a linear sequence for students.
• Modules can be locked until a specific date.
• Due dates and point values for assignments, graded discussions, and quizzes automatically populate on the Modules that contain them.

**Navigation (Course Menu & Navigation)**

IMPORTANT: Blackboard’s navigation structure will NOT migrate to Canvas.

• You cannot rename your menu links.
• Menu links can be hidden from students through the Course Settings > Navigation tab.
• Modules are used in Canvas for organizing content, NOT folders (except within the Files area).
• Items in the menu can be rearranged in the order of instructor preference.

**New Analytics (Statistics Tracking & Course Reports)**

Student Analytics identify specific user tracking as well as assignment and grade distribution trends. Course statistics help instructors analyze how students are interacting with content items and course materials.

**Notification Preferences**

Based on communication plans for important student dates, it will be important for instructors to become familiar with these settings and make recommendations to students based on how often they post content as well as make it available.

• Add additional contact methods in addition to email, including Text messaging, Twitter, Facebook, or even personal emails.
• Students can define which objects trigger notifications as well as how often to receive them.

**Pages (Content Items)**

Pages store content and educational resources that are part of a course or group but don’t necessarily belong in an assignment. Pages function much like a Wiki where all edits (and the history of the edits) are tracked. Instructors can grant editing privileges to students.

• Pages can include text, video, links to files, embedded files, linked files, YouTube, Kaltura, links to other course tools, and much more.
• A page in Canvas can be set as the Home Page of the course.
• Pages can be added to Canvas Modules and be linked to other pages.

**Publish Course (Make a Course Available)**

After an assignment is submitted in Canvas, the ability to unpublish the course does not exist.

• Canvas courses are set to unpublished by default.
• Instructors MUST publish their course for students to access it.
• After a course is published and well underway it cannot be unpublished.

**Quizzes (Tests, Surveys, and Pools)**
The auto-regrade feature affecting students receiving multiple choice, true false, or multiple answer type questions that were corrected, may require manual intervention by instructors. Regrade will not trigger if questions are removed or if a point value is updated; only if a correct response is updated.

- Tests and Test Pools in Blackboard are referred to as Quizzes and Question Banks in Canvas.
- Quizzes are automatically submitted if it is a timed assessment.
- The Quiz timer can be changed (ie, Moderated) for individual students to allow for extended time on published quizzes.
- Like Blackboard, instructors can allow an additional attempt for an individual as well as multiple students as once; however, Canvas calls this moderating.
- Tests can be edited after students begin submitting attempts and are automatically re-graded.
- Instructors can manually add or remove points from students scores using Canvas’ Quiz Fudge points feature.
- Like Blackboard, test questions and answers can contain media; however, they do not call these Mashups. It is just another button on the rich text editor.
- Hot Spot questions are only available in the New Quizzes tool. See also [New Quizzes](kent.edu/proctoring).
- Quizzes can be setup as practice or graded quizzes (ie, practice quizzes do not count in students final grades).
- Surveys can also be setup to be graded, if desired.
- For information on online/remote proctoring, see [kent.edu/proctoring](kent.edu/proctoring).

**Recent Activity (Notification Dashboard)**
Because all course activity displays in these feeds, it may not be necessary to receive all notifications via related communication preferences (ie, email, text, social sites, etcetera); therefore, it is important to review Notification settings to prevent the numerous communication protocols available within the Canvas platform.

- The Recent Activity links allow you to expand, remove, or navigate to that item within the course.
- There is Global Navigation Activity and Course Activity Feeds, both of which display information pertaining to announcements, discussions, assignments, and conversations, including due date changes, assignment changes, graded and ungraded items, and much more. The difference is that one is available within the Dashboard, the other within the Course.

**Rubrics**
Blackboard rubrics need to be re-associated with assessments. Ranges need to be enabled or adjusted to a points-only format.

- Integrates with graded items.
- Add media comments and integration within SpeedGrader.
- Instructors can override a grade produced by clicking the Rubric criteria.
- Students can view the rubric within their Grades area.
• Rubrics can be added to quizzes.

**SpeedGrader (Inline Grading)**
SpeedGrader is the closest equivalent to Inline grading found in Blackboard; although, the features & functionality overall are more rich than what is available in Blackboard.

• Grade/give feedback on all submissions for an assignment, quiz, or graded discussion in one place.
• Students sorting is allowed in a variety of ways, providing instructors the options to grade alphabetically, by submission date, while hiding student names, or for only students that have submitted.
• The tool is accessible through Assignments, Quizzes, Graded Discussions, and Grades.
• Submitted files can be marked with instructor comments, drawings, highlights, or text.
• Students can download graded files as annotated PDFs.
• Instructors are able to record audio or video feedback for each student assignment.

**Student View (Student Preview)**
Enabling Student Preview creates and adds a Test Student to your course. The Test Student appears as the last entry in the Gradebook. Student View can be used to test assignments and practice grading; this test data can be removed from the course.

• Student View in Canvas enrolls a test student in the course but will not prompt you to remove the student when you exit the preview.
• An instructor must leave Student View in order to return to instructor editing tools.

**Syllabus**
Setting up due dates for assignments, discussions, and quizzes automatically populates at the bottom of the Syllabus page.

• Dates that appear on the Syllabus also appear on the Calendar.
• Objects such as Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, or other calendar items are hyperlinked from the bottom of the Syllabus page to the content automatically.
• The top of the Syllabus page is can be edited to allow sharing of files or to paste in formatted text, links to specific course content (perhaps those that are not automatically populated at the bottom).

**Alternative Solutions**
The following tools were featured in Blackboard Learn; however, these are not available in Canvas. If a course featured a Journal, Blog, and/or Wiki, those activities will need redesigned in Canvas with several options to consider for alternative/replacement tools. Instructors interested in requesting Canvas features can submit an Idea to the Canvas Community, which can then be voted on by community members.

**Journals**
**IMPORTANT: Journals are not currently available in Canvas.** Instructors can use the Assignment tool with a text submission option to track journal entries as an alternative to the Journal in Blackboard. See How do I add or edit details in an Assignment?
Blogs

**IMPORTANT:** Blogs are currently not available in Canvas. Students can use 3rd-party blogging tools and share links to those blogs within their course or a group. Discussions can also be used to as a substitute for classroom blogs.

Wikis

**IMPORTANT:** Wikis are not currently available in Canvas. That said, Canvas Pages can be set to allow students to edit and contribute content. [See Edit Page Settings](#). So, while Blackboard wikis will not migrate to Canvas, an editable Page(s) can be created to recreate a Wiki experience.

Reference & Attributions

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