



Information Technology Services

Faculty Quick Start Guide for Blackboard at George Mason University

Table of Contents

Click on any of the headings below to navigate to that section within the guide

Getting Started.....	3
What is Blackboard	
Obtaining a Blackboard Account	
General Information and Support	
Course Creation and Retention	
Accessing myMason and Blackboard Courses	3
Basic Information About Course Shells.....	4
Student and Faculty Enrollments	
Default Course Layout	
Course Menu and Environment.....	4
Icons and Navigation	
Creating Menu Items	
Making Courses Available	
Communication.....	6
Creating Announcements	
Send E-mail	
Adding Content to Courses	7
What is Content?	
Uploading a Syllabus and Other Course Documents	
Adding Assignments to Courses	
The Student’s Perspective on Submitting Assignments	
Using the Grade Center.....	9
Grading Assignments	
Hiding Grade Center Columns from Students	
Additional Information.....	10
Student View Tool	
Changing Course Colors/Themes	
Adding Additional Users	
More Information and Additional Course Tools	12

This guide is designed to help new faculty become familiar with Blackboard at Mason. In addition to this guide, please review all of our support documents at <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu>, sign up for a workshop at <http://ittraining.gmu.edu>, or enroll in the Self-Paced Online Blackboard Training course via the Courses page in myMason (<http://mymason.gmu.edu>).

Getting Started

What is Blackboard?

Blackboard is a course management system used campus-wide at George Mason University. Courses are automatically generated each semester based on faculty assignments in PatriotWeb. Blackboard allows faculty to post course materials, deliver tests, assignments, and surveys, host discussions, and facilitate many other course-related functions. You will not receive a course shell in Blackboard until you are listed as officially teaching a course in PatriotWeb.

Obtaining a Blackboard Account

A Blackboard account is automatically created for all faculty, staff, and students. New faculty can access Blackboard 30 days before their official start date.

General Information and Support

Access Blackboard via the Courses tab on myMason: <http://myMason.gmu.edu>

Support site: <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu> (includes FAQs for faculty and students and instructional guides)

Blackboard Assistance:

- Support Documents and FAQs: <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu>
- Contact Form: <https://coursesupport.gmu.edu/contactus.cfm>
- Workshops: <http://ittraining.gmu.edu>
- Walk in Help: Collaborative Learning Hub, Johnson Center 311 (Fairfax), Founders Hall, Room B115 (Arlington), and Occoquan Building, Room 231(Prince William)
- Phone Help: 703- 993-3141

Blackboard On Demand Learning Center (Videos): <http://ondemand.blackboard.com/>

Password/Login Help: <http://itservices.gmu.edu> or call 703-993-8870

The Blackboard manual can be found in the Help section of the Control Panel of your course shell or at http://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Instructor.

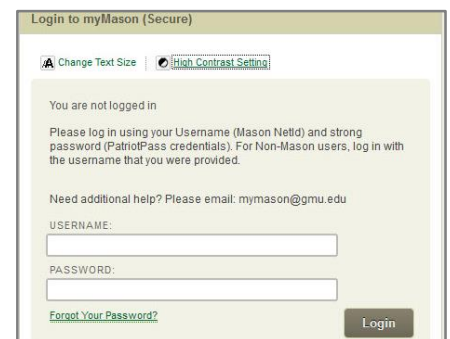
Course Creation and Retention

Course shells are created for all courses when course registration starts for the next semester. Professors will have immediate access to their next semester's courses at this time.

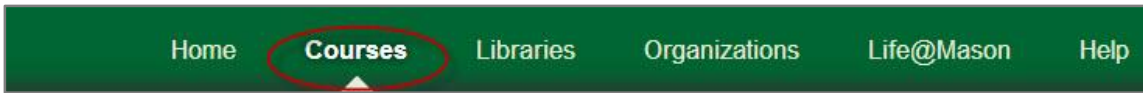
Course sites are removed from Blackboard two years after the end of the semester. Courses will be deleted on or after January 15 and July 15 of each year. For example, fall 2011 courses will be deleted on or after January 15, 2014. Instructors will be notified via e-mail to their GMU e-mail address four weeks prior to each deletion date and an announcement will be posted in myMason. Instructions for retaining your course and the deletion schedule can be found at coursesupport.gmu.edu.

Accessing myMason and Blackboard Courses

Using a web browser (a list of supported browsers can be found at http://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Instructor/015_Browser_Support/014_Browser_Support_f_or_April_2014), log into the myMason Portal with your Mason NetID and password at <http://mymason.gmu.edu>.

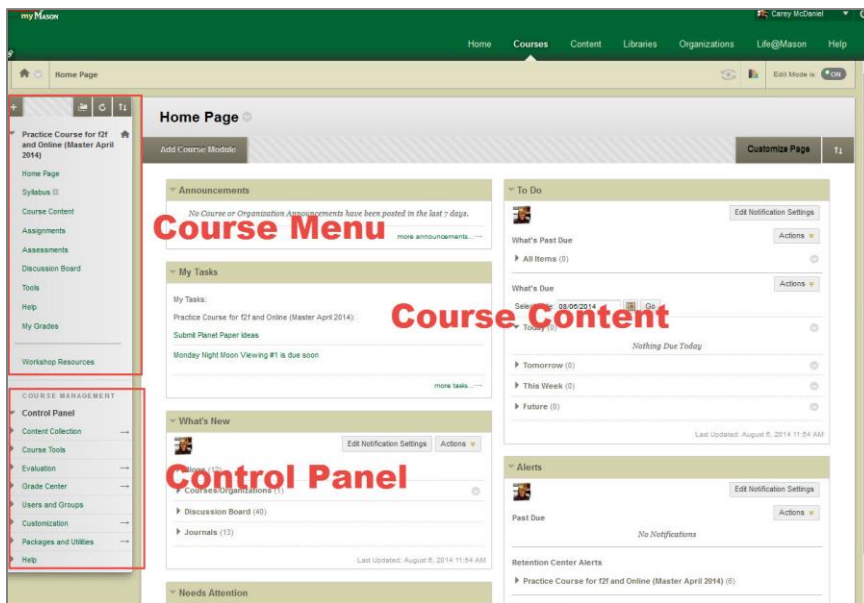


After logging in, select the Courses Tab from the myMason homepage. The Courses tab contains a list of all the courses you are teaching and/or taking as a student.



Basic Information about Course Shells

Course shells are created at the beginning of a semester's registration period (e.g., early October for spring semester) in order to give faculty the opportunity to develop their courses before the semester starts.



Student and Faculty Enrollments

Student rosters are automatically updated. When students add/drop in PatriotWeb, the enrollments are automatically reflected in Blackboard Courses within 24 hours. Updates to instructor enrollments (add/drop in PatriotWeb) are also automatically reflected in Blackboard Courses.

Default Course Layout

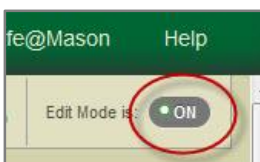
The left side of your course site will always contain two components: the **Course Menu** and the **Control Panel**. The Course Menu is where you place content for students. Information about setting up the Course Menu is found below.

The Control Panel is only visible to users with instructor, TA, and Course Builder roles. It is through the Control Panel that you access the Grade Center, customize your course, create backups, and more.

Course Menu and Environment








Icons and Navigation

In order to add or edit content in your Blackboard course, confirm Edit Mode is ON by clicking the ON/OFF button in the top right of the course.



When you set Edit Mode ON, you will see a number of different icons, identified below. Setting Edit Mode OFF will allow you to see what students in your course will see.

The following icons are used in the course site:

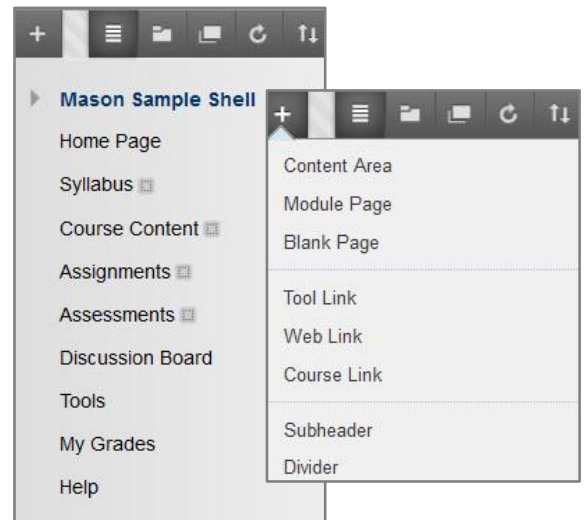
	Downward Arrow	Displays a menu to show item options
	Drag and Drop Arrow	Double-pointed arrow. Click to drag-and-drop an item for easy reordering.
	Not Available icon	Item is not available to students
	Content Empty icon	Content area is empty
	Add to Menu	Place your mouse pointer over the plus sign to display Course Menu options
	Shows details	Displays text entered in the Text Box.
	Hides details	Hides text entered in the Text Box.

Creating Course Menu items

The Course Menu provides navigation for the content of the course and can be customized based on the organization of your course. When your course is created, some items are included in your menu by default. You can modify or delete these items and add your own.

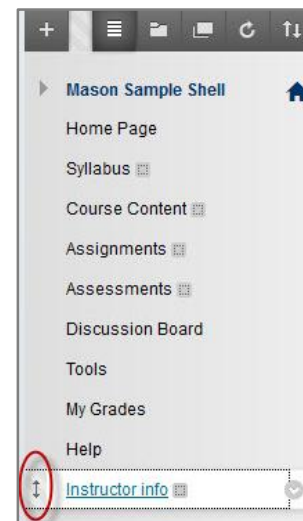
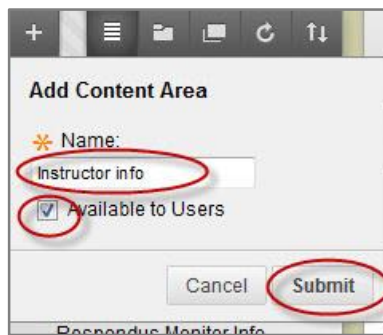
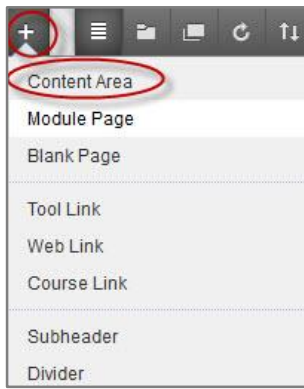
The types of items that can be included in the Course Menu include:

- **Content Area** - Contains content items such as readings, handouts, assignments, quizzes and links
- **Module Page** - A page containing Modules such as a Dictionary, Calculator or Library information
- **Tool Link** - A link to a tool such as a discussion board, blog, or wiki
- **Web Link** - A link to another site on the Web
- **Subheader and Divider** - Used to add dividers to separate items on the Course Menu and help add clarity to menu section



To Personalize the Course Menu for Your Course:

1. Click the + icon to open the Course Menu options
2. Select the type of item to add to the menu. In this example, a content item will be added.
3. Select Content Area. Update the Name, Availability, and click Submit.
4. The new menu item is automatically added at the bottom of the Course Menu. Drag it up or down by clicking on the reordering arrow next to the new menu item.



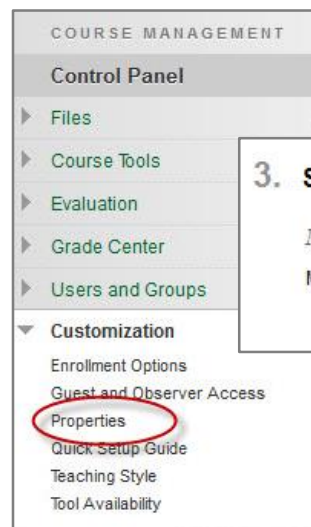
Making Courses Available

All courses must be made available by the instructor for students to access each semester. The instructor also decides whether or not the course should remain available to students after the semester ends. When the course is unavailable to students, it is still accessible for the instructor.

To quickly make recent courses available to students, select Customization and then Properties from the Control Panel.

Select 'Yes' for Option 3, then Submit.

The course is now available to students.



Communication

Creating Announcements

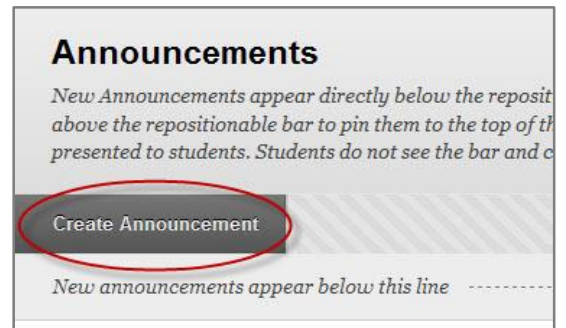
Announcements are an ideal tool for communicating time-sensitive information to students, such as reminders about upcoming assignments, tests, discussion forums, etc.

From the Control Panel, select Course Tools> Announcements. Click 'Create Announcement'



On the *Create Announcement* page, enter the Announcement subject and message. Specify whether the announcement is date restricted and if it is, select Date Restrictions. Click the Submit button.

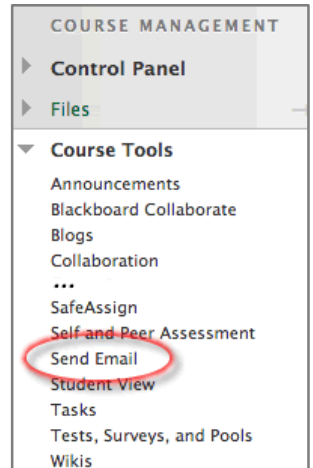
The new Announcement will be posted in the course Home Page and the announcements module, if E-mail Announcement was selected, students will receive the announcement via e-mail to their Mason address.



Send E-mail

You can also send an e-mail to some or all of your students easily from Blackboard. Students will be Bcc'd and you will receive a copy of the e-mail. You can include attachments in the e-mail.

From the Control Panel, select Course Tools > Send E-mail. Choose the type of user(s). Compose the e-mail and then select Submit.



Adding Content to Courses

What is Content?

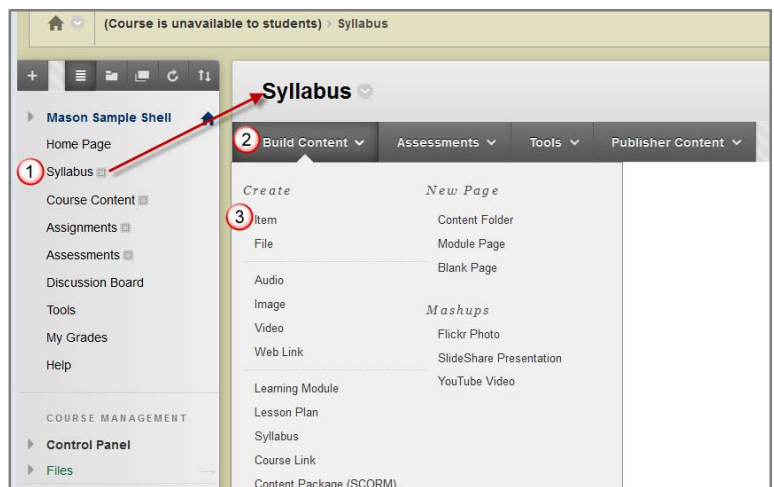
Content is information you share with your students. It can be text, files, audio, video, folders, web links, assignments, quizzes, and more. Content can be organized in folders to create a structure and flow through the course.

Content is broken up into four types: Content, Assessments, Tools and Publisher Content. All content areas are created equal, so you'll see these options in every content area of your course.

Uploading Files

To add a file (e.g., syllabus or other files) to your course:

1. Choose a content area (Syllabus, Course Content, etc.) from the Course Menu.
2. Place your mouse over the Build Content.
3. Select Item or File from the drop-down menu. Although these content types are similar, an Item can have a description and contain an attached file; whereas a File does not have a description. In both cases, the student clicks on the file name and it opens on their local computer.



4. Give the Item a name.
5. In the Text Box, type any instructions or descriptions required for the file.
6. Click Browse My Computer to find the file on your local computer.
7. Select the appropriate options for the file.
8. Press Submit to create the Item and upload your file to Blackboard.

Most file types can be uploaded into Blackboard, however, please make sure your students will be able to read the files that you upload. Keep in mind that students may be accessing your files on or off campus with different internet providers, timeout limits and access limits.

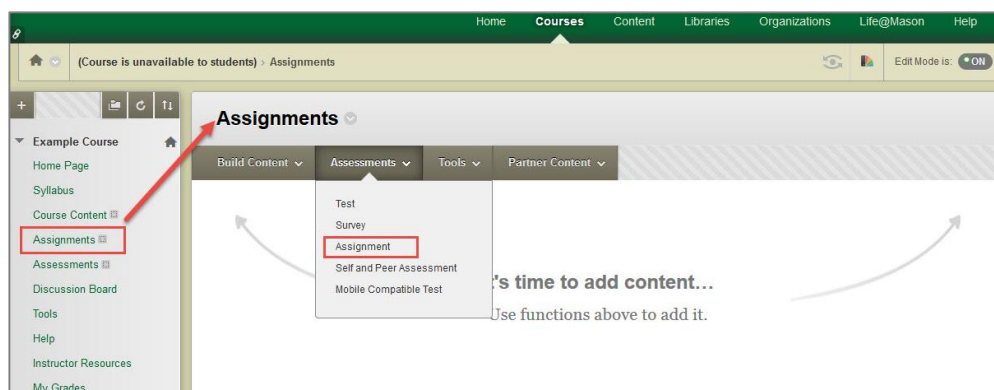
Adding Assignments to Courses

You can create assignments in Content Areas, Learning Modules, Lesson Plans, and Content Folders. In an assignment, you can include a description, point value, due date, and attach a file and/or rubric. You can deliver assignments to students individually or as collaborative work for groups of students.

When you create an assignment, a grade column is created automatically in the Grade Center. The Grade Center is where faculty collect and view submitted assignments (see additional information on page 9). When reviewing assignment submissions, you can provide a grade and feedback (either by marking up the submitted document or written text) on the Grade Assignment page.

Creating an Assignment

1. Open any Content Area in your course. In this example, the content area is called "Assignments". Place your mouse over the Assessments button and then select Assignments.



2. Enter the Assignment Information including the assignment name, points possible, any accompanying documents (if required) and then select Submit. You have now created an Assignment for your students and a place in your course for the students to post their assignment files.

The Student Perspective on Submitting Assignments

Students will log into your course, enter the content area for the assignment and click on the Assignment name. The student will upload any files required to complete the Assignment. When the student clicks on the Submit, the assignment becomes available in the Grade Center with the date and time stamp of submission.

Using the Grade Center

In the Grade Center, you can enter and manage your students' grades for assignments, tests, discussion posts, journals, blogs, and wikis, and for ungraded items (e.g., surveys or self-tests). You can also create manual grade columns for any activities or requirements you want to grade (e.g., special projects or participation).

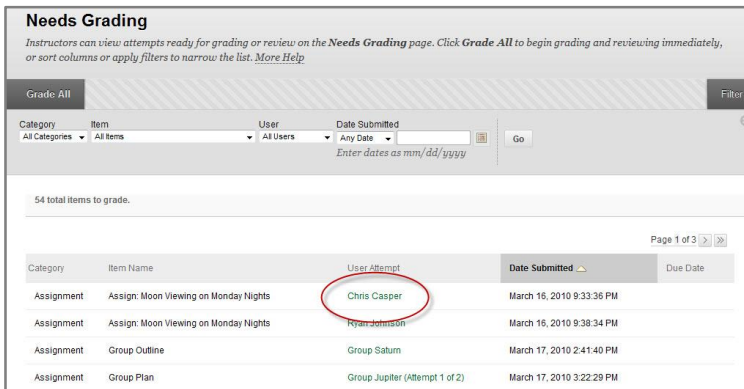


Grading Assignments

Access the student assignments by expanding Grade Center under the Control Panel and selecting Needs Grading, Full Grade Center, or Assignments.

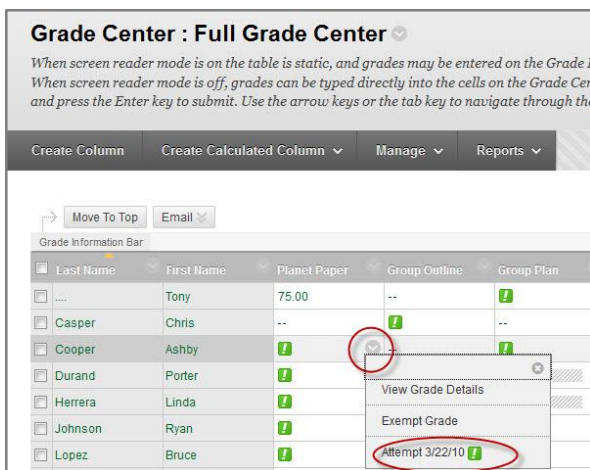
Needs Grading View

Select the student name to view and grade the student's work



Full Grade Center View

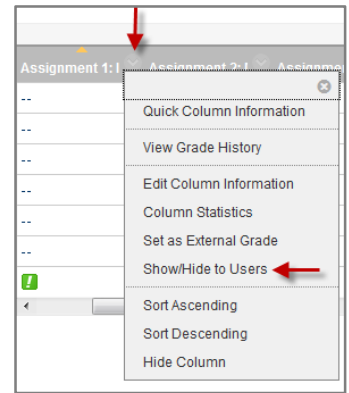
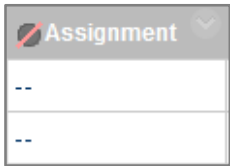
Select the Grade Center column and Student Name, click the downward arrow in the cell and select the student attempt. The exclamation point is your Needs Grading alert.



Hiding Grade Center Columns from Students

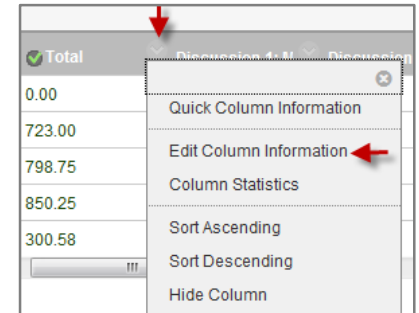
Students will view their grades in Tools/My Grades. If there is a column with or without grades that you do not want students to see, click on the downward arrow next to the column name and select "Show/Hide to Users."

A dark circle with a red slash will display next to the column name indicating that the column is not visible to students.



To hide calculated columns, such as the Total Column and Weighted Column from student view, click on the chevron next to the column name and select Edit Column Information.

On the Edit Column page, scroll down to Section 4: Options. Click in the radio button next to No (Show this Column to Students). Then click Submit.



4. Options

Select **No** for the first option to exclude this Grade Center column from calculations. Select **No** for the second option to hide this column from Students in My Grades. Select **Yes** for the third option to show column statistics to Students in My Grades.

Include this Column in Grade Center Calculations Yes No

Show this Column to Students Yes No

Show Statistics (average and median) for this column to Students in My Grades Yes No

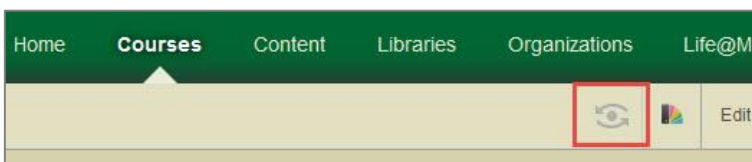
Please note, an additional "Hide Column" option exists that hides a column from the instructor view, but not the student view.

Additional Information

Student View Tool

The Student View course tool allows an instructor to create a fully functional student account for each course and easily switch between the instructor and student accounts. Instructors can:

- See course content exactly how students will see it
- Test exams and assignments submission
- Verify or troubleshoot issues students may have in a course
- View the student's My Grades tool



Student preview creates a student account, called the preview user account, logs you in as that student and enrolls you in the current course. When you are in student preview mode, the preview bar appears at the top of every page.

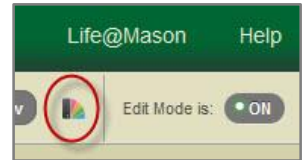
To return to your instructor account, chose “Exit Preview” from the Student Preview Bar.



Changing Course Colors/Themes

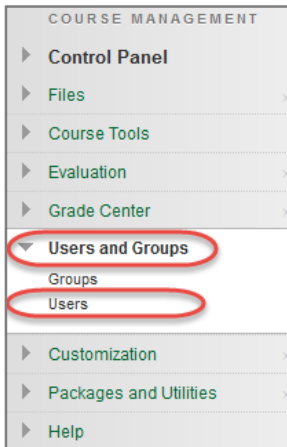
Select the rainbow icon at the top of your course to quickly change course colors.

You can also change course colors and Course Themes by selecting Customization under the Control Panel and then select Teaching Style.

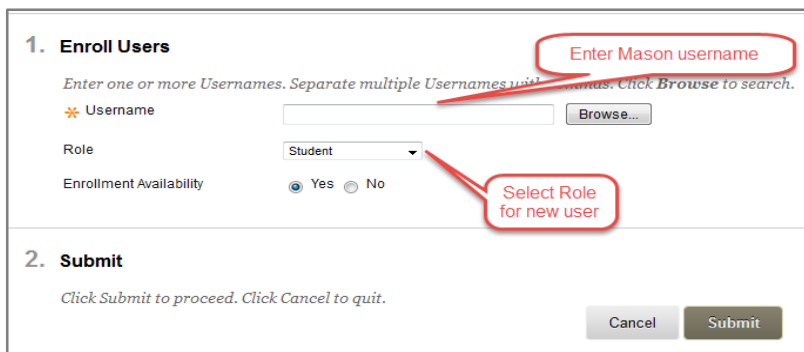


Adding Additional Users

The Enroll User feature allows instructors and TAs to manually add users to a course and set their course role. Students are automatically enrolled/un-enrolled into courses, but you can add additional students, guests, another instructor, or a teaching assistant into your course.



1. In the Control panel of your Blackboard course, select Users and Groups then Users
2. Select Find Users to Enroll
3. If you know the Mason Username (name before @gmu.edu), enter it into the Username field; otherwise, choose Browse to locate the user
4. Select the Role for the new user and press Submit



More Information and Additional Course Tools

- Instructional Design Consultations: <http://doit.gmu.edu/faculty-and-staff/instructional-design-consultations/>
- Supported Browsers: <http://goo.gl/bRZolK>
- Course Tools (Faculty): <http://doit.gmu.edu/faculty-and-staff/course-tools/>
- Course Tools (Students): <http://doit.gmu.edu/students/course-tools/>