

Announcements

What is it?

The Announcements feature in Blackboard enables teaching staff to provide class wide statements with email notification sent to students. This is particularly useful for time-sensitive information.

Announcements can also be created in advance and preset to be released and removed at specified times.

A member of the teaching team can create an announcement item on the announcement page.

Announcement content can include styled text, images, links, video, audio and attachments.

By default the announcement page is the landing (first) page for a course site.

You can optionally send a copy of the announcement to all students as an email, Blackboard will otherwise send an email to say the announcement is available. Students can turn these emails off. It is a great idea to have a communications plan for your course and tell students how you will communicate with them and what you expect of them.

When students access the course site, they can review all the announcements available ordered from the latest to the oldest.

The screenshot shows the 'Create Announcement' interface in Blackboard. At the top, it says 'Create Announcement' and provides a note: 'New Announcements appear directly below the repositionable bar and can be dragged to new positions to modify the order.' Below this is a 'More Help' link. A red asterisk indicates a required field. There are 'Cancel' and 'Submit' buttons. The form is divided into sections, with the first being '1. Announcement Information'. Under this section, there is a 'Subject' field with the text 'Welcome to PUBH7830' and a 'Black' color selection. Below the subject field is a 'Message' field with a rich text editor toolbar.

What could you do?

Course updates

Changes in your course can be highlighted – timetabling, sickness, change of guest lecture, change of topic, assignment extensions, errata in texts, updates to course content or new material added to the course site (be sure to include a course link directly to the changed or new material so students can access it directly from the message itself).

Reminders

Setting reminders for important tasks and activities in a course can help less organised students keep up. For example, 'assignment 3 due in 7 days...', 'you should be up to chapter 7 of the textbook exercises by week 8...', 'remember to wear enclosed shoes for the first lab session this week...'

Whole class messages

If there is a message all students need to receive about the course an announcement can be a great way to distribute this message. For example 'welcome to the course...' <http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/fair-and-manageable-student-communication>.

Weekly updates

Weekly updates can help keep students connected and focused. Identify what students should be doing in the broader context of the course, including what they have done recently and what is coming up.

Tips

Create a short meaningful title (subject)

This is akin to the subject line of an email or headline in a news article. This may be all a student reads, so ensure that the subject effectively reflects the key message of the announcement.

Keep announcements short

Most of the time students just don't read long messages, so keep it short and sharp. Generally announcements are messages you want students to receive and understand quickly. Unless announcements contribute directly to the learning objectives of the course (note: course content itself is best placed in more appropriate areas of the site), you would want students to spend as little time as possible on these messages.

Use images, video and audio carefully

Add a picture, video or audio clip if the announcement needs to stand out and the chosen media is relevant to your message. For example a welcome announcement with a video or image can help students connect more personally to the teaching staff. A screen-recorded tour can be an effective way to show students how to use the course site and where to begin (try Kaltura screen recording)

Use pre-set release dates to improve your work-flow

At the time you create the announcement item you can choose the dates for it to be displayed and removed. Therefore you can create announcements in advance and then make them available when they will be most effective for students. Making announcements available until after the end of semester can provide a valuable record of official notices for students and course staff.

Link directly to the referenced items

If the announcement relates to an item within your course website (i.e. new resource, corrected content, changed due date) then place a link within the announcement itself leading directly to the affected item. Use the 'course link' on the 'create announcement' dialog box to do so. This saves students time because it allows them to go directly to the referenced item rather than having to hunt through the website to find it. It also saves you time because you receive less 'I can't find it' emails.

Tell students where to look for messages

Students can turn off email announcements and may check blackboard infrequently. If you expect students to check announcements regularly (daily, weekly, etc) either on the course site or through email you should make this expectation explicit. Tell students at the start of semester both electronically and in class what you expect them to check and when to make sure they have the information they need to succeed in your class.

TEDI Technology Enhanced Learning Group

UQ systems technical support: elarning.uq.edu.au

Workshops for elearning tools and teaching with technology: uq.edu.au/staffdevelopment

Help make these resources better: send feedback to tedi_ed_tech@uq.edu.au

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