



Blackboard 5.5 Roles and User Availability

A Blackboard Learning Solutions Tip Sheet

Introduction

In Blackboard 5.5, roles determine a user's level of privilege within a particular section of the Blackboard system or to a set of functionality within the system. User availability settings can be used to block a user's access to the system entirely or to block access only to a specific course. This tip sheet will explain the various Blackboard roles and user availability settings.

Note: In this tip sheet, the term "user" refers to the account, not to the actual person using the account. For example, the user "jdoe" in the Blackboard system might represent a person named John Doe.

Overview of Roles

There are three kinds of roles within Blackboard. These are:

Primary Institution Roles. These roles govern a user's access to modules in the My Institution portal for Blackboard 5.5 Level Two and Level Three. Each user can have only one Primary Institution Role. The Primary Institution Role is set when the user is created and can be modified from the System Admin Tab.

Administrative User Roles. These roles govern a user's access to the Blackboard system in general and the System Administration menu in particular. Each user can have only one Administrative User Role. The Administrative User Role is set when the user is created and can be modified from the System Admin Tab.

Course User Roles. These roles govern a user's access to the Control Panel of a course. Course User Roles are set when the user is enrolled in the course. Each user can only have one Course User Role per course, but users can have different roles in different courses. For example, a single user might be an Instructor in one course but a Student in another course. Course User Roles can be modified from the Control Panel of the course or from the System Admin Tab.

Each of the kinds of roles is explained in detail below.

Primary Institution Roles

There are seven Primary Institution Roles:

- Student
- Faculty
- Staff
- Alumni
- Prospective Student
- Guest
- Other

Primary Institution Roles allow for the customization of My Institution portal modules in Level Two and Level Three of Blackboard 5.5. System Administrators can enable different portal modules for each of the Primary Institution Roles. For some Primary Institution roles, certain modules would be required, other modules would be enabled (available to a user with that Primary Institution role, but optional) and other modules would not appear at all.

For example, a Blackboard System Administrator could set the My Courses module so it is required for any user with the Primary Institution Role of Student, but only have it enabled for users with the Staff Primary Institution Role. Users with the Staff role would then have the choice of including or not including the My Courses module on their My Institution page. Refer to the Blackboard 5.5 Administrator Manual for more information about enabling, disabling, and requiring portal modules.

The Primary Institution Role is set at the time of user creation. Each user can have only one Primary Institution Role. Primary Institution Roles can be modified only through the System Admin panel.

If a Primary Institution Role is not set when a user is created, it will default to the Primary Institution Role of Student. Instructors cannot set or modify a user's Primary Institution Role from the Control Panel of a course; if Instructors have the ability to add users, then any users they create will have the Primary Institution Role of Student. The exception to this default is when users are created through the Batch Create Users tool in the System Admin panel. If no Primary Institution Role is specified in the batch file, it will default to Other.

Since the My Institution portal is not customizable in Blackboard 5.5 Level One, the Primary Institution Role has no active functionality in Blackboard 5.5 Level One. However, the Primary Institution Role is included in Blackboard 5.5 Level One in the event that the Level One institution upgrades to Level Two or Level Three in the future. Blackboard recommends that Level One clients still set the Primary Institution Role when creating users since this will eliminate the need to retroactively set a Primary Institution Role for each existing user when an institution upgrades to Level Two or Level Three.

Although some Primary Institution Roles have the same name as some Administrative User Roles or Course User Roles (e.g. the "Guest" Primary Institution Role and the "Guest" Administrative User Role or the "Student" Primary Institution Role and the "Student" Course User Role), the Primary Institution Role has no function outside of portal management and is not related to these other roles.

Administrative User Roles

Administrative User Roles determine a user's level of access to the Blackboard system and, more specifically, to the System Admin Tab.

There are six Administrative User Roles:

- None
- Guest
- System Admin
- System Support
- Course Creator
- Account Administrator

The Administrative User Role is set at the time of user creation. Each user can have only one Administrative User Role. Administrative User Roles can be modified only through the System Admin panel. If not specified at the time of user creation, the Administrative User Role will always default to None.

A description of each of the Administrative User Roles follows:

None

A user that is set to None has no access to the System Admin panel at all and will not see the System Admin Tab. This is the Administrative User Role that should be assigned to nearly all users, including all of an institution's students and faculty.

Setting an Administrative User Role of None does not affect student or instructor access to a course or the ability for an instructor to build a course; this is controlled by the Course User Role system (see below).

Guest

The Administrative User role of Guest allows for the viewing of any unsecured area of course Web sites that have Guest Access enabled. A user that is set to Guest has no access to the System Admin panel at all and will not see the System Admin Tab.

Every Blackboard system has a default Guest user account called Blackboard5 Guest with the UserID of "guest" and "guest" as the password. When a person clicks the Login button from the Blackboard gateway and then clicks the **Preview** button rather than entering a UserID and password, that person has access to the Blackboard system as the user Blackboard5 Guest. This default user is set to the Administrative User Role of Guest and Primary Institution Role of Guest.

Additional accounts with limited guest privileges would be assigned this role.

For more information about Guest Access, see the Blackboard 5.5 Guest Access tip sheet.

System Admin

A user with the System Admin role (also known as the System Administrator) has access to the entire System Admin Tab and to the Control Panels of every course on the system. The System Admin role is the most powerful level of access that can be assigned to a user.

Since System Administrators already have access to every course, they cannot be enrolled in courses. However, some areas of a course Web site require a user be enrolled to view material. The System Administrator can use the Quick Enroll button in the course's Navigation Menu to temporarily enroll in a course to view these areas. The Quick Un-enroll button reverses the process. These buttons will only appear for the System Administrator.

Note: Because users with the System Admin role cannot be enrolled in courses, any users with the System Admin role will not appear on a list of existing users if an Instructor tries to Add User>Add Existing User from the Instructor Control Panel of a course. Likewise, even if the System Admin user has used the Quick Enroll button to enroll in a course, the System Admin user will not appear on the list of class members when the Instructor searches with List/Modify Users or if an Instructor attempts to add the System Admin user to a Group through Manage Groups>Add Users to Group.

If the Blackboard System Administrator at your institution also has an active role in courses on your Blackboard system, that person should have two user accounts – one with the Administrative role of System Admin and one with the Administrative role of None. This second user account would be enrolled in any applicable courses with the Course User Roles of Instructor, Teaching Assistant, Student, etc.

Every Blackboard system must have at least one System Administrator. It is fairly common to have two or three System Administrators. However, since it is the most powerful role on the system, this level of access should not be given to many users. Too many System Administrators can make it difficult to maintain consistent system administration practices. Furthermore, because a user with the System Admin role has access to the Control Panel of every course, that user has the ability to add, modify, and delete course content, change grades in a gradebook, change assessment availability, and all other functionality available to an Instructor from a course Control Panel. *Access to this “all powerful” role should be strictly limited.*

The remaining Administrative User Roles can be used to delegate administrative responsibilities to other users who should not have total access to the Sys Admin Tab and the Control Panels of all courses on the Blackboard system, but who may be granted permission to perform certain limited administrative tasks.

System Support

A user set to the System Support role has access to the whole System Admin Tab, but does not have access to the Control Panels of the courses on the system.

You might assign the System Support role to technical assistants who need to perform administrative tasks, but who should not have the ability to modify the content in any course Web site or access the Online Gradebook of any course.

Course Creator

A user with the Course Creator role has access to the System Admin Tab, but only the Course Management and Assistance sections of the System Admin Tab. With Blackboard 5 Level Two and Level Three, the Course Creator has access to the entire Course and Community Management section. Though the Course Creator role provides access to the Course Management section, a user with this role will not have access to the Control Panels of individual courses.

The Course Creator role is designed for someone who will assist the System Administrator with course management tasks such as creating courses, copying or recycling courses, exporting courses, etc. and, with Blackboard 5 Level Two and Level Three, can also assist with creation and management of Organizations.

Note: Many institutions mistakenly think people who will teach or lead courses on the Blackboard system need Administrative User role of "Course Creator." This is incorrect. An instructor with the Administrative User role of Course Creator would be able to manage *all* courses on the institution's Blackboard system, not just his or her own. To create course content, a user needs only the role of Instructor in his or her courses and should have the Administrative User role of "None". Administrative User Roles (including Course Creator) provide access to the System Admin Tab, and there is typically no reason faculty users need to be assigned administrative access. The Instructors of Blackboard course Web sites are determined on a course-by-course basis by the Course User Roles (see below), not by an Administrative User Role.

Account Administrator

A user with the Account Administrator role has access to the System Admin Tab, but only the User Management section of the System Admin Tab.

The Account Administrator role allows the System Administrator to have someone who will help specifically with user management tasks, such as creating users, enrolling them in courses, changing user passwords, etc.

Note: An Account Administrator may not create or remove a user with the Administrative role of System Admin. Only System Administrators can create or remove other users with the System Admin role. An Account Administrator may create users with other Administrative roles, however, including System Support.

Course User Roles

Course User Roles determine the level of access to a course. Each user enrolled in courses will have a Course User Role in each course. Users can have different Course User Roles in different courses. For example, someone getting a Ph.D. in English may be taking a graduate course and would have the Course User Role of Student in ENG750. The same user might also be teaching an undergraduate course and would have the Course User Role of Instructor in ENG101. As a graduate assistant, that user might also have the role of Grader in ENG302, a course taught by a full professor, for which that graduate student has the responsibility of grading essays on tests.

There are five Course User Roles:

- Instructor
- Teaching Assistant
- Course Builder
- Grader
- Student

Each user can have only one Course User Role per course. The Course User Role is set at the time the user is enrolled in a course. If no Course User Role is set at the time of enrollment, it will default to the Course User Role of Student. Course User Roles can be modified through either the List/Modify Courses or List/Modify Users tools in the System Administration panel. Instructors can also modify the Course User Role of users in their course through the Control Panel's List/Modify Users function if the System Administrator has not disabled this option for Instructors.

Blackboard 5.5 Level Two and Level Three have a Communities tab where organization sites can be created. Organization Web sites have the same functionality as course Web sites, and the Course User Role functionality works identically in organization sites. A description of each of the Course User Roles follows.

Instructor

The Instructor role has the highest level of privilege within a course. Typically, the Instructor is the person developing, teaching, or facilitating the class. The Instructor has access to everything in the course's Control Panel. If the course is Unavailable to students, Instructors may still access the course Web site.

Teaching Assistant

The Teaching Assistant is the rough equivalent of the Instructor. This role would be assigned to a user who will be significantly participating in the teaching of the class or management of the course Web site. Only a person who should have access to modify course content including the Online Gradebook should be assigned this role.

The Teaching Assistant has access to everything in the Control Panel of the course except for the User Management ability to remove an Instructor from the course. Unlike the Instructor, the Teaching Assistant will not be listed in the Course Catalog listing for the course. If the course is Unavailable to students, Teaching Assistants may still access the course Web site.

Course Builder

The Course Builder role has access to limited areas of the course's Control Panel. A Course Builder has access to the Content Areas, User Management, Course Tools, and Course Options areas of the Control Panel, but not to the Assessment section of the Control Panel or to the Manage Groups functions in the User Management section. Therefore, a user with the Course Builder role would not have access to the Online Gradebook.

An Instructor might assign an individual the Course Builder role so that the person could assist the Instructor in the creation of course content and with some of the course management. As with the Teaching Assistant role, access within the User Management section of the Control Panel is limited to prevent the Course Builder from removing an Instructor from the course. If a course is Unavailable to students, the Course Builder may still access the course Web site.

Grader

The Grader role has access to the Assessment area of the Control Panel of a course. A Grader would assist the Instructor in the creation, management, delivery, and grading of online assessments and surveys delivered through Blackboard. A Grader may also assist the Instructor with adding manual entries to the Online Gradebook.

If a course is Unavailable to students, the course will appear in the My Courses module and Course list for a user with the role of Grader, but the Grader will not be able to enter the course Web site until the course is Available.

Student

The Student role is the default Course User Role. A user with the Course User Role of Student has no access to the course's Control Panel and does not see the Control Panel button at all. If a course is Unavailable, students may not enter the course and the course will not appear in the My Courses module or the Course List on the Courses Tab for the student.

User Availability

The idea of user availability was introduced in Blackboard 5.5. There are two levels of user availability: System User Availability and Course User Availability.

System User Availability

System User Availability can be set at the time of user creation and can only be modified through the System Administration panel. If the Availability option for a user is set to "No," then, when that user attempts to log in to the system, the system will indicate, "Your account has been disabled." If the Availability option is set to "Yes" (the default setting), the user may log in to the system.

An institution might choose to use this feature to block access to the Blackboard system for students who have transferred, withdrawn, or graduated from the institution. All of the gradebook entries and related data for a user would be retained, but the System User Availability setting of "No" would prevent that user from accessing Blackboard.

Course User Availability

Like the Course User Roles, Course User Availability is managed through either the System Administration Panel (via List/Modify Courses or List/Modify Users) or through the course Control Panel's List/Modify Users function. If this Availability option is set to "No," then, when attempting to enter the course, the user will be told, "Your access to this course has been disabled by the Instructor or System Administrator." If the Course User Availability option is set to "Yes" (the default setting), then the user may enter the course. Gradebook entries and related data for a student whose Course User Availability has been set to "No" in a particular course will be retained.

This feature might be used if a student withdraws from a course. By setting that the Course User Availability option for that student to "No", the instructor blocks the student from accessing that particular course, but retains all information associated with the student in the gradebook. The student would still be able to log on to Blackboard and would be able to access any other courses in which he or she is enrolled.

Additional Resources

Blackboard Learning Solutions offers comprehensive classroom training programs and educational materials for all Blackboard Course and Portal products. For more information about how Blackboard Learning Solutions can serve your institution's training needs, please contact your Customer Relationship Manager at Blackboard or visit the online [Training Center](http://trainingcenter.blackboard.com) at <http://trainingcenter.blackboard.com>.

For more information about Blackboard 5.5 and other Blackboard products, please visit the [Blackboard](http://www.blackboard.com) Web site at <http://www.blackboard.com>.

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