# Using Blogs, Journals and Wikis in Blackboard

## Integrating Web 2.0 features into your Blackboard course

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## Help
Blogs

What is a Blog or a Journal?

The word blog is short for web-log. A blog can take a variety of forms, but the most common is that of an online diary or journal, recording what is happening in the blogger’s life, or commenting on news and happenings in the world at large. Often a blog will contain links to other websites, perhaps other blogs. Usually visitors to the blog are able to leave comments on what the blogger has written. The entries are arranged chronologically - most recent first - but are often tagged with keywords to allow visitors to find relevant entries.

For an example of a blog at the University of West London, see the following; http://westlondononline.wordpress.com/

What is the difference between a Blog and a Journal in Blackboard?

A Blog can be added to, viewed and commented on by other users of the course including the tutors and students. A Journal is an individual blog for each student that is only able to be added to by the student and is only able to be viewed and commented on by the student and the instructors of the course.

Why use a Blog or a Journal?

There are many possible uses for blogs or journals in education.

For teachers:

- Summarising and commenting on research in your field (for the benefit of students and colleagues)
- Recording, publicising and inviting comments on your current research
- Networking and sharing knowledge
- Instructional tips for students
- Course announcements and readings
- Annotated web links for students

For students:

- Reflective journals (as part of the course, or when on work placement)
- Creative writing
- As a tool for group work
- E-portfolios
- To share course-related resources

WebLogs in the Classroom (Department of Education & Training, Western Australia); http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/cmis/eval/curriculum/ict/weblogs/
There are also case studies on the use of blogs within a Virtual Learning Environment, such as Blackboard.

**Creating a Course Blog or Individual Blog**

**How do I add a Blog or a Journal to my courses?**
By default, a course does not have any blogs or journals. The instructor needs to create the blogs that they would like to use for their course.

There are three different types of Blog and one type of Journal:

- **Course Blogs**: All enrolled users are able to post Blog Entries. All enrolled users can also post Comments to Blog Entries.
- **Individual Blogs**: Only the owner of the Blog is able to post Blog Entries. All other users enrolled in the Course are able to view and add Comments.
- **Group Blogs**: If the instructor enables the Blog tool for the Group, all Group members can post Blog entries and make comments on Blog entries. Any course member can view Group Blogs, but can only add comments. Group Blogs need to be added when creating or editing the group. Please see the Managing Groups guide; [http://www.uwl.ac.uk/blackboard/tutorials/managing_groups.pdf](http://www.uwl.ac.uk/blackboard/tutorials/managing_groups.pdf)

- **Journals**: These are Individual Blogs that are only contributed to by each student. As a result, they can only be viewed and commented on by the student and the instructors of the course. If you would like to create a Journal see page 7.

**Adding a Course Blog or Individual Blog to the course menu**

To create a Course Blog or an Individual Blog, click on Blogs on the Control Panel, select Course Tools and then Create Blog (highlighted below).
Enter a name and description and choose Course Blog or Individual Blog.

Other options are self-explanatory but for further help click on More Help at the top.

An example of the text that you may use for the Course blog description is detailed below. Copy, paste and amend the text for your own blog:
This course blog will be used to record yours and my thoughts on what we have been studying. It will also be used to track our progress though the course.

All instructors and students can add entries to this blog.

Please add your own entries on what you think you have achieved and any questions you would like to put to me and the rest of the group. Please comment (politely) on my entries and others.

An example of the text that you may use for an Individual blog description is detailed below. Copy, paste and amend the text for your own blog:

Use this blog to enter your own thoughts on what we have been studying and how you think you have been doing.

Only you can add entries to this blog but all students on this course can read and add comments.

Remember: A Course Blog allows any member of your course to add entries. The Individual Blog permits each member of the course their own blog, which can be seen and commented on by everyone. If you would like Individual Blogs that are only able to be viewed and commented on by instructors you need to create a Journal. See page 7.

Adding the Course/ Individual Blog button to the Course Menu

To make the blog(s) you have created easily accessible to your students you will need to add a Course menu button named Course Blogs or similar.

With Edit Mode turned ON, click on the + sign at the top of the menu and choose Create Tool Link.

Enter a name for the new button e.g. Course Blog or The Course Blogs and from the Type option select Blogs.
The new **Course** blogs button appears at the bottom of the list. You can drag the new item to any position on the menu by using the up-down arrow icon to the left of the button.

If you select the button, it will display a list of all of the blogs you have created. This includes **Course Blogs** and **Individual Blogs**.

To enter a blog, simply click on the relevant title. To edit a blog title or type, click the down arrow to the right of the heading and choose **Edit** when in **Edit Mode** (shown above).

Students will see the following when they log into a blog on Blackboard.

Students are able to upload images and other media to display in their blog entries using the buttons highlighted below.
Users removed from the Course will no longer have access to any of the Course Blogs. If users are removed from the Course after Individual Blogs have been created, all of their posts and comments will be deleted. If users are removed from a Course after Course Blogs have been created, all of their posts and comments will be retained, but the name of the poster or commenter will be changed to "Anonymous."

Creating a Group Blog

If you would like to create a blog for a particular group, this needs to be done when creating or editing the group. Please see the Managing Groups guide http://www.uwl.ac.uk/blackboard/tutorials/managing_groups.pdf.

You can also add a Journal or a Wiki for use by a group.

Creating a Journal

A Journal is a tool for self-reflection. Only the student and the Instructor are able to Comment on Journal Entries. Journals can be made Public by the Instructor to enable all enrolled users to read entries made to the Journal topic. Group Journal entries can be read by all members of the Group and the Instructor.
Creating a **Journal** is very similar to the way you create a blog (above). Select **Journals** from the **Control Panel** and then select **Course Tools**

Enter a name and description.

Many of the remaining options are self-explanatory but for further help click on **More Help** at the top.
The following text can be used as a description of a **Journal**: (feel free to copy and paste);

Only you and the tutors will be able to see your entries to your Reflective Journal.

You must add at least one blog entry per week (of the course) to record what you have learnt from that week’s activities, whether you thought it was useful and how it may benefit you. Please also use the Journal to record any questions or comments you have for us, the tutors. We will check the Journals regularly and respond to any questions using the comments.

NB. You must layout each entry to include the titles:

- **Reflections on this week’s course activities**
- **Self-evaluation of my development this week and any implications this has for me.**

**Adding the Journal to the Course Menu**

To make the **Journal** you have created easily accessible to your students you will need to add a Course menu button named **Reflective Journal** or similar.

With **Edit Mode** turned **ON**, click on the + sign at the top of the menu and choose **Create Tool Link**.

From the dialogue box that appears, enter a name for your new button e.g. **Reflective Journal** and from the **Type** selection choose **Journals**. Select available to users.

The **Journal** button will appear at the bottom of the list.

You can drag it in **Edit Mode** to any point on the menu bar by using the up-down arrow icon to the left of the button.
**Journals** also permit users to upload images and other media to display in their blog entries using the buttons highlighted.

**Wikis**

**What is a Wiki?**

A **Wiki** is either a website or a similar online resource that allows users to add and edit the content collectively. The best known example is Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/)


**Why use a Wiki?**
There are many possible uses for Wikis in education:
- for staff and/or students to collaborate on online projects
- to create shared resources
- to enable students and staff to easily create simple websites
- for staff to track and assess student group work

You can find ideas and links to further reading on this website:

10 Best Practice Ideas for Using Wikis in Education

There are case studies on the use of Wikis within a Virtual Learning Environment, such as; Blackboard, on the Higher Education Academy website:
[http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/publications/casestudies/technology/](http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/explore/publications/casestudies/technology/)

**Creating a Wiki**

Creating a Wiki is very similar to the way you create a Blog or a Journal (detailed above).

Select Wikis from the Control Panel and then select Course Tools

Enter a title and a description
Many of the remaining options are self-explanatory but for further help click on More Help at the top.

Click Submit and your Wiki will be created and ready for you to add content.

Adding the Wiki to the Course Menu

To ensure that the Wiki you have created easily accessible to your students, you will need to add a Course menu button named Course Wiki or similar.

To do this:
With Edit Mode turned ON, click on the + sign at the top of the menu and choose Create Tool Link.
From the dialogue box that appears, enter a name for your new button e.g. Culinary Arts Wiki and from the Type selection choose Wikis.

Select available to users.

Building your Wiki pages

The first thing that you need to do when building a Wiki is to create a home page by clicking the Create Wiki page button. Tutors or students can format the text and upload an image, other media or add a ‘mash-up’ video using the buttons highlighted.

Click Submit when you have finished creating your home page.
The remaining pages for your Wiki site are also created in the same way by clicking the Create Wiki page button.

![Create Wiki Page](image)

Pages can be edited by clicking the Edit Wiki Content tab or by using the drop down arrows, highlighted.

![Edit Wiki Content](image)

**Linking the pages**

The final section explores linking the pages together by using the Link to Wiki page tool highlighted below.
The Link to Wiki page icon inserts a hyperlink to the other wiki pages.

The text of the link can be amended to a specific title. The link detailed above points back to the home page that has been added. The user can also utilise the list of pages to navigate through the Wiki. The illustration below is a partially completed Wiki with 2 pages: Sociology (home page) and a Social Interaction Threats page.
The final point

There is an alternative way to add a Blog, Journal or Wiki to a course within a content area using the Add Interactive Tool button when inside a content area with Edit Mode ON.

However, the method shown on pages 3, 7 and 11 will create a dedicated Tool Link button on the main Course Menu to all of the Blogs, Journals and Wikis that you have created.

Help

If you require further help, please contact the IT Service Desk:

Telephone    +44 0300 111 4895
Email             itservicedesk@uwl.ac.uk