

# Blackboard Assessments

## Known Issues, Tips, and Solutions to Common Problems

OUR INSTANCE OF ASP HOSTED BLACKBOARD IS RUNNING ON CENTRAL TIME ZONE

Blackboard Assessment Topics Covered in this Document:

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### What can I do to reduce the chances of my students losing their test answers after losing their internet connections?

When students are engaged in a Blackboard assessment, there is always the possibility that they may lose their connection to the internet, whether they are working from a home cable or dial-up connection or on the UNO campus. When these problems arise, students can lose all of the quiz answers they have supplied up to that point in the exam. However, there is a way in which you, as instructor, can reduce the chances that your students lose their answers.

1. After posting your exam within the appropriate section (*Course Documents, Assignments, etc*), click the **Modify the Test options** link
2. Under the *Test Availability* heading, set the appropriate *Availability* options and then verify that the *Force Completion* checkbox is **NOT** checked (this allows your students to re-enter the exam after losing their internet connections)
3. Under the *Test Presentation* heading, select the **One at a Time** option (this presents each question one-by-one for the student, forcing them to click the **Next >** button, thereby ensuring the answer is saved after each question is completed)
4. Click the **Submit** button

If your student loses his/her internet connection, the student should be able to log back into your Blackboard course site and re-enter the exam with all previously submitted answers saved. Also, to minimize the risk of connection interruption, **instructors can** break a single long assessment into multiple, shorter assessments.

### How do I reset test attempts for students who lose their Internet connection while taking a test?

1. Proceed into your *Control Panel* and click the **Gradebook** link
2. Locate the student whose grade needs to be reset. You should see a padlock icon where the student's grade should be. Click on this padlock icon
3. Click the **View** button
4. You will now see the student's assessment. Click the **Clear Attempt** button to clear the student's quiz attempt. This student can now re-take the exam.

## **Browser Issues**

Certain browser actions may cause the student to unintentionally exit the quiz. Students taking quizzes should not:

- Click the Back, Forward, Home, or Refresh/Reload buttons in their browser
- Enter new URLs in the Address or Location fields of the browser
- Select any pages from their Favorites/Bookmarks list in the assessment's browser window
- In Netscape, students should also not re-size, maximize, or minimize the assessment's browser window after beginning the quiz because, in Netscape, this causes a Refresh.
- Students should also not attempt to print the assessment while using Netscape.
- **The AOL browser has compatibility issues with Blackboard:**
  - If you use AOL (or another internet service that provides a customized browser), you should install Netscape or IE, minimize your AOL or other ISP application after connection, and then use Netscape or IE for Blackboard.

### **Popup Blockers:**

Pop-up blocker software may block a quiz from opening. If an assesment is set to open in a new window, pop-up blocker software prevents a new window from "popping up."

Solution: Disable the pop-up blocker.

#### **To Disable Pop-up Blocker in Internet Explorer:**

Select from the menu bar: Tools > Pop-up Blocker > Turn Off Pop-up Blocker

#### **To Disable Pop-up Blocker in Mozilla Firefox:**

Select Tools > Options > Web Features > Uncheck "Block Popup Windows" **or:**

Click "Allowed Sites" and enter the URL of the website allowed to open popup windows.

#### **To Disable Pop-up Blocker in Netscape 7.1:**

Select Tools > Popup Manager > Allow Popups From This Site

#### **To temporarily override the pop-up blocker in Internet Explorer:**

Hold the (ctrl) key as you click on the assessment link

Instructions on disabling other pop-up blocking software may vary, check the software documentation.

## **Internet Connection Issues**

Students are required to be online to begin and to submit a Blackboard assessment. If the student loses an Internet connection while taking a Blackboard assessment, this can prevent the successful submission of the Blackboard assessment.

### **Reasons that a student's connection may be interrupted might include:**

- The student's ISP timing their connection out after a certain amount of inactivity. Many ISPs have an 'idle time-out' on their dialup connections. Filling in forms does not generate traffic back and forth across the Internet connection, and it is not viewed as "activity" for the purpose of automatic time-outs. This means if you're online but not actually using the connection they will kick you off for being idle after a set amount of time - often around the 10 minute mark.
- Blackboard timing their connection out after three hours of inactivity. After three hours, Blackboard will end the user's session automatically.
- Modem problems or interruptions (such as call waiting).
- Power failures
- System crashes

### **Avoid Losing Your Work:**

We recommend that you work on essay questions offline using a Word Processor such as Microsoft Word or Wordpad. Save the file to disk and then use the copy and paste feature to copy the information to the Blackboard essay text box. Saving work that you will be posting online is a good idea (especially if your response is a long one) just in case there is a problem, and you get logged out without submitting the information. Many students have composed long answers online and lost all information upon submission.

### **Quitting by Accident:**

Unless an assesment has the option for students to "Allow multiple attempts" checked, an assessment can only be taken once. This feature has unfortunate consequences for some students who make an honest mistake. For example, a student loses the right to retake an exam if they accidentally close the window or if the browser crashes or if the electricity to the computer is shut off for any reason. Consequently, students should be warned to take quizzes carefully. To avoid losing a quiz, they should first close down the other programs running on the computer. Avoiding distraction, they should focus only on the quiz until it is finished. Be careful not to close or even resize the window.

### **Locked Out of a Quiz**

When a student gets kicked offline and tries to log back in to the quiz, they get an error message saying that they already have completed the quiz or that the quiz is still in progress. The only way for a student to get back into the quiz is for the instructor to "Clear the Attempt" from the Gradebook. This also clears any answers they have entered previously.

### **Instructor: To clear a student's attempt:**

1. Go to the course Control Panel
2. Under the Assessment area, Click on Gradebook link
3. Locate the student who you wish to reset, and click on the padlock "In Progress" icon, or the exclamation mark (!) "Completed" icon
4. Click on the View button to access the students' quiz attempt page
5. Clear the assessment attempt by clicking on the Clear Attempt button.

# Blackboard Settings

## The Force Completion Setting

- If the Instructor selects the Force Completion setting, Students must complete the Assessment the first time it is launched.
- Students may not exit the Assessment and continue working on it at a later date. The Save button is available for Students to save the Assessment as they work through it, but they may not exit and re-enter the Assessment.
- If the Force Completion option is enabled, it is noted and explained to Students at the top of the Assessment.
- If Force Completion is not enabled and a Student exits a Question-by-Question Assessment, the Assessment will open to the first unsaved question when it is re-entered.

## Saving the Test versus Submitting the Test:

If an Assessment is set to Display All questions, the Submit and Save buttons will always be displayed.

## The Prohibit Backtracking Setting

If a Student is taking an Assessment that does not allow backtracking, an error page will appear if they submit a question and then attempt to use the browser's Back button. The Student will be sent to the last unsaved questions from this page.

## The Allow Multiple Attempts Setting

If a user selects the Back button after submitting an Assessment a receipt page appears stating that the Assessment has already been taken. For multiple attempt Assessments they may choose to take the Assessment again; for single attempt Assessments they may review the results of the Assessment. Reference: Blackboard Learning System (Release 6) Instructor Manual - Assessment Workflow in Release 6.0.10 and Higher

## Firewalls

If operating behind a firewall, students may see an error message telling them that their system was configured to deny access to this URL. The solution is to take the test somewhere that doesn't have a firewall.

## Spyware

Spyware and other programs running in the background can interfere with taking quizzes. You can detect and remove spyware from your personal computer (please do not attempt to download these applications to UNO lab computers) by downloading and running anti-spyware applications such as Spybot - Search & Destroy [<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/spybotsd/index.html>] and Ad-Aware [<http://www.lavasoftusa.com/>]

## More Tips and Suggestions for Students:

- Click Submit ONLY ONCE. If your Internet connection is slow, you may think the quiz is not being sent. Wait at least 2-5 minutes for a confirmation that your quiz was received. The quiz must be sent, scored, and the results returned to you.
- If you must enter a password to begin the quiz, click the Submit button. Do not press the Enter key. If you have call waiting, be sure to disable it by dialing \*70 before connecting to the Internet. Insist that no one in your home pick up another phone while you are taking the quiz. This can disconnect you.

- Contact your instructor directly if you have a situation that you are unable to resolve.
- If you do get disconnected, don't close your browser. Re-establish your internet connection, click your browser's back button so your test copy is visible and click Submit. If you are uneasy about your quiz being recorded, you may want to print a copy for your records.

### Instructions on Taking an Online Test in Blackboard:

1. Check Your Browser Options before the Test to ensure that it is not set to disconnect after several minutes of inactivity. \* The location of this setting depends on your browser. For example, in Internet Explorer 5 & 6 it is located under Tools > Internet Options > Connections > Settings> Advanced \* If you have an Internet Service Provider that will break your connection if you don't visit a new site after a certain period of time, then keep another window open and occasionally visit it and load a new page or refresh the page to keep your connection open. AOL users, see note below\*.
2. Do Not Open the Test until you are ready to take it, as online tests are set to only allow you to access the test once. Find a time to take the test in which you will be free from interruptions. Let friends and family know you will be occupied. **TIP: If your computer and telephone share the same telephone line, unplug your telephone while taking the quiz.**
3. Do Not Use the "Back" Button on Your Browser During the Test once you have begun taking the quiz. Instead, use the scroll bar to move back to check earlier questions. **Don't close the window of the test for any reason.**
4. If something goes wrong, send an e-mail to your professor immediately, documenting the exact problem and asking how you should proceed. Include your username and the course and section number.
5. Review All of Your Answers Before Submitting the Quiz. Make sure you have not accidentally changed your response to a question or made a typographic mistake.
6. When you are satisfied with the result make sure you finish by clicking the SUBMIT button at the bottom of the screen. **Click the Submit Button ONLY ONCE!** After you submit the test answers, you will receive a score unless you have exceeded the time limit for the quiz.

### To Check Your Grades:

Click "Student Tools" then "Check your grade. "

Keep In Mind: It is important that you click the SUBMIT button every time you access an online assessment. Even if you are just logging on to print the quiz, you must click the submit button. Otherwise you will be locked out of the exam.

### Verify That You Have The Minimum Blackboard System Requirements:

- **Operating Systems:** Windows 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP; Mac OS 8.x or 9.x. Mac OSX 10.2 or greater is recommended, especially if Collaboration Tools will be used in a course.
- **Internet Connection:** You will need a 56K modem connection or better (cable modem, DSL, T1, etc.).
- **Browser:** You will need to have IE 6 or greater or Netscape 6.2.3 or greater. It is recommended that you download the latest release of IE or Netscape if you experience problems with your current browser (<http://www.microsoft.com> or <http://home.netscape.com>)
- **Java and JavaScript Must Be Enabled In Your Browser**
- Windows users will also need to download the Java 2 Runtime Environment in order to use the Collaboration Tools (Virtual Chat or Lightweight Chat) available for download at <http://java.com>. Mac OS 8 and 9 users running Netscape may need to download and install the Java MJR 2.2.5 and the Mozilla MRJ Plugin for Netscape.
- **Your browser must Accept Cookies.**

To view or change your browser cookie settings:

- In Netscape, go to the Edit/Preferences/Advanced menu.
- In IE 6.0, go to the Tools/Internet Options/Privacy menu.
- In IE 5.0, go to the Tools/Internet Options/Security menu.