Blackboard tests: Recommended settings for high-stakes assessments (including exams)

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1. About this guide

This guide covers how to configure the recommended settings for high-stakes assessments (including exams) in Blackboard. More help on Test and Quizzes, including question types and how to set up a quiz, is available on the Blackboard Help.

This guide is maintained by the TEL team; please contact tel-help@bristol.ac.uk if you require further help or support.

2. Essential information

If you have any questions or queries about setting up or using quizzes in Blackboard please contact the TEL team: tel-help@bristol.ac.uk.

3. Recommended settings for high-stakes assessments

Tests in Blackboard can be set up in different ways, and there are many options available both in the creation and in the deployment of the tests. All settings should be carefully considered prior to running high-stakes assessments. In the following sections you will find detailed explanations of what these settings do, how they should be configured, and step-by-step instructions about how to configure them in the Control Panel.

To create a test or a Quiz or a Test in Blackboard follow the instructions contained in the Blackboard guide ‘Create Tests and Surveys’. Then follow the instructions given here in section 4 to set up the recommended settings and in section 5 to make your test available within your course.

4. Task 1: Set up recommended settings for high-stakes assessments

a) Go to the content area (in the menu of your Blackboard course) where you wish to put the test (or create a new content area). You may want to set this as ‘unavailable’ until the exam is ready to be delivered.

b) From the Assessments menu, select Test

c) Click on Create to create a new test

d) Enter a name for the test, and any instructions, then click Submit

e) You will then come to the Test Canvas screen. Here you can either create new questions or use some from a pool (or another test)

f) To use a question from a pool you created earlier, click on the Reuse Question menu and select Find Questions

g) You will be prompted to choose to either Copy or Link questions. Remember that if you choose Link to original questions, if the original question changes this will be applied to all tests where it has been linked. Select your option and click Continue

h) The Find Questions window opens
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i) The **Find Questions** window lists all saved questions, including those from a pool you have just created, as well as those in any other tests or pools

j) Use the Browsing Criteria on the left to search for questions

k) Select the questions you wish to use for your test by clicking in the relevant check boxes, then click **Submit**

l) You will return to the **Test Canvas** screen, where you should now see your selected questions listed

m) You can add further questions, if required, by clicking on **Create Question** and selecting the question type from the drop-down list. You can set the points values of these new questions on the **Test Canvas** screen

n) When you have all the questions you need, click on **OK in the bottom right**. You will now come back to the **Create Test** page. Select your new test and click **Submit**

5. **Task 2: Set up exam options and make available to students**

   a) You will now enter the **Test Options** screen. Here you can edit the details of your test and make it available to students

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**Section 1: Test information**
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a) Name: Edit the name as required
b) Description: Add a description or any other relevant information as necessary
c) Open Test in New Window: Select No

Section 2: Test availability

2. Test Availability

a) If you are ready for students to access the test then ensure that Make the Link Available is set to Yes
b) Add a New Announcement for this Test: No
c) Multiple Attempts: We recommend that you use this option, and Allow Unlimited Attempts. Since all attempts are recorded, it is not particularly valuable to restrict students to a single attempt, and makes it harder to manage if a student needs to be granted extra attempts
d) Score attempt using. Select from the drop down list which attempt to record in the Grade centre.
e) Force Completion: This is a particularly important option in Blackboard tests – if you select this, then students must finish the test in one go. We strongly recommend that you do not select Force Completion as this means a student leaving the test for any reason will not be able to re-enter it.
f) Set Timer, Auto-Submit: Using the timer is recommended, as it provides an individualised timer for each student, and also records the time of the test’s submission. However, we recommend that you have Auto-Submit set to OFF, as turning it on can cause problems if you have to grant a student additional time for any reason, and
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doesn’t give any extra information about the time when the test was submitted. If the Set Timer box is left unchecked the test won’t be automatically submitted by the system. This means that invigilators will need to take the start time of the exam and tell the students when to submit the exam.

Please note that the timer doesn’t have a pause option, in non-invigilated exams students should be instructed to complete the test in one go as the timer won’t resume when they restart it.

For students who need to take breaks during the exam (‘stop the clock’) it is recommended not to set a time in the exam so that students can stop and resume as and when they need to. (Note: Instructions on how to assist students when taking breaks during exams are provided in the running and invigilating online assessment guide)

Note 1: If you don’t want to use the password, another way to make access more secure is to create the test in a separate content area in the main menu and hide the content area up until the start of the exam.

Section 3 & 4: Due date and self-assessment options

a) Test availability exception. This functionality allows you to change the schedules for students who need special arrangements. Click on Add user or Group and then select the student(s) who needs to have extra time or to take the test at a different time. You may also set up a sub group in ‘Group’ called extra time if that’s easier. You can change/edit the following exceptions:

- Number of attempts
- Timer
- Availability
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- Force completion
- Restrict location

b) Due Date: Not required
c) Self-assessment Options: Select **Include this Test in Grade Centre Score Calculations**

Section 5, 6 & 7: Test feedback, presentation and Submit

![Image of settings and feedback options]

a) Test Feedback: Select from the drop down list the option that applies, eg ‘on specific date or after attempts are graded, or until after the academics have checked the item analysis report. This will prevent the students from seeing the grades from My Grades immediately after they have submitted the tests.

**Note 2:** You may also want to hide the matching column in the Grade Centre until you are happy to release the score to the students.

b) Presentation Mode: Select **All at Once** if you want the questions to appear on one screen (appropriate for fewer than 20 questions), otherwise select **One at a Time**.
c) Prohibit Backtracking: **Leave unchecked**
d) Randomise Questions: Select if you wish to randomise questions; this is generally recommended if students are sitting close to each other.

**Note 3:** The grade centre statistics are unaffected by choosing to randomise questions; however, when you download the results (in the standard format of “by user”) to a spreadsheet, it puts them in the order students take the questions (ie if they were given question 7 first then their first question and answer in the spreadsheet is for question 7). The way to resolve this is to select download by “Question and User”; this downloads the results in a format that will allow analysis of particular questions with minimal manipulation (eg a filter).

e) Then click on **Submit**. The test is now available for students.