The Blackboard Interface

Let’s look at how to navigate Blackboard.

Start by logging into Blackboard, which will take you to your overview page for Blackboard at NIU.

At the top of the page is the header bar, which contains a number of tabs. The first tab, “NIU,” allows you to come back to your institutional overview page from anywhere in the system. This page contains modules which summarize information from your courses. You can add more modules or customize the color scheme with the “Add Module” and “Personalize Page” buttons.

The most important module on this page is “My Courses.” It lists all of the recent courses you belong to, whether you are teaching or taking them. You can decide which courses appear in the My Courses module by clicking on the gear icon in the upper right-hand corner.

Next is the “Courses” tab. Unlike the My Courses module, this page lists all courses you have ever taught or taken, which is useful for accessing older courses.

The third tab is “Community.” This page lists all of the Communities (also referred to as “Organizations”) that you belong to or manage. Communities have all of the features of Blackboard courses, but they are not tied to course registration and student enrollments. Communities are typically used for non-academic purposes, such as departmental committees and student organizations.

Next is the “Content Collection” tab. The Content Collection allows you to store files online in Blackboard. Once uploaded, you can reuse files across courses, or securely share files with others at NIU.

The next tab is “Course Evaluations.” If your department decides to use the “NIU BlueEvaluations” system for end-of-semester course evaluations, you will be able to check progress and results from within Blackboard, here. Results will appear approximately two weeks after final grades are due.

The next—very important—tab, is “Services.” Services is where you access Blackboard Faculty Tools, which allow you to request your Blackboard course(s). You must request your new courses each semester!

Lastly, the “MyOneCard” tab allows faculty and students to check and manage their meal plan and printing quotas by logging into the OneCard system.

At the top of the header bar, you will see your name, followed by a round power symbol. You can click the power symbol to log out of Blackboard when you are finished using it. If you click on your name, the “Global Navigation” menu will open. This menu lets you easily access your recently visited courses and organizations.

The left side of the Global Navigation menu has icons for “My Blackboard.” This feature combines updates, posts, and other important information from all of your courses and communities in Blackboard.

For example, “Bb Home” presents the most recent calendar events, grades, and posts across all courses.
The “Posts” page collects all of the discussion board, blog, journal, and wiki posts from all of your courses and communities. You can even reply or comment directly from this page.

The “Updates” page lists all of the content or grading changes made to your courses and communities.

Students can view their latest grades in all of their courses from the “My Grades” page. They can also see the grades separately within each course.

The “Retention Center” tracks which of your students may need extra help or attention, based on their grades, activity level, or missed deadlines.

Lastly, the Calendar displays all of the events from your courses, plus you can add your own personal calendar reminders.

Now you have three tools to help you navigate Blackboard: the top navigation tabs, the Global Navigation Menu, and My Blackboard.