



Assignments vs. the Digital Drop Box

A Blackboard Learning Services Tip Sheet

Introduction The *Blackboard Learning System* (Release 6) introduces a new function called the Assignment Manager. This new tool combines the file exchange capabilities of the Digital Drop Box with the organization and management functionality of the Gradebook.

When deciding which tool to use, it is important to establish the final outcome should be for the user. This decision rests with each instructor and at times a combination of both tools can be used to achieve the desired goal.

Faculty should consider using the Digital Drop Box when file exchange is needed between the instructor and one student, a select group of students, or when a project will not be graded. On the other hand, an Assignment may be more effective when a grade will be assigned to student work and the graded product requires the submission of one document.

The following scenarios present several different examples of how the Digital Drop Box and Assignment Manager might be used separately or together to collect student work.

This overview is designed for Instructors who will be building and teaching courses with the [Blackboard Learning System \(Release 6\)](#).

Assignments

Overview The Assignment content type in Blackboard allows users to post an article or other document with an assignment, retrieve the completed assignment from a student, and grade that assignment via the Gradebook. With Assignments, Blackboard provides enables enhanced item management options, including bulk downloading and cleanup of these files.

Digital Drop Box

Overview The functionality of the Digital Drop Box tool in the Blackboard Learning System has not changed from previous versions of the application. The Drop Box still provides a shared area where students and instructors can store and exchange digital files. Students are able to send files to the instructor; the instructor can retrieve and review those files, then return them to the students.

Scenario #1: Students Write a Graded Paper with Graded Drafts

Situation Students are asked to write a paper which counts towards their final grade. The instructor reviews outlines and drafts of the paper throughout the project; each of these milestones is part of the final project, and each milestone has a due date. Each milestone also contributes to the total grade for the paper.

Possible Solution Use an Assignment.
The instructor can create an Assignment for each phase of this project, and place them in a relevant Content Area. Each Assignment can be made Available on a certain day, and automatically disappear after the due date.
Each Assignment can have specific details on what will be graded for that particular section and how it will contribute overall to the final grade.



Note: The solution will create multiple entries in the Gradebook, but since the objective is to check and monitor progress throughout the writing of the paper, this solution would work best for grading and providing feedback.

Scenario #2: Students Write a Graded Paper with Ungraded Drafts

Situation Students are asked to write a paper which counts towards their final grade. The instructor reviews outlines and drafts of the paper throughout the project, but these drafts do not count toward the total grade for the paper.

Possible Solution 1 The instructor can follow the solution for Scenario #1 and ignore the grading options for each milestone, or indicate completion of that milestone with a check mark in the Gradebook for that item.

This solution allows the instructor to track student completion and keeps the various drafts of the paper organized based on when they were due.

Possible Solution 2 The instructor can create one Assignment that gives the guidelines for the paper, and instruct the students to submit all preliminary drafts via the Digital Drop Box. When they are ready to turn in the finished work, it can be submitted as an Assignment.

This will create a single column in the Gradebook in which a final grade for the paper can be placed. If the instructor does not track submissions throughout the process and just assigns a single grade this option might be a good choice. The drawback to this strategy is this all the various drafts are located in the Digital Drop Box and it can be difficult to manage the separate versions of each student's work