

# Manage files and file permissions for HTML content in Blackboard



## Overview

If you want to use HTML content in Blackboard with linked files, such as CSS or images, then it's important that you take care with the following:

- referencing linked files correctly
- managing file and folder permissions in the *Blackboard Files area (a.k.a. Content Collection)* or File Manager
- overwriting files in the *Blackboard 'Files' area* or File Manager

Errors with one or more of the above can mean that students are not able to see your HTML content. This article explains how to avoid such problems.

### N.B. Content Collection / Files / File Manager

Since a 2014 upgrade to Blackboard, the term 'Content Collection' has been replaced by 'Files'. However, the new term is not used consistently throughout the system, and you will often encounter 'Content Collection' to refer to the 'Files' area. For this reason, some of the screenshots in this article show the term 'Content Collection', but in the Blackboard context this is synonymous with 'Files'.

Outside of course or organisation spaces, the file repository is called the 'File Manager'.

## Referencing linked files

HTML files that you create offline and upload to Blackboard will be held in the Blackboard *Files* area or the File Manager. Any dependent files that your HTML documents link to (e.g. CSS files, images, Flash files etc.), will also need to be held in the *Files* area.

### Important Note: Editing HTML files in Blackboard

Blackboard has a facility for editing HTML files that have originally been created 'offline' (i.e. outside Blackboard). In order to do this, locate the HTML file in the Files area or File Manager, and choose 'Edit in Blackboard' from the options menu. However, be sure to keep any offline backup versions of these files updated with any changes that you make in Blackboard.

In order to reference these linked files correctly in your HTML documents, you will need to use one of two possible approaches:

**Approach 1:** Create a dedicated folder structure for all your HTML related files and use relative links in your HTML link tags (recommended method).

This is a much more efficient way to manage HTML pages and linked files in Blackboard, which has a number of advantages:

- You can upload all HTML and linked files easily using a single drag and drop<sup>1</sup> action from your local computer to the Blackboard *Files* area or File Manager.
- Your files will be easier to locate and manage.
- You can reference linked files in your HTML pages using a relative URL (instead of using the longer Permanent URL from Blackboard). This will allow for much easier maintenance of your HTML pages in the future.
- During the course roll over process, files remain linked within the course<sup>2</sup>.

### Notes

1. The drag and drop feature requires Java to be enabled in your browser, and some browsers no longer allow Java to run at all (e.g. Google Chrome from Sept 2015). If the drag and drop feature appears not to be working, try one of the following:

- enable java in your web browser.
- switch to a java compatible browser e.g. Firefox (at the time of writing).
- use the 'Single file > Upload Zip Package' option.

2. There is a known bug with the course roll over process that results in only the index page of HTML page sets being brought over to the current year's course space. Two workarounds exist for this problem:

- 'manually' copy over HTML page sets from the previous year's course to the current year's and rebuild links
  - store all HTML page sets in the File Manager at Institution Content level instead of the 'Files' area of the course.
- (Contact [eLearning@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:eLearning@manchester.ac.uk) for more help with this option).

**Approach 2:** Find the Blackboard Permanent URL of the files you want to link to and use this URL in your HTML link tags.

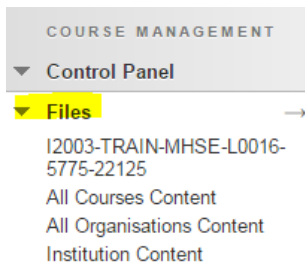
If it is not possible to keep all your related files in a single, dedicated folder structure in the *Blackboard Files* area, or if you need to link to a file that sits somewhere else in the *Files* area, then you will need to use this method.

This approach involves four steps:

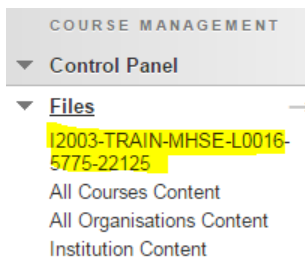
- In the Blackboard *Files* area, locate the file you want to link to and copy its Permanent URL (how to do this is explained below).
- In an HTML editor such as Dreamweaver or Nvu, copy the Permanent URL into the desired place in your HTML file.
- Upload your edited HTML file to the *Files* area.
- Deploy your HTML file to a student-facing Content Folder.

NOTE: Using this method will require you to re-build your HTML pages every time the course is copied to a new year, as your permanent URLs will point to the previous year's course that the new students will not have access to.

You can **find the permanent URL** for any file in the Blackboard *Files* area by doing the following:



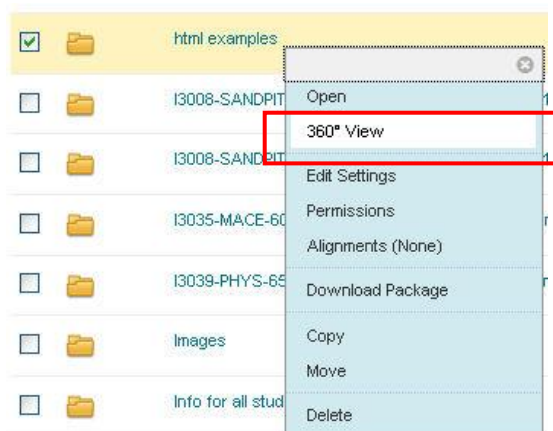
In the Control Panel on the left-hand side of Blackboard, click on 'Files'.



Choose the Blackboard *Files* area where your file is located. This is most likely to be the area for your course, which is the top of the list (as shown here). However, if the file is shared across courses, it may be stored in one of the higher level *Institution level* File Manager areas.



Browse the *Files area* until you find the folder that holds the file you are searching for.



Click on the folder and use the drop down menu next to the file name (click on the downward pointing chevron) to choose '360° View'.

Web Folder URL: [https://online.manchester.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/courses/I3011-SAND/BioStatistics%20HTML%20files/Biostatistics\\_Week1/biostats.cs](https://online.manchester.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/courses/I3011-SAND/BioStatistics%20HTML%20files/Biostatistics_Week1/biostats.cs)  
 Permanent URL: [https://online.manchester.ac.uk:443/bbcswebdav/xid-727957\\_1](https://online.manchester.ac.uk:443/bbcswebdav/xid-727957_1)

In the properties listed for the file, you will find the Permanent URL. This is the URL you should use in HREF tags when you link from your HTML pages to that file held in the *Files* area.

## Managing file and folder permissions in 'Files' and 'File Manager'

This section covers the following areas:

- Why are file and folder permissions important?
- Setting permissions when deploying files
  - for most files
  - for HTML and CSS files
- Permissions in the *Blackboard Files area / File Manager*
  - Checking file permissions
  - Changing permissions
  - Tips for managing the *Files area / File Manager*

### Why are file and folder permissions important?

Permission settings for files and folders allow anyone who is responsible for building and managing courses to determine who has access to content and what they can do with it. Setting appropriate permissions in Blackboard will ensure that:

- students can see the content that they need to see, and *only* those files.
- colleagues can edit, replace or delete content if needed.

Permissions are also important because, if not set correctly, students may not be able to see the material that you have deployed to a student-facing *Content Folder*. This is because, in order to make files from the *Blackboard Files area or File Manager* available to students, the following **two** conditions must be met:

- **the files are deployed** to the student-facing side of Blackboard ( i.e. added to a Course Content folder)
- **the permissions are set** appropriately for the files in the *Blackboard Files area / File Manager*

Usually, when you 'deploy' a file, the correct permissions are set automatically: Blackboard allows '*All Course Users*' (which includes students) to 'read' the deployed file. However, on some occasions (for example with HTML content) you will need to manually set those permissions. The next section explains how to do this.

### Setting permissions when 'deploying' files

#### For most types of file...

In most cases, when you deploy a file from the *Blackboard Files area or File Manager* to the student facing side of Blackboard (i.e. in a Course Content folder), Blackboard will automatically set permissions so that '*All Course Users*' – including students – are able to read the file.

NB: Although the 'read' permission should be set automatically when a file is deployed, it is worth checking in the *Blackboard Files area or File Manager* that your files have the correct permissions set. See the later section in this article on 'Checking file permissions in the Blackboard ' for more details.

#### For HTML files...

When you deploy an HTML file to a student-facing Content Folder, Blackboard will recognise it as an HTML file and prompt you to choose the most suitable file permissions. In the 'Create File' form, you will be given these choices:

## 1. Select File

Select a local file by clicking **Browse My Computer** or one from within Course Files by clicking **Browse Course**. Enter a Name for the file and choose a Colour for the text to appear in the list of content. Click **No** to display the file within the Course environment or **Yes** to display it as a separate piece of content with no Course page heading.

**Name**

**Colour of Name**

**Find File**

**Selected File**

<b>File Name</b>	<b>Bioinformatics.htm</b>
<b>File Type</b>	<b>HTM</b>
<b>Manage Access</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Give users access to all files and folders in the folder <input type="radio"/> Give users access to this file only <input type="radio"/> Give users access to selected files in folder <input type="button" value="Browse"/>

The most appropriate permission setting for your HTML files depends on:

- whether or not the HTML file is linked to related files (CSS, images, video clips, etc.).
- how you have organised your files and folders in the *Blackboard Files area* or *File Manager*.

The table below explains when each of the settings would be most appropriate.

Permission setting	Suitable for...
<input type="radio"/> Give users access to all files and folders in the folder (selected by default, refers to "Read" access only)	an HTML file with linked files (CSS, images, etc.) that students need to have access to. Choose this setting if you have organised your HTML and related files (and <b>only</b> those files) into a neat parent and subfolder arrangement in the <i>Blackboard Files area</i> or the <i>File Manager</i> . <b>NB:</b> In this case all users will be given read permission for all files contained in the same folder as the HTML file, and those contained in any subfolders. It is important that these folders do not contain files to which you would not want students to have access.
<input type="radio"/> Give users access to this file only (Refers to "Read" access only)	a single HTML file that has no other related, linked files such as CSS, images or video content. In this case, the <i>Files area</i> (or <i>File Manager</i> ) parent folder (and any other files within it) will not be accessible to students.
<input type="radio"/> Give users access to selected files in the folder (refers to "Read" access only)	an HTML file with linked files (CSS, images, etc.) that students need access to. Choose this setting if you want to manually select each file for which students need read permission. <b>NB:</b> This option allows you to choose files and folders

from the *Files* area or the *File Manager* for read permissions. You can select any file in the parent folder of the HTML file you are deploying, and you can also select any subfolder contained in the parent folder.

*Be aware that if you give 'read' permission to a subfolder, this permission will be inherited by **any other subfolders and files contained within the folder you have chosen** unless you specifically change the permissions for files inside the subfolder.*

**TIP:** Subfolders and files within a parent folder inherit permissions set for their parent folder in the *Blackboard Files* area *File Manager* (although you can override this for individual files). It is important, therefore, that you have a clear understanding of how your *Blackboard Files* or *File Manager* folder structure is organised so that permissions are granted appropriately.

## Permissions in the Blackboard

Files and folders held in the *Blackboard Files area* or the *File Manager* are not equally accessible by all Blackboard users. Whether or not you can view a file or folder, and what you can do to it (e.g. view it, change it, delete it), depends on:

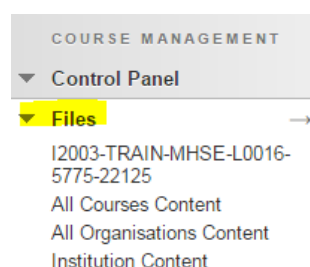
- Your Blackboard Role (e.g. Administrator, Lecturer, Course Builder, Student).
- The permissions you have been given for that file or folder (Read, Write, Remove, Manage).

The table below shows the permissions that have been set as default at the University of Manchester (i.e. for any files or folders when they are first uploaded to the *Blackboard Files area* or the *File Manager* and before they have been deployed).

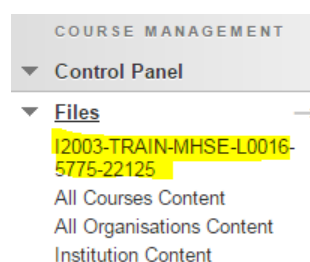
Role	Default permission on files and folders			
	Read	Write	Remove	Manage
Course Leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Course Builder	✓	✓	✓	✓
Administrator	✓	✓	✓	✓
eLearning Support	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lecturer	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching Assistant	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student	-	-	-	-

## Checking file permissions in Blackboard

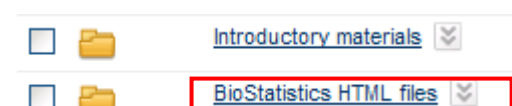
In the Blackboard *Files* area you can check the permissions currently set for a file or folder, and change them if necessary.



In the Control Panel on the left-hand side of Blackboard, click on 'Files'

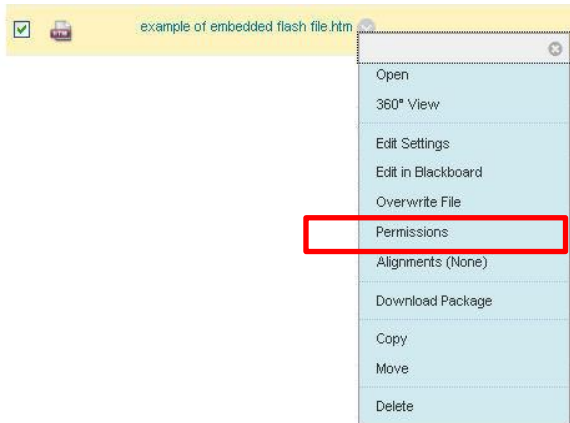


Choose the *Blackboard Files* area where your file is located. This is most likely to be the area for your course, which is the top of the list (as shown here). However, if the file is shared across courses, it may be stored in one of the higher Institution levels of the *File Manager*.



Browse the *Files* area or *File Manager* until you find the folder that holds the file you are

searching for.



Click on the folder name, then use the drop down menu next to the file name (click on the downward pointing chevron) and choose Permissions.

You are then presented with a list of users (Blackboard roles), and the permissions that each has for the selected file or folder.

**Manage Permissions: answer buttons.docx**  
Share files and folders by assigning one or more permissions to individual users and groups of users.

Select Specific Users   Select Specific Users By Place ▼   Select Roles ▼   Permit Anyone

Delete

	Read	Write	Remove	Manage
<input type="checkbox"/> User/User List				
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): Administrator (User List)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): <b>All Course Users (User List)</b>	✓			
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): Course Builder (User List)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): Course Leader (User List)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): eLearning Support (User List)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): Lecturer (User List)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<input type="checkbox"/> PLAYGROUND-mboxssc2 Lynn's testbed (13008-SANDPIT-7470600-1): Student (User List)	✓			

In the above example, the role *All Course Users* (which includes students) has been granted the 'Read' permission for the selected file.

**TIP:** For any files you want students to be able to see, including CSS and image files that are linked to HTML content, 'Read' permission must be granted to *All Course Users*.

### Adding a Role to the User List

If you don't see the *Student* role or the *All Course Users* role in the User List, you can add it by doing the following:

**Manage Permissions: example of embedded flash file.htm**  
Share files and folders by assigning one or more permissions to individual users and groups of users.

Select Specific Users   **Select Specific Users By Place ▼**   Select Roles ▼   Permit Anyone

In the Manage Permission area for the file or folder, hover over 'Select Specific Users By Place'.





Click 'Course'.

## 1. Choose Courses

Select boxes from the list of courses below or enter the C

- ★ Courses
- ☐ CHEM10312 Basic Inorga
  - ☐ CHEM19030&69030 Heall
  - ☒ CHEM61031 This course
  - CHEM-61031-1111-1SE-02672

Under 'Choose Course' select the course to which you want to make the file available.

## 2. Select Roles

- ★ Roles
- ☒ All Course Users
  - ☐ eLearning Support
  - ☐ Student
  - ☐ Course Leader
  - ☐ Teaching Assistant
  - ☐ Course Builder
  - ☐ Marker
  - ☐ Course Guest
  - ☐ Administrator
  - ☐ External Examiner
  - ☐ Lecturer

Under 'Select Roles', choose *All Course Users*.

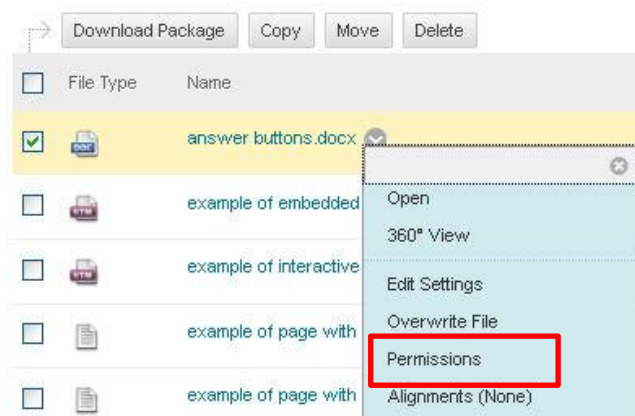
## 3. Set Permissions

- Permissions
- ☒ Read
  - ☐ Write
  - ☐ Remove
  - ☐ Manage

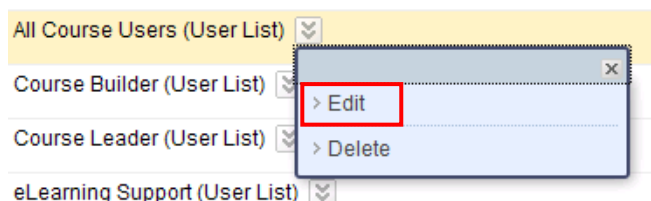
Under 'Set Permissions' choose 'Read'.

## Changing permissions in the Blackboard Files

You can change permissions granted to each role by doing the following:



Open the Manage Permission area for the file.



Find the role in the User List and click the chevron. Choose 'Edit' from the drop down menu.

## 2. Set Permissions

Permissions

☒ Read

☐ Write

☐ Remove

☐ Manage

Select the permissions as required. For the *Students* or *All Course Users* role, choose 'Read'.

## Setting permissions on folders: the 'Overwrite' option

When you change permissions for an existing folder in the *Files*, you are given a third 'advanced' option to 'overwrite'.

## 3. Advanced Folder Options

Select **Overwrite** to remove the current permission for all folder contents and sub-folders, and grant all permission selected above. When **Overwrite** is not selected, all existing permission remains and the selected permission is granted to folder contents and sub-folders.

☐ Overwrite

This option determines whether permissions set for the folder should be inherited by files and subfolders contained within.

If you select 'overwrite', then the new permissions for the folder will be inherited by the contents of that folder. If you do not select 'Overwrite', the files and subfolders within will keep their existing permissions settings.

## Tips for managing the Blackboard *Files* area or the *File Manager*

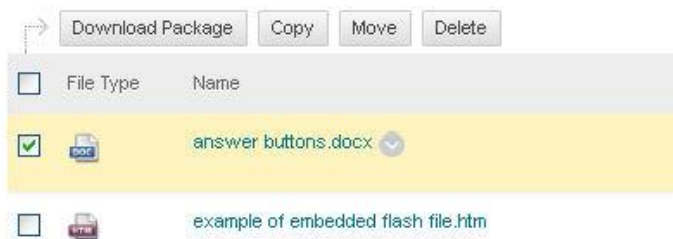
- Create an organised folder structure: keep all your HTML and linked files together in a parent folder.
- Remember that granting Read permission to the parent folder will grant the same to all its contents – unless you change permissions for individual files within.
- Before granting Read permission to folders, make sure they contain only content to which you want to grant such access.
- Be careful when changing permissions for files, or folder containing files, that have already been deployed. This may affect Student access to course content.

## Overwriting files in the *Files* area or the *File Manager*

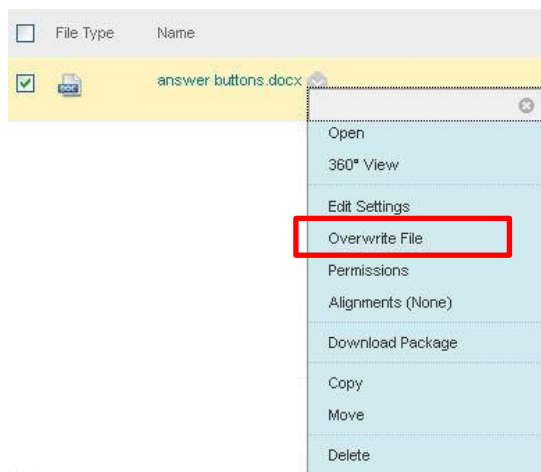
If you need to update any file (including HTML) held in the *Files* area or *File Manager* by replacing it with a new version, it is important that you use the 'Overwrite File' method and **not** 'Upload File'. This is because:

- Blackboard does not allow you to upload a file to a *Files* area folder if a file of the same name already exists there.
- If you change the name of HTML or related dependent files, you will break the links between them.

For these reasons, when you need to update files in the *Files* area or the *File Manager*, use the same file name and overwrite the old file as shown below:



Browse *Files* to find the file that needs updating.



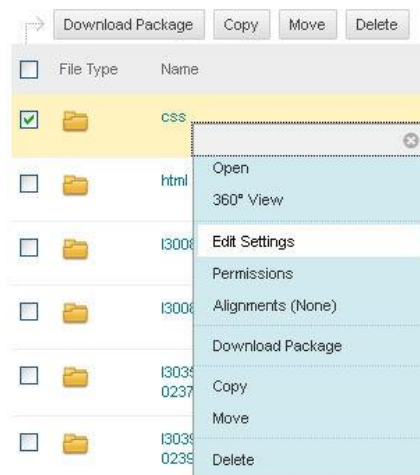
Use the downward pointing chevron and, from the drop down menu, choose **Overwrite File**.

The file will be uploaded to Blackboard. The safest way to check that the file has been replaced is to go to the student-facing Content folder where the file is deployed and view using **Edit Mode** off.

### Important Note: Switch off 'Versioning' in Blackboard *File* or *File Manager* folders

Blackboard has a 'file versioning' feature which, when switched on, keeps old versions of a file each time it is overwritten. This allows users to roll back to an earlier version of a file, but it can cause links from HTML files to break. For this reason, it's best to keep your folders set for 'No versioning'.

The versioning feature described above is switched off by default, but it is worth checking that this is the case. How to do this is shown below:



Browse the Blackboard *Files* area or the *File Manager* to find the folder that holds your HTML files and linked content. Select 'Edit Settings'.

## 5. Version Options

*Versioning creates a new file each time the file is changed and saved. When Versioning is enabled, users have the option of rolling a file back to a previous Version. Settings on individual items may be edited. However, if the Versioning option for the folder is updated, any option changes made to subfolders or items within the folder will be overwritten.*

- Versions
- ☒ No Versions
  - ☐ Enable Versioning on the files within this folder
  - ☐ Enable Versioning on the files within this folder and all of its subfolders.

In the page which opens, scroll down to item 5 'Version Options'. Make sure that 'No Versions' is checked.