



## Introduction

There are some areas of Blackboard which can be easily improved to give the students a better experience. The “15 minute makeover” looks at four topics:

1. Updating the Standard Course Structure
2. Adding Introductory Text
3. Using Icons and Text for Items
4. Using PDF Files

## Updating the Standard Course Structure (SCS)

By removing or hiding unused folders and resources throughout the course, navigation of and interaction with your course can be improved. You can choose to either hide the tool(s) from the students or remove them completely. You should also look at the content items that require your input, such as Staff Details in the Communication/Information folder, or items that have red text within them as this indicates you are required to make some changes.

**Note:** you can restore any folders you have hidden

Take a few minutes to look in SCS folders and see which resources you are using, those which you are not, and those which need editing. The folders you are likely to be able to see on the course menu are as follows:

- Course Content
- Communication
- Course Information
- Assessment
- Learning Resources
- eLearning Support

### To hide unused folders or resources (recommended):

1. Click on the **Action menu**  next to the item/folder you wish to hide
2. Click **Edit**
3. Scroll down to the **Options**
4. Change the **Permit Users to view this Content** option to **No**
5. Scroll down and click **Submit**

### To remove unused folders or resources (NB only use this method if you are sure you won't want to use the folder or resource in future):

1. Click on the **Action Menu**  next to the item/folder you wish to remove
2. Select **Delete**
3. Click **OK**

### To edit existing content in the SCS

1. Click on the **Action menu**  next to the content you wish to edit
2. Select **Edit**
3. Update the details of the item
4. Click **Submit**

### Adding Introductory Text to Folders, Content Areas and Items

A title and brief description of the contents of a folder/area will improve your pages. Adding descriptive text to items will also help contextualize information for your students.

#### To Add Introductory Text to a Folder/Content area

1. Navigate to the folder/area you wish to add introductory text to
2. Click on **Build Content**
3. Select **Item**
4. Enter a **Name** for the item (you could repeat the content folder name, or call it "About this folder" for example)
5. Type in an **introduction** in the Text area. This could include what the folder is for, what students might find in the folder etc
6. Click **Submit**
7. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and find the item
8. Using the double arrows **drag** the item up to the top of the folder, and **drop** it in place so it is the first item in the folder

#### Adding descriptive text to items and sub-folders

1. Click on the **Action menu**  next to the sub-folder/item you wish to add descriptive text to
2. Click on **Edit**
3. Add descriptive text to the Text area
4. Click **Submit**

### Displaying Icons and Text for Items

Quite frequently a page will contain a mixture of content types, for example simple text items, items with attachments, documents and sub-folders. When icons are not visible on a page it is difficult for students to ascertain what each content type is. Switching on the icons allows students to see what the content type is before they access it making navigating through your resources easier.

#### To switch on icons for an individual folder:

1. Navigate to the folder that you want to switch icons on for
2. Click on the **Action menu**  next to the folder name (at the top of the main content area)
3. Click on **Edit**
4. Scroll down to 2. **Default Content View**
5. Check **Icon and Text**
6. Scroll down and click **Submit**

**To switch on Icons for all Folders:**

1. Click on **Customisation** in the Control Panel
2. Click on **Teaching Style**
3. Scroll down to 4. **Default Content View**
4. Select **Icon and Text**
5. Check **Apply** this view to all existing content
6. Click **Submit**

**Creating PDFs from Word Documents**

Saving your Word (or PowerPoint or Excel) document as a PDF will allow the student to open it directly within Blackboard. If you are using a standard imaged computer at the University, the procedure is very simple.

In Word (or PowerPoint or Excel):

1. **Open** your document
2. Choose **Print** from the **File** menu
3. Change the printer to **PDF Creator**
4. Click **OK** – you will be presented with some information about the document
5. Click **Save** – you will open a standard Microsoft file saving window – save the pdf to your chosen directory. The pdf will be created
6. Use the **Content Collection** in Blackboard to upload the pdf as you would a Word document and then add to your course.