

# New Semester Check List

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Once you copy your course material to your new Blackboard course shell, there are a few things you will probably want to do:

- ANNOUNCEMENTS** - Copying your course will usually copy ALL announcements with it. You should either (1) remove all previous-semester announcements from the new course shell so that you start the semester with a fresh blank announcement area or (2) selectively go through each announcement to remove ones that you will no longer use and HIDE old announcements that you might want to reuse later in the new semester. Generally, it is a good idea to have atleast ONE announcement up in the course for the first day of class, a "Welcome" announcement. If you have a welcome announcement that you usually use for the first week of class, make sure that it is available and updated.
- SYLLABUS** – If you have a syllabus in your course, make sure that you read through it carefully and update ANYTHING that is specific to the previous semester (ie, dates, changed assignments, etc).
- SAFE ASSIGN** – Do you have any SafeAssign assignments in your course? If so, make sure you synchronize the assignments in your new shell. It is important to do this throughout the semester as well (usually recommended before an assignment is due). To synchronize SafeAssign with your course, go to Control Panel → Course Tools → SafeAssign. Click on "SafeAssignments" . There will be a button in the upper-right corner of the SafeAssignments screen that says "Synchronize this course." Click it!
- DATE CONTROLS** – If you set date controls (ie, "Display After" and "Display Until" options) on ANY item in your previous-semester course, it is likely that those date controls came over in the copy. You need to review your course *completely* and remove or reset all date controls to match the current semester.
- ADAPTIVE RELEASES** – If you set adaptive release rules in the previous semester that were based on (1) dates or (2) membership, these are likely to have come over in the copy. Review the course for any items that say "Enabled: Adaptive Release" and reset the rules on the adaptive release if they were date or membership specific. Adaptive Release rules that are GRADE specific are fine to keep, as those graded items should have come over in the copy.
- PASSWORDS ON TESTS** – Passwords set on tests WILL remain on the test when you copy a course. For any test in the course where you might have set a password during the previous semester, go through and remove/clear any password restrictions – otherwise students in your new semester won't be able to get in!
- DUE DATES SET ON ASSIGNMENTS/TESTS/ETC** – Every assignment, test, discussion board, blog, journal, etc that you set up in your course has an optional area for "Due Date" when you are creating it as a graded item. This date has NO CONTROL over the availability of the item. The only purpose it serves is as a DISPLAY item to students in their grade book. If you set due-dates that were semester-specific for items, you will need to go through and update ALL Due-Date areas for graded items/columns in your course. Due Dates can be changed individually, or

through the **Date Management** tool, under Course Tools. Control Panel → Course Tools → **Date Management**.

- DISCUSSION BOARDS** – When copying your course, threads from the discussion board from the previous semester will come with the copy. When copied over, since the course roster in your new course shell is completely different, all copied threads show “ANONYMOUS” beside the “posted by” name. You will need to go through and clear out all old threads from the previous semester.
- GROUP AREAS** – Group areas have the ability to use a Group-Only Discussion Board. If you have groups in your course and if you gave your groups the ability to use the Group-Only Discussion Board, you will want to go through each group discussion board and remove old threads/forums from the previous semester.
- TOOLS** – It is always a good idea to evaluate the tools that you have enabled in your course. Remove any unnecessary tools that students will not need for the semester. To do this, go to Control Panel → Customization → Tool Availability. Remove checkmarks from the lines of tools that you will not be using. While you are doing this, make sure that tools that you DO want to be using are enabled.
- LINKS/PICTURES/MULTIMEDIA** – If you have links to outside websites, pictures or multimedia in your course (ie, links to YouTube, links to Films on Demand, links to Wikipedia or reference articles, links to MSN news articles, etc), you will need to go through and make sure that all of these links are still active and working links! It is VERY common that links will break during the middle of a semester, and therefore you will need to be vigilant in checking them at the beginning of each new semester. If a link is broken, either remove it completely or replace it with a working link.