

The Shift to Blackboard Ultra

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by Amy Lin, the Teaching & Learning Centre

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Seneca has used Blackboard for almost 20 years and it has become a familiar learning management environment for our faculty and students. Blackboard has launched its Ultra Experience – a new user interface that is more personalized, pro-active, and intuitive for both students and educators. Seneca is currently working on this shift to Blackboard Ultra Experience.

Why now?

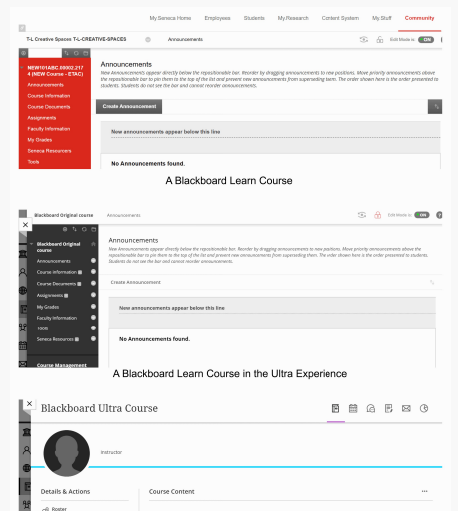
The move of all courses to remote delivery happened in winter 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Courses for the summer semester were adapted to online delivery and this will continue into the fall. The added value for students and faculty of this Blackboard Ultra project falls into place at a time when there will be considerable reliance on the use of Blackboard and to provide the resources and tools for this pivot in delivery mode.

When does the switch to the Ultra Experience happen?

Both course views – Blackboard Learn (what you see now) and Blackboard Ultra – will be available to all Seneca users at the same time. This dual course mode will allow faculty members to decide when they will make the change to Blackboard Ultra in their courses.

Even with the Ultra experience enabled, the original course view will provide faculty with all the features that they have access to now in Blackboard Learn.

Prior to the launch of Blackboard Ultra course views



campus-wide, we will carry out a faculty pilot. All schools across the college have faculty members who are willing to be part of this pilot for the Ultra Experience. The pilot project will involve the Teaching & Learning Centre and ITS to support the learning in the new environment.



The Blackboard Ultra Seneca Framework

The framework provides direction and guidance for the project and defines the roles and responsibilities of the teams. It identifies the milestones and resources needed to implement this Seneca-wide project.

Project Team

The project team meets regularly to discuss progress, ensure alignment, and provide recommendations related to communication plans, gaps, emerging issues, and barriers. The team will also be involved in the training resources for faculty and students.

Project Support and Advisory Team

The project support and advisory team is made up of the Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) and some additional members from Marketing and Communications and ITS. The role of this team is to provide input to the project team on the strategy and plan. They will provide feedback on the progress of the plan, gaps to be addressed, suggestions for improvement, and evaluation. Each member of this support and advisory team will be the champion for the project within their own roles.

Timelines

We are in the early stages of this pilot project. The project team is working on the first phase of tasks including setting up course sites for the preliminary testing of Blackboard Ultra, recruiting faculty members who are interested in participating in the pilot in September, and a drafting preliminary communications plan.

Please reach to our project team if you would like additional information about the transition to the Blackboard Ultra experience.

Project Team:

Amy Lin, Director of the Teaching & Learning Centre – Project Team Lead
Cristian Durca, Director of Information Solutions – Project Team Lead
Team members: Ashley Ribbel, Andres Quintero, Tony Fu, Kevin Pitts, Valerie Lopes,
Hannah Sweet, and Sherri Parkins

View the [June 2020 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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