Announcements

What is it?
The Announcements feature in Blackboard enables teaching staff to provide class wide statements with optional email notification sent to students. This is particularly useful for time-sensitive information. Announcements can also be created in advance and preset to be released and removed at specified times.

A member of the teaching team can create an announcement item on the announcement page. Announcement content can include styled text, images, links, video, audio and attachments.

By default the announcement page is the landing (first) page for a course site. Optionally, all students enrolled in the class can be notified of the announcement by email. You need to specifically turn this feature on when creating the announcement item.

When students access the course site, they can review all the announcements available ordered from the latest to the oldest.

What could you do?

Course updates
Changes in your course can be highlighted – timetabling, sickness, change of guest lecture, change of topic, assignment extensions, errata in texts, updates to course content or new material added to the course site (be sure to include a link directly to the changed or new material so students can access it directly from the message itself).

Reminders
Setting reminders for important tasks and activities in a course can help less organised students keep up. For example, ‘assignment 3 due in 7 days…’, ‘you should be up to chapter 7 of the textbook exercises by week 8…’, ‘remember to wear enclosed shoes for the first lab session this week…’.

Whole class messages
If there is a message all students need to receive about the course an announcement can be a great way to distribute this message. For example ‘welcome to the course…’.

Not have announcements
In some courses it may be more appropriate to distribute this sort of information in other ways (e.g. noticeboards, in class announcements).

If you are not using the announcements feature consider changing the default landing page for your course site to something students will use. Go to Customisation > Style > Default Course Entry Point.
Tips

Create a short meaningful title (subject)

This is akin to the subject line of an email or headline in a news article. This may be all a student reads, so ensure that the subject effectively reflects the key message of the announcement.

Keep announcements short

Most of the time students just don’t read long messages, so keep it short and sharp. Generally announcements are messages you want students to receive and understand quickly. Unless announcements contribute directly to the learning objectives of the course (note: course content itself is best placed in more appropriate areas of the site), you would want students to spend as little time as possible on these messages.

Use images, video and audio carefully

Add a picture, video or audio clip if the announcement needs to stand out and the chosen media is relevant to your message. For example a welcome announcement with a video or image can help students connect more personally to the teaching staff.

Use pre-set release dates to improve your work-flow

At the time you create the announcement item you can choose the dates for it to be displayed and removed. Therefore you can create announcements in advance and then make them available when they will be most effective for students.

Link directly to the referenced items

If the announcement relates to an item within your course website (i.e. new resource, corrected content, changed due date) then place a link within the announcement itself leading directly to the affected item. Use the ‘course link’ on the ‘create announcement’ dialog box to do so. This saves students time because it allows them to go directly to the referenced item rather than having to hunt through the website to find it. It also saves you time because you receive less I can’t find it emails.