





# UHCL'S INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY TEAM (IDT)

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FOR NEW FACULTY

### IDT OVERVIEW

Welcome to the University of Houston - Clear Lake! Whether you are new full-time, tenure-track faculty or a new adjunct instructor, our team is here to help you with course design and development, active learning strategies, and instructional technology training and support. This guide should provide a comprehensive overview of our staff and services although, in the interest of brevity, we may leave out some details along the way.

### About the Team

Sometimes mistakenly characterized as "the Blackboard people," the OIT's Instructional Design and Technology team members offer a much broader array of support for faculty, staff, and students than this description suggests. Our staff includes two primary categories of team members:

- **Instructional Designers (IDs)** - All members of the ID team and the team's supervisor hold, or are working toward, advanced degrees in Instructional Design. The IDs' academic backgrounds include substantial preparation in human learning, active learning, assessment design/development, curriculum/content design, and other non-technology educational/instructional domains. We consider ourselves to be instructional designers first and instructional technologists second. In addition, our Director currently teaches online graduate-level courses for UHCL, and two of our IDs have teaching experience in higher education outside of UHCL. Given our academic and experiential background, the IDs' roles are diverse and include a wide range of training offerings. We provide training and consulting on active learning, effective teaching practices, course design/development (whether web-assisted or fully online), and strategically employ technology tools to support and enhance teaching and learning effectively.
  - **Learning Technology Administrators (LTAs)** - Historically, the role of our LTAs has been to coordinate with Blackboard and other vendors to ensure that our instructional technology systems work as intended. They have also always been the first point of support for students with instructional technology concerns. However, the LTAs role has evolved. They now have primary responsibility for assisting both faculty and students with a wide range of technology-based systems (e.g., Blackboard, video, Zoom, Echo360, online proctoring tools, etc.). Both LTAs bring to these tasks years of experience at UHCL with Blackboard and other technologies and in customer support.
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Except for the Director, Learning Technology Services, all of the IDT staff have their offices in the Center for Engagement, Teaching, and Learning (CETL), located in Bayou 1604. Although our team does maintain on-campus hours, we are still providing most of our support via email, telephone, and virtual meetings (Zoom or Teams). Please get in touch with our team members directly or by contacting the Support Center to schedule appointments for assistance. You will find the contact information for our current instructional designers and learning technology administrators on our blog post, [Instructional Design and Technology Team - Contact Information](#).

## Stay Up-to-Date with the IDT Team!

Our IDT staff provides several options to use if you want to stay up-to-date on instructional design and instructional technology news at UHCL:

- Weekly IDT Newsletter - typically sent every Monday night via email to only faculty and staff who have specifically requested to receive it. **To be added to our newsletter distribution list, please email us at [IDT@uhcl.edu](mailto:IDT@uhcl.edu)**. You can also review previous newsletters from our team's blog posts, [IDT Newsletter Archives \(2020\)](#) and [IDT Newsletter Archives \(2021\)](#).
- [OIT Instructional Design and Technology Blog](#) - please drop in on the blog periodically, especially if you don't elect to receive our newsletter.
- [Weekly Virtual Drop-In Support Sessions](#) - Stop by to get your questions answered regarding Blackboard, Zoom, Echo360, and other technologies or teaching tips.
  - Monday, 10 - 11 a.m.
  - Tuesday, 1 - 2 p.m.
  - Wednesday, 6 - 7 p.m.
  - Thursday, 10 - 11 a.m.

Zoom Link: <https://uhcl.zoom.us/j/91324561229>

## Instructional Technologies at UHCL

UHCL's primary instructional technology tool is Blackboard Learn, a full-featured course/learning management system. UHCL's "flavor" of Blackboard Learn is the software-as-a-service (SaaS) version, hosted and managed by Blackboard from their headquarters in Washington, DC. Integrated within our instance of Learn are several textbook publisher tools (e.g., McGraw-Hill Connect, Perusall, WileyPLUS, Pearson, etc.). In addition to Blackboard Learn, our team supports users with the following applications:

- **Zoom** - Robust web conferencing system for virtual meetings both within and outside of Blackboard Learn. Many faculty members use Zoom with their face-to-face and hybrid classes as a way to record and post video lectures and, as needed, to enable off-campus students to watch and participate remotely.
- **Echo360** - Echo360 serves several functions: (1) provides long-term storage for faculty-created videos and Zoom recordings, (2) through its Universal Capture software, enables instructors to easily record video lectures and other presentations to then share with students within Blackboard,  
(3) Once in Echo360 and deployed for students through Blackboard, videos can be enhanced with

polling (periodic questions that students must answer during a video), confusion flags, video-related chat/discussion feature, student note-taking capabilities, and metrics on student access and views of posted contents, and (4) when used during face-to-face classes, allows instructors to capture their lecture and live-stream it to off-campus students. Interaction with remote learners is much more limited than in Zoom; however, it also offers some benefits regarding internet bandwidth requirements for remote participants.

- **Point-Tilt-Zoom (PTZ) Cameras** - Currently being installed across UHCL's campuses and classrooms, these cameras in the back of the classroom will support live-streamed instruction via Zoom and Echo360.
- **SafeAssign** - This application is embedded within the assignment dropbox tool in Blackboard. Faculty control whether to use SafeAssign for any or all assignments. SafeAssign is an originality checker, similar to its primary competitor, Turnitin. Although it does provide some support for instructors who have concerns about plagiarism in student assignments, it is not a comprehensive solution to that daunting issue. Please review our team's blog post, [SafeAssign: False Positives Do Not Necessarily Indicate Plagiarism](#), for more information about SafeAssign and its limitations.
- **Blackboard Ally** - Blackboard's integrated Ally tool supports faculty in their efforts to make digital content more accessible to a wide range of learners, whether they have disabilities or prefer alternative content delivery formats. With Ally, instructors can see how accessible their Blackboard contents are, identify the most critical areas, get guidance on how to improve the accessibility of electronic content, and offer students the option to download materials as audio files, HTML files, electronic braille, and other formats.
- **Scantron Exam Processing Station** - The IDT team trains and supports faculty from the Bayou, Arbor, Delta, SSCB, and STEM buildings to use a self-service Scantron exam scoring system located in the Center for Engagement, Teaching, and Learning (CETL).
- **Online Exam Proctoring** - UHCL currently provides both ProctorU Live+ and Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor as proctoring solutions when using online tests/exams. However, per the Dean, **faculty in the College of Business (BUS) assigned to teach a 100% online course must use ProctorU Live+**. More information about both options is available on the team's [Online Proctoring Resources page](#).

## A Special Note About Audio/Video Files and Blackboard

To ensure that UHCL's Blackboard Learn system operates smoothly and is fully backed up every night, it is critical that contents in each Blackboard course not total more than 1GB, including course materials and student submissions. Therefore, we must emphasize that **neither faculty nor students should ever upload an MP4 (video), MP3 (audio), or similar multimedia file into a Blackboard course**. Faculty should store all audio and video files in Echo360 (or another cloud-based system) and then provide links to those videos in the class. For training on how to do so with Echo360, don't hesitate to get in touch with your designated instructional designer or the Support Center. Similarly, if students create and submit audio or video files in your class, they should not upload those media files directly uploaded to Blackboard. Please ensure that they save their multimedia file in a cloud-based location (e.g., YouTube, Echo360) and then submit a

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link to that content in the assignment dropbox, discussion, blog, or another tool in your course. Our team has already created a support document for students, [Submitting Videos in Echo360](#), that instructors can share with their classes.

## Online Blackboard Training

All UHCL instructors who intend to use Blackboard to support or deliver instruction must complete the university's Blackboard Basic Training - Online course, regardless of previous experience with Blackboard Learn or other course/learning management systems. Our team recently redesigned the training, paring down the time needed to complete it from an estimated 4 hours to only 2. To register for the training, please email the Support Center at [SupportCenter@uhcl.edu](mailto:SupportCenter@uhcl.edu), and a member of our team will be assigned to grant you training access and send you instructions on getting started.

## Student Blackboard Training

We also offer online Blackboard training for students. The short, self-paced course will introduce learners to our Blackboard system. Students will learn how to use essential Blackboard features/tools and avoid technical issues while learning in Blackboard. Some faculty even require students to submit a copy of their training completion certificate as a component of their course orientation activities, especially in 100% online classes. Training [self-enrollment instructions for students](#) are available online. For more information about this optional training offering for learners, please contact the Support Center.

## Recorded Training Sessions

Since 2020, the IDT team has offered virtual training sessions on a wide range of topics. We recorded each session, and you can access those videos from our blog post, [Training/Professional Development Session Recordings](#).

## Help Us Help You!

In addition to the student and faculty Blackboard training courses, the IDT team is always interested in hearing from faculty about what training sessions are most needed or most interesting. Please send us your suggestions via email to [IDT@uhcl.edu](mailto:IDT@uhcl.edu).

## About Blackboard Shells

In advance of each semester, blank Blackboard shells are automatically created for every class in the course schedule. Faculty members can place content into those shells in several ways:

1. If you have taught a specific course before, you can use [Blackboard's Course Copy feature](#) to copy the contents from the previous shell into the new blank one.
2. If another instructor has an existing course and will grant permission, our IDT team can copy contents from the other instructor's existing shell into your new blank one. To request this, please forward to the Support Center an email of permission to copy from the original course own or your

department/program chair (if the owner is unavailable). Once we have that authorization email, a member of our team will complete the course copy job.

3. You can design and develop your new course and contents from scratch. **NOTE: This is not an option for courses listed in the schedule as 100% online. For fully online classes, you must either have developed an online-approved master course, or you will need to borrow content from another instructor's online-approved master course.**

### Course Merges, TA Adds, and Schedule Changes

If you are teaching two or more sections of the same class, or you are teaching two cross-listed courses, you have the option to request that students in those multiple sections share a single Blackboard shell for the semester. Use the [online Course Merge Request form](#) to have a member of our team complete the merge procedure for you.

If you have been assigned a teaching assistant, research assistance, or other student assistance and you want them to have access to your Blackboard course(s), use the online form, [Request Adding TA\(s\) to Course\(s\)](#). **NOTE: Per the Dean, our team can only assign Student role access to TAs in the College of Business (BUS). We cannot give them Teaching Assistant role access to your course(s).**

Changes in instructors and student adds/drops process 2-3 days after the change is made in PeopleSoft/eServices.

If you were initially assigned to teach a course and your college or department has since reassigned it to another instructor, please notify us by contacting the Support Center. Our team will need to deactivate the blank shell created when the course was assigned to you to not appear to the new instructor and their students. If you don't notify us, the new instructor and the students will see two Blackboard shells for the course, which is very confusing.

### Online Course Design and Development

The process of preparing a new online course goes beyond simply modifying materials and activities from the face-to-face version of the course and putting those into Blackboard. Because asynchronous fully online delivery often places additional burdens on both faculty and students, online courses must be carefully planned and organized almost as though it was for an entirely new course. Online classes that are haphazardly developed or even developed "on the fly" can cause tremendous confusion and frustration for students, which can hamper student academic performance and make the teaching and learning process a struggle for everyone involved. For these reasons, UHCL has instituted procedures for requesting, designing, and developing new courses for 100% online delivery that ensure the course is complete and meets or exceeds UHCL's minimum standards before students begin registering for a fully online version of the course. Course requests must be submitted 8-9 months before the intended delivery term and must be completed and pass [Minimum Standards review](#) approximately five months before the delivery term. For more information about the Online Course Development Calendar, please visit our [Minimum Standards Review webpage](#) and watch the short video, [Understanding the Course Development Calendar](#). To learn

more about online course design and development at UHCL, including available support options, don't hesitate to contact our team's [designated instructional designer](#) for your college.

## Critical Instructional Technology Resources

Numerous topics come to mind for our team as "critical" for faculty. In the interest of being concise, we'll provide links to resources about those essential tips and recommendations. Although not comprehensive, the items below address instructional technology issues that most often plague instructors and students:

- [Start-of-Semester Reminders](#) [blog] - This blog post offers some recommendations for tasks to complete before your students jump into their courses.
- [Faculty Support Resources, including Classroom \(Academic Computing\) and Computer Lab Support](#) [blog] - Learn how to get help with classroom technology issues, teaching and open computer labs, 24/7 software access for students, and general OIT questions.
- [Blackboard Browser Checker](#) [webpage] - This online tool can help instructors and students detect any significant device, operating system, or browser incompatibilities that could cause technical issues in Blackboard.
- [Blackboard Faculty Support](#) [webpage] - Provides handouts and video tutorials for faculty about general instructional design and technology issues, Blackboard tools and features, Echo360, web conferencing, and Blackboard Ally.
- [E-Services/PeopleSoft Support Reminder](#) [blog] - Oddly enough, the Office of Information Technology does not manage or have access to E-Services/PeopleSoft.
- [Blackboard Support Requests](#) [webpage] - Includes links for faculty that enables you to [request design/development of a new fully online course](#), [get students from two or more classes merged into a single Blackboard shell](#), [submit a help ticket](#), or [add a TA to your Blackboard course\(s\)](#).
- [DUO Two-Factor Authentication \(2FA\)](#) [webpage] - Blackboard users must prepare to use DUO 2FA before they can access Blackboard Learn. The information on this webpage explains what 2FA is and how to get it set up.
- [Student Checklist for Online Technology Readiness](#) [document] - Created for UHCL students, this reference is also an excellent resource for faculty.
  
- [Blackboard Quiz Tips](#) [document] - Discusses what students must do and must avoid doing to prevent technical problems during online tests, exams, and quizzes.
- [Online Proctoring Resources](#) [web page] - If you plan to give online tests/exams and use online proctoring, make sure that your students know where to find critical proctoring information well before the exam date.
- [End of Course Survey Availability Dates](#) (Login Required) - The FA21 evaluation dates are already posted. For instructions on adding a course evaluation link to your Blackboard course, please review the handout, [Adding or Editing a Course Evaluation Link](#).



## Miscellaneous Instructional Technology Tips/Information

- **Common Student Issue: Kicked Out of an Online Quiz, Test, or Exam:** A technical issue in Blackboard rarely causes a student to be "kicked out of" an online test. Typical causes of this behavior include (1) the student has let their test session go idle for more than a minute or two, causing their internet service provider (ISP) to time out; (2) the student has clicked somewhere outside of Blackboard on their computer, perhaps to listen to music or respond to a text message, and (3) the student temporarily lost the connection to the internet, most often because there are multiple people online in the house, coffee shop, bookstore, etc. in which they are taking the exam. We discuss all of these and other causes in the [Blackboard Quiz Tips document](#), which we recommend as required reading for students before any online test or quiz.
- **Common Student Issue: Request to Reset an Attempt (Test or Assignment):** When kicked out of an online test, students will often contact the Support Center and request that our staff reset their attempt so that they can start again. We receive similar requests from students who have attached the wrong file to their assignment dropbox submission. Whatever the case, our staff cannot clear and reset any student assessment attempt or submission unless we receive a request to do so directly from the instructor. We prefer to teach instructors how to remove/reset attempts and submissions themselves to stay clear of any student grade-related matters.
- **Common Student Issues: Blackboard Ate My Homework:** These issues typically present as a student insisting they uploaded their assignment on time to the designated Blackboard dropbox, but that the instructor can't find their submission or, when opened, the document is blank. As with the "getting kicked out of tests" issue, there is rarely a problem with Blackboard that results in a "lost" assignment submission. In the online Blackboard training for students, we advise learners that they will see and receive via email a submission receipt for every assignment submission. They should check the receipt to ensure that the attached file does not have a 0 file size. If it does, there was a problem with the uploaded file itself, and they should contact their instructor immediately to report the problem and request a clear and reset.
- **Common Instructor Issue: My Course Menu Disappeared:** Blackboard designed the menu to collapse out of the way. Unfortunately, users will regularly accidentally collapse the menu and not know how to restore it. Roll your cursor slowly down the left side of your Blackboard course screen until a small tab with a right-facing arrow appears. Click the arrow to expand the menu.
- **Common Instructor Issue: I Can't Edit Anything in My Course:** For reasons unknown, Blackboard courses will sometimes switch into Edit Mode: OFF status for instructors. When this happens, you will not be able to edit your course. It's a quick fix, however. In your class, locate the Edit Mode switch located in the upper right area of the screen. Switch it from OFF to ON to restore your editing capability.
- **Common Student and Instructor Issue: I Can't Find My Upcoming Classes on My Blackboard Courses Page:** By default, the Course page always shows "Current Courses." If the new semester has not officially started, Blackboard does not flag that term's courses as "Current." However, you can click the Upcoming Courses link in the upper right area of the Courses page to see your Blackboard shells for the new term.

## Conclusion

Again, and on behalf of our Instructional Design and Technology (IDT) team, we welcome you to UHCL. While we are sure to have left out many details about the technologies, procedures, and support that we manage, we hope that this document will serve as a valuable starting point for you.

We encourage you to contact our team members or the Support Center if you have questions or if we may be of any assistance. No question is too small, and the only "stupid" questions as those that go unasked. Please let us know how we can assist you in your online, hybrid, and web-supported teaching!

Regards,

Jenni

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