

# Ultra Update Faculty Concerns

Fall 2019

## Context

At least some of this [recent decision](#) reflects Bb Ultra's readiness to be used by faculty in high enrollment courses making heavy use of groups and assessments.

### More Info:

- [Why CNMS Student Bb Use is So High](#) (11/25/19)
- [UMBC Bb Use Differs from Most Schools](#) (12/11/18)



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INSTRUCTION ▼

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## DoIT Adjusts Support of Bb Ultra Rollout

All faculty still decide when to migrate before FA21

November 26, 2019 7:57 AM

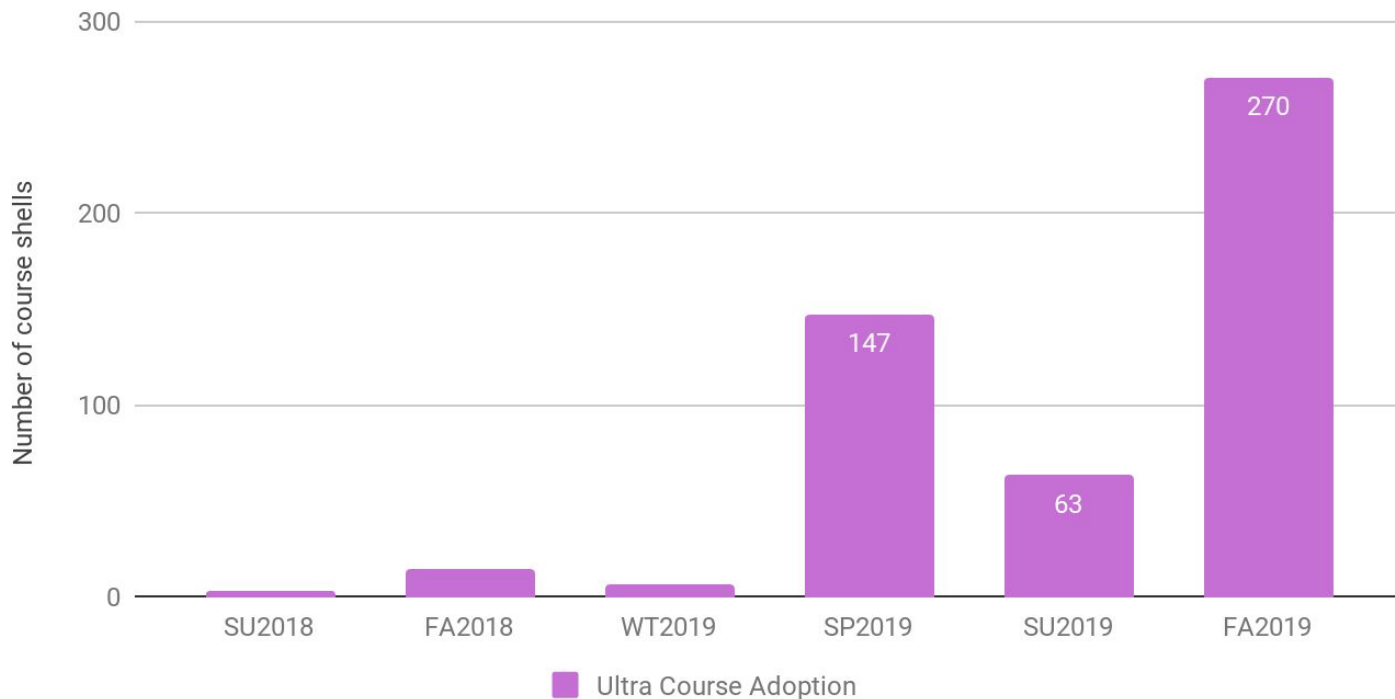
Based on [new analysis](#) of how Blackboard (Bb) Ultra has been adopted across campus, DoIT has decided to modify its approach to faculty support across colleges.

Specifically, DoIT will focus on supporting the **College of Engineering and IT (CoEIT)** in **Spring 2020**, and the **College of Natural, Mathematical and Natural Sciences (CNMS)** in **Fall 2020**. In addition, the rollout period for all colleges and focus areas will extend across two terms (not one, as [previously announced](#)). There are no changes in DoIT support focusing on the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) in Spring 2021. Also, DoIT still plans to discontinue support of Blackboard Classic prior to Fall 2021.

To be clear, **this change is solely focused on how DoIT organizes its own support of faculty**, who still make the final decision of when to switch to Bb Ultra. However, DoIT still recommends all faculty [check their Ultra Course Preview and/or Sandbox](#) well before doing so.



# Tracking Ultra adoption



# Original Phased Rollout of Ultra by College

[Announced April 2019](#)



Targeted Term	College	FA2019 Ultra Adoption
FA2019	Social Work, Erickson, UAA, DPS	24.52%
SP2020	CNMS	2.97%
FA2020	COEIT	10.78%
SP2021	CAHSS	61.34%

# Summary by Severity








Unusable	Severe	Moderate	Annoying	Good
<a href="#">Groups</a> (esp no csv upload)	<a href="#">Gradebook &amp; Grading</a>	<a href="#">Tests (and Assignments)</a>	<a href="#">Engagement &amp; Communication</a>	<a href="#">Ease of [basic] Use (e.g., navigation, mobility, accessibility)</a>
<a href="#">Groups Use Cases</a>	<a href="#">Use Cases</a>	<a href="#">Tests Use Cases</a>	<a href="#">Content Creation &amp; Mgmt. &amp; Use Cases</a>	

[Bonus: Our Ultra Wishlist](#)

# Groups

 Large courses  
 Enrollment changes

Feedback:





- ~~Create & cross populate group sets for gradable items (12/2019)~~
- Upload students to Groups via CSV file  
- Set conditional availability based on groups  
- Allow multiple attempts for group assignments (or allow individual submissions within a group)
- Adding students to groups after gradable activity is started  
- Students are not sorted by any logical method when instructors create Groups or Group Sets: They need a method to sort by name, child section (if merged with parent course), last access, etc. 
- Sort Group Sets by name, last access, etc.
- Instructors want Groups to have Collab recording privileges for assignment submissions

# Groups Use Cases

1. SCI100: Course with over 200 students has 12 different lab sections. Each lab section needs a group to organize/manage student assignments.
  - Enrollment varies with add/drops throughout the semester.
  - Instructor not able to create groups via a CSV file-upload so students self-enrolled
    - If students did not self-enroll in time, they were unable to receive a grade once the group started working on the assignment
2. Group assignments: Regardless of group creation/enrollment method, if new students enroll in the course, they cannot join a group assignment in progress.
3. Groups are not always about team-based activities -- Instructors use Groups to organize students for content distribution, communication & grading.
4. Merged courses require Conditional Availability to release content & assessments to Groups
  - A 1 PM course cannot access the test before the 10 AM course.

# Gradebook & Grading



## Feedback:

- Filter the gradebook by groups (Smart Views)  
- Point-based rubrics / lack of half-point option 
- Rubric evaluation report 
- Gradebook needs to support multiple grading approaches
  - Weighted, straight points, complete/incomplete, pass/fail
- Primary / secondary view (e.g., show letter & number/percentage)
  - Students only see a letter, which doesn't tell them the actual percentage or score they have in the course
- Provide more spreadsheet functionality (sort columns, sort by high/low grades; drop more than one grade, column statistics; sorting by student's first name or last name; hide all but one student's name (for individual meetings))
- Concern that gradebook weight does not equal calculations
- Weighted calculations are not accurate if grades are TBD
- Allow weighted total by columns & categories at same time
- Copy calculation to another column or course gradebook



# Gradebook & Grading

## Feedback (cont.)



- Add feedback for rubric criteria: Faculty would like to provide more granular feedback to students on key evaluation areas, but they have only entire assignment feedback to use
- Attach rubric to essay question on test
- No points rubric for ungraded assignments
- Faculty would like rubrics to display as a simple checklist OR as currently in Ultra with full descriptions: In large courses, a checklist rubric is faster to use for grading.
- Use tab on keyboard to navigate & enter next grade
- Display students in gradebook by Last-Name, First-Name (if 1 field) or Last-Name & First-Name (2 fields)
- Bulk apply date to offline assignment when grading 
- Cannot set up weighted categories unless there is an assignment in that category
- Ability to download only student information for external use (e.g. Scantrons) 
- Grade center history: Who modifies what grades and when? (see Original)

# Gradebook & Grading Use Cases

1. 13-15 quizzes in course; drop lowest 2-3
  - Can only drop 1 using a calculation
  - Not possible using the Overall Grade
2. Students email faculty to find out their actual grades since the Ultra gradebook only displays a letter.
  - The faculty modify the schema to show plus/minus, but it doesn't show the actual numeric value or percentage.
3. SCI100: Lack of gradebook smart views made it difficult to sort groups for instructor & TAs
4. Faculty have trouble finding students in a long list since the Gradebook displays First-Name Last-Name, yet sorts by last name. There is no option to sort by last name OR first name.
5. No downloadable/viewable Gradebook history: Our state auditors inquire about who enters/changes grades, when, etc. and this function is a very helpful tracking log.




# Tests (and Assignments)

Feedback:

- **Students cannot see grades if test or assignment is hidden**
- **Test delivery settings for academic integrity:** 
  - Open test on new page
  - Display only one question at a time, or options to have multiple pages (e.g. 10 questions per page)
  - Password protect tests
- **Feedback settings:**
  - Display correct answers on a particular date and time 
  - Provide feedback on incorrect answers per question
- Upload individual tests into Question Pools
- Instructor upload to SafeAssign via Direct Submit

# Tests (and Assignments)

Feedback (cont.):


- Prevent students from submitting late assignments 
- Students do not get a receipt for submitting assignments
- Present 3 questions to student to choose 1 to complete for grade
- Create assignment for some students, but not all 
- Students want a simple assignment upload
- Create pass/fail or complete/incomplete assignments (without modifying the entire gradebook schema) 

# Tests (and Assignment) Use Cases

1. Display questions one at a time for test integrity or to simulate certification exams
2. Test grades are unavailable to students if the test availability is expired (e.g., date)  
Grades should always be available whether or not the test (or assignment) is visible
3. Faculty want to have ungraded or complete/incomplete assignments.
  - Ungraded is possible with zero point assignments, but cannot be tagged as complete/incomplete without modifying the entire gradebook schema.

# Engagement & Communication

## Feedback:

- Send announcement via email
- Subject line in messages sent to students
- Subscribe to discussion boards
- Anonymous discussion boards
- Workflow to grade discussions are not similar to other graded items
- Formatting announcements like messages
- When message sent via email, reply to needs to reflect instructor
- Ability to see which students have read announcements
- Send messages to TAs, other instructors, all students, or groups 
- Search function needed for Messages

# Engagement & Communication Use Cases

1. Announcements are heavily used - faculty need an option to email them to students.
  - Current workaround: Faculty copy/paste to message and then check box to email.
2. Although the activity stream shows when new discussions are posted, faculty like to have an email subscription for direct notifications to specific threads/boards
3. Journals are a frequently requested item for several courses including SCI100 (large enrollment) and most sections of First Year Experience.
4. The Original peer assessment tool was not used often because it was very clunky to use and was prone to bugs; however, this type of assessment is something we'd like to see supported.

# Content Creation & Management

## Feedback:

- Additional formatting options:
  - **Right to left text alignment** (ARBC, CHIN, HEBR)
  - Resizing / aligning images
  - HTML embed
  - Tables (even simple/limited would be helpful)
- Add direct LTI link in Document (vs. LTI Item via Content Market)
- **Copying rubrics to another course** (or sharing with other instructors)
- Open modules in new tab / page
- **Download files without clicking on overflow menu (...)**
- **Top menu icons need labels**
- **Difficulty moving content using drag & drop**



# Content Creation & Management

## Feedback:

- Conditional availability based on “Mark Reviewed”
- Files are hidden by default
- Allow deep linking or links to specific course content
- Release files embedded in Document based on Conditional Availability

# Content Creation & Management Use Cases

1. File downloads are treated inconsistently, which is very frustrating for students. Files in a Document use the overflow menu (...) to download while files in a Folder can be clicked.
2. Faculty share rubrics between courses and with other instructors. There is no easy way to copy or distribute rubrics in Ultra.
3. Certain language courses (ARBC, CHIN, HEBR) require right to left alignment to present content, demonstrate best practices, accept student work, etc.

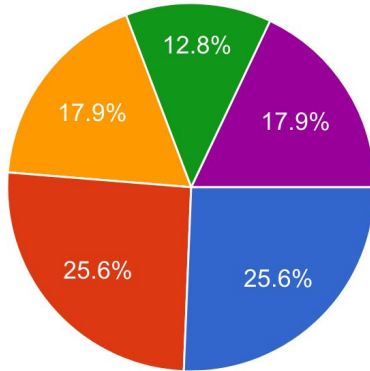
Related: Language courses where students need to draw or handwrite characters (ARBC, CHIN, HEBR, JPNS, KORE, RUSS) to demonstrate competency would really love a way to input student work in an assignment. Collab recording or handwriting recognition? Our faculty are willing to partner & test different options!

Would you recommend Ultra to a colleague?

39 responses

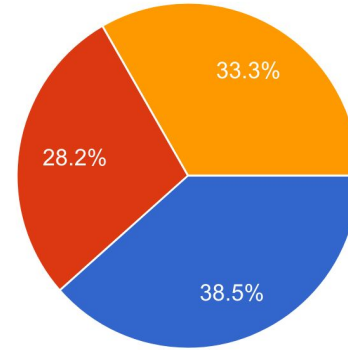
# SP2019 Faculty Survey

How did Ultra compare with the original Blackboard course?  
39 responses



- I liked it a lot.
- I liked it a little.
- I'm not sure yet how I feel about it.
- I'll get used to it.
- I didn't like it.

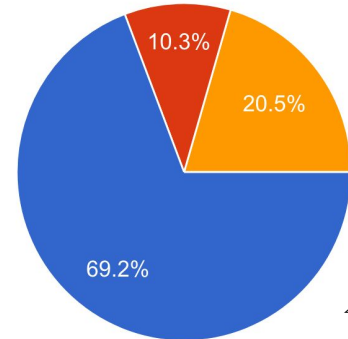
[View full results](#)



- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Would you use Ultra again in your course?


39 responses



- Yes
- No
- Maybe

[Back to Summary](#)

# BONUS: Our Ultra Admin Wishlist

1. **Admin quick-enroll** (currently supported in Original Bb)  
Achievements via Credly (currently supported in Original Bb) - see [UMBC badges](#)  
Guest access (currently supported in Original Bb)
2. Blueprint courses - [enable](#) courses, [lockdown content](#) & [sync content](#) (see Canvas)  
[Instructor-driven](#) course/section merge (see Canvas: [admin doc](#))   
What-if calculator for students ([see Canvas](#))
3. Learning Object Repository - reusable content, updated across courses (see ANGEL)  
Automations for if/then actions in course ([see ANGEL](#))