Making a start in Blackboard

An introduction to Blackboard

Contents

SECTION 1 – Logging into Blackboard

The first step in using Blackboard Learn is to log in on the **Learning Place** page. Your school will provide the URL, username, and password.

> **IMPORTANT!** Passwords enable access to personal information. To maintain security do not share passwords with others.

Frequently Asked Question

What do I do if I can't log in?

Please contact the IT support person at your school. If you're not sure how to contact them, look for the technology office on your school's website or search the web for your *school's name* + *Blackboard* + *help* or *support*.

When you log onto Blackboard you screen will be similar to this:
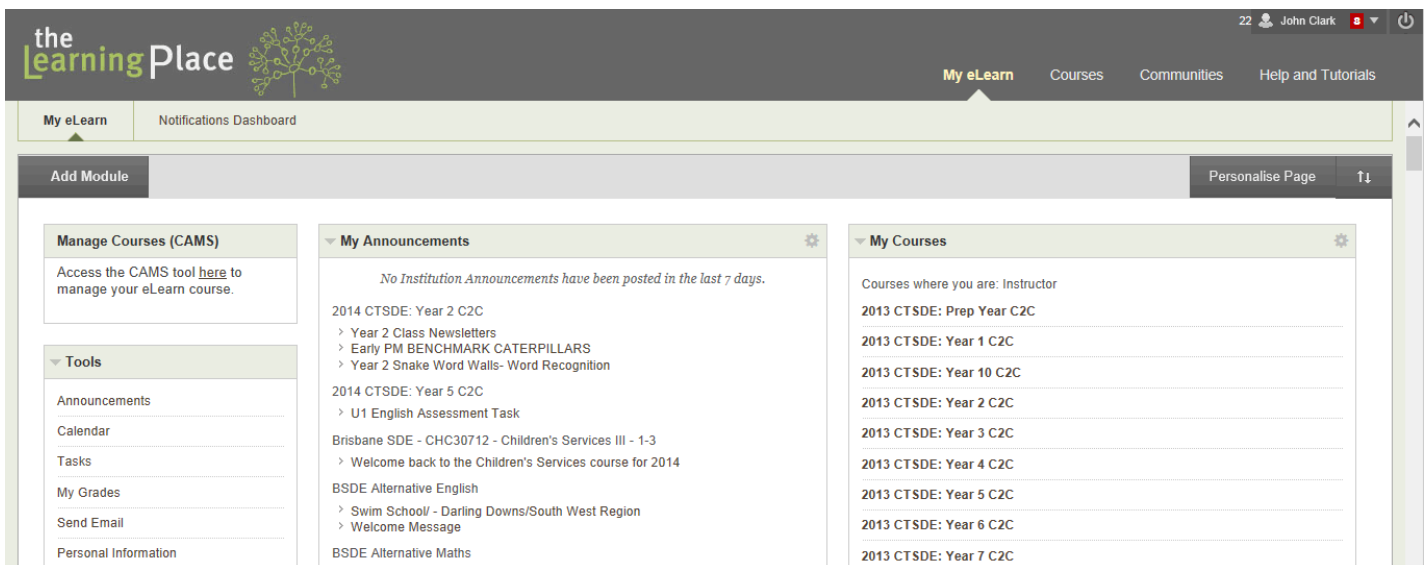
SECTION 2 – Overview of interface

The first page you will see after logging in will be similar to the screen below:
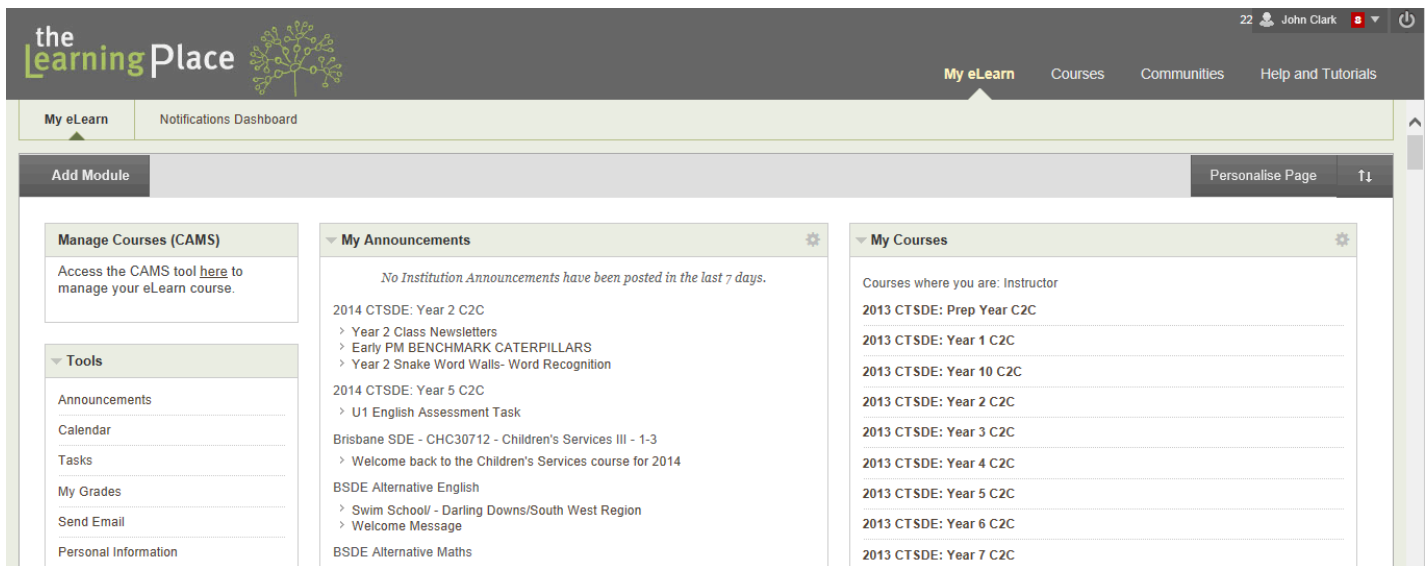
The main tabs contain key information depending on your role as follows:

My Courses
This section displays the list of courses that you have access to (as shown on the right of the image.)

My Announcements
This section displays the announcements that come from any of the courses you are enrolled in. It provides up to the minute access to news from your teachers and trainers.


Customise the screen layout
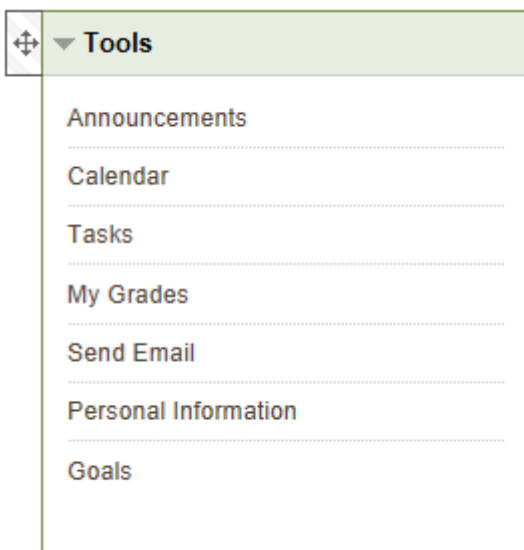
1. Move your mouse pointer over the blue banner of the block you wish to move. Your cursor will change to a cross shape.

2. Click and hold the left mouse button.

3. Drag your mouse to move the block around the screen.

4. Release the left mouse button to drop the block into place.

Course Layout

After logging in, click on any course on the "My Courses" page that appears.

You will be taken to the Home Page of your course.
Note: The default home page is not the first page of your content. It is an information page for announcements, events etc, that are specific to this course only.
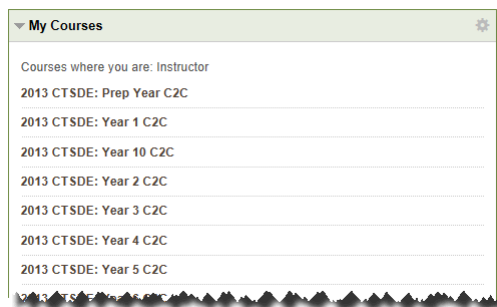
Your Home Page will look similar to the image below. Review the key on the image to find out more about each area of your course screen.
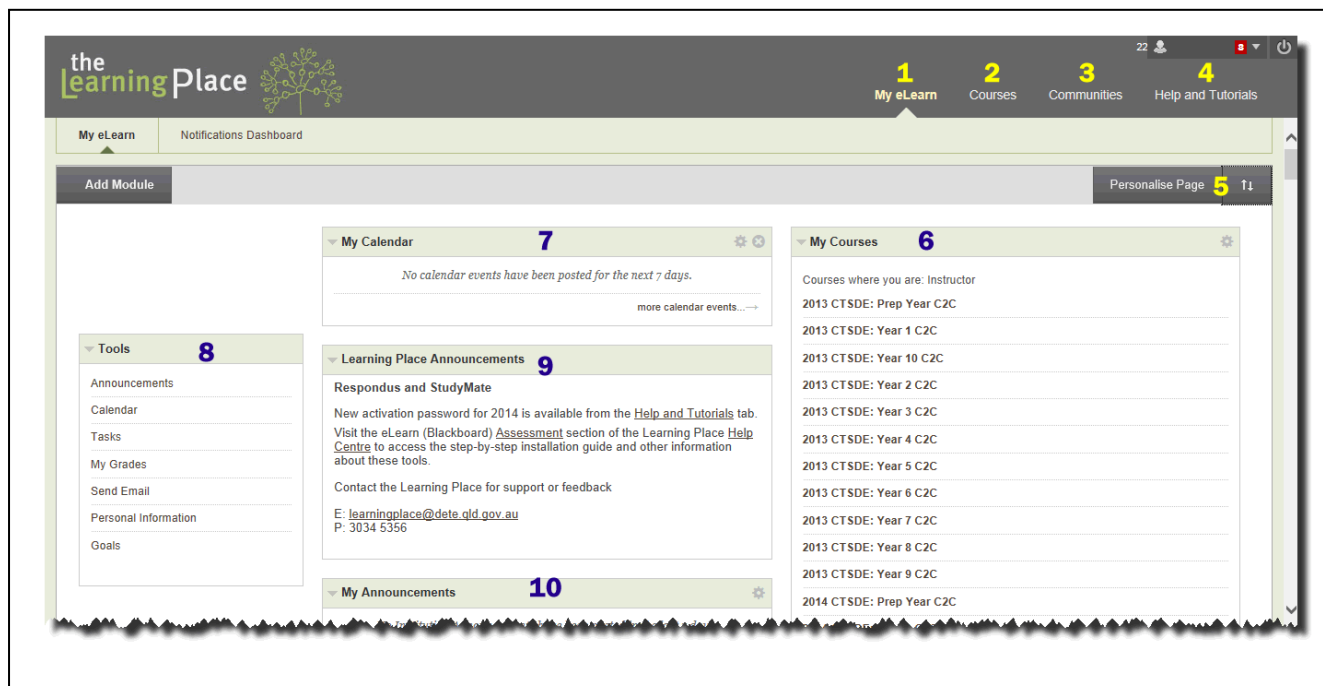
1. **My eLearn** – Your home page in Blackboard.

2. **Courses -** This area contains the courses you are enrolled in. There is a search function in here.

3. **Communities** – This section lists the learning communities you are engaged in.

4. **Help** – There are links and videos here to help you with learning how to use Blackboard.

5. **Personalise Page** – Here are tools to help you personalize how your page looks in Blackboard.

6. **My Courses -** This area contains the courses you are enrolled in.

7. **My Calendar** – This provides you with a calendar to use when planning your courses and assessments.

8. **Tools** – This provides you with access to a number of tools you can use within Blackboard such as email, blogs, wikis, etc.

9. **Learning Place Announcements** – Notices about what is happening (e.g. breaks, etc.) about the Learning Place are posted here.

SECTION 3 – Managing Tools

There are many tools available in Blackboard and the ones to be used in your course will have been turned on by the teacher/trainer.

Available Tools

Announcements

Announcements post timely information critical to Course success. The Teacher can add, edit, and delete announcements from the Announcements page. This is where time-sensitive material is posted such as:
- When Assignments are due
- Changes in the syllabus
- Corrections/clarifications of materials
- Exam schedules

Blogs

A Blog—a shorthand term that means Web log—is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. In Blackboard Learn, only enrolled users can view and author Blogs. Blogs encourage students to clearly express their ideas and addresses the need to expand various aspects of social learning. Blogs are an effective means of gaining insight into students' activities and provide a way to share the knowledge and materials collected. An teacher may choose to allow students to participate in Blogs in three ways:
- Course Blogs: Only the teacher can create a Course Blog and determines the topic to be addressed. All course members can add Blog entries and add comments to Blog entries.
- Individual Blogs: Only the teacher can create a Blog for individual course members to use. Only the owner of the Blog is able to add Blog entries. All other course members can view and add comments.
- Group Blogs: If the teacher enables the Blogs tool for the Group, all Group members can add Blog entries and make comments on Blog entries, building upon one another. Any course member can view Group Blogs, but can only add comments. A Group Blog is different from a threaded discussion as each entry does not need to continue the discussion of the previous entry, but can be a complete thought on its own.

The Teacher can edit and delete entries in any of the three Blog types and delete user comments.

Collaboration Tools

The Collaboration Tools allow users to participate in real-time lessons and discussions. Examples of these sessions include real-time, online classroom discussions, guest speaker led sessions, Teaching Assistant sessions, and live question-and-answer sessions. Recordings of sessions are created and made available for review.

Contacts

Contacts is a place where Teachers can add profile information about themselves and other staff that is distributed to students. This is a good place to add officer hours, phone numbers, and other links to help students identify people who have a role in the Course.

Course Calendar

Teachers can use the Course Calendar to list important Course related events. The dates and events that appear on the Calendar are for all users in the Course. Some typical items Teachers may include in the Course Calendar are:
   * Section meetings
   * Assignment due dates

* Exams
* Guest speakers

Discussion Board

The Discussion Board is a tool for sharing thoughts and ideas about class materials. The Discussion Board is made up of Forums that may appear anywhere in the Course but are also all centrally located in the Discussion Board tool. Course Groups can have their own Discussion Boards.

Glossary

Each Course has its own Glossary of terms. Each entry consists of the term and an accompanying definition. The Glossary must be enabled by the teacher before students can view it.

Journals

The Journals tool offers students the opportunity to reflect on course content and communicate privately with the teacher. Teachers can use the tool to gauge understanding and guide students in their knowledge acquisition. Teacher comments can help students refine their writing and ideas.

Messages

Messages are private and secure text-based communication that occurs within a course and among course members. Although similar to email, users must be logged into the course to read and send Messages.

Send Email

Teachers can send email to individuals who participate in the Course from the Send Email page. Emails are sent to individual users or to groups of users within the Course, such as all Teaching Assistants. A copy of this email is sent to the sender by default.

Tasks

The Tasks page organizes projects or activities (referred to as tasks) by defining task priority and tracking task status. A user can create tasks and post them to the Tasks page. Each user can post personal tasks to their page. Teachers can post tasks to users participating in their courses. Task information is arranged in columns that display the priority, task name, status, and due date.

Wikis

Wikis is a collaborative tool that allows students to contribute and modify one or more pages of course related materials, providing a means of sharing and collaboration. Pages can be created and edited quickly, while tracking changes and additions, allowing for effective collaboration between multiple writers. The teacher can create one or more Wikis for all course members to contribute to and Wikis for specific Groups to use to collaborate. Wikis can also be used to record information and serve as a repository for course information and knowledge.