

# Steps For Preparing Your Course For The New Semester

## A Quick Guide for CT State Instructors

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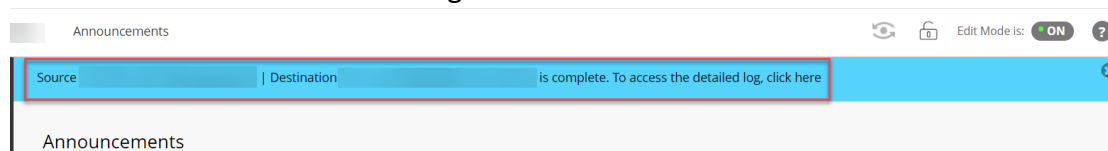
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This guide begins by making the assumption that you have already copied the contents from one shell to another and are ready to begin preparing your new semesters course after the copy process has been completed. (The Course Copy Process in Blackboard: [https://bor.ct.edu/academics/blackboard/faculty/docs/Bb%20Learn%20docs/CourseCopyProcessInBlackboardLearn\\_JOB%20AID.pdf](https://bor.ct.edu/academics/blackboard/faculty/docs/Bb%20Learn%20docs/CourseCopyProcessInBlackboardLearn_JOB%20AID.pdf))

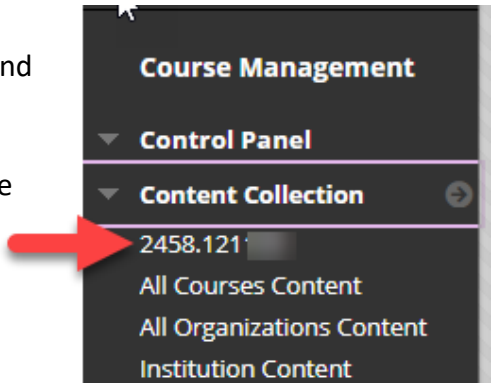
### Be Sure the Course Copy Process is Finished

- There will be a blue bar located at the top of the course entry page that will tell you if the copy is done. If not don’t start working in the course until done.



## Check the Content Collection

- Make sure all your files came over properly by going to the **Control Panel** and clicking the **Content Collection** link to expand the options under that item.
- Choose the first course in the list (it will be the name of you're the section you are in).
- **If your Content Collection is showing as empty, do not recopy the course.**
- Check with your college's Educational Technology Director or Campus Lead Coordinator for next steps.

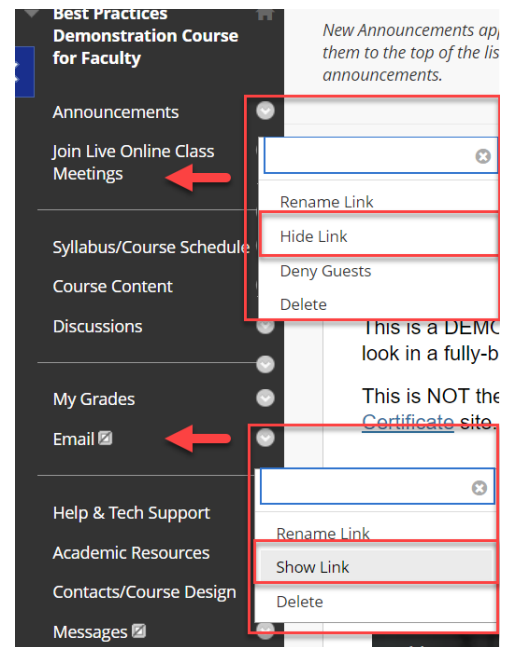


## Review and Revise Your Course Menu

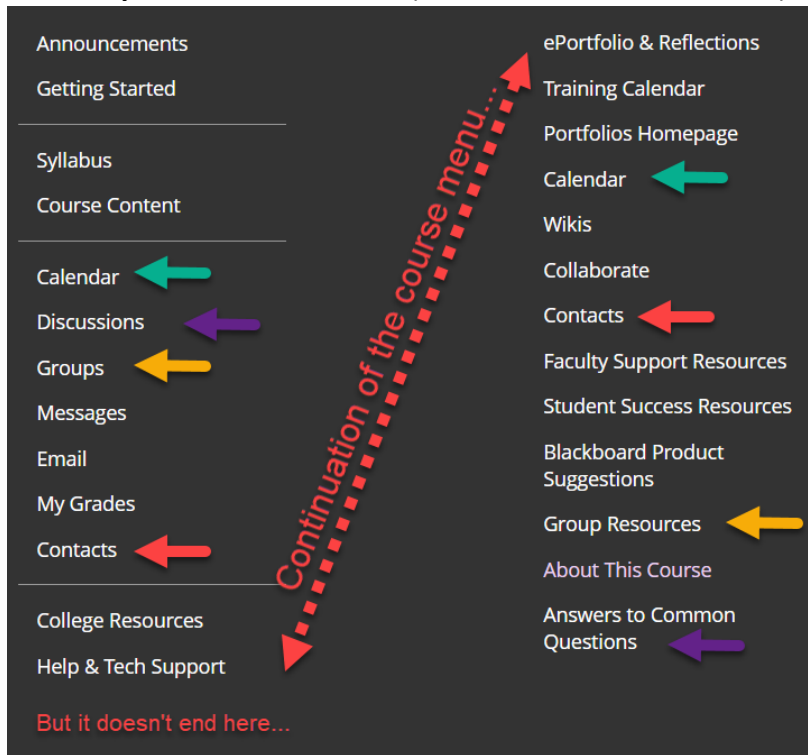
- Hide or unhide course menu items as needed.
- Delete duplicate menu items that appear on the menu.
  - Remember: Every campuses *course template* may be different.
- *Be sure to delete items from the template that you are not using, by clicking the dropdown arrow next to each menu item and then deleting (or hiding) the duplicated item.*

Below is a picture of what one copied course's **Course Menu** looked like after copying into the template shell! As you can see, work needs to be done to clean up this menu.

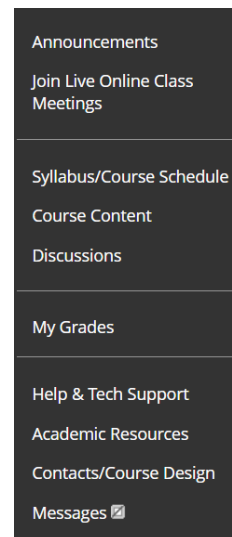
- Duplicate items (shown with arrows) should be deleted
- The course menu should be organized more appropriately to include **ONLY** those items and tools that are essential to the learning process when students first login.
- Other items should be linked to from within other content areas or tools so that students are not overwhelmed when they first login to the course.



## Before Example of a Course Menu: (Not ideal for student success)



## After Example of a Course Menu: (Best Practices for Student Success)



## Review All Content and Tools in Your Course

Now it's time to click on each button on your course menu and check the tool or content it leads to.

### Update Announcements

- Be sure to delete or modify the default announcement that appears in your course template, and create your own personalized "Welcome" announcement to tell students how to get started.
- If you copied your Announcements from a previous term and you plan to re-use them, check them carefully to be sure outdated information is not included.
  - *Time-saving Tip:* Think about ways that you can modify your announcements to eliminate the need to always change due dates or times each term. Can you remind students about an upcoming submission without referencing the specific date? If not, be sure to always put information that needs to be changed in a specific color or font, so that it will be easy to identify and change each time you copy the announcements.
- Delete any announcements that are no longer needed.

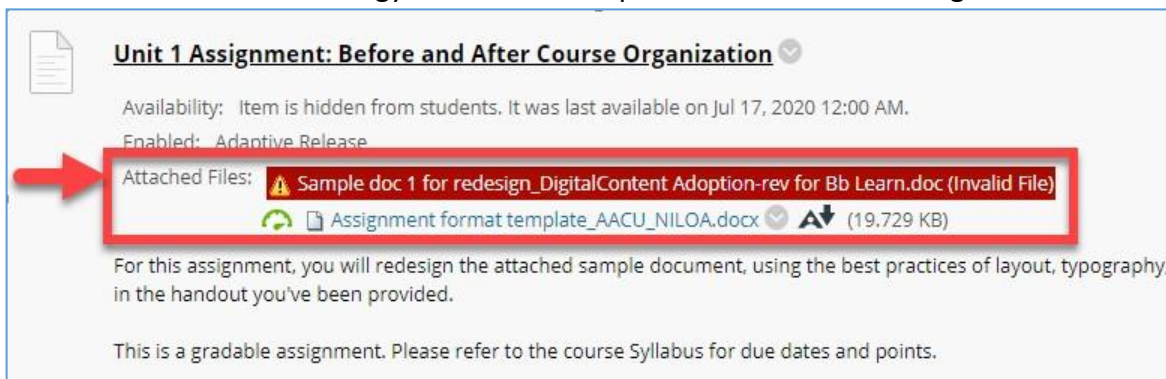
- If you copied your Announcements from a previous term, you can use the [Date Management](#) tool (Control Panel> Course Tools > Date Management) to automatically change all of the announcement release dates.
- Use *Student Preview* to make sure only the correct announcements are displaying to students.

### **Add a new Syllabus**

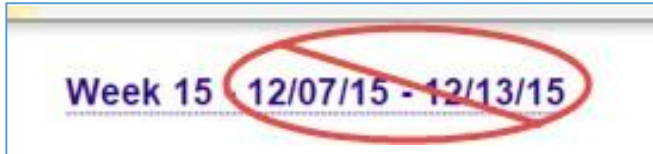
- Upload your current syllabus and be sure old ones are deleted.
  - You should check that the old version is delete from the “Syllabus” content area as well as from the Content Collection. ([Check the Content Collection](#) section above)
- Be sure to include current Contact information and Office Hours.
- Confirm textbook/materials information is up to date.

### **Check Course Materials and Activities**

- **Is all content visible** to students that should be for the start of the course (folders, modules, documents, etc.)?
- **Make sure all documents open correctly.** If you see “Invalid link” after a document that file will need to be relinked in that area. You may see a message like the one shown below next to uploaded files, or in blank pages, items, assignments, or discussions with attached files.
  - If you see many documents with “Invalid file” alert after the link, there must have been problems copying some files over when your course was copied. Speak to your Campus Educational Technology Director or Campus Lead Coordinator for guidance.



- Make sure all **Web Links** are valid by clicking on them. If the website can no longer be found, either find an alternate site or remove the link.
- If you type date information into the titles of folders, modules, or documents, be sure these are updated. However, we strongly recommend that you do NOT include dates in these titles. Instead, we recommend referring students to the syllabus or course outline where the schedule of activities can be found.

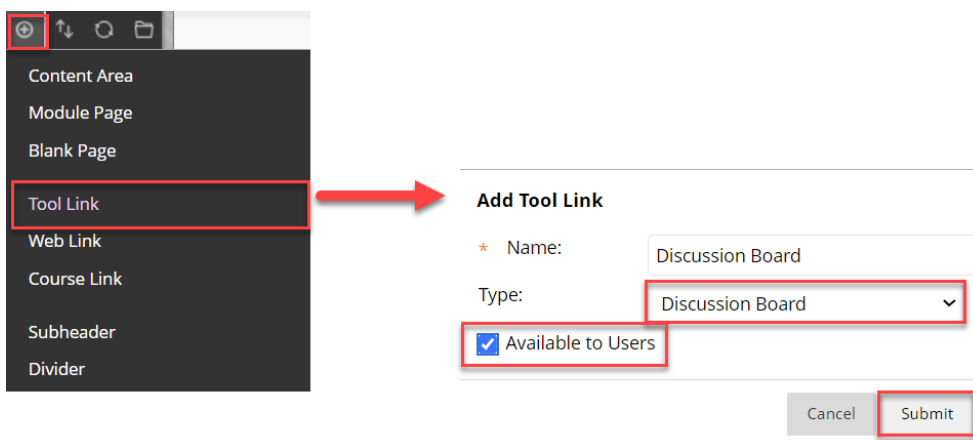


- **TIME SAVING TIP! When naming Content Folders, items, assignments, etc. we highly recommend that you not include dates specific to one term.** Doing so will make cleanup of your course for the following semester much more time consuming. In the example above, the folder could be named just *Week 15*.
  - Your Course Syllabus should be the “Dates go-to resource” for students: Instead of replicating dates in items, folders, tests, assignments, etc., simply include ALL course dates (release dates, due dates, etc.) in your course Syllabus and remind students that they MUST check that. *Then you just have to update dates in ONE PLACE at the beginning of each term. This can also avoid errors.*
  - If you also teach the course in the summer, naming by week can also be problematic—consider naming folders or modules “Unit 15” or “Module 15” instead.

### Discussion Boards

- Sometimes when a course is copied, the button to “Discussions” that had appeared on the course copied course’s menu is NOT copied, but the discussions themselves ARE copied.
  - It’s easy to check this by going to Control Panel>Course Tools>Discussion Board. If your forums are there, then just the button is missing.
  - WATCH A VIDEO: [Discussions Not Displaying After Course Copy](#)

To fix this, just add back the button to the Discussion Board tool on your menu.



- Be sure to drag the link to the Discussion Board forum from the bottom of the course menu to the correct location on your menu, with other tools.

- When you copied your course, you were asked to select from two options:
  - *Include starter posts for each thread in each forum (anonymized)*: If you selected this option, you may wish to go into each forum and select yourself as the poster. Alternatively, if you selected this option in error, you may wish to DELETE the starter posts.
  - *Include only the forums, with no starter posts*: If you selected this post, you should check your discussions but you should not need to update anything.
- Be sure to check any Group discussion forums as well--this can only be done via the "Groups" tool. You may need to clean up old discussion posts in them, as well.
- If you use date availability settings on your discussions, ensure that your dates are set and match the dates in your syllabus.

### ***Assignments***

- Make sure all Assignments copied over correctly.
- Check assignment directions. Changed/update these directions in the instructions field, as appropriate.
- Adjust the dates and times at which assignments appear (“display after”) and disappear from students’ view (“display until”) to reflect the dates of the current semester.
  - **Note:** You can manually update all dates, OR you can use the *Date Management* tool (*Control Panel>Course Tools>Date Management*). It will update all assignment Due dates, OR you can update them manually.
  - **Note:** The Due Date is the date and time after which assignments are marked as late. Setting a due date does not prevent a student from viewing or submitting an assignment late.

### ***Tests, Quizzes, Exams***

- If you are using the *Date Management* tool, it will update all Test dates, OR you can update them manually.
- Be sure to check and adjust all test release dates and/or adaptive release settings -- the dates and times at which tests appear (or display after) and disappear from student view (or display until) to echo the stated dates in your syllabus.
- Update test due dates as required in the Test Options (i.e., the dates and times at which test are marked as late), if applicable.
  - **Note:** Setting a due date does not prevent a student from attempting a test/quiz after that date and time. In order to prevent a student from starting the test after the due date, you must select the checkbox for “Do not allow students to start the Test if the due date has passed. Students will be unable to start the Test if this option is selected.”

- Check test instructions to be sure they are OK as is.

### Check “My Grades” and “Grade Center”

- Using *Student Preview*, check “My Grades” to be sure grade columns are not showing that you do not want students to see. If there are redundant, old, or erroneous columns showing to students, hide them from students (Show/Hide to Users) or better yet, delete them! See your local Educational Technology Director or Campus Lead Coordinator for assistance if needed.
- If you manually create your grade center columns, be sure that the point values that you have entered into your Grade Center columns are still accurate and up to date, and match whatever you have listed in your Syllabus.
- If you manually create your grade center columns, be sure that you have created columns for any NEW gradable activities.
- Make any adjustments to grade weighting, if need be. For example, if you have added any new gradable assessments, be SURE that they have been assigned to the correct Category in Grade Center if you use calculated weighted columns for grade calculations.
- Reorder grade columns so students see them (top to bottom) in My Grades in the correct date order for the course.
- A really easy way to see all of your columns in one place, included points assigned, naming, due date, and column order, is to click the “Manage” button then “Column Organization.” To re- order columns, just click and drag them into the order you want students to see them in (from top to bottom) in “My Grades.”

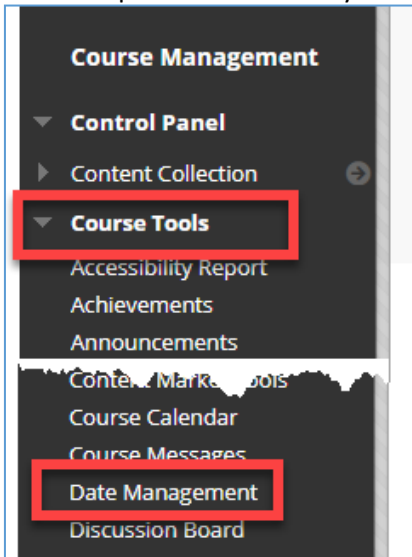
The screenshot shows the 'Grade Center : Full Grade Center' interface. The 'Manage' dropdown menu is open, and 'Column Organization' is highlighted. Below the menu is a table of grade center columns. A red callout box with a speech bubble points to a small icon in the first column of the table, containing the following text:

Mouse over this icon, left-click, and drag to re-order your columns in the order in which you want students to see them in My Grades, from top to bottom.

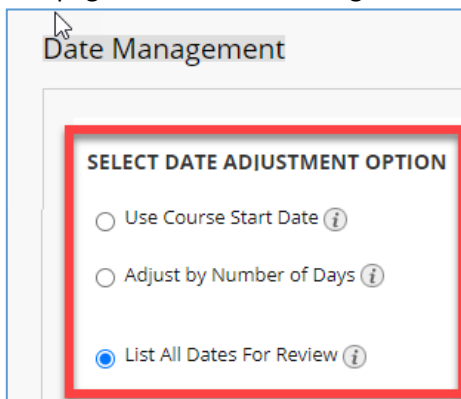
Name	Grading Period	Category	Due Date	Date Created	Points Possible
Letter Grade	Grading Period	Calculated Grade		Sep 30, 2018	95.99999 (may vary by student)
Final wEx	Grading Period	Calculated Grade		Oct 2, 2018	95.99999 (may vary by student)
Extra Cre	Grading Period	No Category	None	Sep 30, 2018	0
Weight	Grading Period	Calculated Grade		None	95.99999 (may vary by student)
Total Score (External Grade)	Not in a Grading Period	Calculated Grade		None	1000 (may vary by student)
Quiz 1	Not in a Grading Period	Quizzes	None	Sep 5, 2018	100
Quiz 2	Not in a Grading Period	Quizzes	None	Sep 5, 2018	100
Quiz 3	Not in a Grading Period	Quizzes	None	Sep 5, 2018	100
Quiz 4	Not in a Grading Period	Quizzes	None	Sep 12, 2018	100
U1 Assign#1	Not in a Grading Period	Assignment	Dec 28, 2018	None	100

## Review Date Management to Resync Release Dates

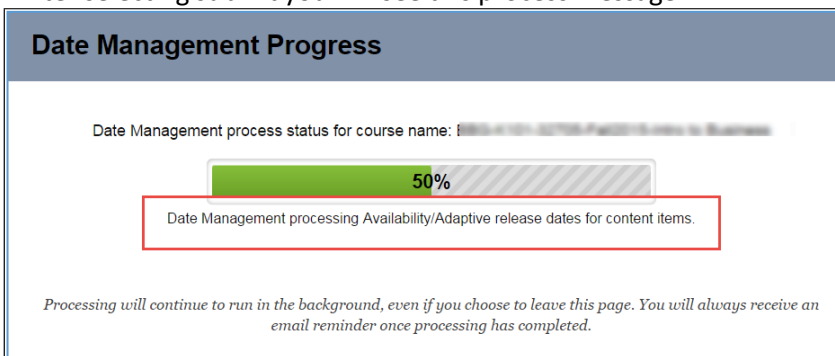
- You can update ALL dates in your course using the Date Management tool:



- You can update your Availability/Adaptive Release dates by term, number of days, or start of course date. We recommend selecting the “List All Dates for Review” option, as this brings everything up on one page to look at and change.

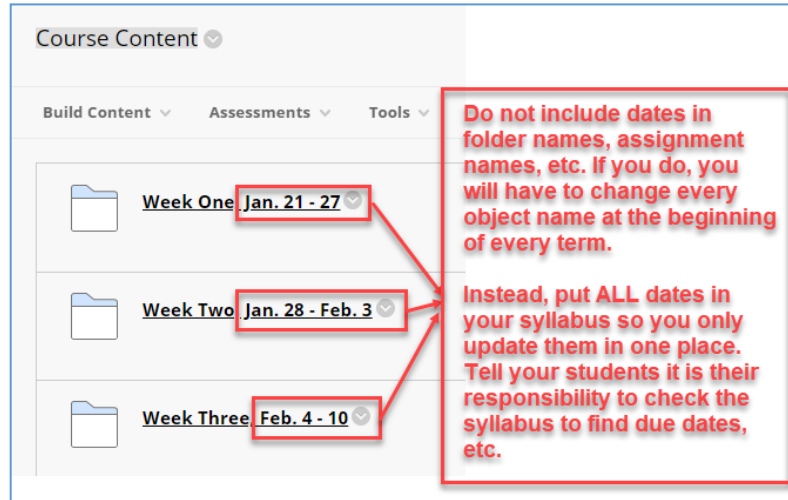


- After selecting submit you will see this process message.



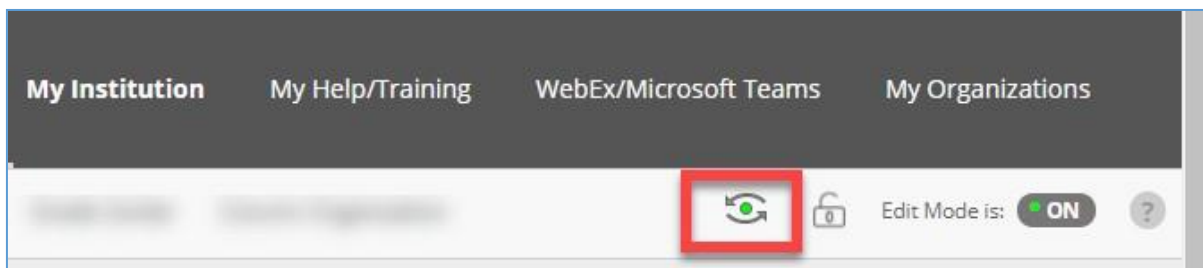


- In the example below, the release date of the folder has been updated. But the name of the folder will have to be changed because it has specific dates in the name.
  - **As mentioned earlier in this document, when naming content folders, pages, assignments, discussions, etc. we strongly recommend that you do NOT enter dates as part of the name.** Doing so will make clean-up the next semester much more time consuming, because the name of every single folder will need to be changed. Far better to simply put ALL dates in your Syllabus and tell students to look there.



## Use *Student Preview* to Check Your Course from a Student's Perspective!

- Make sure everything that should be showing to students is showing (content files, tools announcements). Note: Every time you add new content or tools to your course you should always check *Student Preview* when you are done. This confirms that Students are viewing the correct information.



## Now You Can Make New Revisions or Course Updates

- You should now be set to focus on anything new that will be added to your course for the new semester!