

Blackboard To Moodle Content Transfer Tool Updates: Development Brief

Over the course of time, many of those using the Blackboard to Moodle Content Transfer Tool have requested revisions to the tool to make it more robust and user-friendly. Of the issues gathered from users, ten issues were selected as the most pressing, as they represented bugs in the system (i.e. issues that do not function as intended or as users would expect them to function). The enhancements include cleaner import of quizzes; accurate transfer of correct answers to T/F quiz questions; eliminating file concatenation problems during transfer; eliminating truncation of descriptive text summaries during transfer; and streamlining the user interface to the tool.

Issue # 1: Importing Quizzes

Status: Resolved

Originally, the tool only transferred quiz pool questions into Moodle quiz categories. This appeared to be done by design. In the Blackboard archive, both quizzes and quiz pools are stored in separate files. In parsing through all the files, we determine whether the file is a "Pool" type or a "Test" type. If it is a "Pool" type, then the file describes a quiz pool and continues as the tool had before, transferring quiz question and quiz pool information. If the file describes a test, then we create a temp file for the quiz, extract and transform the necessary data and a quiz gets placed by the tool as it would any other module.

Only certain questions from Blackboard are mapped to Moodle. The tool was originally created to transfer Blackboard 6.x content to Moodle 1.4.x. Only the Blackboard questions that were available to the original developer were considered. Those same questions are currently supported with this fix: Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer, True / False, Fill in the Blank, Matching, and Ordering.

Issue # 2: True / False Questions answers inaccurate

Status: Extensive testing determined this was not an issue

It was reported that the True / False Questions were not being transferred accurately, that is, questions where the answers should be true are false and vice versa. To verify this, we created a test file with a number of true / false questions that we then imported from Blackboard using the Blackboard to Moodle CTT. The results were that all the questions appeared to import properly, regardless of the size of the quiz or the quiz pool.

Issue #3: Filenames concatenated

Status: Resolved

In Blackboard, a resource can contain more than one file. For example, a course could have a resource called Handouts and the resource would display several links to course handouts. Originally, the CTT did not recognize that a resource could include more than one file. Now, when it does recognize that a resource includes multiple files, it imports it as a directory with several files instead of just a link to a single file where the referred to file is the name of all the files concatenated together.

Issue # 4: File's descriptive text in summary and truncated

Status: Resolved

Originally, the CTT truncated summary text to 100 characters. We've increased that limit to 100,000 characters.

Issue #5: Only works on specific version of Tomcat (4.5) & Java & Java 2 connector

Status: Unresolved, refer to <http://moodleconverter.lsu.edu>.

This issue has been tabled in light of the work that Louisiana State University has done to make a Blackboard 6.3 to Moodle 1.8 Content Transfer Tool that works on the most recent version of Tomcat (6.0) and Java

Issue #6: Cannot run indefinitely

Status: Extensive testing determined this was not an issue

The Blackboard to Moodle conversion tool should be able to run indefinitely without crashing or restarting. However indefinitely is immeasurable, so we selected a reasonable and arbitrarily large number of iterations that we believe to be an acceptable and expected number the tool should be able to convert: 100 consecutive Blackboard Archives without crashing or noticeable performance degradation. The Blackboard Archive files can range from 50 KB to 50 MB.

Issue #7: Difficulty with large BB courses

Status: Extensive testing determined this was not an issue

As expected, users trying to transfer larger courses may have difficulty with that task. We set out to determine the limits to which the tool can transfer data before the tool becomes so slow, it becomes impossible to bear.

Issue #8: Ampersand/Special characters in the course name

Status: Resolved

The Blackboard Archive replaces special characters in the course name with the escaped versions of the characters. In this case, the & in some course names is converted to &

Issue #9: Files that remain in temp directory cannot be re-uploaded

Status: Resolved

This was an issue that could not be reproduced. Assuming the root of the cause was that the temp folders still existed in the output directory, we worked to resolve this by cleaning up the output directory and reducing the likelihood of collisions.

Issue # 10: Streamline interface - provide default values

Status: Resolved

- Removed option of selecting grade book; most Moodle installations do not have the option of a 2 different grade books.
- Set default number of topics to 20
- Set default start date of course to Jan 1, 2007

This will help to streamline the process for those who don't wish to set these settings now and wish to change the settings later in Moodle and to remove settings that no longer make sense for the user.

This work is being released under GPL license and was completed with the support of a Mellon Award for Technology Collaboration.