

SECTION 9

BLACKBOARD AND E-LEARNING STUDENT GUIDE

9.1 OVERVIEW OF E-LEARNING AT VU

As a student, you will be expected to remain up to date with classes and coursework. You may be expected to stay up to date with your studies by using online and e-Learning tools.

Online tools help you to do things like:

- Receive important updates, communication and feedback from teachers
- Receive important information from Victoria University
- Submit assignments
- Discuss coursework with other students

Some of these tools include:

- **Blackboard** (WebCT): VU's Learning Management System
- **My ePortfolio** (PebblePad): an e-portfolio and professional development tool
- **Lecture recordings** (ReVU / Lectopia): video recordings of lectures and presentations

The **MyVU Portal** allows you to access the above tools as well as grades and timetable rosters. For further information on the MYVU Portal, please see **Section 7** of this guide.

For further information regarding e-Learning tools including those listed above and others, please see the Learning and Teaching Portal: <http://tls.vu.edu.au/portal/site/technology/overview.aspx>

9.2 BLACKBOARD (WEBCT)

9.2.1 WHAT IS BLACKBOARD?

Blackboard (formerly WebCT) is VU's Learning Management System and the main tool used to support e-Learning. Depending on what courses and information your teacher has set up within Blackboard and wants you to access, you may be using Blackboard for the following tasks:

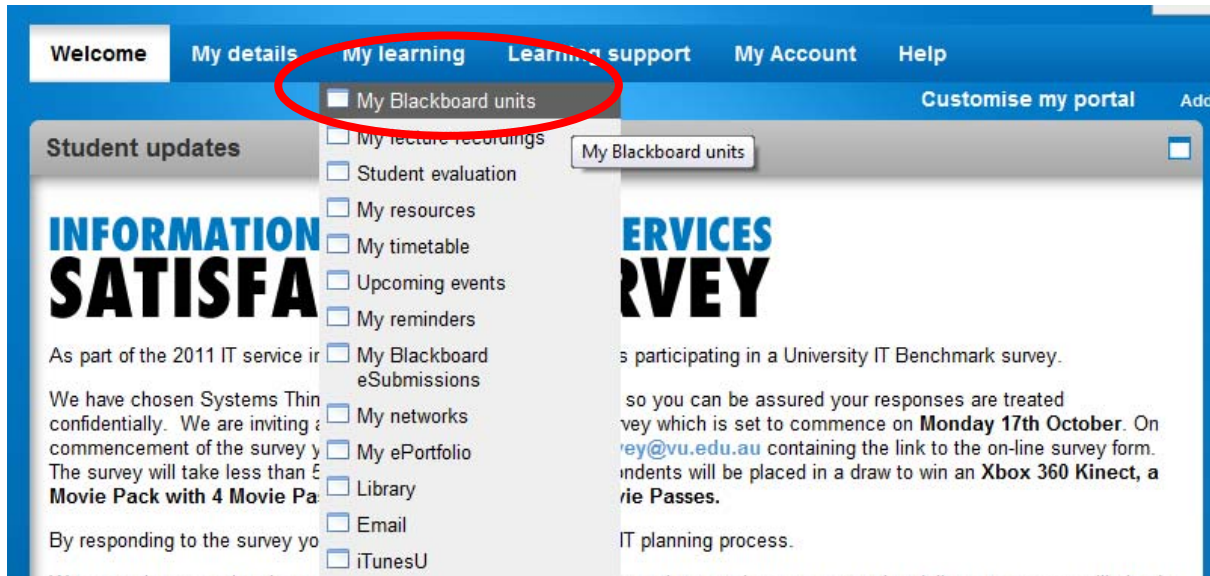
- Access class materials (such as unit guides, lecture slides, links to websites, PowerPoint slideshows, Word documents, videos)
- Uploading assignments
- Performing online quizzes, tests or other assessment tasks
- Discussing class material with your teacher or others online (through things like chat or discussion boards)
- Receiving information and updates
- Feedback regarding assignments and grades

Please note: Not all subjects will have corresponding Blackboard units. If you have logged in to Blackboard and a unit is not visible or available to you, we recommend contacting your teacher or tutor first to check that there is a Blackboard unit for that course.

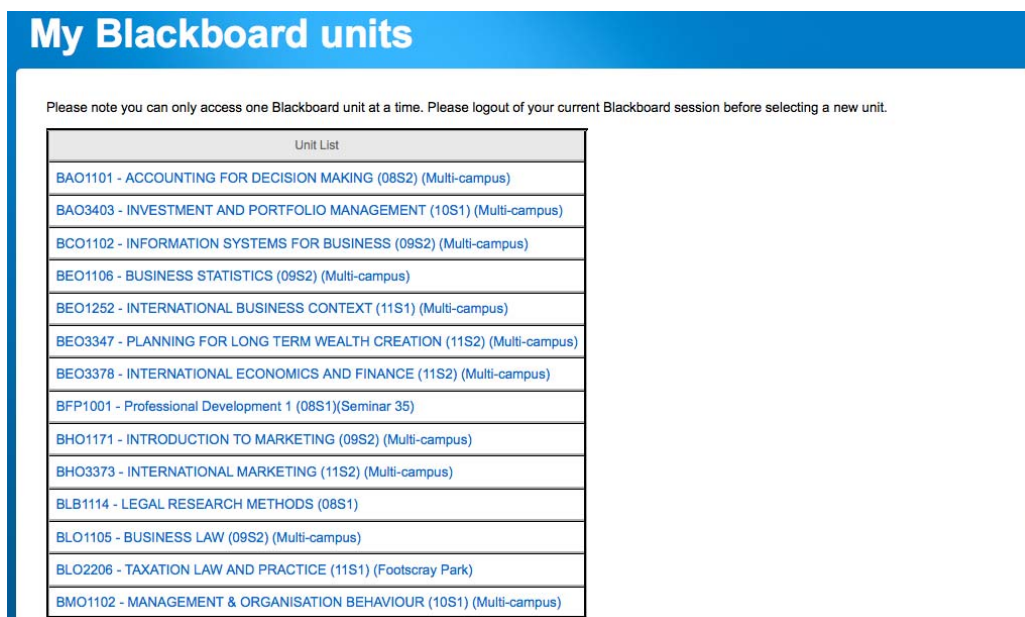
9.2.2 LOGGING INTO BLACKBOARD

In order to access Blackboard, login via the MyVU Portal (<http://myvuportal.vu.edu.au/>). For information on how to use the MyVU Portal, please see **Section 7** of this document.

Once logged in, mouse over **My learning** and select **My Blackboard units**.



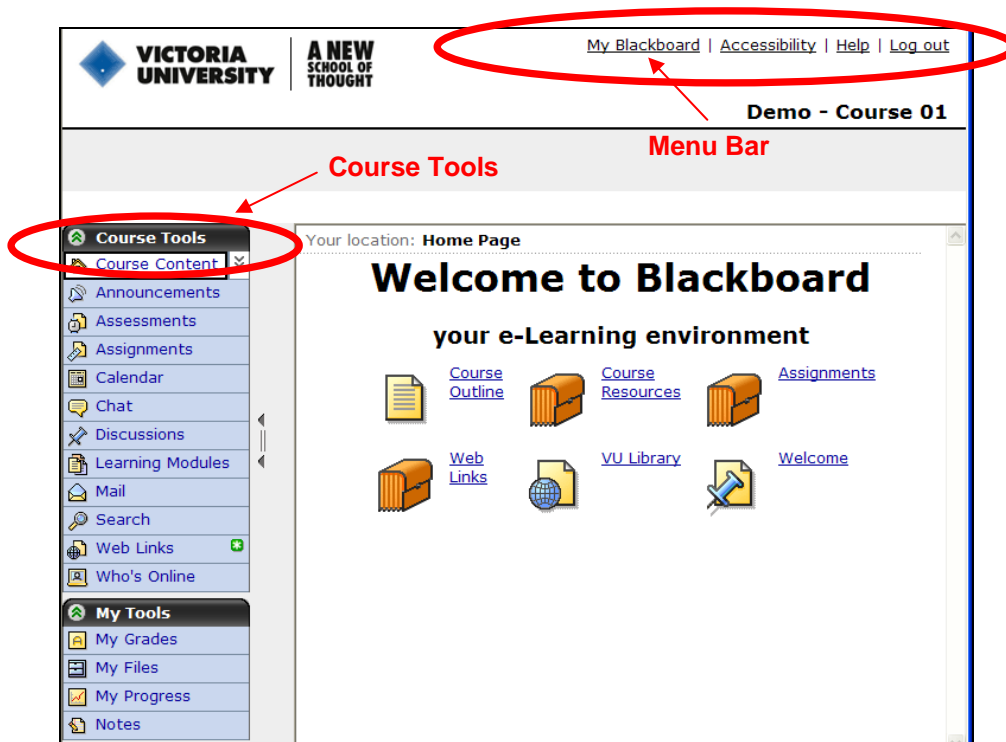
Then click on the appropriate unit of study.



9.3 NAVIGATING YOUR BLACKBOARD UNIT / ONLINE COURSE

When you are navigating around Blackboard we recommend that you don't use the 'Back' and 'Forward' buttons on your browser. This may cause you to be viewing content from the browser's memory, which may not be the most current.

Blackboard has built-in navigation features. The image below highlights key features.



The **Menu Bar** always appears on the top-right corner. Clicking the **My Blackboard** link will take you back to your list of units if you wish to navigate to a different Blackboard unit. **Log out** button will log you out of Blackboard.

The **Course Menu** can appear either vertically or horizontally. If the course menu appears vertically, it can have the following headings:

- **Course Tools** – links to course content and other features (eg: discussion boards, assignments, announcements) used as part of the course.
- **My Tools** – access to your grades (if available) and personal tools that you can use to support your studies. You can upload files and get access to files using **My Files** link.

Depending on what your teacher has made available, there may be less or more buttons within the course menu. Clicking on a link or button on the menu will open that page in the main area.

You can tell when new information or content has been put into an area on the course menu, because it will have a green asterisk (star) icon next to it.



9.3.1 COURSE CONTENT

Most content that your teacher will make available for you to view and download (eg: unit guides, resources, links) will be located under **Course Content** tab. This is like the **Home Page** to your course. This page may include folders, files and links. You can navigate in a similar way to how you would a website. Typically, unit guides and lecture slides will be placed here for you to view and/or download.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard interface for the course 'WTS0001 - WTS0001-WebCT Training Shell (11S1)'. The top left features the Victoria University logo and name. The top right shows the user's name and access information. The main navigation menu on the left includes 'Course Tools' (with 'Course Content' selected) and 'My Tools'. The main content area displays 'Your location: Home Page' and a grid of resource links with icons: 'Blackboard (WebCT) Training for Staff, Instructors and Designers', 'Support resources for Staff', 'WebCT Staff Training Powerpoint - July 2011', 'Blackboard (WebCT) support for students', 'Assignment 1', and 'Assignment 2'.

If you have difficulty downloading or opening files, please contact ITS Service Desk on 61 3 9919 2777 or e-mail servicedesk@vu.edu.au.

9.4 USING BLACKBOARD TOOLS

9.4.1 UPLOADING AND SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

Depending on what your teacher has set up in Blackboard and requested you use, you may need to submit your assignments in Blackboard through an Assignment Dropbox or a Turnitin link (anti-plagiarism software).

For further information regarding submitting assignments through Blackboard, please contact your teacher first. For technical issues with uploading assignments, please contact IT Service Desk on 9919 2777 or e-mail servicedesk@vu.edu.au

9.4.2 LOCATING YOUR ASSIGNMENT DROPBOX

A good place to start is to look under **Course Content** tab. Look for a link or icon that is labelled with the Assignment name.

Please note: Your assignment submission could be for a Blackboard assignment or a Turnitin assignment. If you cannot find your Assignment under Course Content, please also try clicking on **Assignments** on the Course Menu bar (typically located on the left hand side of the screen). If you still have issues finding the Assignment Dropbox, consult your teacher.

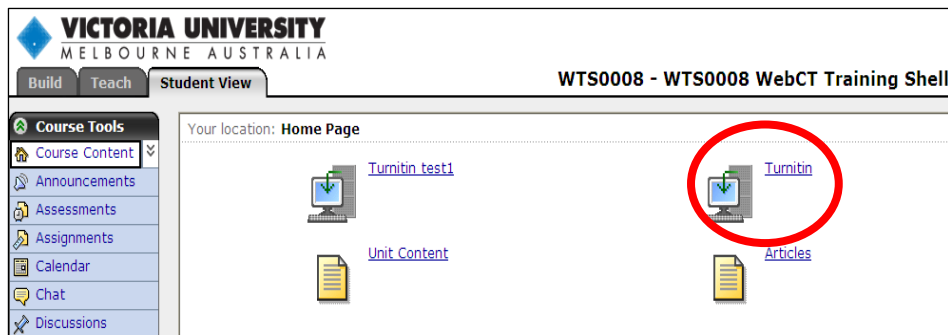


The screenshot above demonstrates options for how and where an Assignment might be located in Blackboard. It could be linked directly on the Home Page (example 1), placed inside a folder (2) or under the 'Assignments' tab in the course menu (3).

9.4.3 Turnitin

Turnitin is a plagiarism detection service. Some VU courses may ask you to submit your assignments electronically through Turnitin so that they can be checked and an "Originality Report" can be generated. Your Lecturer will notify you if you need to submit an assignment via the Turnitin Link.

Usually, if you have to submit an assignment through Turnitin you will see an image with a link, similar to the one inside the red circle in the below figure, but with your assignment name on it (ask your teacher for details). Click on the link and follow the steps to submit your assignment.



For more information regarding uploading and submitting assignments, please view additional resources in the **Learning and Teaching Portal**. Visit <http://tls.vu.edu.au/> and click on the 'elearning' or Flexible learning link.

9.4.4 COMMUNICATION TOOLS: COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS ONLINE

There are different ways to communicate in Blackboard and your teacher will let you know which communication tools you are expected to use within each Blackboard course. The major tools that can be utilized include Announcements, Discussions, Mail, Chat and Calendar.

Announcements

- Teachers will often use Announcements to share important information with you. This may include changes to class or assignment timetables, or reminders about upcoming assessments.
- New announcements may often appear as a pop-up window when you log in, so make sure you allow pop-ups on your web browser.

Discussions

- Often used by teachers for the sharing of information between everyone who has access to the subject.
- Here you can post messages that your peers can read and respond to. This can be useful for asking questions regarding coursework.
- You may have one central discussion board, or several for particular groups or topics, depending on how your teacher has set up the course.
- You may also be required to keep a blog or personal journal. If this is the case; your teacher may have set up additional discussion boards for this purpose. Please check with your lecturer or tutor on how they would like you to submit posts or discussions and where these are located.

Mail

- Allows you to privately message your teacher or others within the class. You can also message several people at once, which can be useful for group work or sharing ideas. Items remain private between those the message is addressed to, compared to Discussion topics, which everyone will be able to view.
- **Please note:** Blackboard mail is different to regular email. The messages sent in the Mail tool are generally **only available within Blackboard** – they do not connect to your regular email account and can only be viewed and accessed by logging into your Blackboard course. It is recommended that you check with your teacher as to whether they wish for you to contact them via this method or if they prefer a direct email to their email address.

Chat

- Allows you to use a text chat room to communicate with others in real time. This can be useful for online classes or conducting study group meetings online.
- If using Chat is a requirement for your subject and you experience issues with using this tool, please contact IT Service Desk on 9919 2777 or servicedesk@vu.edu.au for support. Please provide screenshots of errors if you can.

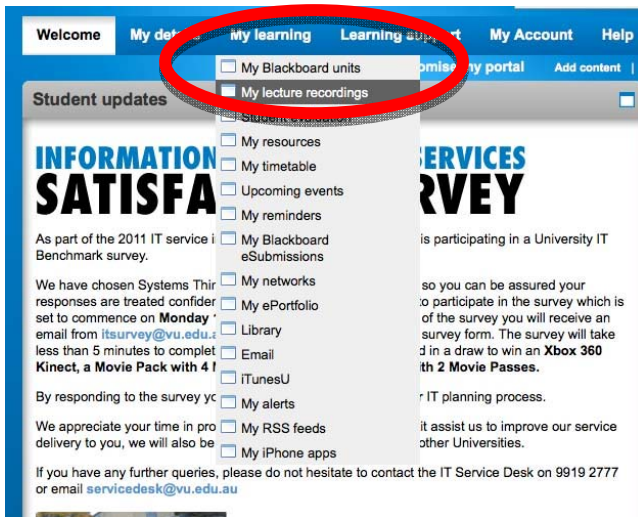
Calendar

- Often used by your teacher to make updates regarding important events such as Assignment due dates. You can also add items to your calendar; however these are only seen by you.

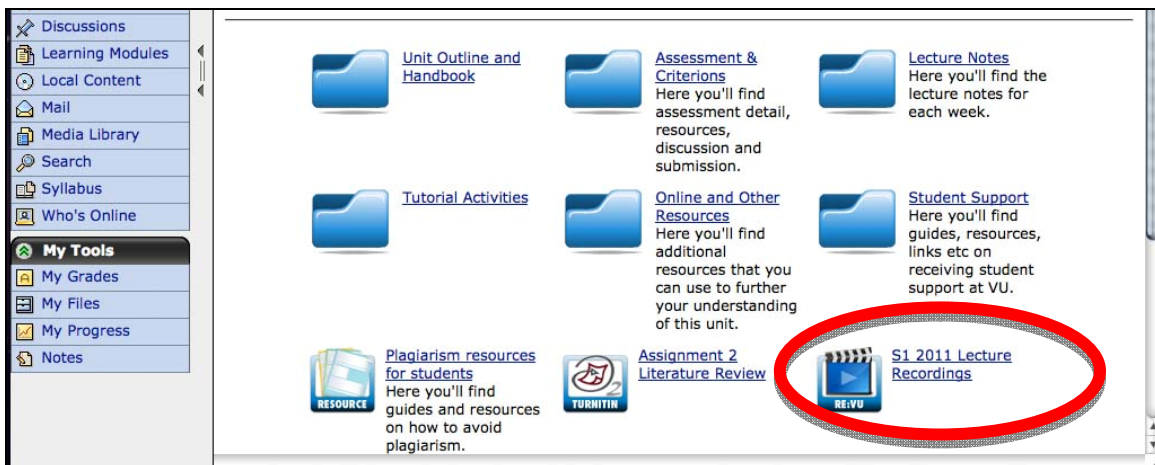
9.4.5 VIEWING LECTURE RECORDINGS (REVU OR LECTOPIA RECORDINGS)

Victoria University offers students the ability to view lecture and tutorial recordings. These can be accessed through the MyVU Portal or through Blackboard. It should be noted that it is up to the lecturer or tutor whether or not recordings are available for students.

Any available lecture recordings will be available in MyVU Portal under 'My Lecture Recordings' in the 'My Learning' tab (See screenshot below):



Lecture recordings can also be accessed through Blackboard, however your lecturer or tutor must create a link for direct access. The screenshot below is an example of a ReVU/Lectopia link within Blackboard:



If you have any issues opening the recorded lectures or tutorials, please contact IT Service Desk on 9919 2777 or servicedesk@vu.edu.au for support.

9.5 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

For further information or support on Blackboard and other eLearning tools, try the following:

1. Contact your teacher or lecturer
2. Contact ITS Service Desk via phone on +61 3 9919 2777 or via email at servicedesk@vu.edu.au
3. Visit an ITS Office location on campus
4. Find further information online:

ASKVU: <http://askvu.vu.edu.au/app/home/>

Gives answers to popular and frequently asked questions. You can also receive personal support from the ASKVU Support Team and request a MYVU Portal password reset.

VU Learning and Teaching Portal: <http://tls.vu.edu.au/portal/site/technology/overview.aspx>

Contains detailed 'How To' guides and other e-Learning resources.

Student Essentials: <http://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/student-essentials/>

Gives links to common tools and support for students.