



 Blackboard

A comprehensive ecosystem for skills-based learning:

How Blackboard LMS supports CBE programs that scale

With skills mastery integrated into courses, flexible release conditions, and multi-level outcomes measurement all included in the core license, Blackboard is the only LMS that facilitates competency-based learning without additional costs or technical requirements.

The three levels of CBE

Embedding CBE at your institution requires more than a single feature or tool. It requires a comprehensive ecosystem that evaluates learner competency at three levels – while also connecting data across all three.

The Course Level:

Allow instructors to assess students' competency for relevant skills, identify gaps, and tailor material to the individual learner's areas of need.

The Program Level:

Understand how course-level skills ladder up to learning outcomes and holistic competencies that drive employment opportunities for students.

The Institution Level:

Support for programs that span departments and a holistic view of learning outcomes across the institution

How Blackboard LMS powers your institution's CBE strategy

The Course Level

Personalized learning paths

At the heart of competency-based learning is providing a tailored experience for each learner. Blackboard LMS includes important capabilities that allow this to be done at scale, without creating an additional admin burden for the instructor.

Release conditions: Instructors can set up tasks to be released based on varied criteria, supporting a tailored experience for each student. This includes sequenced release, ensuring tasks are completed in the most appropriate order to develop learner skills, as well as release conditions related to performance, where students need to demonstrate a level of competency before advancing.

Automated, timely feedback: The Automations tool in Blackboard LMS allows instructors to set up automated messages to students based on their progress. Three messages are supported, all based on specific criteria established by the instructor - a congratulatory message goes to students who have performed well, a supportive message to those who are below a set score, and a feedback reminder message to any learners who haven't read important feedback.

AI-powered Adaptive Learning: The new Pulse Quiz activity, part of Blackboard LMS: AVA*, sets a unique quiz for each student based on course content. The quiz evolves as students respond to each question, identifying and focusing on competency areas where the student needs support.

Blackboard's partnership with **Skillwell** expands the ways institutions can support adaptive learning. By integrating Skillwell with Blackboard, institutions can provide personalized opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in practical scenarios, informed by course content. These experiences complement core Blackboard LMS capabilities and help educators identify strengths and gaps in understanding, target support, and gather evidence of progress toward mastery.

Learn More: [Release conditions](#), [Automations](#), [AVA Pulse Quiz](#)

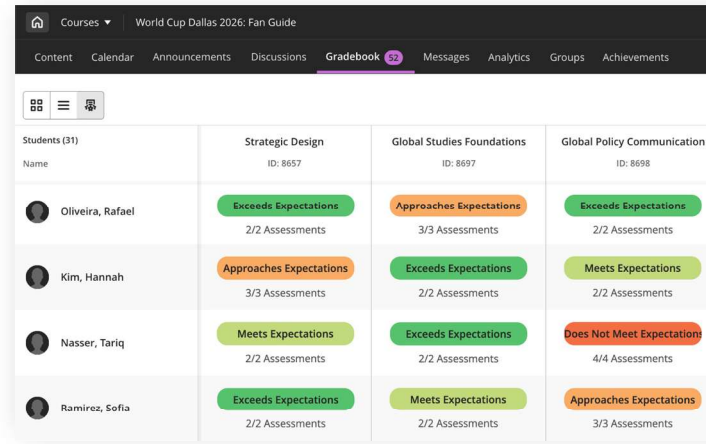
*Requires an AVA license



Mastery view of learner progress

Both instructors and students have consistent access to their mastery progress as they complete courses, just as they do for traditional grading. The Mastery tab in the Blackboard LMS gradebook allows instructors to drill down into each learner's progress for relevant competencies, based on criteria set by the institution (more info below at the institutional level). Students, meanwhile, can access this same data via their own gradebook view, allowing them to proactively focus on areas where they haven't yet achieved mastery.

Learn More: [The Mastery tab in the gradebook](#)



Students (31)	Strategic Design ID: 8657	Global Studies Foundations ID: 8697	Global Policy Communication ID: 8698
Oliveira, Rafael	Exceeds Expectations 2/2 Assessments	Approaches Expectations 3/3 Assessments	Exceeds Expectations 2/2 Assessments
Kim, Hannah	Approaches Expectations 3/3 Assessments	Exceeds Expectations 2/2 Assessments	Meets Expectations 2/2 Assessments
Nasser, Tariq	Meets Expectations 2/2 Assessments	Exceeds Expectations 2/2 Assessments	Does Not Meet Expectation 4/4 Assessments
Ramirez, Sofia	Exceeds Expectations 2/2 Assessments	Meets Expectations 2/2 Assessments	Approaches Expectations 3/3 Assessments

Evidence of achievement

Instructors can set course badges, which are awarded to students as skills are attained. This embeds CBE into learning practices, encouraging students to reflect on the skills they've developed and not just their grades, while also providing tangible evidence of their progress.

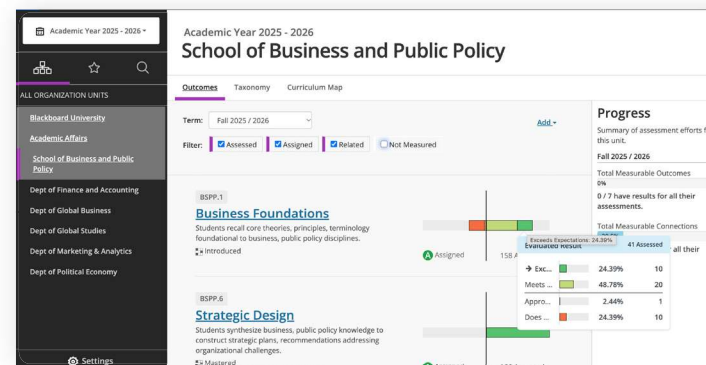
Here again, the parameters are set by instructor and can involve multiple criteria where relevant. They can also use the AI Design Assistant to create a custom image for each badge, further tailoring the experience for their students.

Learn More: [Course badges in Blackboard](#)

The Program Level

Blackboard Outcomes – available to all Blackboard institutions as part of the core license – seamlessly aggregates data from courses and allows institutions to deliver and measure CBE at the program level.

At this point, the focus shifts from mastery of individual skills to learning outcomes: holistic, program-level competencies in line with the requirements of the student's chosen profession.



Met and not met by outcome: The home screen shows how many students met or did not meet each learning outcome.

Data collection progress: It tracks how many outcomes are scheduled for collection and the share that contain data, by year and term.

Degree of learning and Bloom's level: Each outcome is labeled as introduced, reinforced, or mastered, and by its Bloom's taxonomy level. A Taxonomy tab flags statements that are not measurable.

Curriculum map: An auto-generated map shows where each competency is introduced, reinforced, and mastered across courses and units, with CSV export.

Aggregated data: Results can be viewed by connection, by term, and by aligned assessment, aggregated by sum, latest, or a selected assessment.

Longitudinal Reporting: Outcome achievement can be tracked across multiple terms, showing progress over time rather than within a single course. Combined with assessment participation data, this helps programs identify trends, confirm evidence is collected consistently and completely, and drive evidence-based improvement.

From results to action: Outcomes results can support planning, where teams attach analysis and improvement actions.

Learn More: [Blackboard Outcomes](#)

The Institution Level

Blackboard Outcomes also allows CBE to become a core part of your institution's overall pedagogical approach. There are four key components to this.

Consistent Scale, Flexible Measurement: Institutions define a single Performance Results Scale of 2 to 5 units with custom labels, set each term. Within that scale, thresholds are flexible: each assessment can set its own cut points for mastery, so a capstone project and a weekly quiz are each measured on their own terms. Those thresholds are aggregated against the shared scale, so results still roll up for program and institutional reporting.

Mastery that reflects the whole body of evidence: Mastery is a weighted median of normalized results across every assessment aligned to an outcome.

Support for programs across departments: Optional Programs let a single course contribute to several programs at once, such as General Education and a major, without restructuring the hierarchy.

Accreditation Reporting: Beyond CBE, Outcomes captures also direct measures of student learning to support accreditation reporting.

Only Blackboard LMS supports the 'program' and 'institutional' levels within the core license

All major LMS alternatives offer CBE support at the course level, including mastery measurement as part of standard learning workflows. However, the inclusion of Blackboard Outcomes in the core license means that **only Blackboard can truly drive a holistic CBE program without additional costs.**

D2L Brightspace does not allow insight into CBE at the program or institutional levels as part of the core license. This is only possible by paying extra for a *D2L Achievement+* license – Blackboard provides comparable functionality at no additional cost.

Canvas by Instructure's *Program Assessment* tool is also an add-on tool not included within any of their standard pricing tiers. Many institutions choose to complement their Canvas instance with Blackboard Outcomes as they find it a superior alternative.

Further CBE innovation is on the way

We are actively working on several initiatives to further integrate CBE into Blackboard LMS at the course level. These build on existing capabilities to allow instructors additional flexibility to truly tailor learning to the individual student's needs.

Faculty alignments in Blackboard LMS. (3-6+ months): Instructors will align outcomes to assignments and tests, gradebook columns, rubric criteria, and test questions.

Note: All but test questions can already be aligned today via Blackboard Outcomes, but not natively in the LMS course experience.

Expand Mastery Calculation Options (3-6+ months): Institutions will be able to choose from additional methods for calculating mastery, so the approach can reflect how each program defines and demonstrates competency.

Release conditions tied to outcomes (6+ months): Content release based on the Performance Results Scale and on Outcomes mastery, so a learner's path adapts to demonstrated competency.

As always with Blackboard LMS, our roadmap is shaped in collaboration with our partner institutions. The Idea Exchange, focus groups, and office hours sessions allow institutions to share their CBE needs, and all future development in this area will be delivered with this in mind.

Learn More: [Watch the latest Blackboard LMS roadmap webinar](#)

