

## **Blackboard Vista 8.0.1**

### **Setting Up Your Course**

These instructions have been written to help you navigate your Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 account. After learning the format and capabilities of the system, you will need to decide which tools best suit your needs.

Your comfort with the technology is the first step; the second is designing your course to accommodate your teaching style and content. A good design will create an interactive learning community for your students in which your presence is felt and their learning is successful.

### **Welcome Letter**

If you are teaching an online (as opposed to hybrid) course, consider writing a letter welcoming the students to your course. Our students have expressed concerns about lack of interaction in the non-classroom learning environment; some may need assurance that a learning community can be established online. Important relationships can still form without a physical meeting space. A Welcome Letter added to your Homepage as a Content File is a simple way to break the ice and encourage online students to use the Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 email and discussion functions, in order to ask and respond to questions and get to know each other. Whether your teaching style is casual or formal, a Welcome Letter will establish a solid first impression and set the tone of your course.

## Navigation

### Tabs

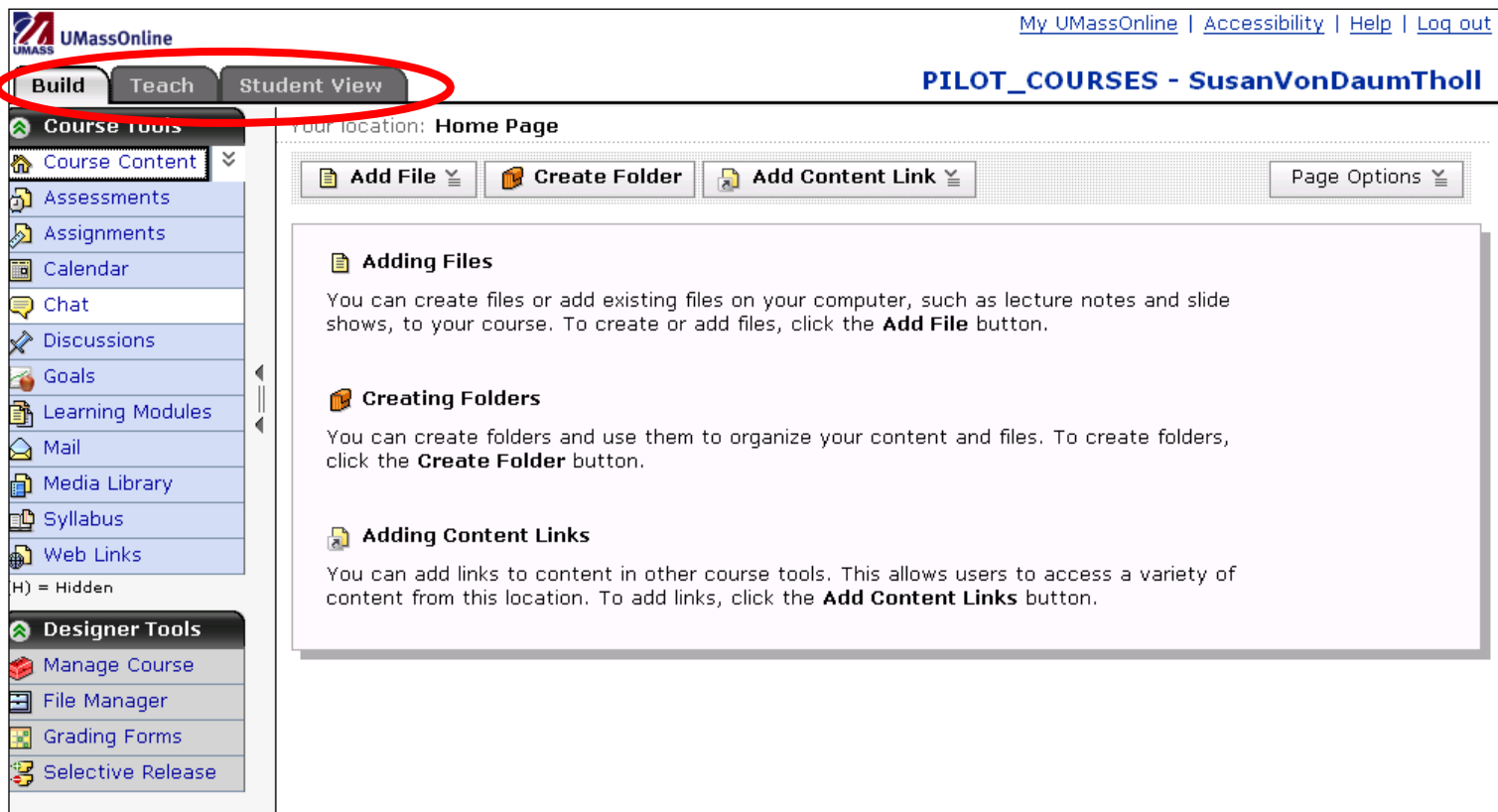
There are three tabs at the top left of your screen. Each tab allows you to do different things within a course.

**Build:** Use the Build tab to create assessments, assignments, course content. To add a new item or activity to the course, you must be in the Build tab.

**Teach:** Use the Teach tab to edit course material and grade assessments and assignments. This is the teaching space.

**Student View:** In this tab, you see what the student sees. You may participate in your course as the demo\_student to check whether assessments appear as you intended.

If one of the functions or tools doesn't seem to be working, check to be sure you are using the correct tab.



The screenshot displays the UMassOnline Blackboard interface. At the top left, the UMassOnline logo is visible. The navigation tabs are 'Build', 'Teach', and 'Student View', with 'Build' highlighted by a red circle. The course title 'PILOT\_COURSES - SusanVonDaumTholl' is shown in the top right. The main content area is titled 'Your location: Home Page' and contains three buttons: 'Add File', 'Create Folder', and 'Add Content Link', along with a 'Page Options' button. Below these buttons, there are three sections: 'Adding Files', 'Creating Folders', and 'Adding Content Links', each with a brief description of the function.

UMassOnline

My UMassOnline | Accessibility | Help | Log out

Build Teach Student View

PILOT\_COURSES - SusanVonDaumTholl

Your location: Home Page

Add File Create Folder Add Content Link Page Options

**Adding Files**  
You can create files or add existing files on your computer, such as lecture notes and slide shows, to your course. To create or add files, click the **Add File** button.

**Creating Folders**  
You can create folders and use them to organize your content and files. To create folders, click the **Create Folder** button.

**Adding Content Links**  
You can add links to content in other course tools. This allows users to access a variety of content from this location. To add links, click the **Add Content Links** button.

## Toolbars

Two toolbars are on the left side of the screen. Course Tools, those that are directly a part of your course are at the top. Designer or Instructor Tools, which help to manage your course, are at the bottom. The toolbar menu will expand or collapse when you click on the gray bar that separates the tools from your work space.

The screenshot displays the UMassOnline Blackboard interface. At the top left is the UMassOnline logo. To the right are links for 'My UMassOnline', 'Accessibility', 'Help', and 'Log out'. Below the logo are three tabs: 'Build', 'Teach', and 'Student View'. The main header area shows 'PILOT\_COURSES - SusanVonDaumTholl' and 'Your location: Home Page'. On the left side, there are two toolbars. The top toolbar is labeled 'Course Tools' and includes 'Course Content', 'Assessments', 'Assignments', 'Calendar', 'Chat', 'Discussions', 'Goals', 'Learning Modules', 'Mail', 'Media Library', 'Syllabus', and 'Web Links'. The bottom toolbar is labeled 'Designer Tools' and includes 'Manage Course', 'File Manager', 'Grading Forms', and 'Selective Release'. Two red arrows point to the 'Course Tools' and 'Designer Tools' labels. The main content area on the right contains three sections: 'Adding Files', 'Creating Folders', and 'Adding Content Links', each with a brief description and a button to perform the action. At the top of this area are buttons for 'Add File', 'Create Folder', 'Add Content Link', and 'Page Options'.

## Tools

Tools are used to recreate classroom activities and many work in tandem with one another. Consider each tool in relation to your current method of teaching and use only those tools that support your material and teaching style.

Some tools recreate basic classroom activities (assignments, assessments, discussions), while other tools can be used in any combination to supplement content and enhance the overall experience (goals, modules, media library, web links).

We've included a description of each tool's function below. However, it's important to know that you have choices about how to present your course content. For instance:

- content, created in a tool (assignment, assessments, media collections, etc.) may be arranged in "folders" within "learning modules";
- content may be arranged simply in "learning modules";
- content may be arranged simply in "folders";
- content may be left in separate tools, clearly labeled by week or unit or section, etc.

After thinking about how you teach and how you want to organize the various components and activities of your course, you are ready to “build”. Select from the following tools.

### **Syllabus**

Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 offers three ways to set up your syllabus.

- It can be built in Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 and seen by your students in the “Syllabus” tool.
- It can be uploaded to Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 from a computer file. (The downside of this is that the syllabus will open in a separate MS Word file *outside* of the Blackboard Vista 4.2 web page.)
- It can be cut-and-pasted into the Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 syllabus tool. (The advantage of this is that your syllabus will be integrated into the Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 format and create a more cohesive appearance.

### **Email**

This tool works the same as any other email system, with the benefit of never having junk mail. It also organizes your messages by course.

### **Announcements**

This is a way to inform an entire class about last minute changes to the schedule, syllabus, or assignment due dates. You can choose to have an announcement displayed on your students’ login page or as a pop-up after they log in.

### **Calendar**

Keeps track of important activities and events. There is also a pop-up function so you can see the events for the day as soon as you log in.

### **Content Files**

This tool allows you to upload files you’ve already created, such as lecture notes, worksheets, and handouts. You can also create new files and save them using this tool. Content Files can be linked to “learning modules” and other tools.

### **Goals**

This tool is a place for you to state the learning objectives for the course. Goals, once created, can be linked to assignments, assessments, and other learning activities.

### **Media Library**

The media library can be used in a number of ways. Depending on course content, you can compile a list of: glossary terms with definitions; mathematical or scientific formulas; reference or recommended readings; or images and diagrams from lectures.

## **Web Links**

This tool makes it easy to encourage use of the Internet. Like goals, live links can be attached to any part of the course, for example, you can include them in the instructions for an assignment. Integrating persistent links to relevant articles in the Library's databases is another use of this tool. Links will open in a new window. Students won't need to copy long URLs.

## **Discussions**

The discussion board provides a space for you and your students to interact. You present students with a topic and the learning begins as they form ideas and write comments to their peers. You guide the discussion and become a presence as you are in the classroom. As a writing tool, it gives students space and time to craft more thoughtful responses than you would hear in a classroom discussion.

## **Journals/Blogs**

The journal/blog is a discussion tool that creates portfolios by archiving entries by individual student names. Unlike discussions, it allows you to communicate with students individually for a higher level of privacy. You also have the option to make the student journals accessible to the entire class, anonymously, if you wish. Other options exist here for customizing your journal postings.

## **Assignments**

You may link an assignment to a specific set of lecture notes or to an assigned reading. Assignments may also be created and kept in this tool, which manages virtual submissions in a single place. Options here allow you to grade and return an assignment to the student; comment and return without a grade for resubmission; or grade an assignment with comments. Date and time of submissions are recorded in the system.

## **Assessments**

The assessment tool can be used to create and administer any type of quiz or exam: true/false, essay, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, matching, multiple choice, and calculation. Your quiz may be designed with only one type of question or combined types.

Assessments are timed and Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 will grade any question for which you can provide an exact answer. (Essays must be graded manually.) You may opt to give students more than one attempt to complete an assessment; you have the option to select the first or best grade. Grades are entered into a grade book, which appears as an "Instructor Tool" in the Teach tab.

## **Learning Modules**

Learning modules allow you to group course content by unit, section, week, or any other organizational category. Elements that you may want to include in each module are: lecture outlines or notes, assignments, quizzes, lists of resources for a specific topic, PowerPoint slideshows, discussion topics, and links to helpful web sites.

Create your assignments, assessments, discussions, etc., *before* creating your module(s), so that you can move each piece into the Learning Modules.

### **Selective Release**

When you add an item to the course, it is possible to hide it from the students' view until a selected date and time. This is convenient if you want to be able to edit an assignment or exam before you post it. It also insures that the class does not jump ahead and attempt to complete all assignments at once.

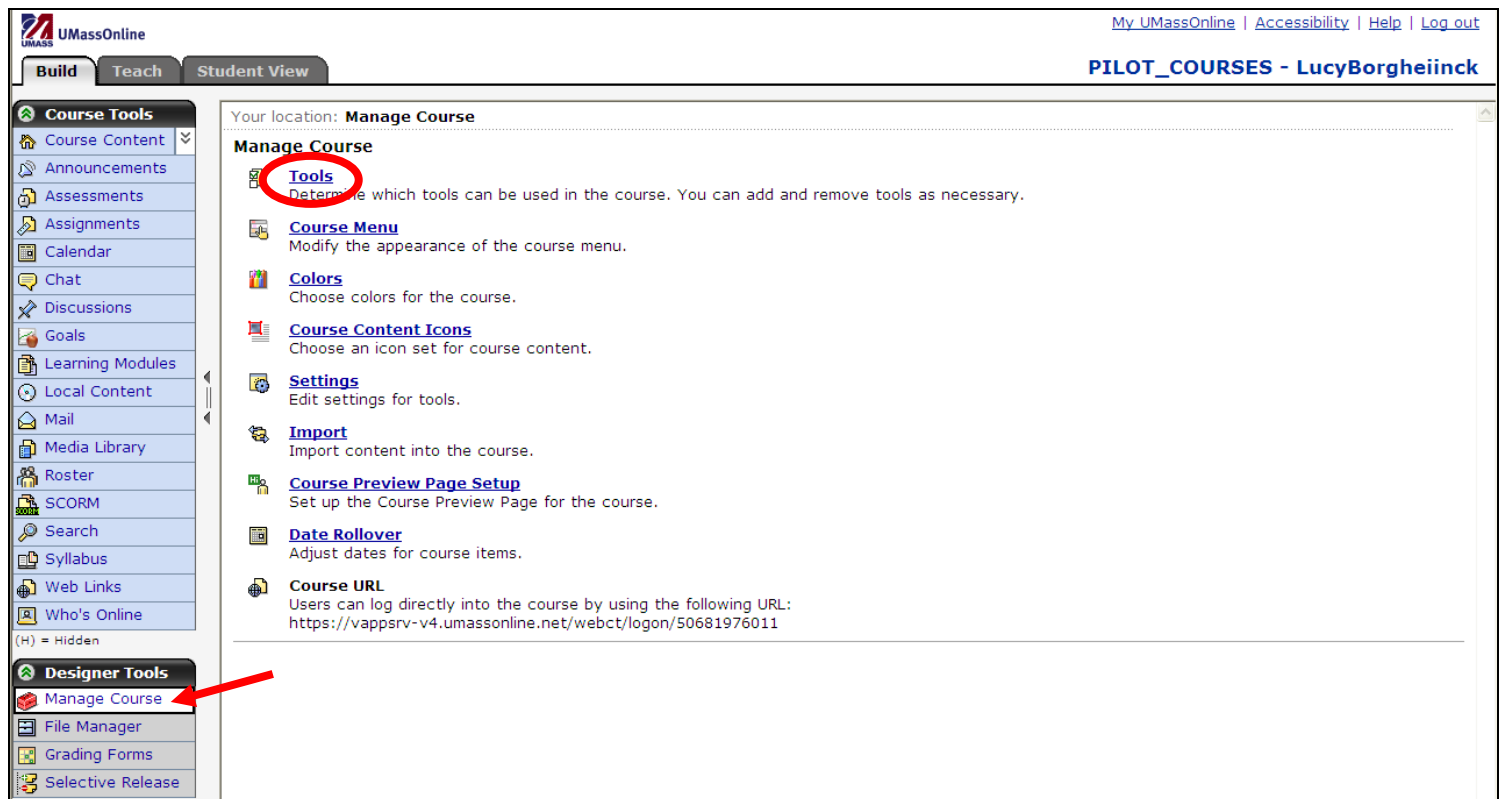
### **Chat**

The chat function allows synchronous communication among students on a specific topic at an assigned time. You may participate if you wish or simply monitor student activity. You will be able to see how students communicate with each other (in real time) to answer questions and solve problems together.

## Choose Your Course Tools

You choose which tools will appear on the course toolbar. This can be done from either the Build or Teach tabs. You can add or remove tools at any time.

1. To set up the toolbar, first select the course.
2. Then go to the Designer Tools menu and click on Manage Course.
3. Click on Tools at the top of the list.



The screenshot shows the UMassOnline interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Build', 'Teach', and 'Student View'. The user is logged in as 'PILOT\_COURSES - LucyBorgheinck'. The main content area is titled 'Your location: Manage Course' and contains a list of management options. The 'Tools' option is circled in red. Below the 'Tools' option, there are several other options: 'Course Menu', 'Colors', 'Course Content Icons', 'Settings', 'Import', 'Course Preview Page Setup', 'Date Rollover', and 'Course URL'. On the left side, there are two main menu categories: 'Course Tools' and 'Designer Tools'. The 'Designer Tools' menu is highlighted with a red arrow, and the 'Manage Course' option within it is also highlighted.

4. Check the box next to any tool that you want to use for the course. You can always add or remove them later if you change your mind.
5. Scroll down to view all tools and click Save when you are finished.

UMassOnline [My UMassOnline](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Help](#) | [Log out](#)

**PILOT\_COURSES - LucyBorgheiinck**

Build Teach Student View

Your location: [Manage Course](#) > Tools

**Tools**  
Add tools to the course by selecting the check boxes. Remove tools by clearing the check boxes. If you remove a tool, all content in that tool is saved and available if you add the tool again.

**Organizational Tools**

- Calendar**  
Enter important events and deadlines, and allow Students to enter their own events.
- Search**  
Search for content in the course.
- Syllabus**  
Provide course requirements, objectives, and policies.

**Communication Tools**

- Announcements**  
Post important information in a central location.
- Chat**  
Chat with other users in the course in real time, or use the Whiteboard to display images.
- Discussions**  
Post and respond to messages on specific topics.
- Mail**  
Send messages to other users.
- Roster**  
View profiles for course members. Users can edit their own profile.
- Who's Online**  
Chat with other users who are logged in to the Learning System.

**Student Learning Activities**

- Assessments**  
Create quizzes, self tests, and surveys.
- Assignments**  
Create assignments for Students to submit online. Students can work independently or in groups.
- Goals**  
Create goals that list the qualitative and quantitative performance expected in your course.

**Content Tools**

- Learning Modules**  
Organize and present content and activities to Students.

(H) = Hidden

**Designer Tools**

- Manage Course
- File Manager
- Grading Forms
- Selective Release

## Other Options

The Designer Tools menu will also allow you to change the icons, color scheme and other visual aspects of your course.

As you design your course, consider which online tools will serve your teaching style and make teaching easier, communication better, and grading faster.