

Getting Started with Blackboard Organizations

The features and functions available in Blackboard course sites (e.g., posting announcements, sharing documents and links to web resources, creating organizational calendars, and conducting surveys) can be utilized in sites other than regular course sites. In Blackboard terminology, these sites are called **Blackboard Organizations**, also referred to as **Blackboard Communities**. Organizations are accessed from your Blackboard home page, where you see two boxes--one named **My Courses** and one named **My Organizations**. If you have not changed the layout of this page, **My Courses** appears on the top of the right-hand column and **My Organizations** appears towards the bottom of the right-hand column.



All Hunter faculty and staff can request organizations for college-related activities. Organizations are currently used by a wide variety of Hunter groups, including academic and administrative departments, research groups, and committees. Many departments set up organizations for all instructors teaching sections of large courses to facilitate communication about teaching practices and sharing of course materials. Additional information about policies related to the creation and maintenance of organizations can be found in the [Hunter College Blackboard Use Policies](#).

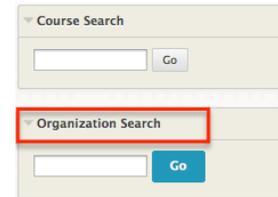
Blackboard uses different terminology to refer to the roles that individuals hold within courses and organizations. Instead of “instructors” and “students”, users in organizations have the roles of “leaders” and “participants.” For more information about other roles that members of an organization may have and the privileges granted to those roles, please see our documents on our support page. Many of the support materials that exist on the [Blackboard Documents for Faculty](#) webpage originally written for courses can be used by organization leaders as well.

To create your organization, follow these steps:

1. **Request an organization** by emailing bb@hunter.cuny.edu from an official Hunter email address. Organizations for departmental programs and functions must be requested by the appropriate department chair or officer. In your email, include the following information: 1) preferred name of the organization; 2) name and Hunter email address of organization leader(s) to be enrolled; 3) a brief description of the purpose of the organization; 4) preferred enrollment option (see below). You will be notified via email by the Blackboard support group when the organization has been created.
2. **Select an enrollment option.** Unlike Blackboard courses, in which participants are automatically enrolled, organization participants are enrolled in one of three ways:
 - 1) **Manual enrollment** by organization leaders (default option): Organization leaders have the ability to enroll individual users. See instructions on the 2nd page of the

document **Adding Instructors, TAs, and Course Builders** for step-by-step instructions.

- 2) **Self-enrollment:** Organization leaders can allow users to email them enrollment requests. They can also allow self-enrollment by the users themselves. Leaders can limit self-enrollment by requiring that users have an access code to enroll. Users need to search for the organization from their home page and follow the instructions on the screen.

The image shows a screenshot of a Blackboard search interface. It consists of two search boxes. The top one is labeled 'Course Search' and has a text input field followed by a 'Go' button. The bottom one is labeled 'Organization Search' and also has a text input field followed by a 'Go' button. A red rectangular box highlights the 'Organization Search' label and its input field.

- 3) **Batch enrollment:** Organizations that have large numbers of participants (e.g., all majors in a department) can request batch enrollment. Requests for batch enrollment must be sent by the department chair or appropriate program officer from their official Hunter email address and should specify the group of participants to be enrolled (e.g., all Sociology) by providing the appropriate academic plan and year. **Batch enrollment requires the cooperation of several Hunter offices. Please allow one week for the process to be completed.**

NOTE: Unlike course enrollments, batch enrollments are **not** automatically updated.

NOTE: Regardless of which enrollment option you choose, participants cannot un-enroll themselves. All un-enrollment must be done by the organization leader, technically by making the organization “unavailable” to such participants. Please see the document “**Removing**” Users from Courses and Organizations” for instructions. If needed, contact the Blackboard support group at bb@hunter.cuny.edu for assistance.

To configure your organization according to its purposes and tailor it to its members, follow these steps:

1. **Customize the organization menu.** Consider what type of content you intend to post and what tools you intend to use. Then, tailor the navigation menu to the nature and purpose of your organization by following steps in the document **Customizing the Navigation Menu** .
2. **Create groups within the organization, if appropriate.** You can create groups that have their own work areas, including email, a discussion board, online chat, and document sharing. Groups can also have their own wikis and blogs. For more information, see our documents **Getting Started With Groups, Creating and Using Blogs** and **Creating and Using Blackboard Wikis**.
3. **Configure tools that you will use and turn off those you will not use.** Choose tools for interaction and collaboration such as discussion boards, wikis, and blogs that you will use in your organization. Configure them according to your needs using our documents **Creating Discussion Board Forums and Threads, Creating and Using Blackboard Blogs** and **Creating and Using Blackboard Wikis**. Turn off unused tools by going to the **Control Panel** and selecting **Customization** then **Tool Availability**. Keep in mind that enabling and disabling certain tools may have unintended consequences. For example, turning off the “My

Grades” tool will prevent participants from seeing that they have successfully completed surveys.

4. **Consider whether to open the organization to guests.** You can allow Blackboard users who are not organization participants to view all or parts of the organization content by turning on **Guest Access**. You can create specific areas designated for “public” access. See instructions in our tutorial **Allowing/Setting up Guest Access**.
5. **Consider whether to enable the **Send Email** tool to participants.** The **Send Email** tool can facilitate communication among members of an organization as it allows sending messages to a large group. However, it has the potential of being misused for email spam or other inappropriate purposes. Consider the purpose and membership of your organization and decide whether to make the **Send Email** tool available to the participants. You can also choose to configure the tools so that participants can only email specific groups (for example, the tool can be configured so that participants can only send email to the leaders of the organization). Keep in mind that organization leaders can send emails to all participants from the **Control Panel** even if the tool is unavailable to the participants.
6. **Make the organization available.** All organizations are created as “unavailable” to their participants. When you are ready to share the contents of your organization with its participants, make your organization available. See instructions at **Make My Course Available**.
7. **Email organization members.** Let organization members know that they have been enrolled by using Blackboard’s **Send Email** tool to send them an email message. Let them know where they can find information in the organization and how you expect them to participate.

If you have further questions, faculty members can email bb@hunter.cuny.edu or contact the [Technology Resource Center](#) at 212-650-3358 and students can contact the Student Help Desk at (212) 650-EMAIL (3624) or studenthelpdesk@hunter.cuny.edu.