

Using Sound and Multimedia in BlackBoard's Assessment Tools "Convergence of Learning and Technology," 2003 OLN Conference

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Abstract

Online environments such as BlackBoard may be used as an extension of classroom instruction for the assessment of student achievement. Incorporating audio, video and multimedia files extends the capacity of this software to be used as a strong assessment tool that goes beyond standard assessment techniques. This presentation shows how to incorporate these media files within the BlackBoard Assessment tool.

Technology and Student Assessment

Course Management Software such as BlackBoard, is gaining popularity on campuses nationwide. Since the entry of this software several years ago, a number of schools adopted course management software into their information technology departments. The software is typically integrated as an extension of the classroom environment. In this way it is another instructional tool. Incorporating audio, video and multimedia files extends the capacity of this software to be used as a strong assessment tool that goes beyond standard assessment techniques. Utilizing student assessment within online environments provides alternatives for testing knowledge and basic skills. There are a number of benefits to both the student and the instructor for facilitating effective learning and efficient classroom management. Providing several short assessments contributes more frequent feedback to students about their progress in the course materials. If the instructor chooses, assessments can be repeated so that students may be challenged to achieve higher learning outcomes. Online assessments also relinquish valuable class time that can be better used to either introduce important course materials, or to serve the needs of the students in a more personal or effective manner. As the wealth of subject matter grows in this information age it is increasingly imperative to maximize the effectiveness of in-class time.

The testing tools in BlackBoard are flexible to accommodate a variety of testing styles. These tools allow the instructor to integrate a variety of media and multimedia files within the assessment environment. These media files include pictures/graphics, sound, MIDI, video and animations. The assimilation of media within the online test questions can improve effectiveness in the test design in a number of ways such as:

- clarifying an item that is otherwise difficult to put into language,
- illustrating an item that is unique to the topic,
- testing a student's knowledge or experience with a topic that is not based in language, e.g., recognizing sounds, shapes, colors, or skills in reading graphs, maps, etc.

Instructors that utilize these capabilities in their online test designs render dynamic assessments within an already rich multimedia environment. Most students today seem to relate to this very well.

Preparing the Assessment

This presentation introduces methods for preparing media materials for use in the BlackBoard environment. This demonstration includes the basic process for integrating these into the online assessment tool, and focuses on the following objectives:

- how to use the BlackBoard software to set up online tests
- how to include graphics such as JPG, GIF, PICT, TIFF, etc., into a BlackBoard online test
- how to upload to a web page, files that serve as media resources
- how to include sound files such as AIFF, WAV, MP3, and MIDI
- how to link other types of multimedia files such as MPG, QuickTime, etc.

The techniques shown here are applicable to any subject and may be incorporated into any class as well as any level of education. Successful use of these tools only requires some thought to planning and developing some basic technology skills. Some of the examples used during the presentation are taken from college placement exam given to prospective music students through online assessment. Other examples are taken from music courses taught at a college freshman level.