

E-Pack (a.k.a Course Cartridge) Guidelines for Faculty in the Connecticut Community Colleges

This document is intended to provide faculty interested in importing content from e-packs or course cartridges into their Blackboard Vista course sections with the information they need to get started. For an overview of **Blackboard Vista E-pack resources**, visit <http://www.blackboard.com/support/epack>.

Finding E-packs

Check publisher websites or http://www.webct.com/content/viewpage?name=content_showcase to see if they have course e-packs/course cartridges for your subject/book. **Please be certain you request an e-pack that is Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 compatible.** After requesting a specific e-pack, it will usually be sent to you via email with instructions on how to download it. The download file should be a .zip format. The email will have a link within it that will take you to where you can “download” the e-pack or .zip file to your computer. *See page 4 for guidelines on how to import an e-pack into your course section.*

What Are the Key Features of E-Packs?

- They're developed in partnership between publishers and Blackboard.
- They're **free** to instructors, although there *may* be an access cost for students.
- Suitable for web-enhanced, hybrid, or fully online courses.
- Provide high quality, interactive online content and tools, such as question database, pre-built assessments, pre-built discussion topics, glossaries, and different types of media or interactive activities (such as simulations, flashcards, or games, as well as audio, video, or animations). Some also include teaching guides or an electronic version of the complete textbook.
- Content within the e-pack is customizable by the instructor.
- Can help save you time on course development.

Who can help me or my students if I decide to use a Blackboard Vista E-Pack in my course?

Blackboard has a dedicated support team to assist distance learning support staff, faculty, and students with questions that specifically relate to e-Packs.

To contact their Content Support Team:

- Online Faculty Resources: <https://behind.blackboard.com/epack/faculty.htm>
- Troubleshooting Access Codes: <https://behind.blackboard.com/epack/troubleshoot.bb>
- Phone: 1-800-806-7396 or 202-715-6177.

How Do I Get Started Using An E-Pack in My Blackboard Vista Course Sections?

1. Determine whether digital content is available for your textbook.

Digital content could be available in various forms. Most commonly, there may be a "companion website" to the textbook, which could contain an electronic version of the textbook content, assignments, quizzes, discussions, etc. This content would be located on servers managed by the publisher or by a third-party. Digital content could also take the form of an "e-Pack", which is a *content package that is imported directly into your Blackboard Vista section(s)*. All components of an e-Pack are deployed within the Vista section, meaning that all student information remains on servers controlled by our system.

2. Request the e-Pack.

If you determine that an e-Pack is available for your textbook and you wish to utilize it, be sure to begin the process of obtaining it *at least 4 to 6 weeks prior to the beginning of the term*. This will give you adequate time to familiarize yourself with the e-Pack and to make any customizations, and it will also provide your college's Distance Learning staff with time to review the e-pack for you and to troubleshoot any questions or issues that might arise. (Note: In Blackboard Vista, the way in which e-packs may be uploaded has changed, but faculty should speak with their college's [DL staff](#) to discuss the preferred process at *their* school.)

Here are the recommended steps involved:

- 1) Visit http://www.blackboard.com/extend/digital_content/instructors. Choose the "**Request a Copy**" link for the e-Pack you have selected.
- 2) Check with your publisher representative regarding:
 - a) Whether the e-pack available is specifically a "**Blackboard Vista 8.0.1**" compatible e-Pack.
 - b) Whether you can get an evaluation copy or be provided with some other type of access in order to determine whether or not you wish to adopt the e-pack.
 - c) Whether there is a cost to students to access the e-pack content—sometime there is not. However, it's common for textbooks to be sold in two versions: "Bundled" with an e-pack access code or without one, for two different prices.
 - If you want your students to be able to access e-pack content and your publisher's rep tells you there are two versions, be sure to ask for the "bundled" version's ISBN.
 - You will also want to inquire as to the cost of how much the standalone access code will cost for students who buy a used textbook.
- 3) Once you have decided to adopt an e-pack, complete the **Content Download Application** form on the Blackboard website and be sure to include your college's [DL Director](#) (whomever is your Vista administrator) contact information in the appropriate section.

3. Obtain Access Code information.

Get this very important information from your publisher's rep:

- 1) Obtain the ISBN for the packaged Textbook + Access Code.
- 2) Obtain the ISBN for stand-alone Access Codes (for students who purchase their textbooks from another source)

4. Inform key campus personnel of your adoption.

Maintaining communication about your e-Pack adoption decision with the appropriate campus staff will help ensure a smooth term.

- 1) Tell your [Distance Learning Director](#) that you are using an e-Pack for your course, and send them the information provided by your publisher on how and where to log in to obtain the e-pack file that will be imported into your Vista sections.
- 2) If you are planning to re-use a previously adopted e-Pack from a prior term, there are some potential issues that must be addressed:
 - a) If the students must purchase an access code for the e-pack you've adopted, then be sure you provide your students with the ISBN for the textbook, and provide them with instructions on how they must purchase the access code (usually either online or through the bookstore).
 - b) Note that if a student is purchasing a used textbook, they *may* need to purchase the access code separately, since it may not come with a used book.

5. Notify your bookstore and/or department chair that you plan to teach with this product, and ensure the correct products are ordered.

1. Be sure to ask the bookstore to order the book that includes the universal key or One Key code—this usually has a different ISBN from the textbook alone. This way, students will not have to pay a separate fee to gain access to the e-pack in Vista.
2. Confirm that the bookstore has the textbook+Access Code package available in the store one week prior to course start date.

6. Prepare your course.

- Become comfortable with the content, tools, features, and browser settings.
- Customize your course to include your syllabus, calendar, announcements, and other personal information.
- Use the "Student View" tab in Blackboard Vista to view the e-Pack as a student would.
- Ask the publisher for a test Access code if possible before the class starts so that you can test one to make sure it is working.
- Identify any plug-ins or players that students will need for this e-Pack, and make them accessible via links on your Home Page.

7. Prepare your students.

- On the first day of class, plan to orient your students on how to log in to your Vista course section, and how to purchase the correct Textbook + Access Code package at the bookstore (if applicable).
- Encourage your students to try their access codes as soon as they receive them. That way if it is not working for any reason, a resolution can be found as quickly as possible. As the instructor, contact your [Distance Learning Director](#) so they can also help to find a resolution.

Importing E-packs (a.k.a. Course Cartridges) into Blackboard Vista Courses

Faculty Can Now Import E-packs into Course Sections

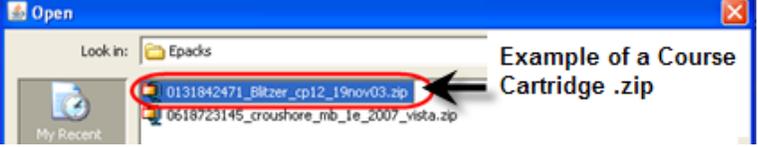
If you previously used E-packs in WebCT, you know that the Blackboard Vista Administrator at your college had to implement it into your course section for you. With the release of Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 (our current version), it is possible to import the e-packs into your own course sections.

Most colleges are allowing their faculty to upload their own e-packs/course cartridges. You should check with your local DL director first prior to uploading an e-pack.

Note: In previous WebCT or Vista versions it would “wipe out” any course content you had during the import process. With this new version, it will no longer “override” existing content you may already have in your section. Your content will remain after importing an e-pack.

To Import an E-pack

This documentation assumes you’ve already received from a publisher the e-pack or course cartridge you want to import into your course, and that you have downloaded the e-pack .zip file to your computer.

Go into the section you want to import an e-pack into.	
1. From the Build or Teach tab, go to Manage Course .	
2. Click Import .	
3. From the Get Files screen, click on My Computer .	
4. Locate where you saved the e-pack .zip file to. <i>(In this example, I had created a folder called “Epacks” on my desktop, and that is the location I saved the .zip file to.)</i>	
5. Select it and click “Open”	

After the import process is complete, be sure to go to Student View tab to make sure it appears as you want student’s to see it. You may need to hide or unhide items or components as you see appropriate.

Troubleshooting FAQ's

Most colleges are allowing their faculty to upload their own e-packs/course cartridges. You should check with your local DL director first prior to uploading an e-pack. If you need further support with e-packs, contact your DL director. If you have any trouble or receive errors as described below, they may be able to further assist you depending on the situation.

Q. Socket Error (or Broken Pipe error if on a Mac). Why do I receive a socket error message when trying to “import” the e-pack?

A. This error occurs with particularly larger files. Blackboard support has said, "Being that you are on a cluster, there is potential that it's the load balancer, could be its not handling sessions properly and tossing sessions back and forth between nodes."

In all instances, the files have been successfully uploaded at a later time, perhaps when there are less people/events on the system.

Q. Size Error. Why do I receive a size limit error message when trying to “import” the e-pack?

A. E-packs can be rather large files. If you receive a size limit error, report this to your local Blackboard Administrator or DL Support person. Let them know what size the .zip file is that you are trying to import. The system office will determine if this size can be accommodated and will temporarily give access to larger file uploads.

Q. Other Errors. You may receive generic “import error messages” after Step #7 in the import process.

A. Common reasons for errors:

#1. The e-pack may not be compatible with our version of Blackboard Vista. (There are so many versions, that it can easily be confused when requesting, or when the publisher sends the e-pack.) Check with the publisher to verify that the e-pack is Blackboard Vista 8.0.1 compatible.

#2. We have had one instance where the .zip file would not work, and verified with the publisher that it was for our version. In this instance, the .zip file had to be unzipped, and within the extracted .zip file was the e-pack .zip. (Essentially, it was a .zip within a .zip)