

ULTRA

Supporting All Course Design Patterns Using

Ultra is a new user experience, designed to offer a more personalized, intuitive, and mobile friendly experience for both learners and educators. The Ultra experience is oriented to *how* users use the LMS to fulfill critical use cases and workflows instead of *what* users use in the LMS – a discrete set of features and functions. Because of this paradigm shift, it is important to consider how your instructors design their courses in determining which faculty and courses to include in your initial roll-out of the Ultra course experience.

We studied how instructors use the LMS at the course design level. The data sample for this study included 70,000 courses from 927 institutions, with 3,374,462 unique learners using Blackboard Learn during Spring 2016 in North America. All of this data was anonymized at the individual and institutional levels; only aggregate data was used for analysis. We conducted a cluster analysis and five course patterns emerged:

1. **Supplemental:** high in content but with very little student interaction
2. **Complementary:** used primarily for one-way teacher-student communication
3. **Social:** high peer-to peer interaction through discussion boards
4. **Evaluative:** heavy use of assessments to facilitate content mastery
5. **Holistic:** high LMS activity with a balanced use of assessments, content, and discussion

COURSE ARCHETYPE	COUNT (%)
Supplemental Content-heavy_Low Interaction	9,909 (53%)
Complementary One-way communication through content, announcements, and gradebook	4,588 (24%)
Social High peer-to-peer interaction through discussion board	2,130 (11%)
Evaluative Heavy use of assessments	1,832 (10%)
Holistic High LMS activity with balanced use of assessment, content, and discussion	351 (2%)

Please review the course pattern profiles and a sampling of suggested tools/features that may be used within Ultra to support the pattern.

Read the full blog post on the study, [Patterns in Course Design: How instructors ACTUALLY use the LMS.](#)

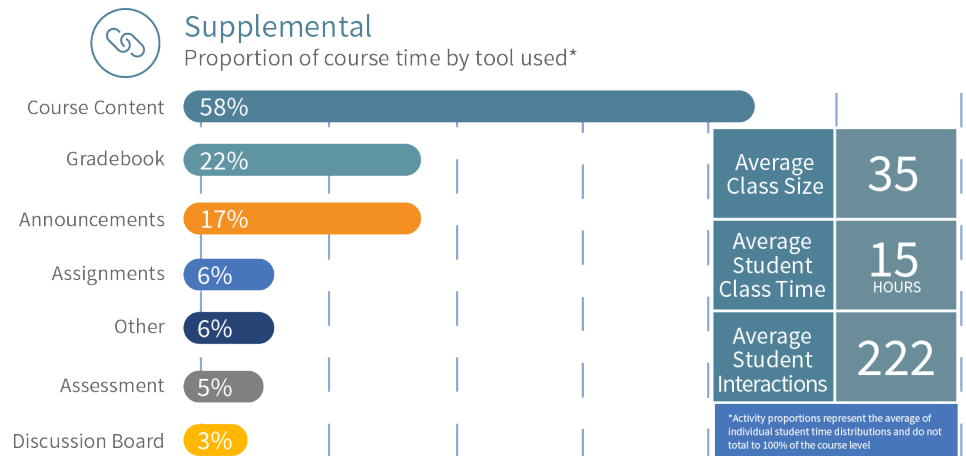
Lastly, we encourage instructors and course designers to demonstrate best practices in four major areas: Course Design, Interaction & Collaboration, Assessment, and Learner Support. As such, exemplary practices for each course design pattern are noted according to the Exemplary Course Program Rubric category and sub-category.

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THE SUPPLEMENTAL COURSE PATTERN IN AN ULTRA COURSE

- Share a variety of content with your students by importing, uploading, or copying content from other courses. Organize your content in chunks or manageable segments using Folders or Learning Modules.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 1.4



- Create a folder at the top of your course content area called “Getting Started” or “Course Information.” In this folder be sure to include orientation materials that explain how to navigate your course and where to go to get help, if needed, with the LMS. Be sure to include your contact information and any course or instructor policies (e.g., decorum, behavior, netiquette).
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 4.1, 4.4, 4.9
- Use a document to communicate how your instructional strategies will help your students achieve the goals and objectives for your course. You can align institution or department level goals to various types of content to help communicate desired learning outcomes.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.1, 1.8
- Integrate alternative resources for those needing accommodation. Ensure your course files are easily readable by assistive technology.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.13, 1.14
- Use the gradebook to record grades of in-class activities and some Blackboard course assignments. You can easily create assignments where submissions are collected offline (face-to-face). Corresponding columns are automatically added to the gradebook. Further customize your gradebook by adding items (columns) and calculations.
- Prepare announcements to post immediately, or schedule announcements. Course announcements appear the first time each student enters the course after the announcement is posted and before the student can access the Course Content page.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2
- Create assignments, with offline (face-to-face) submission collection if you like, and group assignments. Assignments may guidance to help your learners engage the course content in meaningful ways. You may also include questions, files, and blocks of text. You can apply time limits if you wish. Multiple attempts are an option with the choice of how you want to calculate the assignment grade. Lastly, you can set accommodations for students, allowing an exemption for a due date or a time limit across all assignments or specific ones.

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Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.9, 3.5, 3.6

- Support your assessment strategy by using tests (or quizzes). Take advantage of test question types that auto-grade, such as fill in the (multiple) blank(s), matching, multiple answer, multiple choice, and true/false. Essay question types are also available. You can allow multiple attempts for practice tests and tests can be timed if you like. It's easy to reuse questions and content from other tests, assignments, and question banks in your course.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 3.5, 3.6

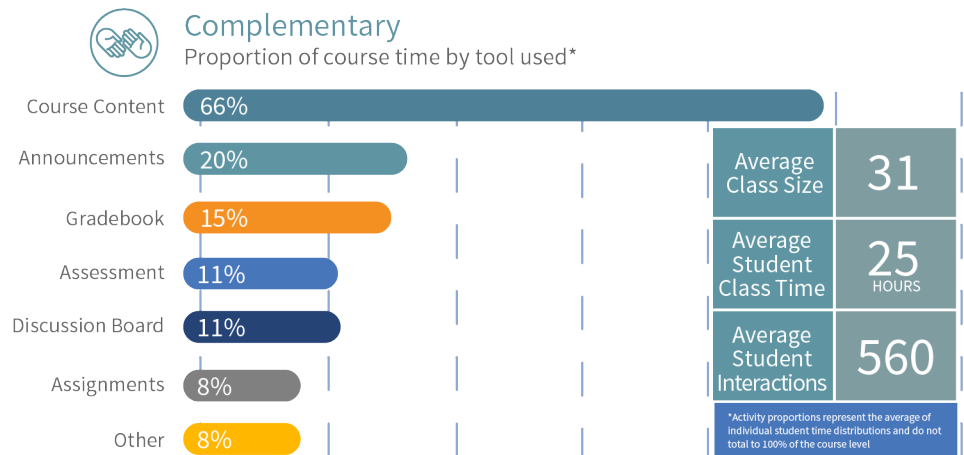
- Make use of embedded rubrics on assignments, tests, and discussions to help you as you evaluate graded work. Alternatively, simply upload a rubric to explain how learners will be assessed and to support self-evaluation. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 2.7, 3.1*

- Use a discussion with the post first option or an assignment or test to provide learners with the opportunity to share feedback on course design and course content during course delivery and after course completion.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 4.18

THE COMPLIMENTARY COURSE PATTERN IN AN ULTRA COURSE

- Design and share a variety of content by importing, uploading, or copying content from other courses. Use Learning Modules and Folders to organize your content. Create a document to present instructions or an overview along with a combination of content, such as introductory text, an audio file of a lecture or video of a demonstration, and an image. Add links to



websites you want students to use alongside with other course content.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10

- Create a folder at the top of your course content area called “Getting Started” or “Course Information.” In this folder be sure to include orientation materials that explain how to navigate your course and where to go to get help, if needed, with the LMS. Be sure to include your contact information and any course or instructor policies (e.g., decorum, behavior, netiquette).

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 4.1, 4.4, 4.9

- Integrate alternative resources for those needing accommodation. Ensure your course files are easily readable by assistive technology.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.13, 1.14

- Prepare announcements to post immediately, or schedule announcements. Course announcements appear the first time each student enters the course after the announcement is posted and before the student can access the Course Content page.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2

- Use the gradebook to record grades of in-class activities and some Blackboard course assignments. You can easily create assignments where submissions are collected offline (face-to-face). Corresponding columns are automatically added to the gradebook. Further customize your gradebook by adding items (columns) and calculations.

- Support your assessment strategy by using tests (or quizzes). Take advantage of test question types that auto-grade, such as fill in the (multiple) blank(s), matching, multiple answer, multiple choice, and true/false. Essay question types are also available. You can allow multiple attempts for practice tests and tests can be timed if you like. It’s easy to reuse questions and content from other tests, assignments, and question banks in your course.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 3.5, 3.6

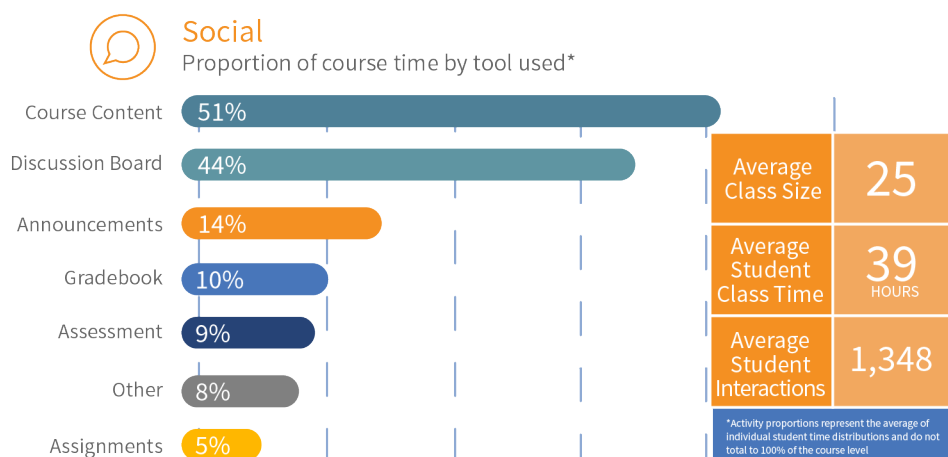
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- Use discussions to extend office hours and reach students outside of class.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.11, 1.12, 2.5, 2.6
- Create assignments, with offline (face-to-face) submission collection if you like, and group assignments. Multiple attempts are an option with the choice of how you want to calculate the assignment grade.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 3.5, 3.6
- Make use of embedded rubrics on assignments, tests, and discussions to help you as you evaluate graded work. Alternatively, simply upload a rubric to explain how learners will be assessed and to support self-evaluation. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 2.7, 3.1*
- You can send messages to multiple people or the entire class. The messages stay inside the system and you don't have to worry about incorrect or no-longer-used email addresses.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2
- Use a discussion with the post first option or an assignment or test to provide learners with the opportunity to share feedback on course design and course content during course delivery and after course completion.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 4.18

THE SOCIAL COURSE PATTERN IN AN ULTRA COURSE

- Design and share a variety of content by importing, uploading, or copying content from other courses. Use Learning Modules and Folders to organize your content. Create a document to present instructions or an overview along with a combination of content, such as introductory text, an audio file of a lecture or video of a demonstration, and an image. Add links to websites you want students to use alongside with other course content.



Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10

- Create a folder at the top of your course content area called “Getting Started” or “Course Information.” In this folder be sure to include orientation materials that explain how to navigate your course and where to go to get help, if needed, with the LMS. Be sure to include your contact information and any course or instructor policies (e.g., decorum, behavior, netiquette).

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 4.1, 4.4, 4.9

- Integrate alternative resources for those needing accommodation. Ensure your course files are easily readable by assistive technology.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.13, 1.14

- Create discussions to support high student-to-student interactions to demonstrate grasp or mastery of the material, to defend or debate, and to create a sense of community in online courses. Group discussions provide value for truly fostering discussion in large classes. It is easy to randomly and automatically divide a large class into smaller groups of students. When appropriate, you can require students to “post first” to encourage originality and critical thinking. Include examples of quality communication. Check out Best Practice: Effective Discussion Questions for tips on drawing out higher order thinking and guiding questions. Be sure to check out the discussion analytics to monitor participation and to support and encourage students, and engage non-participants.

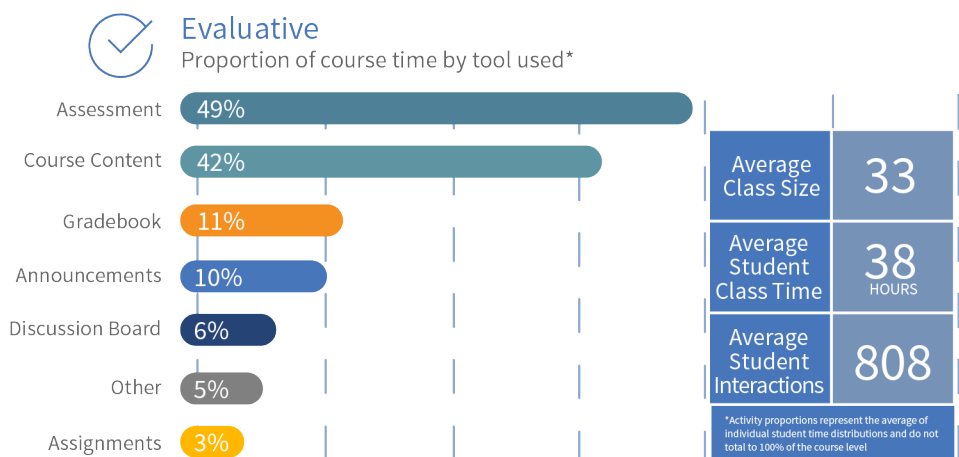
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.11, 1.12, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 3.5, 3.6

- Make use of embedded rubrics on discussions to help you as you evaluate graded work. Alternatively, simply upload a rubric to explain how learners will be assessed and to support self-evaluation. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 2.7, 3.1*

- Enable Conversations on content or assessments in your course. This tool is great for allowing students to ask for help, share resources, or answer questions about a specific piece of content or an assessment. Conversations are available for group assignments and tests (quizzes). If your course uses Collaborate and you enabled conversations, students can easily move into a Collaborate room to meet with peers.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6
- Prepare announcements to post immediately, or schedule announcements. Course announcements appear the first time each student enters the course after the announcement is posted and before the student can access the Course Content page.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2
- Use the gradebook to record grades of in-class activities and Blackboard course assignments/assessments. You can easily embed audio/video recordings of your feedback in the grading process. If your class meets face-to-face, you can create assignments where submissions are collected offline. Corresponding columns are automatically added to the gradebook. Further customize your gradebook by adding items (columns) and calculations.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 3.9
- You and your students can send messages to each other, multiple people or the entire class. The messages stay inside the system and you don't have to worry about incorrect or no-longer-used email addresses.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2
- Use a discussion with the post first option or an assignment or test to provide learners with the opportunity to share feedback on course design and course content during course delivery and after course completion.
Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 4.18

THE EVALUATIVE COURSE PATTERN IN AN ULTRA COURSE

- Support your assessment strategy by using tests (or quizzes). Take advantage of test question types that auto-grade, such as fill in the (multiple) blank(s), matching, multiple answer, multiple choice, and true/false. Essay question types are also available. You can allow multiple attempts for practice tests and tests can be timed if you like. Secure



assessments may take advantage of 3rd party tools, such as Respondus. It's easy to reuse questions and content from other tests, assignments, and question banks in your course. Use the question analysis to review statistics on overall performance on tests/quizzes, assessment quality, and individual questions. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 3.6*

- Make use of rubrics on assignments, tests, and discussions to help you as you evaluate graded work. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 2.7, 3.1*
- Design and share a variety of content by importing, uploading, or copying content from other courses. Use Learning Modules and Folders to organize your content. Create a document to present instructions or an overview along with a combination of content, such as introductory text, an audio file of a lecture or video of a demonstration, and an image. Add links to websites you want students to use alongside with other course content. You may also choose to use teaching tools from Blackboard's partner publishers with LTI connections or SCORM packages. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10*
- Create a folder at the top of your course content area called "Getting Started" or "Course Information." In this folder be sure to include orientation materials that explain how to navigate your course and where to go to get help, if needed, with the LMS. Be sure to include your contact information and any course or instructor policies (e.g., decorum, behavior, netiquette). *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 4.1, 4.4, 4.9*
- Integrate alternative resources for those needing accommodation. Ensure your course files are easily readable by assistive technology. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.13, 1.14*

- Use the gradebook to record your online assessment grades. Corresponding columns are automatically added to the gradebook when you create a test. It's easy to [get started with your grading](#) according to your preferences. You can also easily embed [audio/video recordings of your feedback](#) in the grading process.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 3.9

- Prepare [announcements](#) to post immediately, or schedule announcements. Course announcements appear the first time each student enters the course after the announcement is posted and before the student can access the Course Content page.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2

- [Create discussions](#) to support students as they demonstrate grasp or mastery of the material and to create a sense of community in online courses. When appropriate, you can require students to ["post first"](#) to encourage originality and critical thinking. Check out [Best Practice: Effective Discussion Questions](#) for tips on drawing out higher order thinking and guiding questions. Be sure to check out the [discussion analytics](#) to monitor participation and to support and encourage students, and engage non-participants.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.11, 1.12, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 3.5, 3.6

- Use a [discussion](#) with the post first option or an [assignment](#) or [test](#) to provide learners with the opportunity to share feedback on course design and course content during course delivery and after course completion.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 4.18

THE HOLISTIC COURSE PATTERN IN AN ULTRA COURSE

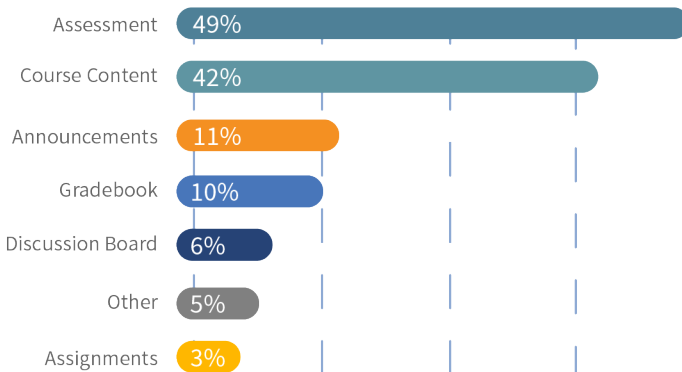
- Support your assessment strategy in a variety of ways:

- Use tests (or quizzes). Take advantage of test question types that auto-grade, such as fill in the (multiple) blank(s), matching, multiple answer, multiple choice, and true/false. Essay question types are also available. You can allow multiple attempts for practice tests and tests can



Holistic

Proportion of course time by tool used*



Average Class Size	39
Average Student Class Time	70 HOURS
Average Student Interactions	1,596
*Activity proportions represent the average of individual student time distributions and do not total to 100% of the course level	

be timed if you like. Secure assessments may take advantage of 3rd party tools, such as Respondus. It's easy to reuse questions and content from other tests, assignments, and question banks in your course. Use the question analysis to review statistics on overall performance on tests/quizzes, assessment quality, and individual questions.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 3.5, 3.6

- Create discussions to support students as they demonstrate grasp or mastery of the material and to create a sense of community in online courses. When appropriate, you can require students to “post first” to encourage originality and critical thinking. Check out Best Practice: Effective Discussion Questions for tips on drawing out higher order thinking and guiding questions. Be sure to check out the discussion analytics to monitor participation and to support and encourage students, and engage non-participants.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.11, 1.12, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 3.5, 3.6

- Create assignments and group assignments. Multiple attempts are an option with the choice of how you want to calculate the assignment grade.
- Use SafeAssign to check for potential plagiarism in assignment and test submissions.
- Make use of rubrics on assignments, tests, and discussions to help you as you evaluate graded work.
- Use attendance data as part of your students' overall grades.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 2.7, 3.1

- Design and share a variety of content by importing, uploading, or copying content from other courses. Use Learning Modules and Folders to organize your content. Create a document to present instructions or an overview along with a combination of content, such as introductory text, an audio file of a lecture or video of a demonstration, and an image. Add links to websites you want students to use alongside with other course content. You may also choose to use teaching tools from Blackboard's partner publishers with LTI connections or SCORM packages. *Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.4, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, 1.10*

- Create a folder at the top of your course content area called “Getting Started” or “Course Information.” In this folder be sure to include orientation materials that explain how to navigate your course and where to go to get help, if needed, with the LMS. Be sure to include your contact information and any course or instructor policies (e.g., decorum, behavior, netiquette).

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 4.1, 4.4, 4.9

- Integrate alternative resources for those needing accommodation. Ensure your course files are easily readable by assistive technology.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standards 1.13, 1.14

- Prepare announcements to post immediately, or schedule announcements. Course announcements appear the first time each student enters the course after the announcement is posted and before the student can access the Course Content page.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 2.2

- Use the gradebook to record your grades. Corresponding columns are automatically added to the gradebook when you create a gradable items. It’s easy to assign, edit, and post grades in Ultra. You can also easily embed audio/video recordings of your feedback in the grading process.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 3.9

- Use a discussion with the post first option or an assignment or test to provide learners with the opportunity to share feedback on course design and course content during course delivery and after course completion.

Exemplary Course Program Rubric alignment: Standard 4.18