

Getting started



The aim of this guide is to give students a practical introduction to using basic features and tools within Blackboard.

This guide covers:

1. Getting started
2. Communication
3. Electronic assignment submission.



Figure 1: The Blackboard banner

You will find Blackboard at:

<http://www.ole.bris.ac.uk/>

Introduction

Symbols



Aim i.e. what you should know after completing the section.



Tips

Additional important information for the section.

Logging in



Aim: This section will show you how to log in and where to get additional help.

To login Blackboard you need access to the Internet and a Blackboard login (username and password).

Your Blackboard username and password is the same as your University username.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard login page for the University of Bristol. It features the 'ole' logo, the University of Bristol logo, and the Blackboard logo. The main heading is 'Welcome to the University of Bristol's Online Learning Environment.' Below this, there are links for 'Learning Technology Support Service Blackboard pages' and 'Blackboard User Area'. The page is divided into 'Login' and 'News' sections. The 'Login' section has three options: 'UoB Username Login' (with a callout 'E.g. an0000'), 'Non UoB Username Login' (with a callout 'E.g. ltss0000v'), and 'GSaE project Username Login' (with a callout 'Special PDA project login'). The 'News' section has a callout 'The Blackboard blog link'. At the bottom, there is a contact information box for helpdesk support. A callout 'Links to useful web sites' points to the top right area of the page.

Figure 2: The Blackboard Login Page.

UoB Username Login

If you have a UoB username and forget your password you will need to contact the Information Services Helpdesk in the Computing Centre on Tyndall Avenue (0117 9287870).

Non-UoB Username Login

If you have a non-UoB username (for example LTSS000v) and forget your login please email bb-help@bristol.ac.uk.

More information

Up to the minute information on Blackboard is available from the Blackboard Blog at www.blackboard.blog-city.com

Your Blackboard Home Page



Aim: This section will give you an overview of the Blackboard Home Page.

After receiving your username and password, you can login to the Blackboard web site. After login in you will see your personal Blackboard Home Page (**Figure 3**). Your Blackboard Home Page welcomes you by name and is divided into four sections.

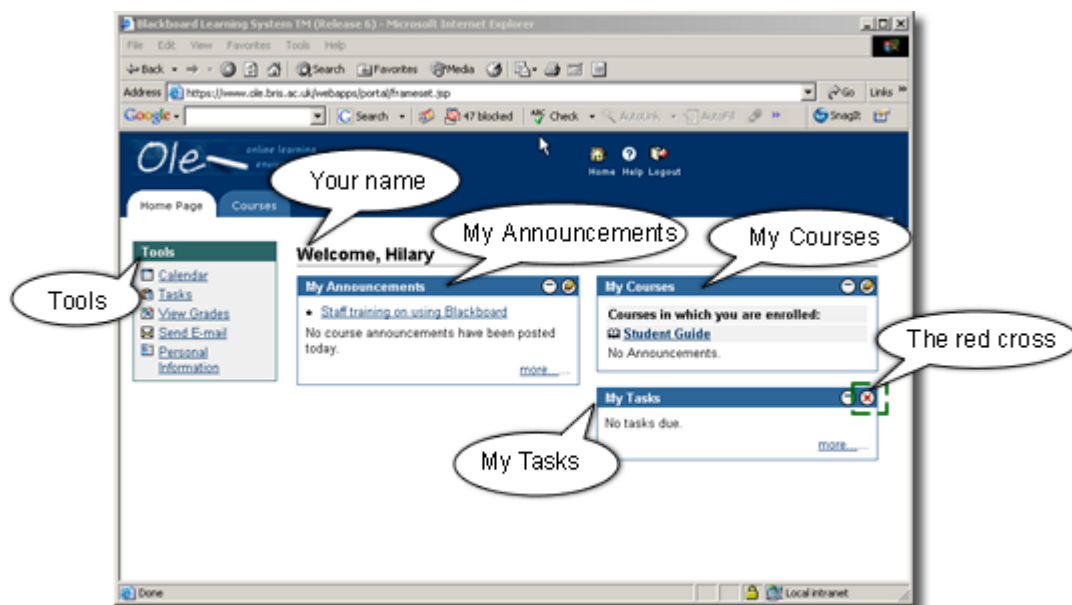


Figure 3: Your Blackboard Home Page

The Blackboard Home Page sections are:

1. **My Courses:** lists all the courses you are currently enrolled on. Click on the course name to enter the course.
2. **My Announcements:** this lists all the announcements that have recently been made on courses in which you are enrolled. Click on an announcement name to read the announcement.
3. **My Tasks:** this lists all the tasks you have set yourself.
4. **Tools** This area allows you to see the Calendar, check any available grade books and send email through Blackboard.



Tip: You can remove the My Tasks section from your Blackboard Home Page by clicking the red cross.

Logging in



Aim: This section highlights recent changes in Blackboard.

Until recently all users could reset their Blackboard password via the Personal Information section of their Blackboard Homepage. Blackboard now uses UoB usernames and passwords and access to Blackboard is via a single sign-on for web applications. (**Figure 4**)

University of BRISTOL

home | contacting people | a-z index | news | events | help

University home > Single Sign-On > Login

Single Sign-on for Web Applications

UOB Login

Username:

Password:

Login

[About the UOB Domain](#)

Warn me before logging me in to other sites

[What does this mean?](#)

Remember to Logout

It is important that you remember to [Logout](#) or close your web browser when you have finished accessing services that require authentication

Check the URL

Check the address of this web page begins with: <https://sso.bris.ac.uk/sso/>
If it does not - [do not continue!](#)

SINGLE SIGN-ON FOR WEB APPLICATIONS

- Login
- Logout

Documents about SSO

- SSO for users
- SSO for developers
- Bristol's modifications

Figure 4: The Single Sign-on for Web Applications page.

If you need to change your UoB password please contact the Information Services Helpdesk in the Computing Centre on Tyndall Avenue (0117 9287870).

If you use a Guest account login to Blackboard (for example Itss000v) you can still use the **Change password** option in the Personal Information section of your homepage.



Tip: For maximum security use a password that combines both numbers and letters (upper and lower case).

Self enrolling



Aim: This section outlines how to self enrol.

Some courses allow you to self enrol (**Figure 5**). To self-enrol on a course your first need to locate it. This can be done by clicking the Courses tab and using the search facility.

The screenshot shows the Blackboard 'Courses' page. The 'Courses' tab is highlighted. The page displays 'Current Location: Learning Technology Support Services' and a list of categories: Clinical Academies, ETS Masters Courses, Projects, ELAN, and LTSN Partnership. Under the 'Courses' section, three courses are listed:

- its-new-technologies** (its-new-technologies)
Instructor Users: andy ramsden
its-new-technologies
Buttons: Preview, Enrol
- its-further-developing-2** (its-further-developing-2)
Instructor Users: andy ramsden, Alan Lockett, Bhagesh Sachania
its-further-developing-2
Buttons: Enrol
- its-further-developing** (its-further-developing)
Instructor Users: Hilary Griffiths, andy ramsden, Anna Sims
Buttons: Enrol

Callouts in the image:

- 'The Courses tab' points to the 'Courses' tab.
- 'Course name' points to the course title 'its-new-technologies'.
- 'Preview the course' points to the 'Preview' button.
- 'Self enrol' points to the 'Enrol' button.
- 'This course does not allow self enrolling' points to the 'its-further-developing' course, which only has an 'Enrol' button and no 'Preview' button.

Figure 5: Self enrolling on a course

To self enrol:

1. Login to Blackboard.
2. Find the course (see the **Tip** below on searching)
3. Click on the Enrol button.
4. If you are requested for an access code please contact the course lecturer.

If an enrol button does not appear then either the course is not set for self enrolment or you are already enrolled.



Tip: To find a course either click on the Courses tab then enter the name or Unit Code into the Course Search box or search by selecting the appropriate Department from the list on the right side of the screen then search the list of courses associated with that Department.

Increasing screen size



Aim: This section gives a simple technique for enlarging the Blackboard content area.

You can increase the size of the content screen by minimising navigation frame.

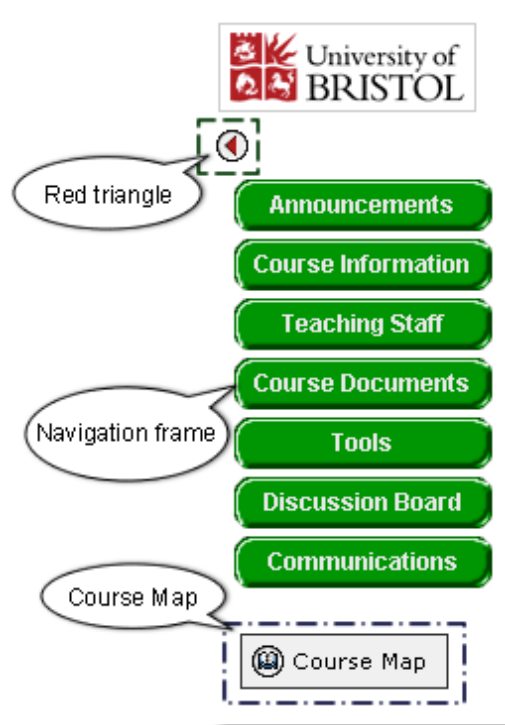


Figure 6: Increasing content screen size

. To minimise the navigation screen simply click on the red triangle at the top of the navigation frame. You can re-activate the navigation bar by clicking on the red triangle.



Tip: The Course Map (below the navigation frame) shows the structure of your course and the location of specific course documents.

Communication

Blackboard facilitates communication between students and between students and lecturers in a range of ways using tools including:

- Announcements
- Email
- Messaging
- File exchange
- Discussion boards
- Chat rooms
- Student groups (with access to their own discussion boards, file exchange, email groups)

This section will briefly cover a few of these tools.

Your Course Homepage



Aim: This section shows how to create a personal profile.

You can create a profile in a specific course by using the Course Homepage tool. Your profile can include personal information, an introductory message, photograph and your favourite web sites.

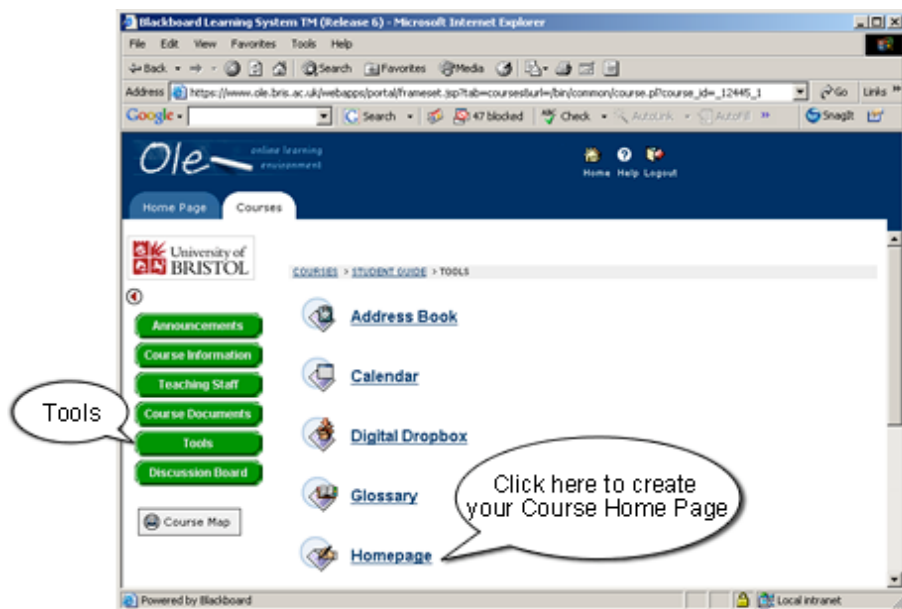


Figure 7: Your Course Home Page

To create or edit your Homepage:

1. Go into the relevant course by clicking its title in My Courses.
2. Click the Tools button.

3. Select Homepage from the list of Tools.
4. Complete the form.
5. Click Submit to finish.



Tip: You can search for Homepages in the Roster page of any course. Don't forget you can use the Course Map to find where your Roster area is (usually in Communications).

Redirecting E-mail



Aim: This section covers enabling email redirect from UoB account.

Blackboard by default uses your UoB email address to contact you. However, many individuals use another email client as their preferred email option, for instance, Hotmail or Yahoo. It is possible to redirect all mail sent to your UoB address by completing a simple online form. **(Figure 8)**.

You can redirect your UoB email to another email client by completing an online form at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/is/services/register/registercomputing.html#redirect>

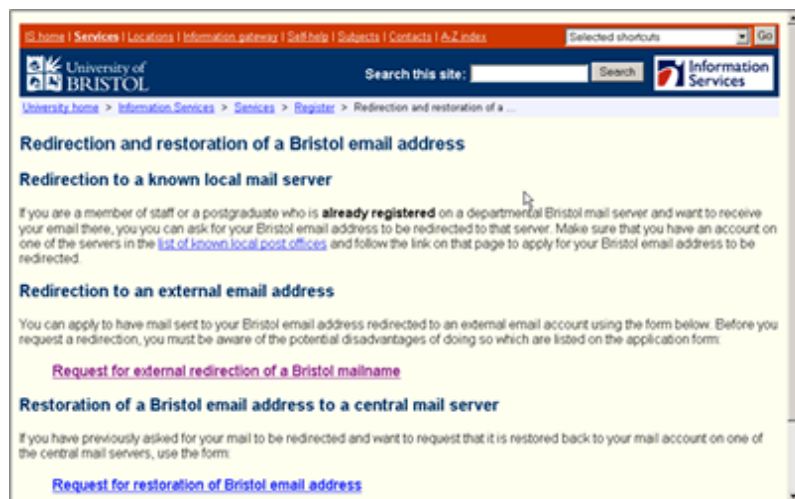


Figure 8: Redirecting email

Group File Exchange



Aim: This section provides a brief overview of Blackboard Groups highlighting the File Exchange option.

The Blackboard File Exchange feature allows students to communicate and collaborate by sharing files and documents. Files are exchanged between group members, with the groups themselves being defined within Blackboard. Groups may also have access to other communication tools like discussion boards. (More on online discussion in the next section)

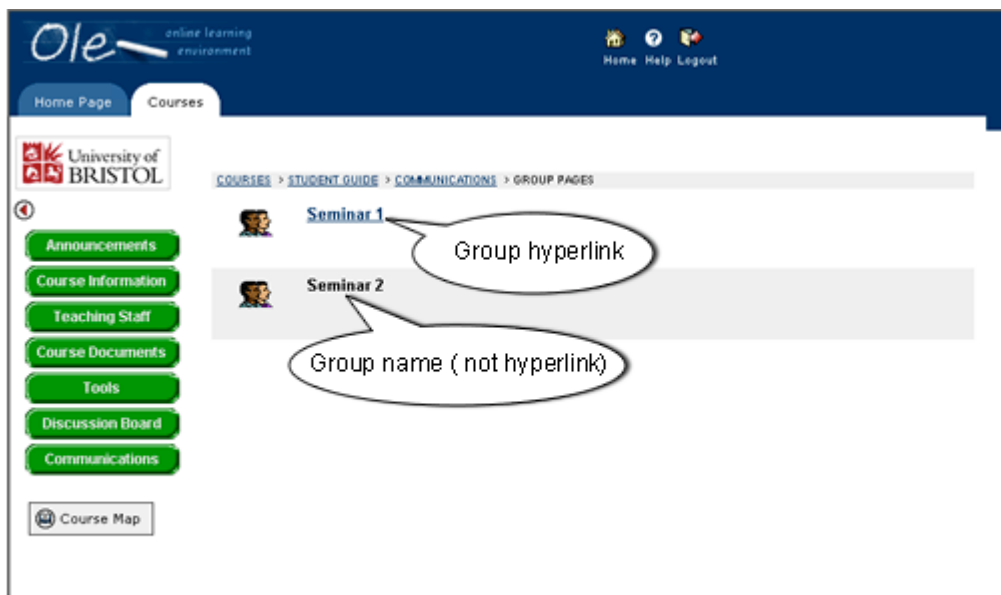


Figure 9: The Group Pages

To share a file:

1. Enter your group (it will be underlined as a hyperlink). **(Figure 9)**.
2. Click on the File Exchange link.
3. Click on the Add File button.
4. Enter a document title
5. To upload the document you need to click on Browse, then find the document on your local computer (then click on Submit).
6. After uploading you will receive a receipt stating if it was successful.

To check a file upload has been successful navigate back into the group file exchange screen and your file will be visible, with a time stamp on when it was uploaded.

There is no automatic alert to other members of the group and the file can only be accessed by other members of the group.

Discussion Boards: Getting started



Aim: This section gives you an introduction to online discussion boards.

Blackboard discussion boards are relatively simple to use and can be a very effective way of collaborating in an online learning environment. Here are some brief instructions on discussion board basics.

To enter a discussion board:

1. Click Discussion Board (or a discussion board link in a group area)
2. Click on the name of the discussion forum you want to enter
3. Click the title of a thread to view that thread (**Figure 10**)

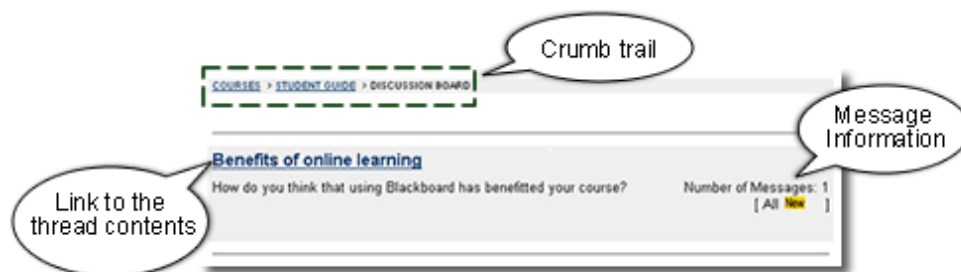


Figure 10: A discussion board thread

To post a reply:

1. Enter the appropriate board and thread (as above).
2. Click the Reply button.
3. Type in your reply.
4. Leave Smart Text checked, and Post as Anonymous unchecked.
5. Click Browse if you wish to locate and attach a file.
6. Click Submit to post your reply.

To start a new discussion thread:

1. Enter the appropriate board and thread (see above).
2. Click the Add New Thread button.
3. Type a subject for your message.
4. Type your message.
5. To add an attachment (assuming enabled) then click Browse and locate the file.
6. Click Submit to post your message.



Tip: The Crumb trail is a navigation aid that appears on each Blackboard screen shows the sequence of screen you have viewed to get to this location. It allows you to quickly retrace your steps or jump to another part of the course.

Discussion Boards: Managing your messages



Aim: This section provides a few techniques for managing busy discussion boards.

Once your discussion board has been active for a while you may find that there a lot of messages, and it is hard to keep track of what you should be reading. There are several ways you can deal with this.

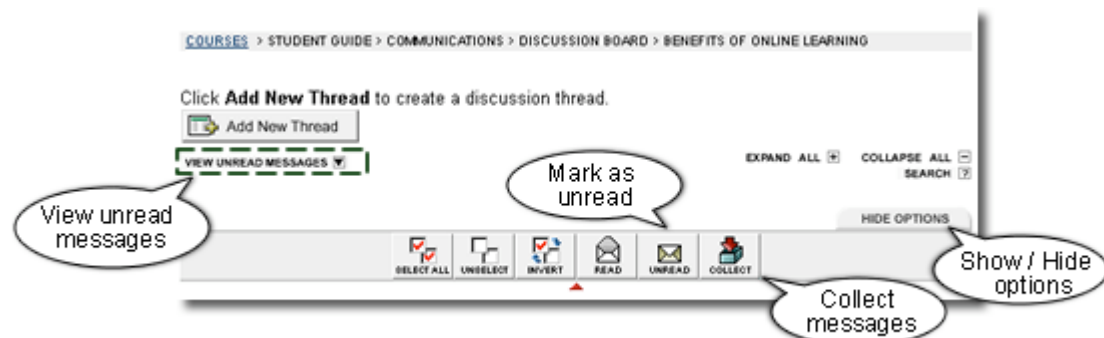


Figure 11: Managing your messages

Ways of managing your messages (Figure 11):

1. Only view new messages

Discussion boards show all the messages posted by default. A way to manage your messages is to select to view only unread messages. To do this simply click on View unread messages and you will see only the messages you have not yet read.

If you wish to view all your messages then click back onto View all messages to see the whole discussion.

2. Mark messages as unread

A problem with viewing only unread messages is that you may want to return to an important read message. You can mark important messages for re-reading later by selecting and marking them as unread.

To re-mark a read message as unread:

Select the message to mark as unread by clicking in the check box next to the message. Then click on the Unread icon.

3. Collect important messages

This will display any selected messages on single page, which makes it easy to read them, and easy to print them all out.

To collect important messages select the messages you want to collect, then click on the Collect icon on the options bar. You can then cut and paste these to Microsoft Word to print or comment.

Electronic assignment submission

Blackboard has a range of ways that students can submit assignments electronically.

Electronic submission methods range from the simple digital drop box to the more developed JISC plagiarism software.

The additional Jisc Turnitin functionality checks for the originality of content against a range of published materials, including web based repositories and generates an originality report and score.

The Digital Drop Box



Aim: This section gives an overview of the Digital Drop Box.

The Digital Drop Box is a way of transferring files, between students and between a student and the course lecturer. The drop box is available from the Tools section of a course.

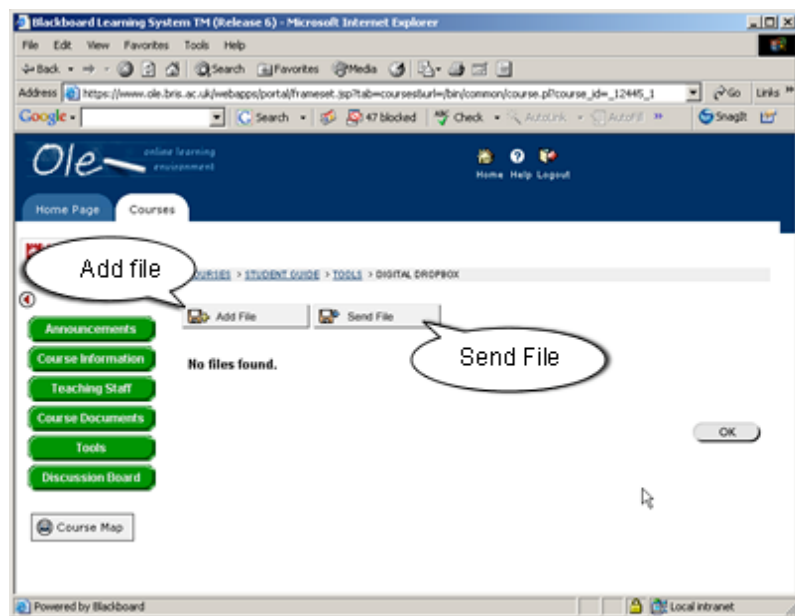


Figure 12: The Digital Drop Box

The use of the Digital Drop Box is a two stage process:

1. Upload the file to Blackboard
2. Send it to your desired recipient. **(Figure 12)**

Files and documents deposited in the Digital Drop Box can be only be opened by permitted individuals (i.e. the file recipient and creator).

The Assignment Manager



Aim: This section covers the Assignment Manager submission method.

The Assignment Manager is a method for students to submit their work for assessment and is enabled by lecturers on a course by course basis.

Figure 13: The Assignment Manager

To submit your work via the Assignment Manager:

1. Find the part of the course where the assignment has been included.
2. Add any comments in the box provided.
3. Browse and attach your assignment (as you would an email attachment.)
4. Click Submit **(Figure 13)**.



Tip: You are advised to take a screen grab of the Receipt screen that appears after you click submit. You can do this by clicking the Print Screen button then pasting the screen grab into Word.

Jisc PDS: submitting an assignment



Aim: This section looks at how to use Jisc PDS assignment submission.

Jisc PDS assignment submission is a new and increasingly popular addition to Blackboard. It allows students to submit an assignment electronically, which can be checked with a plagiarism detection program developed by JISC. It can be set up so both students and lecturers can view the plagiarism report generated. (Jisc is The Joint Information Services Committee, PDS is plagiarism detection software).

The screenshot shows the 'Submit JISC PDS Assignment' form. It has a breadcrumb trail: COURSES > STUDENT GUIDE > COURSE DOCUMENTS > SUBMIT JISC PDS ASSIGNMENT. The form title is 'Submit JISC PDS Assignment'. Section 1, 'Assignment Information', shows 'Name: Assignment 2' and 'Instructions: Please submit your assignment using the Jisc PDS service.' Section 2, 'Paper Information', includes fields for 'Author's First Name', 'Author's Last Name', 'Paper Title', and 'File'. A 'Browse...' button is next to the 'File' field. Below these fields, it lists 'Acceptable File Types: MS Word, WordPerfect, PostScript, PDF, HTML, RTF, and plain text, with a maximum size of 10MB.' Section 3, 'Submit', contains the instruction 'Click Submit to finish. Click Cancel to quit.' and 'Cancel' and 'Submit' buttons. Callouts point to 'The Assignment Information', 'Browse to attach your file', and 'Submit'.

Figure 14: The JISC PDS Assignment

To submit an assignment:

1. Login in to your Blackboard course.
2. Find the assignment upload area (it may be under tools).
3. Click on View / complete.
4. Complete the online form (**Figure 14**).

5. Click Submit.

Help

Can't log in?

As soon as you receive your UoB username and email address you will be able to log in to Blackboard via the Single Sign-on for Web Applications page.

Forgotten password?

Students with UoB usernames should contact the Information Services Helpdesk on 0117 9287870.

Students using guest accounts should contact bb-help@bristol.ac.uk

Not seeing Blackboard courses you expect?

Contact your course lecturer to ensure that they are planning to use Blackboard to support their face to face teaching and have set up a course.

Not enrolled on the correct courses?

Your Blackboard courses reflect the courses you are enrolled on centrally, however your lecturer can still enrol you on their courses if the central data is not accurate.

Not sure if the Blackboard system is down?

The policy is to only schedule service downtimes during student vacations, however sometimes, security or system performance depend upon short service downtimes during term time. To get the most up to date information on the Blackboard service please check the Blackboard blog at www.blackboard.blog-city.com

General browser or IT issues e.g. printing, plug ins?

Contact the [IS Helpdesk](#)