

# Ultra Course Conversion - audio overview

## Overview

This audio content was auto generated with Google's Notebook LM using a Workbook from Anthology that serves as a comprehensive guide for educators transitioning their Blackboard courses from the Original format to the Ultra interface.

### Transcript begins:

Okay, so welcome to the deep dive. Uh, today we are diving into something that I am sure is on a lot of people's minds and that is the transition from Blackboard original to Blackboard Ultra.

Yeah.

And we're going to be looking at uh this great workbook from Anthology Inc. called the Ultra post Conversion Text Workbook V4.pdf.

Right.

And uh we really want to focus on, you know, what happens after that initial conversion and all the things that you need to do to kind of get your Ultra course up and running.

Absolutely.

Uh so why don't you introduce yourself and then we'll jump right in.

Sure. So my name is expert name and I am an instructional designer.

I am host name.

I've been working with Blackboard Ultra for a few years now.

All right. So let's take a look at what we're going to be doing today.

Okay.

Um the workbook actually lays out a five-step process for us.

It does.

Uh step one is get oriented. Okay.

Step two is organize content. Step three is refine and complete. Got it.

Step four is adjust settings. Okay.

And step five is final check. Makes sense.

So, we're going to try to hit all of those today.

Sounds good.

Um, and we'll kind of, you know, pick and choose the things that we think will be most beneficial to you.

Sure.

Um, so let's jump into step one.

Get oriented.

Okay.

So, the first thing I think you're going to notice right off the bat is just the navigation is different. Like things have moved around quite a bit from original to ultra.

Yeah. You know, I think one of the first things that you're going to notice is in original you had that customizable lefthand menu and you could put anything you wanted in there, right? You could put a link to your, you know, personal website or whatever you wanted and then the homepage you could customize as well. So, you could make every course look and feel different,

right? And I know some people really liked that, but I know a lot of students really struggled with that because if they had five different courses and they all look totally different every time, they have to learn how to navigate

the course. So, Ultra takes a a more centralized approach.

Yes.

Um, so now you have this menu at the top that is fixed. Um, so it's going to have your course content, calendar, announcements, discussions, gradebook messages, analytics groups.

Um, and that is going to be the same in every ultra course that your students are in.

That is correct.

So that way they can kind of learn their way around and it doesn't matter whose course they're in, they kind of know

exactly

where to find things.

That's the idea.

And then the overall structure of the back end is a little different, too.

It is.

So in original, you kind of had your menu and then you had this whole like like course management area where all your settings and the grade center and all that stuff was and then you had your content area, but it was kind of like this layered effect.

Yes, very much so.

But Ultra streamlines that

it does.

So, you've got that top menu that we talked about and then the settings are actually located in a few different places depending on what you're setting up.

And then you have this one main area that you customize that has like everything that's going to be in your course. So, it kind of combines the menu and the content.

Exactly. It's all one space. essentially. Yeah.

And that's a big difference from how original was structured.

Um and then there's a couple of really important buttons to be aware of that are going to be different.

Oh, yes, definitely.

So, the first one is this plus icon.

Yeah.

Um you'll see it when you hover between content items,  
right?

And you'll also see it just like right at the top of the main content page. And when you click on the plus, that's how you add anything to your course. So, that would be like a document.

Yeah.

A test, an assignment, any of that stuff.

Exactly. And it's consistent throughout the entire interface.

Right. And then there's this three dot menu that you're going to see everywhere.

You are the three dots will be your best friend.

Yeah. So you see those three dots, you're going to click on that to get your options to either delete or edit whatever it is

exactly

you're working with.

And it's really handy because it's context-sensitive.

So it'll give you the options that are relevant to the item that you're looking at. And then even navigating within the content is a little different for students.

It is.

Um so you're going to see these boxes or chevrons is around folders and learning modules and you just click on that to expand or collapse the content within those areas.

A nice way to keep the course content page a little bit cleaner.

Yes.

So not just this huge long list of items.

Right. So let's talk about learning modules because those are really powerful in Ultra. They are um and they're, you know, they're designed for you to kind of structure related content and activities together.

Um so you can put them in a clear sequential order.

All right,

for your students. So it's like step one, step two, step three. So it makes it really easy for them to

Exactly. Yes.

And it helps you as an instructor organize your content in a way that makes sense for the learning process.

Yeah. And this is great because it supports this progressive learning flow.

It does.

Um so instead of like in the old days where students would have to click in and out of all this different content, um now you can have like a next button and a previous button so they can just seamlessly go through the material.

It's like reading a book.

And here's something that's really interesting. If you put folders inside of learning modules, yes,

you get that next and previous button even.

That's right.

In the folder,

it inherits the navigation from the learning module.

Oh, that's nice.

Which is really helpful for organizing complex content.

Yeah. So, folders still have a place in Ultra.

Absolutely.

Um, you know, it's a great way to organize content that isn't sequential, right?

Um, or maybe to organize content within a learning module.

Yeah. You know, like say you have a week one learning module. Right?

And you have like readings and exercises, right?

You could have a folder for the readings and a folder for the exercises within that learning module.

Um, and then the workbook even suggests having like a top level folder.

Oh, yeah.

For what they call an alle cart collection of course resources.

I like that.

So that's kind of a place for just random stuff. Exactly. Um, so you know if it doesn't really fit anywhere else, you can just throw it in there and students can

It's like the junk drawer of your course.

Yeah. Exactly.

But sometimes you need a junk drawer.

Yeah. You do it. for those miscellaneous items.

Right. So, when you're creating the actual content in Ultra, you're going to be using the Ultra text editor.

Yeah.

Um and it's a lot more simplified.

It is.

And streamlined than the old one.

Um they designed to be a lot more mobile friendly and accessible.

That's right.

Um so, it really focuses on creating clear and readable content for students.

Exactly. And, you know, getting rid of a lot of the bells and whistles that weren't really necessary, right?

And sometimes made things more complicated.

So, let's talk about what happened when your course was converted. Like, what did they do with your stuff?

Okay. So, the million-dollar question, Rick.

Yeah.

What happened to my stuff from original?

Yeah.

So, Blackboard does its best to map things over.

Okay.

Um, so if you had a content area in original, the title of that content area will probably become a folder or learning module.

Yeah.

On your content page.

Okay.

Um, and anything that was inside of that content area

right

should be inside that folder or learning module now but there's some things that don't translate directly

right

um so for example a module page from original doesn't come over at all

okay

um a blank page will usually become a document in Ultra

okay

um a tool link won't convert a course link won't convert

okay

um web links will still be web links

okay good

um and then dividers and subheaders that you might have had in your menu

right

those don't come over either

okay and the way items are displayed is pretty different now, too.

It is very different.

So, in original, like you could have everything on one long page,

right? Right.

Like all of your content items, folders, assignments, everything could all be in one big

Exactly. It's just one long scrolling page

and then folders would take you to a new page.

Yeah. A new page with potentially another long list of items. But Ultra is much more modular.

Okay.

So each document, each assignment, each discussion, all those things will have their own page.

Oh.

So you end up with a lot more pages.

Gotcha.

But you know, gives you more control. control over the flow of content for students.

So you might have like a lot of short pages

potentially. Yes.

Yeah.

But it also allows you to break things down into smaller chunks.

Okay.

Which can be beneficial for students.

All right. So the next thing we need to talk about and this is really important is the exceptions report.

Yes, this is key.

So after the conversion is done,

right,

you're going to have this report and it's going to basically tell you anything that was lost or changed in the conversion process.

Exactly.

So this could be like settings changes, formatting problems,

um maybe issues with your gradebook columns,

right?

Um or those unsupported items that we just talked about.

Yes. All of that will be in the exceptions report.

Now, it's really important not to freak out

when you see this report because it can be really long and it can look really intimidating. It can look like, you know, the world has ended and your course is completely broken.

Yeah. But the workbook says that a lot of those items are either repeats, right,

or they're just formational. Exactly.

Um, so you might not actually have to do anything about a lot of the things on that list.

That's correct.

Um, so to access the report, you're going to go to your ultra course. Okay.

On your main content page, you're going to click that three dot menu, right?

That's next to course content.

Got it?

And then you should see something like course tasks and logs or copy details.

And then you'll click on that and you'll see a button to view report.

Okay.

Um, and then you can actually click on different categories like assignments and tests, right, to see the exceptions within those areas.

That's helpful.

Yeah. And it's important to note that the system will actually create a log every time you copy content into your Ultra course.

Oh, that's good to know.

So, you can always go back and look at those logs.

Yeah, that's really useful

if you need to.

Absolutely.

Um, so the workbook has two really helpful strategies for us in terms of dealing with this report.

Okay, let's hear them.

Um, so the first one is what they call read then revisit.

Okay,

so basically just take a quick glance at the whole report just to get a sense of what's there.

Right. Just skim it.

Yeah. And then they recommend that you actually wait until you've done some of the other steps like organizing your content. Okay.

Refining things and then go back and read it again.

Got it.

Because a lot of times once you've actually seen your content in Ultra, it might make more sense or you might realize, oh, that's not really a big deal, right?

Um and then the other one is find your top five 10 concerns.

Okay.

So, basically just go through the report and write down the things that are really important to you.

Like the things that you absolutely need to fix.

Yeah. Like if there's something in there about your gradebook you're like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe that's not working." You know, put that on your list. And then as you work through the rest of the process, right,

you can check things off. And anything that's left on the report, you can kind of deal with later on.

Makes sense.

So, let's move on to step two. Now, organize content.

Okay.

So, this is where you really start to shape how your ultra course is going to look and feel for your students. Yeah, this is where the fun begins.

Yeah. And the workbook really emphasizes that how you organize your content is a really crucial decision.

It is.

Um because even though you don't have that left-hand menu anymore,

right,

that main course content page is essentially your new menu for your students.

That's right.

Um so they have three different ways that you can organize your content. And the first one is just folders.

Okay.

Um so this works well for synchronous courses where your content is organized more by topic.

Mhm. and by like a timeline, right?

Um, so you might have folders for things like course information, assignments, tests, discussion boards, that kind of thing.

Yeah. And I like that you can still put like individual links or files right at the top level.

Oh, yeah.

So if there's something that's really important, you know, maybe the syllabus or a link to a really critical resource,

you can put that right at the top where students will see it immediately.

Yeah, that's a good point.

And then you can have folders for, you know, all the other materials organized by topic.

Oh, the second way is learning modules.

Okay.

Um, and as we talked about These are really good for guiding students sequentially through the content,

right?

Um so this could be like week by week. Yeah. Um and they support that progressive learning where you have those next and previous buttons.

Exactly.

Um so it's really easy for students to navigate.

It's very intuitive for them.

And then the third option is kind of a hybrid approach.

Okay.

Um you could use learning modules with subfolders, right? So this would be good if you have a lot of content that needs to be both grouped and sequenced.

Got it.

Um so like for example, if you have a unit,

right,

and then you have, you know, chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3,

you could have a learning module for the unit, right?

And then a subfolder for each chapter.

And the nice thing about subfolders is they inherit the navigation from the learning module.

Oh, that's cool.

So students can use the next and previous buttons to move through the subfolders just like they would through the learning module itself.

That's great.

It's very helpful for keeping things organized.

And then the workbook have some sample use cases for us.

Okay.

For those different structures.

Yeah, that's always helpful.

Um, so like using folders alone would be great for synchronous courses with a limited amount of content or content that's organized by assignment type, right?

Learning modules without subfolders would work well for courses that are organized chronologically.

Um, maybe with a smaller amount of content in each module or maybe even shorter term courses.

Yeah, like a four-week summer course or something like that. We wouldn't necessarily need subfolders for that.

And then learning modules with subfolders would be a good fit for longer courses, right?

Um that have subtopics within each module.

Yeah. Like units and chapters, that kind of thing,

right? And then one of the recommendations that they make that I really liked is to have a start here module or folder.

Yes, that's a great idea.

Right at the top of your course.

It's like the front door of your course.

Yeah. So, this is where you can, you know, really welcome your students and outline your expectations.

Exactly.

Um and they have a bunch of suggestions for things to put in there.

Oh, yeah. Like what?

So, they suggest a welcome document.

Okay.

Maybe like a short welcome video from you.

Yeah.

Um with some tips for success in the course,  
right?

Um and a quick tour of the ultra layout.

That's a good idea.

Um a meet your instructor document with your bio and contact information.

Um obviously the syllabus  
of course.

Um a course overview. Okay.

That could include like the descriptives. Yeah.

Um required materials and the schedule.

That's a lot of good stuff.

Um a document about policies and requirements.

Okay.

Um so that could be like institutional policies or technology requirements.

Yeah.

Um some links to student support resources. So like the library, the tutoring center, the tech center, that kind of thing.

Very helpful.

Um and then even like a simple introduce yourself discussion board.

Oh yeah, I like that.

Just to kind of get everybody  
build some community.

Yeah, exactly. And before you even start building building any of this in Ultra.

Um the workbook recommends that you actually write out an outline of your desired structure first.

Yeah, it's a good idea.

Yeah, it's kind of like planning your trip before you get in the car.

Exactly. You don't want to just start driving without knowing where you're going, right?

You'll end up lost.

So, um let's say you create some of your top level containers

and then you decide, oh, you know what? I actually want to switch from folders to learning modules or the other way around, right?

Um You can actually do that in Ultra.

Oh, that's good.

Yeah. So, you just click on the three dot menu on that learning module or folder.

Mhm.

And there should be a change to option.

Okay.

Um the one caveat is that if you have any subfolders, right, inside you have to move those out first.

Okay, that makes sense.

Um and then adding new learning modules or folders is pretty easy too.

Okay.

Um so on your course content page, you just click the plus icon, right,

where you want to add the container. container

and then you select create and then learning module or folder.

Got it.

Um and then once you have your containers in place, you're going to want to start moving your content into those.

Um and Ultra makes this super easy because it has drag and drop functionality.

Oh, that's good.

So you can literally click and drag an item.

Um you can use the little six dot icon that pops up or you can click and drag on any of the blank space,

right?

Um just be careful when you're deleting folders or learning modules.

Oh yes.

Because it's going to delete all the content,

everything inside

inside. Yeah.

Gone.

And you can't undo that.

Oh, no.

So, just be really careful about that.

Good advice.

Um, and then remember how we were talking about how your items in original might become individual documents?

Yes.

Is it all right?

Um, so if you have like a bunch of really short documents that you really want to combine.

Yeah.

You can just copy and paste the content from one document to another.

Okay. So, just like you would in a word document, just copy and paste it right into the Ultraext editor.

And then one thing want to point out about discussion boards.

Okay.

Um is that they might not automatically show up on your course content page after the conversion.

Oh, really?

Yeah. So, they'll probably be in the discussions tab at the top.

Okay.

Um but if you want them to be visible on the course content page,

right?

You have to go to that discussions link.

Okay.

Find the discussion board that you want to make visible, right?

And there should be a little check box that says display on course content page.

Got it. Um, once you check that, it will appear at the bottom of your course content page. Okay.

So then you'll have to drag it up

to wherever you want it.

Makes sense.

Um, and if you find that your discussion boards are visible.

Um, but the prompts or the instructions are incorrect or need updating. Yeah.

You can edit those. Okay.

Um, so you just click on the title of the discussion board

and then there should be an ellipsis under the main discussion topic heading.

Okay.

And when you click on that, You should see an edit option.

Got it.

Um, so you can go in and edit the prompt that way.

All right, that makes sense.

So, let's move on to step three now. Refine and complete.

So, this is where we're going to start looking at some of the finer details.

Right. We're getting into the nitty-gritty now.

Yeah, exactly.

Making sure everything is polished and ready to go.

Um, so one of the big changes is how descriptions are handled in Ultra.

Oh, yeah. Descriptions are a little different.

Yeah. So, in original you had the full content editor for des descriptions, right?

Um, so you could do like line breaks and you could do color.

Yeah, you could get really fancy.

You can make them look really nice.

You could,

but in Ultra they're just plain text.

Just plain text. No formatting.

And there's a character limit.

Oh, there is?

Yeah. 750 characters.

Okay. So, not a ton of space.

No. So, if you had a really long description in an original, it's going to get cut off.

Oh, no.

Um, and then also the workbook points out that descriptions for journals and discussions, they're actually pulled from the content of those items.

Okay.

Um, so you can't edit them separately.

Oh, so you can't have like a separate description field for those.

Not right now.

Okay.

Um, so if you relied heavily on those really formatted descriptions,

yeah.

Um, you might have to come up with a new strategy for that,

right?

Um, so the workbook suggests that you could actually create a document.

Okay.

Um, and put it inside a folder or a learning module.

Got it.

And put all that information in there.

So like instead of having a long description for a folder, you could have a separate document with all the details,

right? And then you could just make the folder description really short

or just get rid of it all together.

Yeah, that makes sense.

Um and then you could do something similar with your assignments like instead of having a long description, you just put all the instructions in the assignment content itself.

Exactly.

Um so editing the descriptions is pretty consistent for most things in Ultra. Okay.

Um so for things like learning modules, folders, documents, and links, you would click on the three dot menu, right?

And then there should be a description box that you can edit. Got it.

Um, for assessments like tests and assignments, okay, you usually open the item, right?

And then there's either a gear icon or some underlined settings on the right.

And when you click on those, that'll open up a panel where you can edit the description.

Okay, that makes sense.

Um, now for those of you who use external learning tools,

okay,

um, which are sometimes called LTI,

right?

Um, the workbook does say that these might not transfer automatically.

Oh, no.

Um, when your course is converted.

So, what should people do if they're using LTI's?

Um, they recommend checking with your institution support team. Okay. Um, to see what the best way is to handle those.

Yeah, that's good advice.

Um, and they do mention the content market as a place where you might be able to synchronize or add that content.

Um, but definitely check with your school first.

Definitely.

Um, okay. So, another really important thing to check after the conversion is your test questions.

Yes. Tests are critical.

Yeah.

You want to make sure those are working properly.

Absolutely.

Because, you know, they're often a big part of a student's grade,  
right?

So, you want to make sure everything is accurate and functioning correctly.

Yeah. So, the workbook recommends that you go through each test in your course.

Okay.

And open it up and take a look at any text at the top that might have had instructions in your original course,

right?

Um those instructions won't actually be visible to students until they start the test. Oh,  
okay.

Um so, make sure you double check those. Yeah.

Um and then you want to go through each individual question and the point values and make sure everything's still correct. Mhm.

Um, and you can edit all of that stuff pretty easily.

Um, you know, you just scroll through the questions,  
right?

And use the three dot menu next to each question.

Got it.

Um, to either edit it or delete it.

Makes sense.

Um, if you used question pools in your original course, those should be there in Ultra.

Okay.

Um, and you can click to view and edit the questions in the pool as well.

That's good to know.

Um, and then they actually highlight some specific original question types that might have some issues.

Oh, okay. Like what?

Um, so for example, either questions.

They recommend rewriting those as multiple choice questions in Ultra.

Okay.

Um file response questions. You want to make sure your directions clearly explain how to attach files,

right?

Um in that essay question format.

Okay.

Um question types like jumbled sentence and quizb.

Yeah,

those are not supported in Ultra.

Oh, no.

So, you're going to have to find a different way to do that.

Come up with an alternative.

Right. Okay.

Um ordering questions you might be able to rewrite as multiple choice.

Mhm. or maybe fill in the blank.

Okay.

Um, lyer scale questions are available in Ultra,

but they're in the forms feature, right?

Um, they're not in the graded tests.

Okay. So, if you need to use a liquor scale, you'd have to use a form, right? Yeah.

Got it. Um, hotspot questions actually have more options in Ultra.

Oh, that's good.

So, you might want to take a look at those. Yeah.

Um, and then math question types and questions with images.

Okay.

You want to be extra careful with those to make sure that they're working

because those can be a little tricky sometimes with the conversion.

Um, So, what if you had things in your original course that didn't come over at all?

Right. Like what if you had a blog or a wiki?

Yeah. Or if you used one of those unsupported question types.

Exactly.

Um the workbook has a couple of suggestions for us.

Okay.

Um so the first one is to check with other instructors at your institution or with your LMS support team,

right?

Um to see if they have any workarounds or if they've found any solutions.

Yeah, that's always a good place to start.

Yeah. other people are doing.

Um, and then if you're not already a member, you might want to join the Anthology community forums.

Oh, yeah. That's a great resource.

Yeah. So, you can ask questions there and get answers from other Ultra users and from the Anthology folks themselves, so you're getting it straight from the source.

Um, and then another thing they recommend is just to make a list of everything that's missing.

Okay.

Um, and then categorize it by like how essential is it, right?

So, is it critical, is it important, or is it more minor?

Yeah. So, you can prioritize what needs to be replaced, right? Okay.

Um and then if your institution has the AI design assistant enabled

Oh yeah.

Um you might want to explore that.

That could be helpful.

Yeah. For creating new assessments or maybe even generating some new test questions.

Okay.

Um and then finally, you know, they just encourage you to see this as an opportunity to refresh your course content and activities.

Yeah. Sometimes a fresh start is a good thing.

Yeah.