Introduction

What’s Scholar?

Scholar is an innovative and robust collaboration and learning management system. Designed by higher education for higher education, it offers tools in support of teaching and learning, research and collaboration, and assessment/accreditation projects.

Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students have the ability to create Scholar sites for any variety of purposes. Scholar offers tools found in traditional learning management systems, such as announcements, assignments, dropbox, discussion forums, chat tools, tests and quizzes, gradebook, etc. Scholar also offers a number of Web 2.0 technologies, including podcasting, wikis, blogs, RSS feeds, and more. Thinking beyond the classroom, Scholar makes it easy to collaborate on a variety of projects and committees, both internal and external to our university.

Scholar supports three types of sites: course, project, and ePortfolio. In course sites, instructors can create online courses or publish material that supplements existing courses. Project sites allow scholars and students to share research and collaborate on projects, both internally and externally to Virginia Tech. Using ePortfolio sites, users can share key projects, skills, and accomplishments with those inside and outside of Virginia Tech. You can find more information about these ePortfolio capabilities at http://eportfolio.vt.edu/.

The Learning Management System

What’s a LMS?

Faculty at Virginia Tech use learning management systems (LMS) such as Blackboard and Scholar to display course and faculty information, make announcements, distribute course documents, post additional readings and materials, administer assessments, track grades, etc. Learning management system use varies greatly between faculty members; some teach from a LMS exclusively (as with an online course), others post basic course information only, and others don’t use it at all.

Most students are familiar with Blackboard. Scholar will eventually replace Blackboard, so it is important that you are familiar with the most widely used features in Scholar. Many of the tools are similar to Blackboard, but Scholar offers a greater variety of interactivity. Key tools include:

- **Announcements** – Post time-critical information
- **Assignments** – Submit assignments
- **Blog** – Create online journal entries
- **Chat room** – Communicate and collaborate online in real time; messages are archived
- **Drop Box** – Exchange documents with an instructor or the site organizer in a personal folder
- **Forums** – Create online discussions organized by topic
- **Gradebook** – View own scores privately
- **Mailtool** – Send email messages to site participants, groups, individuals, and external users
• Syllabus – View the course syllabus online
• Tests & Quizzes – Take tests, quizzes, and surveys within the site
• Wiki – Add and edit content on a website that’s open for the collaboration of all site participants

Logging On

2. Enter your Virginia Tech PID in the Username field.
3. Enter your PID password in the Password field.
4. Click the Login to Scholar button.

Note the Announcements for Students column on the welcome page.

Getting Around

Your Scholar main page (below) has features that will help you access important site information as soon as you log in.

Your preferred 4 sites
Other site tabs
My Workspace area

List of tools within site
Help (Scholar and 4Help)

Link to list of all sites
List of recent announcements
List of recent chat messages
Site currently open
Site calendar
Messages & forum notifications
Using My Workspace

Each user has an individual worksite called My Workspace in Scholar. My Workspace is a place where you can keep personal documents, create new sites, maintain a schedule, store resources, and much more.

Joining a Public Site

1. In the left column of your My Workspace, click Membership.
2. In the submenu at the top of the screen, click Joinable Sites.
3. Scroll through the list of publicly joinable sites, or search for the site you want to join by entering the site name in the search field at the top of the screen and clicking Search.
4. Under the title of the site you want to join, click Join.
Using a Scholar Site

Each site in Scholar has a list of tools in the menu. Common tools are:

- Announcements
- Forums
- Blog
- Resources
- Assignments
- Tests & Quizzes
- Drop Box
- Gradebook
- Wiki
- Request 4Help

### Announcements

The Announcements tool in Scholar is often where instructors post up-to-date or time-sensitive communication. Your instructor may attach files and send you a copy of the announcement via email. Copies of announcements are always stored within the Scholar site; even if you lose the email copy, you can still read the original or updated announcement text online.

### Gradebook

The Gradebook in Scholar displays the points, percentages, and grades for all assignments that have been completed and recorded by your instructor. You can only see your own grades. If you don’t see a grade or point value listed for a completed assignment, please check with your instructor to find out when your grades will be released to you.

### Forums

Forums in Scholar are divided into topics, which are divided into threads. On the forum main page, beside each Topic is listed the number of messages and unread messages within. Click on the topic title to view the messages.

In a thread, you can perform the following tasks:

- Print the thread
- Go backward and forward between threads
- Reply to a single message

Note that you can easily jump to other topics and forums using the “breadcrumb trail” at the top of the thread page.
Blog

The Blog tool allows you to create and maintain weblogs (blogs), or online journals. You may keep a private blog (in your My Workspace) or use a class Blog for group development and interaction.

The main page lists all blog posts. You can view other members’ blogs, your own blog, or create a new post entry. Click the appropriate link in the submenu.

Note that clicking on a blog post title lets you view, edit, delete, or add a comment to the post depending on your permissions.

On the blog main page, you can:
- Show comments or full content of posts
- Search for posts
- Read posts by clicking post titles

Below is the screen that will appear when you choose to add or edit a blog post.

- Enter the title and any keywords
- Use the text editor to enter and format an abstract or summary of your post
- Set the access, read only, and comment options
  - To share a blog post with an instructor, set Access to “Tutor”
  - To allow anyone to change your blog post, uncheck “Read only”
  - To allow site members to comment on your blog post, check “Allow comments”
Below is a continuation of the add/edit blog post page. Here, you can:

- **Edit, delete, or reorder individual elements using the buttons and arrows next to the elements in the current structure display**
- **View the post’s structure as you entered it**
- **Preview, Save, or Cancel your post**
- **Click “Add to document” when you finish adding an element (it will be added to the structure displayed at the bottom of the page)**
- **Use the text editor to format text**
- **Enter the post content in the form of text, images, links, and files using the separate tabs**

The content of my blog post goes in this box.

---

**Current structure:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>This is the content of my blog post. It can include images, links, and files. They can come from my resources, the internet, or my computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Winter.jpg" /> Winter.jpg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2     | Link description: Scholar
Link URL: [http://www.scholar.vt.edu](http://www.scholar.vt.edu) |
| 3     | kba style notes.txt |
Assignments

Use the Assignment tool to complete and submit assignments and view grades and feedback. Below is the Assignments main page, which displays all of the site assignments. Here, you can:

- Navigate through the assignment list
- View open dates and due dates
- View your completion status for each assignment
- Click the assignment title to view, take, and submit it

After clicking on an assignment title, the assignment page will appear. Here, you can view, complete, and submit the assignment.

- View the assignment information, including title, due date, completion status, grade scale, and the last modification date
- View the assignment's instructions for completion
- Enter and format text as necessary
Note that some instructors will allow you to resubmit an assignment. On any returned assignments, you can view your grade in the assignment information.

If the assignment page says “Resubmit” in red at the top, you’re in luck! Resubmit the assignment for a better grade.

Complete the assignment as usual. Use any comments the instructor provided to improve your work.

Additional instructor’s comments about your submission


Tests & Quizzes

The Tests & Quizzes tool allows you to take available assessments, such as tests, quizzes, and surveys. Assessments may contain any of the following question types:

- True/False
- Matching
- Multiple choice
- Short answer
- Essay
- Fill-in-the-blank
- Numeric response
- Survey
- File upload
- Audio recording

Below is the Tests & Quizzes main page, where you can view active and submitted assessments.

Click on an assessment title to take or view the assessment.
To take an assessment, click the title of an active assessment. A page will appear with the assessment information. Click “Begin Assessment” at the bottom of the page.

Instructors can organize their assessments in many ways. For instance, you may see one question per page or all questions on one page. To the left is an example of the latter.

Complete the assessment. Some questions require you to enter rationale for your answer. When you are finished, click “Submit for Grading.” Or, click “Save for Later” to not submit and give yourself the ability to edit your answers by accessing the assessment later.

If you submit the assessment, you will see a confirmation page. Click “Submit for Grading,” or click “Previous” to return to the assessment without submitting it.

**Drop Box**

The Drop Box tool allows you to share files with instructors using a private folder that only you and the instructor can see. There are many types of items you can add to your drop box.

You can access all adding options in the “Add” dropdown menu by your folder. Usually, you will want to upload files.

Note that you can organize the files in your drop box into folders.

When you click “Upload Files,” this screen will appear. Here, you can:

- Select a file to upload from your computer
- Enter a display name and item details
- Add more files (only 50 MB worth at once)
- Send an email to the instructor that notifies him or her of your submission
- Click “Upload Files Now” to add the file(s) to your folder, thereby making it visible to your instructor.
Wiki

The Wiki tool provides site members with an editable website where they can coordinate information with the following unique benefits:

- Store all content relevant to a topic, project, discussion, etc. giving users the ability to find current content in one area
- Access the wiki from any computer with internet access
- Save previous versions of the page and track contributions (i.e. who made what changes when)
- Revert to a previous version of any page at any time (found in the history link)
- Create public or limited availability per page
- Requires no web programming knowledge to edit the page

The “edit” link turns the page into a document where you and your fellow users can add, change, delete, or format content using special punctuation that is automatically converted into programming commands.

When you click “edit,” the page turns into a document (left). Now, you can:

- Edit the document using the toolbars and wiki code, and preview it
- If the change is small, (i.e., a typo correction) mark the change as minor. Changes will not appear in the history.
- Click “save” to turn the document back into a web page. This is now the current version.

The Content Management System

The content management system (CMS) in Scholar allows you to upload, store, and share files securely. The advantage to storing your files online is that you can access them from any computer. For instance, if you work on a document at a library computer, you can upload the file to your Scholar CMS and download it later onto your personal computer. Also, you have the option to share files in your CMS with others, which is especially convenient for group work. You can access your CMS through My Workspace with the Resources tool.

Using the Resources Tool

The Resources tool located in My Workspace is where you can upload, store, and share files. Because you need to be able to find what you’ve put into Resources, it is extremely important to develop a good organizational scheme. To do this, you should divide your files into folders by semester, class, or whatever categories make the most sense to you. Remember to name your folders using a consistent formula and try not to leave any files uncategorized. Resources within Scholar course site are often where instructors post course reading materials, documents, links to websites, and more. Sometimes, your instructor may create a “File Exchange” folder. This kind of folder allows you to upload your own documents to share with all of your classmates. Ask your instructor to how he or she is using Resources for your course.
You can easily navigate your Resources using the breadcrumb trail, which contains links to folders higher up in the structure. Clicking on a folder title takes you into the folder’s contents (files and subfolders). In the example to the left, note the organization by semester and course.

When you find the folder for which you want to add a file, click Add next to the folder.

From the dropdown menu, click Upload Files.

When you click Upload Files, the page to the left appears. Here, you can:
- Upload a file from your computer
- Enter a display name and add item details
- Add additional files
- Upload the files

Managing Resources

Use folders to organize your files so that you can easily find them. To organize your resources using folders:

Click Add next to a folder. This will add a folder underneath that folder (e.g., adding a new folder underneath the current folder, “Public/ePortfolio.”)

From the dropdown menu, click Create Folders.

When you click Create Folders, the page to the left appears. Here, you can:
- Add folder details
- Enter a folder name
- Add multiple folders
- Click Create Folders Now
Once you have created a new folder, the next step is to move files into it. A quick way to move an individual file is to:

- Click Actions next to the file you want to move.
- From the dropdown menu, click Move.

When you click Move, the file you selected to move will be shaded, and paste icons will appear next to the folders. Click the paste link next to the folder into which you want to move the file.

Sharing Files

For other site members to access the files you post to the site, you must make the files publicly viewable. You can do this as you upload them or after, or you can make the a folder that contains them public.

When you are uploading or editing a file (as in the page to the right), click Add details for this item. Then, under Availability and Access, click the radio button to make the file publicly viewable.

To make a folder (and its contents) publicly viewable, click Actions, Edit Details, and then the radio button under Availability and Access.

The wiki is another location where you can share files from your Resources. Instructors can create group pages that allow groups areas to collectively collaborate. Click your group page title to access the page, edit it, and to add files from your Resources to it.
Scholar Quick Tips

Reset Tool
A nice thing about Scholar tools is that if you leave a tool and come back to it, you'll see the page as you left it. To return to the tool's start (or main) page, click the reset button next to the title of the tool.

Help?
Got a question about the tool you're working with? Adjacent to every tool title is a button that will take you to the instructions for that tool. Remember, though, that these instructions were written for all Scholar users (including instructors), and may explain tasks that you cannot perform as a student user.

Note that if you encounter errors or have any questions that the internal instructions cannot answer, you can contact 4Help:

Online: http://4help.vt.edu/ or Call: (540) 231-4357.

There's also a link to the 4Help form at the bottom of every page in Scholar.

In the page editor, click the link button to add a file from your Resources.

When adding the file, click to have other sites shown, then find My Workspace, Resources, and the file.

Once you have accessed your group page, click Edit in the top menu bar. This will allow you to add content and files from your Resources.