

Contingency plan to temporarily disable specific Blackboard Collaborate features to sustain unprecedented global adoption

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As the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) global pandemic continues to unfold, many institutions around the world are leveraging Blackboard Collaborate to support blended and fully online instruction. We are grateful that our virtual classroom capability is helping the broader educational community maintain continuity of instruction during this challenging time for instructors and students.

We have been carefully monitoring Collaborate as more schools and organizations increase their use, and we have already taken specific measures to optimize its reliability. In the coming weeks, we are projecting an unprecedented increase in the use of Collaborate in different regions around the world. Out of an abundance of caution, and in order to maintain the highest continuity of service possible, we have made the decision to disable specific features that can impact overall system stability. These features are:

- Timer (a countdown timer that helps with classroom time management)
- Chat typing indicator (a visual indicator that someone is typing but have not yet completed their thought. The chat feature itself will still be available.)
- Netstats indicator (a visual indicator of connection quality next to each user)
- Reducing the number of video thumbnails from 4 to 2 (this is the maximum number of thumbnails visible in the grid view)

We believe that the removal of these features will not significantly impact the overall Collaborate user experience, which will still include video, screen sharing, chat, a virtual whiteboard, and other favorite features. We believe that disabling them is in the best interest of our global client community. Consistent, reliable service is our top priority. We expect to reinstate these features once we have more information about how the system is performing and we continue to make improvements.

In addition to disabling the features above, we will be temporarily disabling or reducing the following administrator-level functionality in Collaborate.

- Manager-level institution reports (this includes the Metric report, Recording report and Attendance report). While we are temporarily removing the ability to generate these reports, the system will continue to capture usage data which can be retrieved when we reinstate these reports in the future.
- Recording transcoding (this includes generating several renditions of a recording file, which is not necessary for the playback of a Collaborate recording).

We plan to disable this functionality on Saturday, March 14, 2020, in the evening Eastern Daylight Time.

As we continue to monitor the performance of Collaborate in the coming weeks, and in the interest of prioritizing system stability over all else, we may take similar actions for other capabilities. If this situation arises, we will notify our clients in a similar manner to this message.