Sending Course Messages and Email

Instructors can send internal messages or external emails via Blackboard to students. Both allow attachments. For user access, instructors need to add a Messages and/or Email tool link to the course menu and communicate expectations as to how the tool is to be used. To help decide which to use, below is a comparison of these two tools. See the separate step-by-step instructions for setting up each tool.

**Messages**

These are private and secure text-based communications that occur within a course and among course members. Users must be inside the course to read and send messages. These are contained entirely within the course and have no connection to an email address included in a user’s account (such as uams.edu addresses).

**Advantages:**
- Messages are organized in Inbox and Sent folders; additional folders can be created.
- Instructors avoid having their work or personal email inboxes cluttered up with course communication.
- Keeping communication within the course helps generate a collaborative community.

**Disadvantages:**
- There is no notification that an unread message is waiting. Each user has to check the Messages inbox.
- The message system within a course can get too cluttered, impacting performance.
- The message system should not become a repository for files that should be saved to a computer instead.
- Lost messages cannot be recovered.
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Email messages are sent to the user’s account email that is external to Blackboard.

Advantages:
• If the email is sent through UAMS accounts, it uses the UAMS exchange servers and some recovery can be made if needed.
• Instructors may prefer to send/receive all their communication (course and work-related) through the same tool.
• Email about grades can be conveniently sent to individual users through the Grade Center.

Disadvantages:
• Email can only be sent within a Blackboard course; email cannot be received within a course.
• The instructor’s email account can become cluttered.
• Instructors may prefer to keep all course communication within the course.
• Within the course, there is no alert or record that an email message has been sent or received.