FEATURE COMPARISON
BLACKBOARD 5.0 VS. MIDAS 4.1
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	BLACKBOARD 5.0	MIDAS 4.1
Access	• Works well with **Netscape** or Internet Explorer.	• Works well with Internet Explorer.
Course Site Creation	• Created by Administrator	• Created by Administrator, **Instructor, or created automatically by SIS load.**
Student Enrollment	• Students enrolled from SIS into Blackboard as general user. Instructors enroll and remove specific students into courses **manually.** (It is possible to create a program that will enroll students into course sites automatically through SIS.)	• Students enrolled, removed, or **reinstated** into specific course sites **automatically** through SIS. Instructors can manually add, remove, or **reinstate** students **but only if they have been put into the MIDAS system by SIS or an administrator.**
Course Appearance Customization	Customizable items: Customized by Instructor for **EVERYONE** • Navigation Bars used and titles • Navigation button styles and colors • Course banner • Visibility of communication areas • Visibility of tools • Guest access • Course duration • Types of enrollment allowed (self vs. instructor enrolled)	Customizable items: Customized by Instructor for **INSTRUCTOR ONLY** • Background image or color • Font and color of heading and pop-up displays • View all courses or current courses • View Home page with icons, pull-down menus, or text-only Customizable items: Customized by Student for **STUDENT ONLY** • Background image or color • Font and color of heading and pop-up displays • View all courses or current courses • View Home page with icons and text or text-only
Content	• Syllabus, Course Documents, Course Information, Assignments, Projects, etc. can each be arranged in multiple ways with navigation button assigned to each. Content in each navigation area can be **ordered by Blackboard generated numbers** and the order can be changed at any time.	• Two content areas are available, "Syllabus" and "Content" and cannot be changed. An "Index" is automatically created by MIDAS with links to published content and **ordering of content is alphabetical**. However, the "Index" can be modified (with knowledge of HTML (and/or MIDAS Editor and SMART TAGS) and content areas can be created that

		will navigate to any area created.
	• Content can be created within Blackboard or uploaded as a preexisting file and placed in any of the navigable content areas. Content items can be separated into folders or added by item.	• **There are two type of content documents that can be created within the "Content" area; Readings and Assignments.** Readings and Assignments can be created within MIDAS or uploaded as a preexisting file. **Assignments are similar to Exams (see section below on Exams) but do not require a validation code for students to gain access. (Access can be gained multiple times. Therefore, after seeing their assignment grade and the correct answers, students can redo and resubmit an assignment, which will automatically change their grade.) MIDAS automatically grades objective type assignments, and the instructor grades subjective assignments. Students "attach" a file to the assignment and instructors receive all the attached files in a zip file format that must be unzipped to read. Instructors enter a score on the screen and MIDAS transfers it to the grade book.**
	• ------	• Content items can be set up to be made available to individual students after a certain date or after completion of an assignment or event. This allows students to work at their own pace and/or without instructor monitoring.
	• -------	• Automated messages can be set up to be sent to student(s) after completing or not completing an assignment, again allowing students to work without instructor monitoring.
	• Documents can be created within Blackboard to appear on screen, or files **OF ANY KIND** can be uploaded. HTML files are viewed on-screen. Document files (.doc, .xls, etc.) can be downloaded to a student's computer. Media files, such as PowerPoint, can be played on screen if students have the appropriate plug-ins. Links to offline content that is provided on CD can be added.	• Documents can be created within MIDAS to appear on screen, or HTML files can be uploaded. Files of other types such as .doc, .ppt, .gif, must be uploaded to a "Resource" area and then incorporated into an HTML document created using MIDAS (with knowledge of HTML (and/or MIDAS Editor) and SMART TAGS).
	• Once HTML content is uploaded it	• Once HTML content is uploaded it

	CANNOT be edited within Blackboard. To edit, file must be removed and edited file reloaded.	**CAN** be edited in MIDAS if instructor has a knowledge of HTML or the MIDAS HTML Editor along with SMART TAGS. Content can also be removed and edited file reloaded.

Syllabus	• Blackboard provides a place for the instructor to create a syllabus or an instructor can import a previously created syllabus file.	• MIDAS has a tool that allows the instructor to create a syllabus **section by section** or an instructor can import a previously created syllabus file **if it is an HTML file.**

Communication Tools:		
Announcements	• The course entry page of all Blackboard sites is the "Announcements" page. Once entered an announcement is archived and can be retrieved by users based on date posted.	• MIDAS **does not** have an "Announcements" area. However, announcements can be sent to all students via email, or an announcements section can be incorporated into the "Index" page (which is the course entry page) if an instructor has a knowledge of HTML or MIDAS HTML Editor and SMART TAGS.

Email	• Email accounts within Blackboard **ARE NOT** provided. • Email tool allows instructors and students to send emails to **personal email account (s)** of one, groups, or all students registered in each course including the instructor. • Email can only be sent to participants in **one course** at a time. • Unlimited files can be attached and sent with an email. • ------- • Email tool **does not** include spell check	• Email accounts within MIDAS **ARE** provided. MIDAS email accounts are fully functional with options to read, reply, forward (to others or your own personal folder), save (to hard drive) and print. • Email tool allows instructors and students to send emails to **both personal and course email account(s)** of one, groups, or all students registered in each course including the instructor. • Email can be sent to participants of **one or multiple courses** at a time. • Maximum of three files can be attached and sent with an email • Privileges can be set to allow users to view, send, modify, add, or delete posted messages. Privileges can also be set to allow users to change privileges. • Email tool **does** include spell check
Discussion Board	• Discussion Board is a **separate tool and acts like a typical discussion**	• Discussion Board is the **same tool as email and acts like email rather**

	board. • **Instructor or student** can create "forums" with **visible** description and users contribute by clicking on a particular forum. • Contributions are listed and threaded within each forum. • All contributions are visible to all users and instructors set privileges to delete, modify, etc. (With instructor given privileges students can only delete or modify **their own** contributions.) • Group discussion boards with defined group participants can be established by instructor. Any defined group member can begin a discussion forum.	**than a true discussion board.** • **Only instructors** can create "forums" and forum description is **not visible**. **Instructor must create the first email within a forum to state the purpose of the forum.** • Contributions take the form of emails and can be threaded if user uses email "reply" function properly. • All contributions are visible to all users and instructor can set privileges to delete, modify, etc. (With instructor given privileges students can delete or modify **anyone's** contributions.) • Group discussion boards with defined group participants can be established by instructor. Any defined group member can begin a discussion forum.
Digital Drop Box	• Any kind of file can be transferred in both directions between the instructor and students. Receipt of files occurs within Blackboard, and can be viewed on screen or downloaded to a computer. A message can be attached to sent files.	• ---------
Chat	• All users must have a **java plug-in and Tutornet** software (the system automatically directs students on how to download the appropriate software). • **Students can enter Chat area at any time.** • Multiple chat areas **cannot** be set up at the same time. • **Any enrolled student can participate** in a chat session. Students participating in a chat session will always be **identified by user name.** • Chat sessions are **all open** and continues until the last person(s) leaves.	******** • All users must have **Microsoft Virtual Machine** (the system automatically direct students on how to download the appropriate software). • **The instructor must create a chat area before students can enter.** • Multiple chat areas **can** be set up with each chat topic named. • Instructor **must identify the enrolled students that are allowed to participate** in a chat session. Students allowed to participate can be **identified by number, by name and number, or they may be anonymous** (these preferences are set by the instructor). • Chat sessions can be **monitored or open**. A monitored session has a definite start and end time and students are divided into groups. An

		open session has just one group, starts immediately and ends when it dies out (no new messages posted in 24 hours) or the instructor ends it.
	• Blackboard **archives all messages** sent in all chat sessions and these archives can be accessed by anyone in the class at any time.	• Messages from a chat session can be exported for printing and saving. MIDAS **does not keep an archive** of messages for longer than the life of the chat session.
	• Students **cannot** be divided into groups but groups of students can enter the chat area at will. Students discuss topic with everyone present in the session. Students can also send private messages to the instructor only and the instructor can respond to a student privately.	• Students **can be** divided into groups. Individual students within a group can only discuss topics with member of their group or with the instructor. The instructor can discuss topics with one group only or with all participants at once.
	• The instructor can set privileges for students to participate in chat and private messages. Privileges can be set that allow all students to participate, require that all students request the "floor" to be able to participate, or block all students from participating. When the floor is requested by a student, the instructor can grant or deny the individual student's request.	• ----------
	• The Blackboard chat tool contains a whiteboard that can be used by both the instructor and students.	• The MIDAS chat tool contains a **whiteboard for each group and for the class as a whole.** The instructor and group members can use group whiteboards, and the entire class can use the class whiteboard.
	• Whiteboard tools include a pencil, a line, text, **a rectangle, an oval, a polygon, an arrow and a selection tool**. Font style, size, color and **line width** can also be chosen by individuals.	• Whiteboard tools include a pencil, a line, text, **a box, a circle, a diamond and a triangle**. Font style, size and color can also be chosen by individuals.
	• **Everyone can erase the whiteboard or any part of the whiteboard if they have been given whiteboard privileges.** Privileges are set by the instructor that allow all students to participate, require that all students request the "floor" to be able to participate, or block all students from participating. When the floor is requested by a student, the instructor	• **Only the instructor can erase a whiteboard or any part of a whiteboard.**

	can grant or deny the individual student's request. • The whiteboard can be used as a browser window to view a page on the web. Privileges can be set for this tool that allow all students to participate by taking the class to a web site, require that all students request the "floor" to be able to take the class to a web site, or block all students from browsing. When the floor is requested by a student, the instructor can grant or deny the individual student's request. • Whiteboard slides can be created in advance by the instructor and viewed by the class on the whiteboard at the command of the instructor.	• -------- • ---------

Progress Letters	• ----------	• MIDAS provides 13 progress letter templates that can be customized, or an instructor can create their own. Letters are personalized for each student with the use of "Smart Tags." Progress letters can be sent immediately to one or more students or they can be programmed for the system to send when an event occurs or on a specified date. Progress letters can be sent electronically or to a printer for snail mailing.

Assessment Tools:		
Exams	• Exam tool allows True/False, Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer, Short Answer, Essay**, Fill In The Blank, Matching, and Ordering.** • Correct and **incorrect** response explanations are allowed. • Creating a Password is **optional**. • Availability of Exam is manually set and unset by instructor. • Exams can be timed, but not required. Elapse time **is** shown. A **one-minute warning** is given before the time expires. When time is up, students can still work on exam but the amount	• Exam tool allows True/False, Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer, Short Answer, Essay and **File Attached Answers.** • Correct response explanations are allowed and are shown for all answers. • Creating a Validation Code is **required.** • Start Date and End Date for exam to be taken is required • Exams can be timed, but not required. Elapse time is **NOT** shown. **No warning** is given before the time expires. When time is up, exam is automatically submitted. Timer can be

	of time the student goes over is shown on the exam results. • Exams can be practice (allow more than one attempt) or Standard. • Exam results can be customized and are shown to students on screen immediately upon completion • If student omits an answer, **they are given a choice** of returning immediately to the exam to complete it or submitting it. Once exam is submitted, students cannot go back unless instructor resets the exam for a particular student. • -------- • Exams can be exported and then imported into another course. • **Exams can be imported using Respondus.** • Exam results can be viewed by instructor by looking at each **student's individual responses.** • ---------	reset to allow all or a particular student to reenter the exam and complete it. • Exams can be practice (allows more than one attempt), Standard or **Special Security** (intended for use in monitored lab and prevents student from opening a new browser window to search the web for answers to an exam). • Exam results can be customized and can be shown to students on screen upon completion **or emailed to students, or both.** • If a student omits an answer, **no warning is given**. Once exam is submitted, students cannot go back unless the instructor resets the exam for a particular student by resetting the validation code. • Academic honesty will be checked by Anlon upon request by checking answer similarities. Results are sent to instructor the next day. ******** • Exams can be copied from one course to another if identity parameters are changed. • Exams can be imported as a text only file with specific formatting. **Respondus is not compatible with MIDAS as of the current release.** (I understand that it will be compatible this summer.) • Exam results can be viewed by instructor in **several report forms** (summary, breakdown by item or completion order, objective question effectiveness, etc.) • MIDAS allows testing in secured and unsecured environments. Special security prevents students from copying a test for the purpose of saving it on a hard drive or floppy disk for printing.

Surveys	• Survey tool has all of the same features as the Exam tool above but are not graded. Survey responses are anonymous and **cannot** be named.	• Survey tool has all of the same features as the Exam tool above but are not graded. Survey responses **can** be anonymous or named.

Grading	• Objective exams are graded by Blackboard and grades are automatically recorded in the grade book. Subjective exams are **graded by the instructor.** Grades can be edited or entered by the instructor. • Grade book appearance **cannot** be customized but includes possible and average score for each assignment, and current points earned to date. • Allows you to **export** the grade book to Excel. • Instructor can set up graded assignment categories. • ------- • ------- • -------	• Objective exams are graded by MIDAS and grades are automatically recorded in the grade book. Subjective exams are **graded both by MIDAS and by the instructor** (Short answer by MIDAS; Essay and File Attachments by instructor). **Essays can be graded by the instructor in anonymous mode.** Grades can be edited or entered by the instructor. • Grade book appearance **can** be customized by instructor to include information like possible, low, high, and average score for each assignment, number of students completing each assignment, standard deviation, student's current grade and estimated grade, and a comment area. • Allows you to **import or export** the grade book to a spreadsheet. • Instructor can set up graded assignment categories **and assign options for grading within each category such as averaging scores with in a category, omitting lowest score within a category, etc.** • Instructor can set up special grading rules such as applying weights, assessing penalties and giving bonus points. Breakpoints can also be defined for percentage within a letter grade group. • Instructors can add "private" (instructor view only) comments for each student in grade book. Instructors can also add grade book comments for private viewing by each student. • MIDAS can send final grades directly to SIS anytime during the semester. ********

Other:		
Groups	• Groups can be created by the instructor with defined participants. Groups can be given **special areas/tools** for sending emails to group members only, private chatting, private discussion board area, and	• Groups can be created by the instructor with defined participants. Groups can be created in **discussion board** (email) area for private discussions and in **chat area** for private chatting or group chatting

	exchanging files between group members.	within a general class chat. Exchange of files between group members has to happen via email.
Portfolios	• ---------- • ----------	• An area is available to instructors for their portfolios (as in curriculum vitae). • Students can also create a portfolio demonstrating that they have met the competency requirements of their college. Instructors (or college) define the competency categories and the standard of measurement. Students explain and document their progress using the MIDAS editor and imported files. Instructors can make comments that can either be public or for the student only. Student portfolios can be exported as an email attachment.
Calendar/Tasks	• Calendar events can be posted by the instructor. Students can create their own personal calendar. Only the instructor can add, modify or delete items from course calendar. • -------- • All course calendars and the student calendar can be merged by the student. • -------- • Task tool (similar to the calendar but separate) can be used by the instructor to record tasks that are to be accomplished by the student with a due date. Students can note their level of completion (not started, started, completed), which is visible to the student and instructor.	• Calendar events can be posted by the instructor. Students can create their own personal calendar. Instructors have, **and students can be given, privileges** to add, modify or delete items from course calendar. • Calendar events can be set to repeat, and can be set to be viewed by all or viewed only by the event creator. • All course calendars and the student calendar can be merged by the student. • Calendar can be programmed to send a reminder email to student before the date/time of the event is reached. • ---------
Tracking/Activity Report	• **Allows selection of area and dates to track.** Shows number of visits to each area of course home site by **all** students including day of week and hour of day. Also shows total number of hits in general by each student. Shows by chart and by graph.	• Shows number of visits to each area of course home site for **each** student and the class average. Shows specific date and time of entry and what activity accessed by each student. Shows by chart and by graph.
Archives	• Blackboard allows instructor to save all or parts of a course off-line in a zip file. The BLACKBOARD	• MIDAS allows instructors to save files (not course set-ups or preferences) in the "Resource" area which can then be

	Administrator can then load this file to another course. • Blackboard has an online catalog of course cartridges (materials ready for Blackboard) prepared by publishers that can be downloaded to a course site. The instructor or institution must make arrangements with the publisher to obtain a cartridge key to download this material. • -------	linked to a course content area with a SMART LINK. • ------- • MIDAS permits an instructor to import a course from Blackboard. The course loads as separate files in both the course itself and in the "Resource" area. Files must then be arranged within a course into areas/folders, etc.
Course Recycler	• At the end of a semester an instructor can **recycle a course** in part or in total and have it available for the following semester. The instructor has a choice as to which parts will be recycled (content)and which parts will be removed (users, groups, grades, announcements, etc.)	• A course in part or in total can be **copied from one course to another course location** within MIDAS.
Editing	• "Plain" editing is allowed only on text created in Blackboard.	• MIDAS has a built-in HTML editor called IOnEdit. This editor contains most of the basic HTML editing tools found on Netscape Composer and can be used with any HTML file created or uploaded to MIDAS.
Guest Access	• Blackboard allows instructors to set up guest access without a password for each course. Guests have view only privileges.	• Instructor can add course owners as guests by setting privileges to "view only" but only if they have been put into the MIDAS system by SIS or an administrator.
Resources	• ---------- • Link to off-site resource center maintained by Blackboard. Each student's resource page is discipline related with news and external links relevant to the course discipline. Instructor can customize this off-site resource center link for students	• Storage area where graphics, video sounds and slides files can be uploaded and stored for use within a course. These files are not related to a specific course but can be incorporated into course content with use of HTML, MIDAS Editor and SMART TAGS. • ----------

	through Blackboard.	
Help/Manual	• Blackboard has an online user manual for instructors and for students. **It is general in nature and contains a search tool.** • Blackboard has an Instructor Manual available in .pdf format via the web at: products.blackboard.com/gs/training/bb5.cgi	• MIDAS has a help tool for instructors and for students. When the help button is activated, **you are automatically taken to a help screen related to the page or tool you are currently working with.** • MIDAS has both Instructor and **Student** Manuals available in .pdf format via the web at: www.maricopa.edu/MIDAS/support/docs

**** Indicates that while I have not actually tested this feature, I understand it to be true.

(Note: While not an exhaustive list, the feature comparison table above is a list of the major features found within Blackboard and MIDAS. However, it does not comment on how easy or how difficult each feature is to access and use, nor does it comment on how well each feature does or doesn't work.)