

## Paris Dauphine University and Blackboard: a Longstanding Partnership

### Blackboard platform

- Blackboard Learn

### Paris Dauphine University

- 10,000 students
- 2,000 managers in lifelong training
- + 1,400 classes online on Blackboard

Founded in 1968, Université Paris Dauphine is a university with a difference. With 10,000 students, plus 2,000 managers in lifelong training, halfway between a *'grande école'* graduate school and a small university, the establishment is atypical in that it has an entrance selection process. A longstanding client of Blackboard, Paris Dauphine University has been using the Blackboard Learn solution for over six years now to circulate course materials, set exams, and collect homework online. Here's a closer look at this success story.

Paris Dauphine University has been working with e-learning since 1999. With almost 2,000 managers in lifelong training, the university has very specific requirements. *"We first started using Blackboard for our MBA programmes: students were physically present only once a month, so the need to circulate course materials online and offer supervision between sessions quickly emerged,"* explains Cécile Chevalier, Director of Paris Dauphine University's Educational Engineering Centre. Following on from the success of this initial experience with MBA students, the use of Blackboard was soon extended to all lifelong training courses: masters, Executive Masters, university degrees, and so on. Next to be won over by the system were the undergraduate

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courses, where it began to be used alongside conventional classroom methods. Today, 1,435 classes are online on Blackboard: 80% relate to lifelong training, 50% to bachelor's courses and 20% to Masters programmes.

### A single solution for a whole gamut of uses

Now known as MyCourse, the online Learning Management System (LMS) is at the disposal of the 570 research lecturers and 1,500 occasional teachers who work for the university. Among them, there is widespread acclaim for the broad range of possibilities and selection of tools the system provides for uploading documents, receiving homework checked by anti-plagiarism software, setting online exams and conducting teaching evaluation, alongside collaborative and communications resources.

Although many course materials are still not available in the online library, the university is investing to close the gap; each year, it recruits some thirty students to promote the Blackboard solution throughout the establishment. *"The mission of this team of workers, hired on a contract for a few hours a week, is to promote the solution to other students as well as to teachers. In some cases, they may even train staff, or collect course materials in order to put them online directly,"* says Cécile Chevalier. The strategy has paid off: an additional 100-200 classes are placed online each year.

In addition to this group of student workers, the Educational Engineering Centre, with a full-time staff of eight, is responsible for managing and coordinating Blackboard, assisting teachers with their teaching methods and training them in digital technology. *"Our role is to provide support, not technical maintenance: the solution is directly hosted and administrated by Blackboard,"* adds the director of the Educational Engineering Centre. This outsourced arrangement has freed up considerable time for the Educational Engineering Centre staff, enabling users of MyCourse to benefit from improved quality of service.

### A solution with plenty of assets

While it's presence is growing in France, Blackboard's innovative technologies have won over many teaching establishments worldwide, ranging from nursery schools to lifelong training institutions. The figures speak for themselves: Blackboard has over 19,000 clients and 30 million users. Little wonder: Blackboard Learn offers a great many advantages. *"The LMS provides a turnkey product, available in SaaS mode, and delivering a whole host of useful, efficient tools. One key advantage is that there's no need to*



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*configure additional functionality: it's got everything,"* argues Cécile Chevalier. The LMS bundles a full range of vital functionality for integrated collaborative functions such as wikis, blogs, and forums, along with the ability to create groups and share files – as well as an anti-plagiarism application. Another key asset is the solution's robustness and stability. *"Blackboard has enabled us to organize online exam sessions for several hundred students at a time, with no server problems at all. Other, competing solutions don't seem to be as stable,"* notes the director. In addition, the system's look and feel, the international acclaim it has garnered and its open nature, enabling easy web-service communication, are all factors that make it stand out when considering which LMS to adopt.

### **New projects in the pipeline**

Blackboard Learn is highly flexible, and fully customizable. The university has tweaked the LMS's colour scheme to match the school's graphic standard, as well as developing new building blocks. And to keep in step with students' changing habits as they increasingly use mobiles and tablets, Paris Dauphine University invested in a Blackboard Mobile Learn licence in 2013.

There will no doubt be further chapters in the establishment's story with Blackboard. Paris Dauphine University's Educational Engineering Centre is already working on new projects: *"We're currently looking at setting up new teaching models for degree and Masters courses, including expanding our offering of SPOCs and MOOCs in line with our distinctive teaching offering,"* concludes Cécile Chevalier.

***"The LMS provides a turnkey product, available in SaaS mode, and delivering a whole host of useful, efficient tools."***

Cécile Chevalier

Director of Paris Dauphine University's Educational Engineering Centre.

# Blackboard

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