



# Blackboard Learn

## Deployment Guide

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# 1 Introduction

Blackboard Learn™ is a Learning Management System (LMS) developed by Blackboard Inc. It is web-based server software which features course management, customizable open architecture and scalable design that allows integration with student information systems and authentication protocols. Its main purpose is to add online elements to courses which are traditionally delivered face-to-face and develop completely online courses with little or no face-to-face meetings.

To improve performance and provide High Availability (HA), Blackboard Learn™ supports using a hardware or software load balancer and multiple application servers. The Kemp LoadMaster can be used to load balance Blackboard Learn™ traffic.

## 1.1 Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe how to configure the LoadMaster to load balance Blackboard Learn™. This document is based on Blackboard Learn 9.1 SP8. Kemp supports other versions of Learn, but there may be some features that do not work with older versions of Learn.

## 1.2 Intended Audience

This document is intended to be used by anyone who is interested in finding out how to configure the LoadMaster to load balance Blackboard Learn™.

## 1.3 Prerequisites

The following prerequisites must be satisfied before configuring the LoadMaster to work with Blackboard Learn™:

- The Blackboard Learn™ application must be deployed and successfully tested
- The Application Servers must have the relevant JDK and JRE installed.
- A Microsoft SQL Server must be installed

For additional information about the prerequisites, please refer to the [Blackboard Learn, Installation Guide](#).

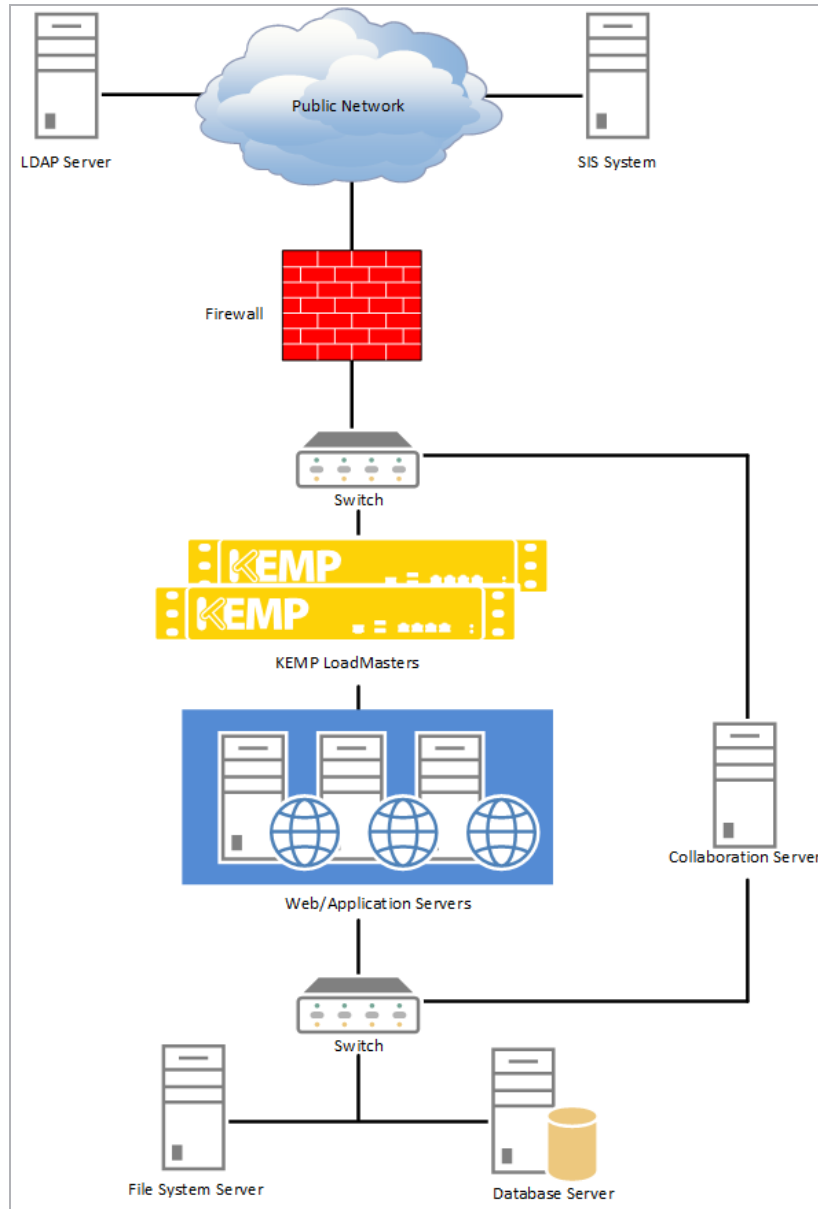
# 2 Template

Kemp has developed a template containing our recommended settings for this workload. You can install this template to help create Virtual Services (VSs) because it automatically populates the settings. You can use the template to easily create the required VSs with the recommended settings. You can remove templates after use and this will not affect deployed services. If needed, you can make changes to any of the VS settings after using the template.

Download released templates from the following page: [LoadMaster Templates](#).

For more information and steps on how to import and use templates, refer to the [Virtual Services and Templates, Feature Description](#) on the Kemp Documentation page.

# 3 Load Balancing Blackboard Learn™



The above diagram depicts a typical load-balanced configuration. Load-balanced configurations include multiple application servers, a database server (or failover cluster), a file system server and a collaboration server. A network switch is used to handle communications from the client machines to the application servers and the collaboration server. A separate switch is used to handle a secure, private connection between the application servers and the file system and database servers. The database and file system must be on a secure, private network.

The LoadMaster is primarily used for load balancing and providing HA for the web/application servers and collaboration servers. The collaboration server can also be optionally load balanced. For more information on how to load balance the collaboration server, refer to this link:

[https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Administrator/070\\_Server\\_Management\\_and\\_Integrations/Performance\\_Optimization/Load\\_Balancing\\_-\\_Configuration\\_and\\_Best\\_Practices](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Administrator/070_Server_Management_and_Integrations/Performance_Optimization/Load_Balancing_-_Configuration_and_Best_Practices)

The diagram above also shows integration with an LDAP server (or servers) to handle authentication and a Student Information System (SIS) to share data with Blackboard Learn™.

## 3.1 Configure the LoadMaster

The following sections describe how to configure the LoadMaster and associated Virtual Services.

### 3.1.1 Configure Global Settings

The following sections explain how to configure various settings globally.

#### 3.1.1.1 L7 Configuration

The **Additional L7 Header** field in the LoadMaster must be set to **X-Forwarded-For**. To do this, follow the steps below in the LoadMaster Web User Interface (WUI):

1. In the main menu of the WUI, go to **System Configuration > Miscellaneous Options > L7 Configuration**.

## 3 Load Balancing Blackboard Learn™

Allow connection scaling over 64K Connections	<input type="checkbox"/>
Always Check Persist	<input type="text" value="No"/>
Add Port to Active Cookie	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conform to RFC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Close on Error	<input type="checkbox"/>
Add Via Header In Cache Responses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Real Servers are Local	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drop Connections on RS failure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drop at Drain Time End	<input type="checkbox"/>
L7 Authentication Timeout (secs)	<input type="text" value="30"/> <a href="#">Set Timeout</a> (Valid values:30 - 300)
L7 Client Token Timeout (secs)	<input type="text" value="120"/> <a href="#">Set Timeout</a> (Valid values:60 - 300)
L7 Connection Drain Time (secs)	<input type="text" value="300"/> <a href="#">Set Time</a> (Valid values:0, 60 - 86400)
Additional L7 Header	<input type="text" value="X-Forwarded-For"/>
100-Continue Handling	<input type="text" value="RFC-2616 Compliant"/>
Allow Empty POSTs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allow Empty HTTP Headers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Force Complete RS Match	<input type="checkbox"/>
Least Connection Slow Start	<input type="text" value="0"/> <a href="#">Set Slow Start</a> (Valid values:0 - 600)
Share SubVS Persistence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Log Insight Message Split Interval	<input type="text" value="10"/> <a href="#">Set Log Split Interval</a> (Valid values:1 - 100)
Include User Agent Header in User Logs	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Select **X-Forwarded-For** as the **Additional L7 Header**.

The Blackboard Learn™ server must be configured to look at this header. If you are using IIS, an Internet Server Application (ISAPI) filter must be used to see the X-Forwarded-For header.

### 3.1.1.2 Enable Subnet Originating Requests Globally

It is best practice to enable the **Subnet Originating Requests** option globally.

In a one-armed setup (where the Virtual Service and Real Servers are on the same network/subnet) **Subnet Originating Requests** is usually not needed. However, enabling **Subnet Originating Requests** should not affect the routing in a one-armed setup.

In a two-armed setup where the Virtual Service is on network/subnet A, for example, and the Real Servers are on network B, **Subnet Originating Requests** should be enabled on LoadMasters with firmware version 7.1-16 and above.

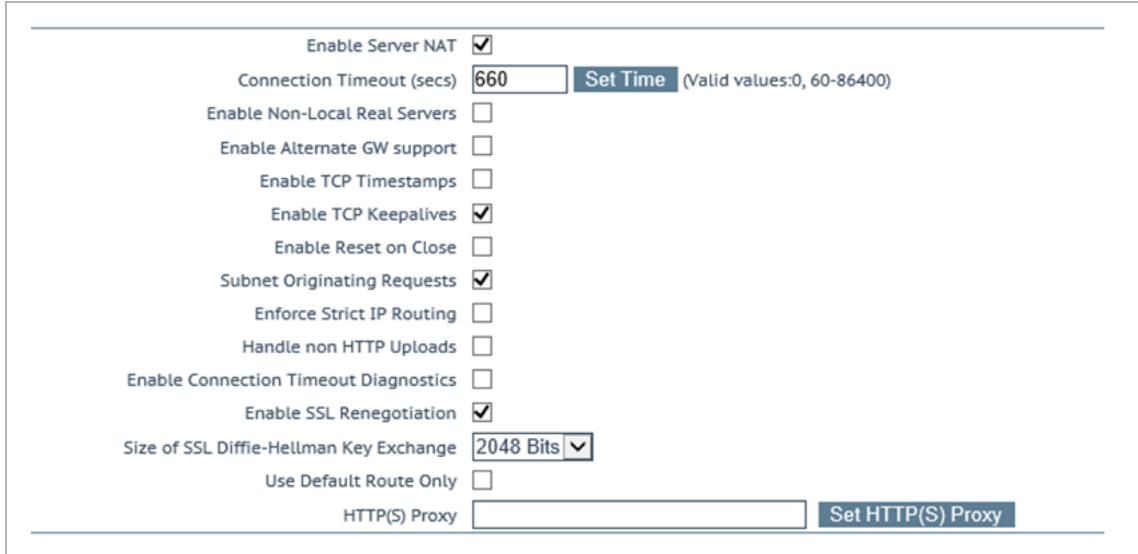
When **Subnet Originating Requests** is enabled, the LoadMaster routes traffic so that the Real Server sees traffic arriving from the LoadMaster interface that is in that network/subnet.



When **Subnet Originating Requests** is enabled globally, it is automatically enabled on all Virtual Services. If the **Subnet Originating Requests** option is disabled globally, you can choose whether to enable **Subnet Originating Requests** on a per-Virtual Service basis.

To enable **Subnet Originating Requests** globally, follow the steps below:

1. In the main menu of the LoadMaster Web User Interface (WUI), go to **System Configuration > Miscellaneous Options > Network Options**.



Enable Server NAT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connection Timeout (secs)	660 <span>Set Time</span> (Valid values:0, 60-86400)
Enable Non-Local Real Servers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enable Alternate GW support	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enable TCP Timestamps	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enable TCP Keepalives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Enable Reset on Close	<input type="checkbox"/>
Subnet Originating Requests	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Enforce Strict IP Routing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handle non HTTP Uploads	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enable Connection Timeout Diagnostics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enable SSL Renegotiation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Size of SSL Diffie-Hellman Key Exchange	2048 Bits <input type="button" value="v"/>
Use Default Route Only	<input type="checkbox"/>
HTTP(S) Proxy	<input type="text"/> <span>Set HTTP(S) Proxy</span>

2. Select the **Subnet Originating Requests** check box.

### 3.1.2 Configure a Content Rule for the HTTPS Virtual Service

To add a content rule, make the following selections:

1. In the main menu, select **Rules & Checking > Content Rules**.
2. Click the **Create New...** button.

### Create Rule

Rule Name	<input type="text" value="X_Forwarded_Proto"/>
Rule Type	<input type="text" value="Add Header"/>
Header Field to be Added	<input type="text" value="X_Forwarded_Proto"/>
Value of Header Field to be Added	<input type="text" value="https"/>
Perform If Flag Set	<input type="text" value="[Unset]"/>
Perform If Flag is NOT Set	<input type="text" value="[Unset]"/>

3. In the Create Rule screen, make the following selections:

- Enter **X\_Forwarded\_Proto** as the **Rule Name**.
- Select **Add Header** from the **Rule Type** drop-down list.
- Enter **X\_Forwarded\_Proto** in the **Header Field to be Added** text field.
- Enter **https** as the **Value of Header Field to be Added**.
- Click the **Create Rule** button.

### 3.1.3 Configure the Virtual Services

Either a HTTP or HTTPS Virtual Service needs to be created and configured in the LoadMaster to load balance Blackboard Learn™. Refer to the relevant section below for step-by-step instructions on how to create the relevant Virtual Service.

#### 3.1.3.1 Configure a HTTP Virtual Service

To configure a HTTP Virtual Service, follow the steps below in the LoadMaster WUI:

1. In the main menu, select **Virtual Services > Add New**.

### Please Specify the Parameters for the Virtual Service.

Virtual Address	<input type="text" value="10.154.11.131"/>
Port	<input type="text" value="80"/>
Service Name (Optional)	<input type="text" value="Blackboard Learn HTTP"/>
Use Template	<input type="text" value="Select a Template"/>
Protocol	<input type="text" value="tcp"/>

2. Enter a valid IP address in the **Virtual Address** text box.
3. Enter **80** as the **Port**.
4. Enter a recognizable **Service Name**, such as Blackboard Learn HTTP.
5. Click **Add this Virtual Service**.
6. Expand the **Standard Options** section.
7. Enter the details shown in the following table:

Section	Option	Value	Comments
Standard Options	Transparency	Disabled	
	Persistence Mode	Active Cookie	
	Timeout	4 Hours	If the default timeout (3 hours) in Blackboard Learn™ is increased, the timeout value in the LoadMaster should be higher.
	Cookie name	KempBBCookie	
	Scheduling Method	least connection	
Advanced Properties	Enable Caching	Enabled	
	Maximum	20%	

Section	Option	Value	Comments
	Cache usage		
	Enable Compression	Enabled	
	Add HTTP Headers	X-Forwarded-For (+Via)	
<b>Real Servers</b>	Real Server Check Parameters	HTTP Protocol	
	URL	/webapps/portal/healthCheck	Click <b>Set URL</b> then click <b>New</b> .

8. Enter the relevant **Real Server Address**.

This is the address of the backend server.

9. Enter **80** as the **Port**.

The **Port**, **Forwarding method** and **Weight** values are set by default. These can be changed by an administrator.

10. Click **Add This Real Server**.

11. Repeat steps **8** to **10** to add more Real Servers, as needed.

### 3.1.3.2 Configure a HTTPS Virtual Service

SSL offloading must also be configured on the Blackboard Learn™ servers. To find out how to configure SSL offloading on the Blackboard Learn™ servers, refer to the following page:

[http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/\\_admin\\_server\\_ssl/ssl\\_about.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/_admin_server_ssl/ssl_about.htm)

Kemp only supports SSL offloading on Blackboard Learn version 9.1 SP8 and above.

To configure a HTTPS Virtual Service, follow the steps below in the LoadMaster WUI:

12. In the main menu, select **Virtual Services > Add New**.

## 3 Load Balancing Blackboard Learn™

Please Specify the Parameters for the Virtual Service.

Virtual Address	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text" value="10.11.0.34"/>
Port	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text" value="443"/>
Service Name (Optional)	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text" value="Blackboard Learn HTTP"/>
Use Template	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text" value="Select a Template"/>
Protocol	<input style="width: 60%;" type="text" value="tcp"/>

13. Enter a valid **Virtual Address**.

14. Enter **443** as the **Port**.

15. Enter a recognizable **Service Name**, for example **Blackboard Learn HTTPS**.

16. Click **Add this Virtual Service**.

17. Enter the details shown in the following table:

Section	Option	Value	Comments
SSL Properties	Enabled	Selected	
	Transparency	Disabled	
Standard Options	Persistence Mode	Active Cookie	
	Timeout	4 Hours	If the default timeout (3 hours) in Blackboard Learn™ is increased, the timeout value in the LoadMaster should be higher.
	Cookie name	KempBBCookie	Click <b>Set Cookie</b> .
	Scheduling Method	least connection	
	Real Server Check Parameters	HTTP Protocol	
Real Servers	URL	/webapps/portal/healthCheck	Click <b>Set URL</b> then click <b>New</b> .

18. Enter the relevant **Real Server Address**.

---

This is the address of the backend server.

---

19. Enter **80** as the **Port**.

---

The **Forwarding method** and **Weight** values are set by default. These can be changed by an administrator.

---

20. Click **Add This Real Server**.

21. Repeat steps **7** to **9** to add any other Real Servers as needed.

22. Expand the **Advanced Properties** section.

▼ Advanced Properties

Content Switching

Disabled **Enable**

HTTP Selection Rules

**Show Selection Rules**

HTTP Header Modifications

**Show Header Rules (1 Request)**

Response Body Modification

**Show Body Modification Rules**

Support HTTP/2

☐

Enable Caching

☒ Maximum Cache usage  Current usage assigned 20%

Enable Compression

☒

Detect Malicious Requests

☐

Add Header to Request

:  **Set Header**

Copy Header in Request

To Header  **Set Headers**

Add HTTP Headers

**Set Server Address**

"Sorry" Server

Port  **Set Server Address**

Not Available Redirection Handling

Error Code:  **Set Redirect URL**

Redirect URL:

**Set Redirect URL**

Default Gateway

**Set Default Gateway**

Service Specific Access Control

**Access Control**

In the **Advanced Properties** section, make the following selections:

23. Select **No VIP Selected** from the **Port Following** drop-down list.

24. Select the **Enable Caching** check box.

## Request Rules

### Add Rule

Rule:

25. Add the content rule added in the **Configure a Content Rule for the HTTPS Virtual Service** section.

- Click the **Show Header Rules** button.
- In the **Request Rules** section, expand the **Rule** drop-down list.
- Select the **X\_Forwarded\_Proto** rule.
- Click **Add**.

26. Select **20%** as the **Maximum Cache** usage.

27. Select the **Enable Compression** check box.

28. Select **X-Forwarded-For (+Via)** from the **Add HTTP Headers** drop-down list.

29. Click the **Add HTTP Redirector** button.

30. Expand the **Real Servers** section.

▼ Real Servers

Real Server Check Parameters

HTTP Protocol

Checked Port

Set Check Port

URL:

/webapps/portal/healthCheck

Set URL

Status Codes:

Set Status Codes

Use HTTP/1.1:

☐

HTTP Method:

HEAD

Custom Headers:

Show Headers

Enhanced Options:

☐

# References

For further information, refer to the following links:

**Blackboard Learn Performance Optimization Guide**

<http://library.blackboard.com/d/?6692a745-b472-4360-b004-3c69b58c2b44>

**Blackboard Load Balancer Guidelines**

[http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/\\_admin\\_server\\_planning/planning\\_load\\_balance.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/_admin_server_planning/planning_load_balance.htm)

**Blackboard – About SSL and SSL Choice**

[http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/\\_admin\\_server\\_ssl/ssl\\_about.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/_admin_server_ssl/ssl_about.htm)

**Blackboard – Load Balancing – Configuration and Best Practices**

[https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Administrator/070\\_Server\\_Management\\_and\\_Integrations/Performance\\_Optimization/Load\\_Balancing\\_-\\_Configuration\\_and\\_Best\\_Practices](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Administrator/070_Server_Management_and_Integrations/Performance_Optimization/Load_Balancing_-_Configuration_and_Best_Practices)

**Blackboard – Set up the Hardware Load Balancer**

[http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/\\_admin\\_server\\_install/install\\_load\\_balancer.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/ref/df5b20ed-ce8d-4428-a595-a0091b23dda3/Content/_admin_server_install/install_load_balancer.htm)

**Web User Interface (WUI), Configuration Guide**

**Blackboard Learn, Installation Guide**

<http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=blackboard%20learn%209.1%20installation%20guide&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Flibrary.blackboard.com%2Fd%2F%3F6968c5f7-7cb7-4251-87a0-d36f2b4c5bf5&ei=gWq8TpSqJcGlgwfgg9SjBw&usg=AFQjCNHnEqRJdrzNJJO8Ss7YVxgaMEwMVw&cad=rja>



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