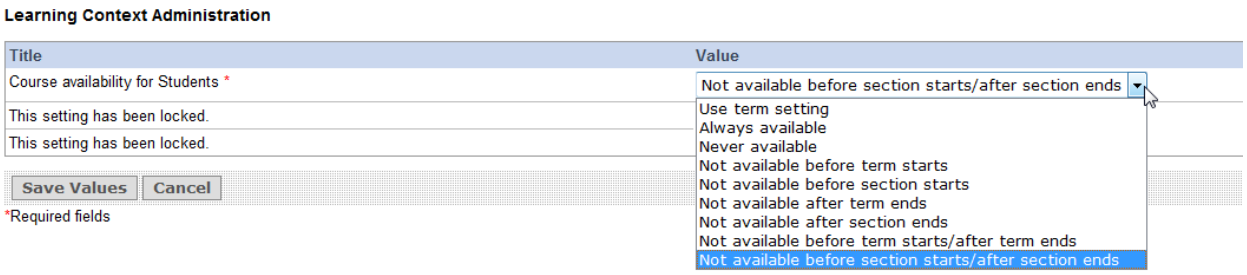
About Student Access Settings

The availability of Blackboard Courses to students are controlled by several settings inside the Blackboard administrative interface, and by settings inside each class. It is the combination of all these that allow or deny access to students.

Blackboard is normally set up to open all the classes automatically on the first day of the class. The bad news is that the settings inside the administrative area apply to all courses inside the Blackboard system without exception, and can be cantankerous at times. **However, the good news is that the settings available to you inside your classes override all other administrative settings for the system.**

At the section level, there are several options you can choose from, and it is important that you understand their meaning. Inside your class, If you look at **Manage Course > Settings > Learning Context**, you will see a screen like the one pictured below with the drop-down box of options:



When courses are created in Banner and then pass over into Blackboard, they are set to "Use term setting". This default setting can be problematic as is dependent on other settings in the administrative area, and may not take into account the special needs of your class. **So you may wish to choose one of the following instead:**

1. If you want your class to definitely be open or closed to the students, choose from "Always available" or "Never available", which take effect as soon as you click *Save Values*. Use "Never Available" to keep students out, and "Always available' to allow access. **If you use these settings, there is no "automatic" opening, so you must remember to return here to change the setting to Always Available on or before the first day of classes!**

2. "Not available before term starts", "Not available after term ends", and "Not available before term starts/after term ends" allows/denies student access based on terms dates that run from the first day of the spring/summer /fall term through the end of the final exam period. For example, from January 19 - May 13, which is ~16 weeks plus finals. **NOTE: If you have a shorter class-- like an 8 or 12 week class - using these 'term' options may open your class too soon or leave it open beyond the end of your shorter term.**

3. "Not available before section starts", "Not available after section ends", and "Not available before section starts/after section ends" allows student access on the first day of class [even if it's a late start] through the last day of classes, but does not include the final exam period. **If you choose one of the options specifying the end behavior, you will need to return to this setting area before finals and switch to "Not available after term ends" or "Always available" to keep the class open for the final exam period.**

NOTE: If you have "incompletes'' who will still need access to your class after the end of the semester, you will need to switch the setting to "Always available" and deny access to the rest of the students from inside the gradebook. Then return the setting to "Never Available" after the last student has finished his/her work.