

# IncludeAll - Inclusive by Design: Making the most of BlackBoard

## What our students say

*'Enjoyed all of the video and online resources - a useful and modern touch.'*

(Level 6 BA Education)

## What our students say

*'Online resources have proved invaluable in my studies.'*

(Level 6 BA Hons Psychology)

## Blackboard and accessibility

Blackboard is designed to be accessible to students and conforms to international standards for accessibility. It includes the following features some of which are aimed at users and some at tutors when writing Blackboard materials:

- High Contrast setting: any user can select this option from the log-in page
- Text size: this can be changed using browser commands - see guide on log-in page
- Quick links: allows simple access to all the headings in the page for ease of navigation. Click the icon shown here on the right on any page:  
- Readable by screen-readers - users can download a tutorial by clicking the following link: [Blackboard Learn Screen Reader Tutorial](#).
- Tutors have the option to include alt-text when images are inserted in Blackboard content so screen-readers can access image descriptions.
- Tutors can use the styles feature in all text entry boxes to enable the creation of consistent text layout (similar to Word styles feature – see Inclusive by Design: Producing accessible teaching materials).

Click here for a full list of [Blackboard's accessibility features](#)

## Adding Learning materials to Blackboard

- Follow the good practice guidance for Word and PowerPoint from Inclusive by Design: Teaching Materials) before adding to Blackboard.
- Be aware that PDF does not always work with assistive technologies especially if heading styles were not included in the original document; a reader may not be

able to alter the background colour or contrast and although there is zoom, the document font size cannot be increased for printing.

- If you have students who are visually impaired try to put materials on in both Word as well as PDF for maximum flexibility.
- Film clips, including YouTube, should have audio subtitles and transcripts if possible; this caters for both visually impaired and hearing impaired students.
- It is good practice to tag images with an audio description for visually impaired students using a screen-reader.
- Voiceover on PowerPoint can be a useful way of capturing, giving a lecture, or providing background information on material.

## Learning activities in Blackboard

Using online learning tools is often a new skill and a challenge for many students. Some suggestions for ensuring that students use Blackboard effectively:

- At induction, explain to students what materials are available in Blackboard and how they can use them for learning.
- Highlight the Staffordshire Graduate Attributes, employability and digital literacy skills they will be developing as they access materials and engage in online learning activities. Find out more about digital literacy on the JISC [Developing Digital Literacies](#) page.
- Include some practice activities and give feedback that will help them build digital skills and confidence in using Blackboard.
- Discussion boards, whether synchronous or asynchronous, are often a more accessible and comfortable way of engaging many students who might want to take their time contributing – this might be because of using English as a second language (International Students or sign language users; students with Asperger Syndrome, hearing or visually impaired students, students with dyslexia).
- Check part-time students are able to access Blackboard from home.

## Reflection into action



Having reflected on the above, my key priorities for making my teaching more inclusive are:

Changes to be introduced	By when	Indicators that it will make my practice more inclusive

This document is part of an inclusive practice 'toolkit' - *IncludeAll*. The whole Toolkit, as one complete document or as separate documents, can be found on the University website at [www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/inclusivepractice) .

It is split into four sections: Core Concepts; Inclusive by Design; Enhancing Practice; Checklists for Self-reflection.

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