

Blended Learning Quick Start Series: Creating accessible and inclusive blended learning

Introduction

Learning and teaching, irrespective of its delivery format, should be accessible and inclusive. Everyone has the right to fair and equal access to digital and physical services such as learning resources, information, and online systems, just as they do for buildings and equipment.

In the United Kingdom, at least one in five people have a long-term disability, impairment, or illness. Added to this, most of us will at some point in our lives experience a temporary or situational disability, including injuries or illness.

In the digital space, accessible content is content that has been optimised to ensure that it can be used and understood by the widest possible audience, and as a public sector organisation, it is our responsibility to remove as many barriers to accessing our services as possible.

It is important to remember that accessible content benefits everyone. By making content accessible, we can unlock its potential, making it more discoverable, searchable, and re-usable for all.

Option 1: Using Blackboard Ally

[Blackboard Ally](#) is an inbuilt feature within Blackboard that enables students to download resources and materials in alternate formats. For example, a visually impaired student may download an audio version of a text-based document so that it is read aloud to them. Ally also provides teachers with on-demand accessibility reports for their resources, enabling any issues to be quickly resolved.

Option 2: Automatic captions in ReCap

[ReCap](#) features Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR). This means that all spoken word audio in your ReCap recordings will be automatically transcribed and will appear as captions at the bottom of the recording for students to view. Not only is this vital for any students with hearing impairments, it's also incredibly useful for students who are watching recordings in noisy environments or those for whom English is not their first language.

Option 3: Microsoft Accessibility Checker

Microsoft offer an [accessibility checker](#) within many of their applications. This helpful tool reviews the document you're working on and makes suggestions about how its accessibility can be improved.

Option 4: Use plain English

Writing in plain English helps students understand your message the first time they read it. When writing, always think about your audience and the message you're trying to convey. Try to avoid writing in the passive voice and keep sentences and paragraphs short.