

Making Online Material Accessible for all Students

Students have a right to access Brightspace/Blackboard material in a format that is suitable for them. Producing information in alternative formats, e.g. large print or electronic format, is expensive and time consuming. All Brightspace/Blackboard material should be produced in an accessible format to reduce the need for materials to be adjusted to meet an individual's needs.

How can you produce accessible Brightspace/Blackboard material?

- Use Microsoft Word and plain text PowerPoint slides as these are the most accessible formats and can easily be manipulated according to an individual's needs.
- Avoid PDFs as they cannot be manipulated and are usually inaccessible.
- Use a plain type font e.g. Arial, Comic Sans, or Calibri. Use bold to highlight headings and key words. Avoid italics and underlining as they can be hard to read.
- Use good colour contrast e.g. white on black.
- To check if your documents are accessible for all students try using a screen reader/text to speech software when preparing materials.
- When using images/videos ensure you also include captions/subtitles/plain text descriptions. For example, YouTube now includes an automatic transcription feature for videos of ten minutes duration or less. TIP: Make sure that the "Closed Captioning" button is turned on.
- Use a clear layout, minimise the number of links and avoid using screenshots.
- Provide information in a variety of ways e.g. information in a graph should also be provided via audio description and plain text.

Tips and Advice

Allow students to see how information relates to prior knowledge and wider context e.g. either explain or use mind-maps/timeline to note how this week's materials link to the previous week.

Introduce students to a variety of media that will allow all students, regardless of ability or disability, to experience their education equally.

Each module should provide guidance on time-management, Brightspace/Blackboard use and research skills as well as an annotated reading list and suggestions on where to find other useful resources. A short introduction to your module provided on Brightspace/Blackboard can help to orient students to your expectations of them.

Consider how the Brightspace/Blackboard environment, could be used to assist students to understand and engage with the module's content e.g. use of mini- quizzes; case study examples; video clips; on-line lectures to be revisited etc.

In the Brightspace/Blackboard environment make material appear more relevant to students e.g. use of a variety of culturally diverse and 'real-life' examples.

Encourage students to collaborate and communicate with their peers e.g. provide a discussion forum which students can receive marks for engaging in.

Provide students with opportunities to actively reflect on their own goals and the module learning outcomes e.g. provide checklists or short multiple-choice quizzes to help students stay engaged and gauge their own progress.

If you have any queries about making online material accessible for all students, please contact lisa.padden@ucd.ie