

Accessible Information Design

Ensuring your BlackBoard/E-content is accessible for all students

What does accessible e-content mean?

Accessibility refers to the concept of making materials in an online setting equally and easily available to enhance learning outcomes for all students.

E-content refers to a number of different materials and activities for learning presented through a computer-mediated medium. Examples of e-content include:

- Text presented online, e.g. web pages, print materials hosted online;
- Video, audio, and graphic images presented online, e.g. recorded lectures, YouTube videos, etc.;
- Links to external web pages;
- Collaboratively generated content, e.g. wikis, discussion board forums, etc.;
- Learning objects, e.g. small, interoperable learning modules and interactive scenarios.

Use plain and inclusive language

- Use simple words
- Use short sentences and paragraphs
- Avoid jargon, when possible. If it is important to use discipline-specific jargon, create a glossary
- Use an appropriate sized font, e.g. 11-13 Arial
- Use plenty of white space

Important Note

Having a standard Blackboard structure/materials style guide for all units in a year/course will reduce the cognitive load for students. If it is possible, work with your colleagues to ensure you are presenting the same types of information and in the same format for all units that students are taking within the course.

Accessible print materials for online viewing

- Use style sheets for layout and presentation
- Avoid columns
- Only use tables for tabular information
- Avoid textboxes as they are not accessible by screen readers
- Avoid underlining and italics. Use bold and/or larger size print for emphasis

Important Note

Note that older versions of screen readers cannot read **PDF** files so Rich Text Format (**RTF**) files or HTML versions are usually a better alternative if the information you are presenting does not need to be protected.

Make online materials more accessible

- Use large icons to make it easier for students with poor motor control to navigate around the e-content

- Include multimedia files (audio, video, etc.) of important materials, such as lectures and assessments
- Avoid large and unnecessary media files as they take a long time to download. Compress all media files. When necessary, include a faster loading text alternative and warn students about download delays
- Provide a clear navigation structure, ensure materials are well organised
- Avoid saving scanned documents as images as they cannot be read by screen readers
- Avoid using too many colours, dark on dark and light on light, and colours that would be difficult for people who are red-green colour blind. For more information on colour contrast, visit the Vision Australia website: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/digital-access/resources/colour-contrast-analyser>
- Use ALT tags to identify all images. Ensure the ALT tags provide useful descriptive text
- Provide transcripts or subtitles for multimedia items
- Avoid using terms such as 'click here' for links – provide a description of what the link is for and where it goes
- Provide a description of how to enlarge text
- Offer multiple file and media formats for easy/preferred student download, e.g. When you include PPTs and lecture video, also include PPTs as 6 slides per sheet
- Only include moving, blinking, and scrolling text and images when necessary and ensure they can be paused or stopped

Blackboard menu design

- Clear the clutter by removing anything you do not use
- Avoid using buttons and patterns in menus
- Ensure text is legible over background colour
- Use appropriate colour combinations
- Use light on dark or dark on light
- Avoid using the colour red
- Use an unit identification logo at the top of the screen
- Insert a full document where appropriate, i.e. the actual timetable on its own menu button
- Ensure there is a salient link to Blackboard's accessibility features
- Regularly check your links to make sure they are working – this is a particular problem with the discussion board link in various teaching units

Announcement Design

- Use content links where possible to avoid 'the hunt' for materials
- Remember to add most recent material as 'permanent' so that it displays at the top of the announcements

Further Information

For more information, please contact Equity, Diversity, and Disability (EDD): studentequity@ecu.edu.au or 9370 6960. You can also view the Equity, Diversity and Disability Service Blackboard Community site.

For more information about different teaching technologies that can help you create an alternative format or medium, please contact the Centre for Learning and Development <http://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/centre-for-learning-and-teaching/overview>