



Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

eLearning Accessibility Planning

An inclusive learning environment anticipates that no two disabilities are alike and proactively grounds itself in the fundamentals of universal access.

Institutions across higher education are seeing an increasing emphasis on the expectations established in accessibility laws and rulings that have been handed down by the Department of Justice and Office of Civil Rights. As online programs grow and understanding of student needs increases, institutions need to provide both content and tools for learners with varying needs.

Learners enrolled in online, hybrid, and blended programs require more than technology-enabled courses – they anticipate and expect a holistic learning experience that is focused on their success. Despite the advances in technology which improve accessibility, most programs still present barriers to students who have visual, auditory, cognitive, and/or physical disabilities that prevent them from fully engaging in the learning materials.

To help institutions meet these increased expectations, Blackboard has developed specialized consulting services to assist institutions in understanding limitations in coursework and across the student experience that affect students with disabilities. This service is designed to assist all staff responsible for developing, maintaining, or auditing online content and functionality including professors, content developers, administrators, webmasters, IT staff, and others.

eLearning Accessibility Plan

This solution results in a comprehensive eLearning accessibility plan to provide a barrier-free eLearning experience for individuals with disabilities. The plan includes:

- Goals
- Strategies
- Performance Metrics

The solution provides a set of recommendations designed to remove barriers uncovered through a discovery and review of eLearning-related student lifecycle functions—recruitment, admission, financial aid, registration, student support, graduation, and alumni. These recommendations and the overall plan can then serve as the basis for revised policies, processes, and procedures to be implemented by the institution.

The plan will not address physical accessibility barriers on the institution's campus nor are the recommendations a substitute for legal counsel.

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