

MHS eLearning Update

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The University of Manchester

Is your Blackboard course ready for Semester 2?

Blackboard courses become visible to students on Monday 25 January 2016 (unless you selected a different option when you activated your Bb course). Please make sure your courses are activated and populated with content.

You can access Blackboard via [My Manchester](#) for staff. Click on the link to Blackboard in the Teaching category of links (you may need to click on 'View all'). You will be able to see and update your Bb course in the Course List on the Blackboard home page within 24-48 hours of it being activated.

Guidance about accessing Blackboard and updating your course(s) is available on the eLearning website of the TLSO: [Blackboard and Start of Year 2015](#). This page also includes information on activating courses for course unit leaders.

See the [article](#) on StaffNet News.

Useful knowledge base articles



- How to activate Blackboard courses (STAFF) - [link](#).
- Preparing Blackboard 9 courses for start of year and semester 2 - [link](#).
- Knowledge Base: supportcentre.manchester.ac.uk

Supporting online exams

The eLearning team will be supporting 25 different exams during the January exams period, a total of 870 individual papers. Many exams are run concurrently in more than one computer cluster. There is therefore a significant demand upon members of the eLearning team who provide support in clusters prior to and during each exam. Some members of the team are also involved in building and preparing papers in Blackboard, and in the extensive testing that is undertaken in the lead-up to the exam period with the aim of ensuring that everything goes smoothly.

If you are running an online exam, please make sure that you liaise regularly with your Learning Technologist and that you check the exam thoroughly when it has been built.



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Key things to note

- Preparing for Semester 2
- OLSG update and working group
- Ensuring the stability of Blackboard



Online Learning Strategy Group

The next meeting of the Online Learning Strategy Group (OLSG) is scheduled for 2 February 2016. Any comments or queries from MHS will be raised by Roger and Jane. You can feedback/feed forward directly to roger.harrison@manchester.ac.uk or jane.mooney@manchester.ac.uk or via di-ane.bennett@manchester.ac.uk.

Following the first meeting of the OLSG, **a working group is being formed to develop, in collaboration with Schools, a set of strategic objectives around online learning.** The group will consider how online learning can be developed and embedded within the overall Teaching, Learning and Student Experience vision. The initial work of the group will be to develop a set of strategic objectives for discussion with Schools to inform a framework/action plan for online learning, with the explicit purpose of embedding online learning within the normal activities of the student teaching and learning experience.

Membership of the group will be: Pam Vallely (Academic Director for DL, Chair); Ian Hutt (Head of DL Operations, Secretary); Faculty eLearning Managers; Faculty eLearning Academic Leads (one of the OLSG reps).

eLearning: what it is, benefits

eLearning is something of a catch-all term encompassing a multitude of technologies and a range of pedagogic approaches. Essentially, eLearning is about harnessing the potential of technology to enhance the teaching and learning experience. eLearning can include anything from the use of electronic voting handsets in lectures to the delivery of fully online programmes and many things in-between.

When thoughtfully designed and well implemented, eLearning can add flexibility, variety and individualisation to courses, making learning more efficient, enjoyable and effective. The University appreciates this and a commitment to developing the role of eLearning is part of its [2020 agenda](#).

Ensuring the stability of Blackboard

In order to ensure the stability of Blackboard it is sometimes necessary to undertake essential maintenance of the system.

From 27 September regular maintenance of Blackboard has been scheduled from 2am-5am GMT on Sunday mornings. This will include approximately 30 minutes downtime. Please be aware of this when planning work.



Key dates for Blackboard 9

This [article](#) provides a list of key dates, including the course unit life cycle (when courses become visible to student and staff, and when they are no longer available).

Reminder: the **provisional dates** for annual maintenance of Blackboard during the Easter vacation are 4pm on Thursday 31 March until 12.01am on Monday 4 April 2016. Please bear these dates in mind when planning teaching and learning activities (*but note that they may be subject to change*).

Resources and articles

Learner Experience Research

The **Winter 2015 issue of the ELESIG Newsletter** is available. It includes summaries of meetings held across the UK regions and updates on regional events, and the launch of the new ELESIG logo, which has been updated to “reflect our key message of “learner experience research” [which] is what makes ELESIG unique and building capacity for undertaking research”.



The newsletter can be read online: <http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=d8ae0c780c&id=72484f7509>

You can **join the local ELESIG North West group** via <http://elesig.ning.com/group/elesig-north-west> — Roger Harrison from the Institute of Population Health, and one of the MHS representatives on the Online Learning Strategy Group (OLSG) is a committee member for ELESIG North West.

Top 100 Tools for Learning 2015

Each year the Centre for Learning & Performance Technologies compiles a list of the **Top 100 Tools for Learning**. The list for 2015 can be seen here <http://c4lpt.co.uk/directory/top-100-tools/>. There is also a categorised list of tools in the **Best of Breed 2015**. The list includes categories organised under four main headings: instructional tools; content tools; social tools; personal tools. The list can be seen here <http://c4lpt.co.uk/directory/top-100-tools/best-of-breed-tools-2015/>.

JISC podcast: digital tools and emerging trends

In a recent podcast (04 Jan 2016), “web developer and technologist Pat Lockley reveals which digital tools he can’t do without, and peers into the future to identify emerging trends.”.



Polling software technology

A number of user groups for people involved in using polling software technology such as Turning Point (aka ‘clickers’) have been set up on social media platforms. You are invited to join and add comments about your experience of using various student response systems.

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Polling-User-Group-PUG-719377871539532/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PollingUsersPUG>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8458481>

HE trends and use of predictive analytics

An article in EducationDive, a US-based organisation, suggests that in the US “Big data ... is now being used by administrators to develop predictive tools that allow faculty and staff to target student interventions” (30 Dec 2015). This includes “early warning systems that alert students when they are at risk of poor outcomes” and “using big data to track faculty performance and financial aid fraud”. A new interoperability standard has been developed which will “expand access to data, and in usable formats, for colleges and universities that use third-party tools like those for student engagement”.

Further information: <http://www.educationdive.com/news/5-higher-ed-trends-to-watch-in-2016/411362/> [accessed 04 Jan 2016]

Conferences and events

11-15 Jan 2016 online	Bring Your Own Device for Learning (BYOD4L) course	http://byod4learning.wordpress.com
13 Jan 2016 @6pm online	The eLearning Guild Webinar: The Future of Learning—where should we	For information and to register: http://bit.ly/1O7RF7w
26 Jan—25 Feb online	Oxford Brookes University MOOC: First Steps into Learning and Teaching in HE . A five-week introduction to teaching in HE, it relies on sharing knowledge with your peers.	Accredited: 10 M-level credits (assessment incurs a fee) http://www.brookes.ac.uk/OCSLD/Courses/Teaching-and-learning/first-steps-into-learning-and-teaching/
12th <i>or</i> 26th Feb (tbc) 10am-1pm	ALTNWESIG Spring meeting at Edge Hill University followed by a campus tour	Doodle link indicate preferred date http://doodle.com/poll/cp75rqxt739575da#table
2 Mar 2016 Liverpool	ELESIG North West @ LJMU: Big Data v Little Ethics	http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=d8ae0c780c&id=72484f7509#Events_for_Elesig_in_the_North_West
2-3 Mar 2016 Birmingham	Jisc Digital Festival (free) [Digifest2016]	https://www.jisc.ac.uk/events/jisc-digital-festival-02-mar-2016
19-20 Apr 2016 Edinburgh	Open Culture (OER16)	https://oer16.oerconf.org/
25-28 Apr 2016 Dublin	Ireland International Conference on Education (IICE-2016)	http://www.iicedu.org
9-11 May 2016 Lancaster	Networked Learning Conference (NLC2016)	http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk/

What would you like to see in the eLearning Update?

Tell diane.bennett@manchester.ac.uk

Team news

What does the eLearning team do?

Our role is to help the Faculty recognize and exploit the potential of eLearning through services which include learning design, development of course materials, staff training and development and on-going support for both staff and students. We provide programme-specific support and also develop and maintain pan-faculty courses, as well as contributing to cross-University activities.

Our services include:

- Blackboard 9 support for students and staff
- Learning design for blended or distance learning courses
- Design and development of online content
- Support for online examinations
- Helpdesk, Start of Year, 'just in time' training, functional evaluation and testing, knowledge base, communications

<http://www.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/admingroups/teachingandlearning/elearning/>