

From Blackboard Learn to Canvas: Your questions answered

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Access to Canvas

When will we transition to Canvas?

From September 2025, all courses at the University will go live using Canvas.

Some programmes that do not follow the traditional academic calendar will go-live with teaching in Canvas earlier than this date.

Selected TNE courses will start teaching with Canvas in February 2025. Executive Education courses are planned to start teaching from March. GMBA programmes are expected to start teaching from July 2025.

When will I get access to Canvas?

All colleagues now have access to Canvas and should have a sandbox space to explore and familiarise yourself with the platform. Local communications have been shared to advise how you can access the platform. Access Canvas here <https://canvas.manchester.ac.uk>.

If you do not have a sandbox space, you can contact your local eLearning team for further support.

- Faculty of Humanities
<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/humanities/teaching-support/elearning/help/>
- Faculty of Science and Engineering
<https://connect.manchester.ac.uk/esc>
- Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health
<https://elearning.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/about/>

Will it be possible to make 'closed' areas on Canvas, (e.g. to School or Department specific training)?

The Canvas account structure we will use will largely mirror the organisational hierarchy of the institute. There will be Canvas accounts representing the different Faculties, Schools and departments (e.g., Cancer Research UK Manchester Institute).

These accounts will host courses so it will be possible to create training material specific to a department or School. These will only be accessible to the relevant administrative staff associated with that organisational unit who will be able to manage the enrolments to those courses.

How will this change any learning that links through to Blackboard to be completed? Will we still need to use Canvas for these as well as the Training and Development page?

Blackboard will be completely retired in October 2025 and will no longer be accessible.

Any external links to Blackboard will no longer work. All Training and Development courses currently hosted on Blackboard will need to move over to Canvas (or an alternative platform).

Building courses in Canvas

When can I start building my course?

All colleagues will have access to the Canvas Course Template and Course Unit Standards to begin confidently rebuilding courses from March 2025.

Any content developed in your sandbox space can be copied over to your 2025/2026 course. The template will provide the correct format for colleagues to structure their courses. Colleagues are encouraged to engage with training and support from their local eLearning teams to support the rebuild of courses.

Will there be a set template for all teaching colleagues to use?

Each Canvas course will be populated with a newly developed template, containing an agreed set of standards for courses at The University of Manchester.

Guidance text for academic colleagues to rebuild their courses will accompany the template.

When will course templates be available?

From March, the template will be available to support colleagues to confidently build courses in Canvas.

When will we have access to the Block Editor in Canvas?

Block Editor is currently only available in a Canvas testing environment. eLearning teams have already begun testing and evaluating this.

Instructure (Canvas's supplier) will not release Block Editor to our live environment until they are confident the user experience will be good enough. Instructure have not yet set a date for release to our live environment.

Will the additional time required to move materials to the new system be recognised when quantifying colleague commitments?

We appreciate that extra time will be needed for colleagues to engage in rebuilding their courses, even if it involves repurposing course content from Blackboard.

Additional time required can vary depending on course size, how the course is configured in Blackboard, the range of materials, and digital competency of the user.

A high-level estimate of time expected to rebuild is around 3 days per course unit.

Migration of data from Blackboard Learn to Canvas

What data will be migrated from Blackboard to Canvas?

All teaching materials from courses from teaching year 2024/2025 will be migrated from Blackboard to Canvas. These materials will be grouped in a logical structure so colleagues can access them to copy into their Canvas course space.

This will include quizzes, files, videos etc. We will also migrate non-Campus Solutions spaces (e.g. community spaces) so the content can be re-used as part of these course rebuilds.

Will Blackboard quizzes automatically migrate to Canvas?

Yes, quizzes will be migrated to 'New quizzes' which is the newest Canvas framework.

How many years' worth of materials from Blackboard will be transferred to Canvas? Will content from previous years' courses also be moved, or only the materials from the current course?

We will have 7 years' worth of materials to migrate from Blackboard to Canvas. This includes:

- 3 years of Legacy Courses (2022/2023, 2023/2024, 2024/2025). We will enrol colleagues and students to these courses so people can access previous years' teaching content immediately.
- 4 years of data as Archived Courses (2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022). Access to this content will be limited, and students will need to submit a request for this data.

There are some exceptions where eLearning and Teaching colleagues have specifically asked for courses that sit outside the default range to be migrated and archived.

Contact your local eLearning team, who we have been collectively engaging and working with throughout the delivery of this change. They will have the specific requirements for your School/department.

What will Blackboard migrated content look like in Canvas?

Blackboard content will be presented in Canvas in a format designed to enhance user experience.

With any transition to a new platform, format and layout changes are to be expected. Course content may appear different in Canvas, but the user-friendly interface should enhance the user experience.

All teaching materials from 2024/2025 courses will be migrated from Blackboard to Canvas. These materials will be grouped in a logical structure so colleagues can access them to copy over to their Canvas course space.

When will content be moved to Canvas?

We currently have seven batch runs planned to migrate into Canvas. These have been prioritised based on the most current academic courses to those we want to archive.

- Semester 1 – Migration will start at the beginning of March with a view to complete by the end of the month.
- Semester 2 – Provisionally, migration will start at the beginning of July and be completed by the end of the month.

Between migration activity, the technical teams will focus on fixing any issues that occur. If satisfactory, we will begin loading all the other courses including those to be archived.

Can we copy any current content over from Blackboard?

Yes, you can copy current Blackboard content over to Canvas; however, it is recommended waiting until data migration activity is complete.

As part of the data migration activity, we will migrate or archive identified courses and have a priority order in which we will try ensure you have what you need for the forthcoming academic year.

All general users will continue to have access until the end of September following which a restricted access will be applied as we close on the term of the contract.

How will students access course materials from previous years of study?

If students wish to access materials within the last 3 years, they should see this available in Canvas. If they want to access materials prior to this, students will need to submit a request to their eLearning team.

We will ask that students download their previous years course submissions and materials to ensure they have all they need as an extra measure.

I have a course that will change code and name from next academic year (September 2025), but its content will still be mostly valid. Will this course content be migrated to Canvas?

Course content will be migrated into a holding space for you to then create a live version adhering to the pedagogy and template standards, this will allow you to update the relevant code and name whilst keeping the content the same as your previous course.

I will be on Academic Research Leave in Semester 1 when Canvas is rolled out. How will courses be migrated when they may not be being taught in the next academic year but will be taught after that?

Included in the migration will be 3 years of Legacy Courses, (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25). Your course will be available in Canvas to be used as the foundation of the new course that you wish to create for the next academic year.

What will happen with MA dissertation submission and marking where submission straddles the transition period?

The official Canvas launch is the beginning of semester one in September of this year. From this date, all teaching should take place in Canvas.

Our official switch off for Blackboard is the Friday 31 October, when this will no longer be available.

However, we recognise that for certain cases, follow-on activity will be needed in Blackboard, including dissertation marking and courses that don't follow standard academic timelines. eLearning teams have been identifying scenarios where challenges could be presented.

We are investigating solutions to accommodate activity taking place after Friday 31 October cut-off. Details will be communicated as soon as we have something more specific to share with you.

Training and guidance

What training is available and how do we access it?

Faculty eLearning teams have developed training materials and resources to support their colleagues in the transition to Canvas. Colleagues can access training and guidance (including face-to-face drop-in and online sessions) through the links below:

- Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health
<https://elearning.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/training/canvas-training/>
- Faculty of Humanities
<https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/humteachlearn/canvas-readiness/#training>
- Faculty of Science and Engineering
<https://www.teachingcollege.fse.manchester.ac.uk/canvas>

A University-wide Training Working Group has been established to support the consolidation of training materials to be accessed from a central area. A standard of materials accessible by all colleagues will be available from March.

Accessibility

Text Headers feature in Modules were being read as span (HTML code) during testing. Can you confirm that Instructure have resolved the issue as it does not meet basic accessibility guidelines.

Accessibility and usability are really important to us for our people using Canvas.

The project team have noted this issue with the Text Headers feature and will perform some internal checks and report to the Accessibility Team at Instructure (Canvas's supplier).

Will oversights in basic accessibility be addressed before the University's official launch of Canvas?

We contacted Instructure in December to ask them about when they are planning to perform an assessment of their platform against WCAG 2.2 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and publish an up-to-date accessibility statement. We also asked about the provisions they are making in their product roadmap to resolve instances of partial compliance and non-compliance.

The response stated that they are actively working on a new accessibility statement that will report compliance against WCAG 2.2. They are also aiming to be compliant by the start of the 2025/2026 academic year.

We will continue to monitor their progress on these items and request regular updates in the run up to the start of the next academic year.

Features

Does Canvas have an equivalent to Blackboard Communities, and will 'community areas' be migrated over?

Yes, Canvas does have community spaces.

Blackboard Communities will be migrated at the same time and manner as all other courses into the same holding space for the teaching staff to copy across into the live space.

Can you form groups with adaptive release in Canvas?

The mechanism for forming groups with adaptive release will be different to your experience in Blackboard, but adaptive/conditional release by groups will be possible in Canvas.

Integrations/LTIs

Will all LTIs be available that were available in Blackboard? If so, will they work the same?

Yes, all third-party tools integrated with Blackboard will be available in Canvas. We have installed and tested all tools, and these are now available in the system.

As we move between CLEs, there will be some differences between how some of the third-party tools function.

This is particularly relevant to TurnItin. We have taken the decision to move away from the native TurnItin application and go with a deeper TurnItin integration with Canvas. The result is a more seamless experience for both students and colleagues.

There are some considerations when users rebuild their assessments which will be included in the training and guidance for all LTI tools for users to access.

Will we still be able to access students' submissions on TurnItin or Cadmus submissions that were graded via TII? This is especially needed for part-time students or students on a course for more than year, (i.e. yet to graduate by July 2025).

Yes. This is an independent application to Canvas.

How will interactions with STACK and TurnItin assessments work? Will they be similar to Blackboard?

TurnItin will be available in Canvas but we encourage colleagues to primarily use Canvas's native inbuilt assessment and feedback tools.

These tools offer enhanced functionality and are a huge improvement compared to TurnItin. We anticipate the Canvas tools will be much more reliable and provide a much better student experience.

Stack will be available as it is in Blackboard, as this is a standard LTI integration.

Is an LTI integration with Moodle available?

Yes, this work was completed in August 2024. It is important that your account on Moodle is correctly associated with your account on Canvas for the integration to work correctly.

Please contact your local eLearning team for further guidance as to how to do this and use the new integration as there are some significant differences (improvements) to how the integration works with Blackboard.

Are the applications supported in Blackboard also supported in Canvas? YouTube, VoiceThread, quizzes, etc.

Most applications supported in Blackboard will be supported in Canvas.

We have implemented the LTI for VoiceThread, and other frequently used applications such as Pebblepad, Piazza, Cadmus, BuddyCheck, Blackboard Ally, Kortext.

I manage a course in Blackboard that was created in Articulate Rise. Will the interactive Storyline elements that are embedded in the course work in Canvas?

We have not yet experienced any major issues when embedding Rise courses; however, they must be exported/imported as SCORM packages. This should preserve the storyline activities as HTML is not an option currently, at least not hosted in Canvas files

Please contact your eLearning team for further support.

Support for colleagues

What backup or workarounds have been put in place if the new system were to go down after we have fully migrated to Canvas and no longer have access to Blackboard?

In the unlikely event we are unable to fulfil our obligation to deliver Canvas by September 2025, a backup option has been planned to ensure teaching and learning can continue through digital platforms. The Programme Board agreed contingency option is to extend our contract with Blackboard for another year to provide assurances that our users are not going to be left without a VLE.

We are investigating solutions to accommodate activity taking place after the Blackboard cut-off date of 31 October.

methods@manchester has a yearly summer school between the end of June and beginning of July. Can we host relevant materials on Blackboard this year? Do we need to move our summer school information to Canvas beforehand for our summer school taking place in 2025.

You should be able to host the relevant materials on Blackboard for this summer.

Please contact your eLearning teams (Hums) for further support.

Student support, training and communications

What guidance, information or training will students receive about how to use Canvas (e.g. in Welcome Week)?

We held a workshop in November to understand students' communication and training needs and preferences. A follow up workshop is planned for March, when we will scope out specific training and support plans informed by student feedback.

Students told us they would prefer guidance in a range of formats including video tutorials, written instructions with easily accessible, clear documentation, and interactive formats, like online guides or workshops.

Student Hubs currently support with queries surrounding Blackboard. Canvas information and guidance will be communicated and shared with student onboarding teams and Student Hubs ahead of the rollout.

We plan to host Canvas information stands for new and returning students to access information during Welcome Week.

What communications are going to students as part of the transition?

We have developed a comprehensive student communications and engagement plan. Starting in February, regular student communications will be rolled out. Planned activities for 2025 include:

- Regular communications on student channels,
- Student roadshows in spring,
- Digital screens across the campus,
- Social media campaigns,
- Information stands during Welcome Week and the start of Semester 1.

Additionally, we are collaborating with student onboarding teams and Student Hubs to understand their support needs and co-create onboarding materials.

My teaching unit involves a large amount of online work for students. The teaching material includes interactive tasks, some of which were built using external software and then linked into Blackboard. Will Canvas have the same degree of functionality? Where can I find this out to prepare and will there be technical support available following migration?

We would recommend you contact your eLearning team at the earliest opportunity to assess the interactive content to see if it can be migrated to seamlessly Canvas or whether it may need to be rebuilt or adapted.

How will we progress students on interruption, who require access to the previous 2 years teaching and learning spaces as well which would have been on Blackboard?

We plan to migrate 3 years of past courses from Blackboard to Canvas. A student returning following an interruption will be able to view course content from their previous years of study in Canvas.

This will not contain student submitted data (such as discussions and assignment submissions) but there will be a way for them to request access to this.