



**Blackboard**

Blackboard Learning System

# **Voluntary Product Accessibility Template**

## **Blackboard Learn Release 9.1 SP11**

*(Published January 14, 2013)*

### Contents:

- Introduction
- Key Improvements
- VPAT Section 1194.21: Software Applications and Operating Systems
- VPAT Section 1194.22: Web-based Internet Information and Applications
- VPAT Section 1194.31: Functional Performance Criteria
- VPAT Section 1194.41: Information, Documentation and Support

## Introduction

Blackboard® is fully committed to ensuring that our platform contains no barriers for users with disabilities and is both usable and accessible by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or situation. With valuable input from our clients and a strong set of development and testing tools, we invest in accessible products and capabilities that meet the wide range of our client's needs. To fulfill this promise we are continually partnering with industry experts to audit our code and user interface design techniques to ensure the accessibility of the products.

Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility using two sets of standards: the WCAG 2.0 standards issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued in the United States federal government.

Audits of our most current release, as well as major future versions will be conducted by a third party to ensure the accessibility of the products and we intend to share this with our client base in the near term.

As we work with all of our clients, if a critical compliance issue is discovered in any of our releases, our Support and Product Development teams endeavor to address the issue in a timely manner to maintain system accessibility.

## Key Improvements

- The previous challenges with the content editor have been resolved with the implementation of an entirely new content editor across the application
- The entire application has undergone a complete UI review. Contrast ratios across the application are now 4:5:1 consistently.
- The experience of taking a test continues to undergo significant improvements at the form mark up level to ensure the best experience for both keyboard only and screen reader users.
- Improvements to the screen reader interaction with a 'fill in multiple blanks' question when building and taking a test.
- Skip links have been added in appropriate parts of the application allowing users to skip over major navigation sections.
- ARIA landmarks have been implemented in some new pages but this is not yet application wide.
- Improvements have been made to the structure of forms to ensure a user is always aware of what they are filling out and what is required within the form.
- A new global navigation menu has been developed providing quick links to courses, organizations, settings, bookmarked files, and user settings. This menu can be accessed at any time throughout the application by pressing Shift+Alt+M (PC) or Control+Alt+M (Mac) on your keyboard.

- My Blackboard is collection of new tools that aggregate conversations, grades and activities within the courses a user is enrolled in into a central location within Blackboard Learn.
- The "My Grades" tool for students was completely re-designed and significantly simplifies the users ability to find and consume their grades
- The "Needs Grading" workflow for teachers was updated and improved to provide teachers with a simpler, more focused way to see and grade all outstanding student submissions within a course.
- Controlled focus when completing tasks within the screen reader view of the Grade Center, ensuring the user is returned to the proper cell in the main Grade Center table.
- Updated keyboard navigation with in our contextual menus and list action menus to ensure they follow commonly understood keyboard patterns.

## VPAT Section 1194.21: Software Applications and Operating Systems

Criteria	Supporting Features	Remarks and Explanations
<p>(a) When software is designed to run on a system that has a keyboard, product functions shall be executable from a keyboard where the function itself or the result of performing a function can be discerned textually.</p>	<p>(a) Supports  (b) Supports through Equivalent Facilitation  (c) Does not support</p>	<p>a) Features of Blackboard Learn are designed to be fully functional with the use of a keyboard.</p> <p>(b) The Grade Center provides an alternative view of the spreadsheet since inline editing of data in the spreadsheet is not accessible, the user is taken to a new page where an accessible form is used to enter the data easily.</p> <p>The multi-file upload functionality in Course Files is limited in that it requires a user to drag files from one window into a designated area of another page. All users have access to equivalent functionality through the single file upload pages.</p> <p>(c) The Virtual Classroom could not be discerned textually because the use of the feature is to display a view of something, such as a webpage, a drawing or other elements. However, the communication portion of the Virtual Classroom (Chat) is designed to be used with only a keyboard.</p>
<p>(b) Applications shall not disrupt or disable activated features of other products that are identified as accessibility features, where those features are developed and documented according to industry standards. Applications also shall not disrupt or disable activated features of any operating system that are identified as accessibility features where the application programming interface for those accessibility features has been documented by the manufacturer of the operating system and is available to the product developer.</p>	<p>Supports</p>	<p>The product does not disrupt or disable any activated features of other products including the operating system.</p>

---

<p>(c) A well-defined on-screen indication of the current focus shall be provided that moves among interactive interface elements as the input focus changes. The focus shall be programmatically exposed so that Assistive Technology can track focus and focus changes.</p>	Supports	The product is designed to provide focus for the interactive elements in a way that Assistive Technology can track it.
<p>(d) Sufficient information about a user interface element including the identity, operation and state of the element shall be available to Assistive Technology. When an image represents a program element, the information conveyed by the image must also be available in text.</p>	Supports	The product is designed to use labels to identify interactive elements and uses either a readable and visible label or alternative text to describe any iconic representations of information.
<p>(e) When bitmap images are used to identify controls, status indicators, or other programmatic elements, the meaning assigned to those images shall be consistent throughout an application's performance</p>	Supports	Images are used consistently throughout the application, such as for form submission or to indicate availability or status of content; additionally these images are not the only means of communicating this information as alternative text is provided.
<p>(f) Textual information shall be provided through operating system functions for displaying text. The minimum information that shall be made available is text content, text input caret location, and text attributes.</p>	Supports	All information is provided through text in the web-browser and is not dependent upon the operating system.
<p>(g) Applications shall not override user selected contrast and color selections and other individual display attributes.</p>	Supports	The product does not override user settings.
<p>(h) When animation is displayed, the</p>	Supports	The product uses an animated loading image that can be stopped and

---

information shall be displayable in at least one non-animated presentation mode at the option of the user.

started by stopping and starting the loading of the page by the browser. If a user provides animation as content in the product, they are provided with a means to provide a non-animated presentation as well.

(i) Color coding shall not be used as the only means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.

Supports

The product does not use color coding to convey information, indicate an action, prompt a response or distinguish a visual element in a meaningful way.

(j) When a product permits a user to adjust color and contrast settings, a variety of color selections capable of producing a range of contrast levels shall be provided.

Supports

The product permits the user to choose a variety of colors for specific display options such as the color of content titles or tab navigation, and provides 216 colors of various contrast levels as options.

(k) Software shall not use flashing or blinking text, objects, or other elements having a flash or blink frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.

Not Applicable

The product does not utilize flashing or blinking text, objects or other elements.

(l) When electronic forms are used, the form shall allow people using Assistive Technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.

Supports

Electronic forms are designed to include properly labeled instructions and elements including the submission of the form.

## VPAT Section 1194.22: Web-based Internet Information and Applications

Criteria	Supporting Features	Remarks and Explanations
(a) A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content).	Supports	The product is designed to provide all non-text elements that are not purely graphical in nature alternative descriptions via the alt attribute.
(b) Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.	Supports	The product does not provide any multimedia presentations. If a user provides multimedia presentations as content in the product, they are provided with a means to provide equivalent alternatives.
(c) Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.	Supports	All occurrences of color are not used as the only method for conveying information. Text or alternative text provides the user with the information.
(d) Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.	(a) Course Delivery, Community Engagement, and Content Management - Supports  (b) Outcomes Assessment - Supports with Exceptions	(a) The documents in the Blackboard Learn product are organized so they can be read without style sheets.  (b) The DHTML version of the reports will require style sheets to be understandable but they can be rendered in a variety of formats including Rich Text.
(e) Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.	Not Applicable	Server-side image maps are not utilized in the product.
(f) Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.	Not Applicable	The product does not utilize client-side image maps. The user may supply a client-side image map for a "hot spot" test question, but a fundamental alteration would be required to change that option for the user, since the only purpose of the question type is to enable the instructor to ask the student to "look" at something in response to a question.
(g) Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables.	(a) Course Delivery, Community Engagement, and Content Management - Supports	(a) Data tables in the product take advantage of headers for rows and columns.

	(b) Outcomes Assessment - Supports with Exceptions	(b) Data tables in the web product take advantage of headers for rows and columns; however, reports produced by the product in a variety of formats may not always make full use of row and column headings.
(h) Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.	(a) Course Delivery, Community Engagement, and Content Management - Supports  (b) Outcomes Assessment - Supports with Exceptions	(a) The product does not include data tables with two or more logical levels of row or column headers.  (b) The web product does not include data tables with two or more logical levels of row or column headers; however, reports produced by the product in a variety of formats may include complex data tables that do not properly associate data cells and header cells.
(i) Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation	Supports	The product titles the frames used in the application; frames are used minimally. Additionally, the product provides <noframe> information which describes the use of each frame with a link to its content.
(j) Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.	Supports	The product is not designed in a way that would cause flickering.
(k) A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.	Supports	The product contains one feature that after best efforts cannot be made to be accessible - inline grading on the Grade Center grid - and an alternative page is provided that is easy to access and contains equivalent functionality and information.
(l) When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by Assistive Technology.	Supports when combined with Compatible Assistive Technology	Scripting language is used to display and hide interface elements, however, the content of the interface elements are a part of the body of the html and are therefore understood by screen readers.

---

<p>(m) When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with 1194.21(a) through (l).</p>	Supports with Exceptions	<p>The Virtual Classroom Chat tool takes advantage of an applet but is designed to work with screen readers (see criteria "a" in Guideline 1194.21 for further details).</p> <p>An applet is used to render MathML using a WIRUS (equation editor) plug-in, a third-party tool that renders mathematical symbols.</p> <p>The multi-file upload functionality in course files also uses an applet and due to the drag and drop capabilities would require fundamental alteration to be considered accessible. Equal access is provided through the use of a network connection (set up with WebDAV) or through a single file upload interface in the web product.</p>
<p>(n) When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using Assistive Technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.</p>	Supports	<p>The product includes electronic forms designed to properly label instructions and elements including the submission of the form.</p>
<p>(o) A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.</p>	Supports	<p>"Skip navigation" links are provided when necessary but the product has been designed with significant header descriptions so the user easily can jump to their desired location.</p>
<p>(p) When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.</p>	Supports	<p>Timed responses are not required in the product. When the instructor provides students with a timed test, the time out information is recorded but does not force the test to close so that the user can continue to take the test if more time is needed, and the instructor can accommodate as desired.</p>

## VPAT Section 1194.31: Functional Performance Criteria

Criteria	Supporting Features	Remarks and Explanations
(a) At least one mode of operation and information retrieval that does not require user vision shall be provided, or support for Assistive Technology used by people who are blind or visually impaired shall be provided.	Supports when combined with Compatible Assistive Technology	The product is designed to be functional for blind and visually impaired users with the addition of assistive technology
(b) At least one mode of operation and information retrieval that does not require visual acuity greater than 20/70 shall be provided in audio and enlarged print output working together or independently, or support for Assistive Technology used by people who are visually impaired shall be provided.	Supports when combined with Compatible Assistive Technology	The product is designed to be functional for blind and visually impaired users with the addition of assistive technology
(c) At least one mode of operation and information retrieval that does not require user hearing shall be provided, or support for Assistive Technology used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing shall be provided	Supports	The default mode of the product does not require the user to have hearing.
(d) Where audio information is important for the use of a product, at least one mode of operation and information retrieval shall be provided in an enhanced auditory fashion, or support for assistive hearing devices shall be provided.	Not Applicable	Audio information is not important for the use of the product.

---

(e) At least one mode of operation and information retrieval that does not require user speech shall be provided, or support for Assistive Technology used by people with disabilities shall be provided.	Supports	The default mode of the product does not require the user to have speech.
(f) At least one mode of operation and information retrieval that does not require fine motor control or simultaneous actions and that is operable with limited reach and strength shall be provided.	Supports	The default mode of the product does not require the user to have fine motor control. The user can use a keyboard and/or mouse of their choosing to operate the product.

---

## VPAT Section 1194.41: Information, Documentation and Support

Criteria	Supporting Features	Remarks and Explanations
(a) Product support documentation provided to end-users shall be made available in alternate formats upon request, at no additional charge.	Supports	The product documentation is available in HTML, Word and PDF formats at no additional charge. Institutions are free to provide any additional format of that documentation as desired.
(b) End-users shall have access to a description of the accessibility and compatibility features of products in alternate formats or alternate methods upon request, at no additional charge.	Supports	The product documentation is available in HTML, Word and PDF formats at no additional charge. Institutions are free to provide any additional format of that documentation as desired.
(c) Support services for products shall accommodate the communication needs of end-users with disabilities.	Supports	Support services are provided online and by telephone.