

Equality Impact Assessment

Department	Registry
Project	Blackboard Learn

Could the policy/project etc. have an adverse impact on equality in relation to:

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender or Gender Re-assignment**
- **Marriage or Civil Partnerships**
- **Pregnancy and Maternity**
- **Race**
- **Religion or Belief**
- **Sexual Orientation**

Blackboard are one of the world's biggest suppliers of educational software solutions. The Academy has introduced Blackboard Learn to provide an online facility for students to submit their academic work. Students will also access their marks and feedback online. Blackboard, which is easy to use and intuitive, also allows students the opportunity to access detailed module/assessment information direct from Blackboard interface.

Academy staff receive ongoing system support and training from the software providers.

The introduction of Blackboard is not expected to adversely affect any individuals in relation to the protected characteristics; in fact the introduction of online submissions will provides equality enhancement as students will no longer be physically required to visit Registry to submit their assessments.

Does this policy/project etc. provide opportunities to make a positive impact on equality?

Yes, Blackboard Learn is fully navigable, works with screen readers and includes keyboard short cuts etc. Users have the option to increase font size as required. BlackBoard Learn also a range of support including webinars on topics including accessibility. 'Ally', an additional add-on product, which focuses on making digital course content more accessible, is also available to purchase (see report from Blackboard Roadshow – 14 November 2017, for more information).

An in-house student user guide has been produced, in addition to the support materials available within Blackboard, detailing the submission process. Telephone, email and in-person assistance (including a dedicated work station) is also provided by the Registry and module leaders/tutors.

The Academy's disability advisor will be trained in the use of Blackboard to ensure that students with Personal Learning Plans are supported, where necessary, with their submissions.

What evidence/consultation has been considered in the above?

The Academy look at a series of software solutions and undertook sector wide consultation before agreeing a contract with Blackboard Learn. A visit to an existing user, Brunel University, provided opportunity for a live demonstration of the system independent of the presentations provided by the supplier. Blackboard was found to be the only system which offered the unique double marking facility required by the Academy.

A pilot project, which included staff training of relevant staff, was conducted in April 2017. This focussed on 5 BMus programme electives and postgraduate portfolios. All students successfully submitted work.

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? No.

Date: 21/02/2018