Getting started with Ally

Blackboard

Agenda

- Introduction to Ally
- Alternative Formats
- Instructor Feedback & Course Accessibility Report
- Demo
- Resources

Introducing Ally

- Identify barriers in your content *(Instructor Feedback & Course Accessibility Report)*
- Provide step-by-step guidance as to how to improve that content *(Instructor Feedback)*
- Help you prioritize what content to remove barriers from first *(Course Accessibility Report)*
- Provide alternate formats of files for greater usability *(Alternative Formats)*

Coming soon to BHSU!

Why does Ally deserve our attention now?

Two Main Approaches to Address Barriers

Focus is supporting the one

- Compliance
- Accessibility
- 1:1 accommodations

Focus is supporting all

- Access
- Inclusive Course Design
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Diverse 21st Century Learners

Visible disability

Non-traditional students

International students

Parents

Temporary disability

Mobile

First-generation students

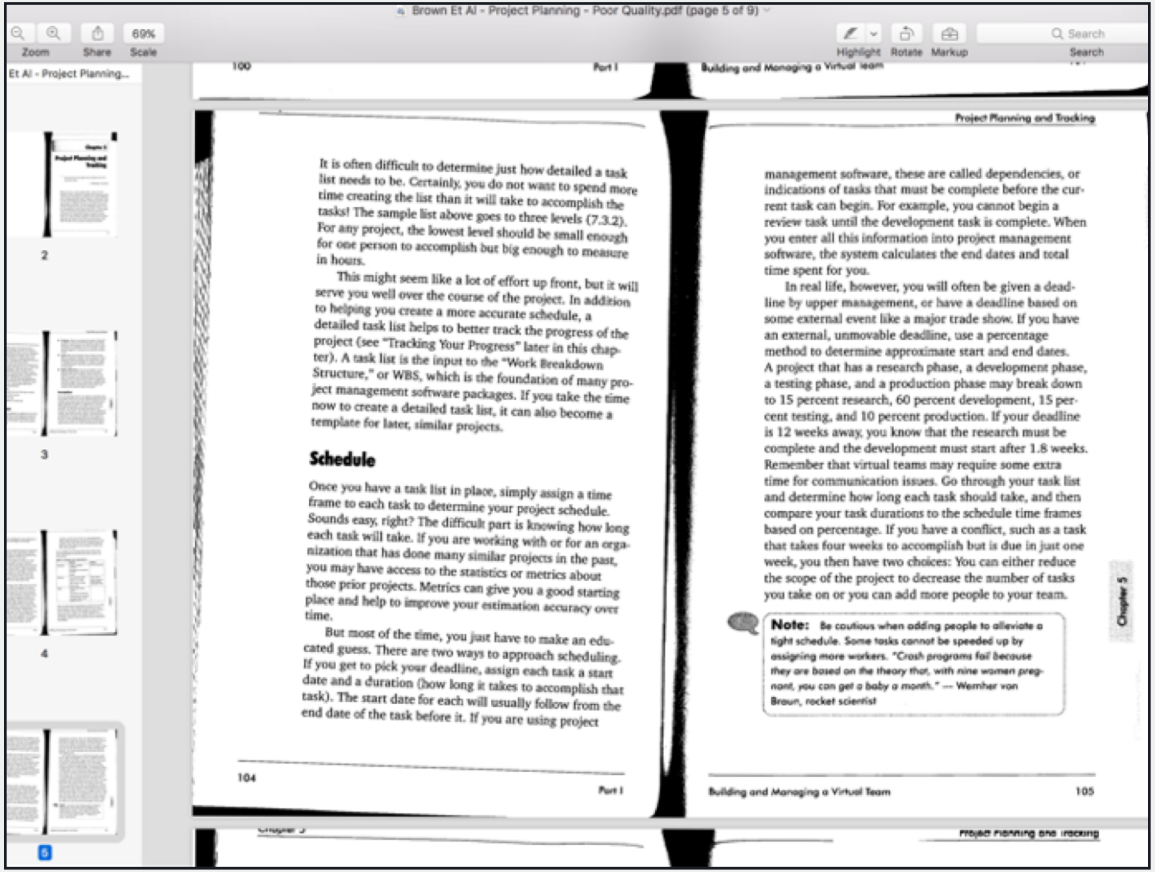
Lifestyle

Invisible disability

Accessibility Issues Affect Everyone

Schmutz et al (2017)

- Improved information retention
- Faster speed of task completion



Blackboard

Making course content accessible

Let's start with you

What do you know about Ally? **(Poll)**

1. I have only just heard of Ally and know very little about it
2. I've heard of Ally and know it is used to create more accessible learning for all learners
3. I 've seen a demo of Ally on video
4. I have pretty good idea of what Ally can do
5. I am an Ally 'superuser'

How does Ally work?

What do faculty experience?

What do students experience?

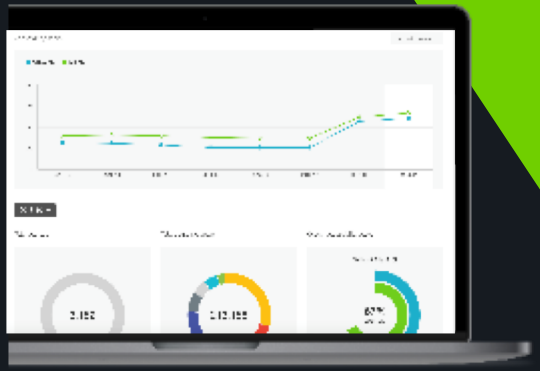
3 Pillars of Ally

Alternative Formats

Automatically checks for accessibility issues and generates a range of alternative formats.

Instructor Feedback

Guides faculty and content creators on how to improve the accessibility of their content and alters future behavior.



Institutional Report

Provides detailed data and insights to help further improve course content accessibility at the institution.

Workflow

Instructor adds course content to their course

Content passes through accessibility checklist and is scored

Machine learning algorithms perform a full structural and visual analysis

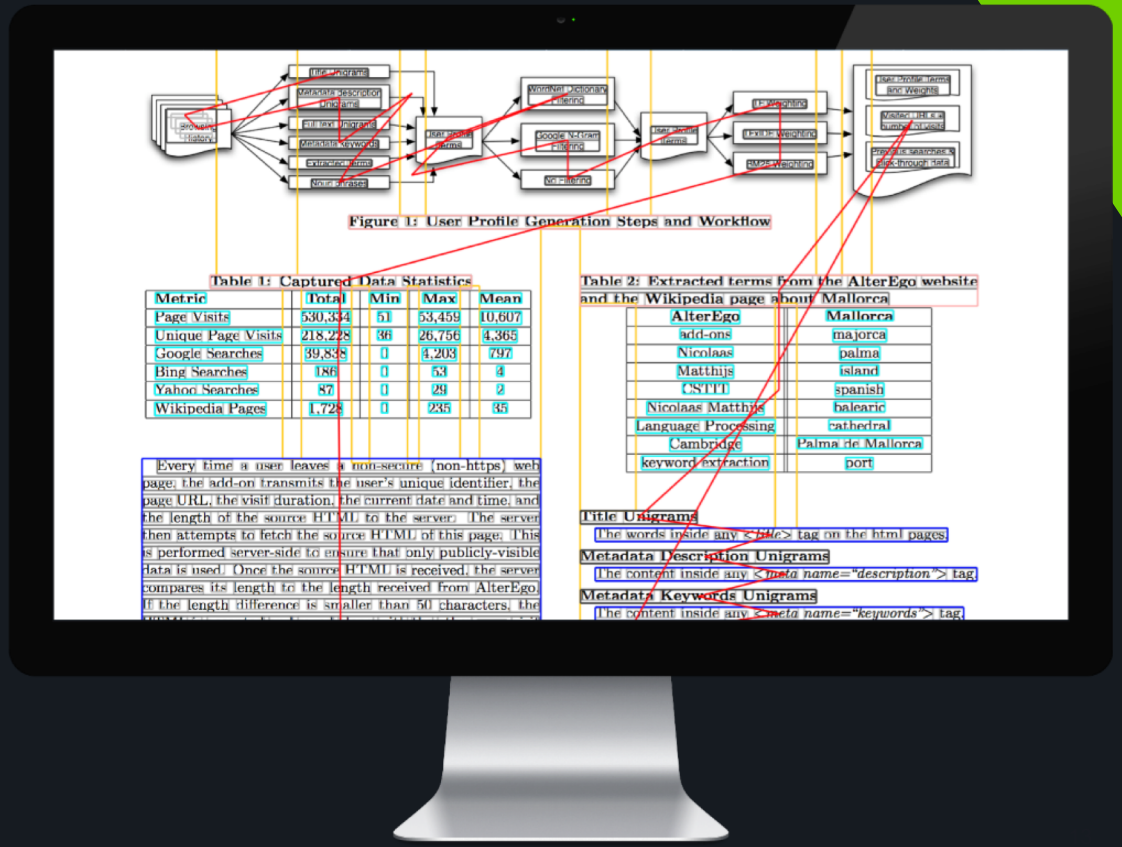
Alternative formats automatically generated

Instructor feedback is provided

Machine Learning Algorithms

WCAG 2.1 AA

Full Ally Accessibility Checklist available at help.blackboard.com



Alternative Formats

Alternative Formats Overview

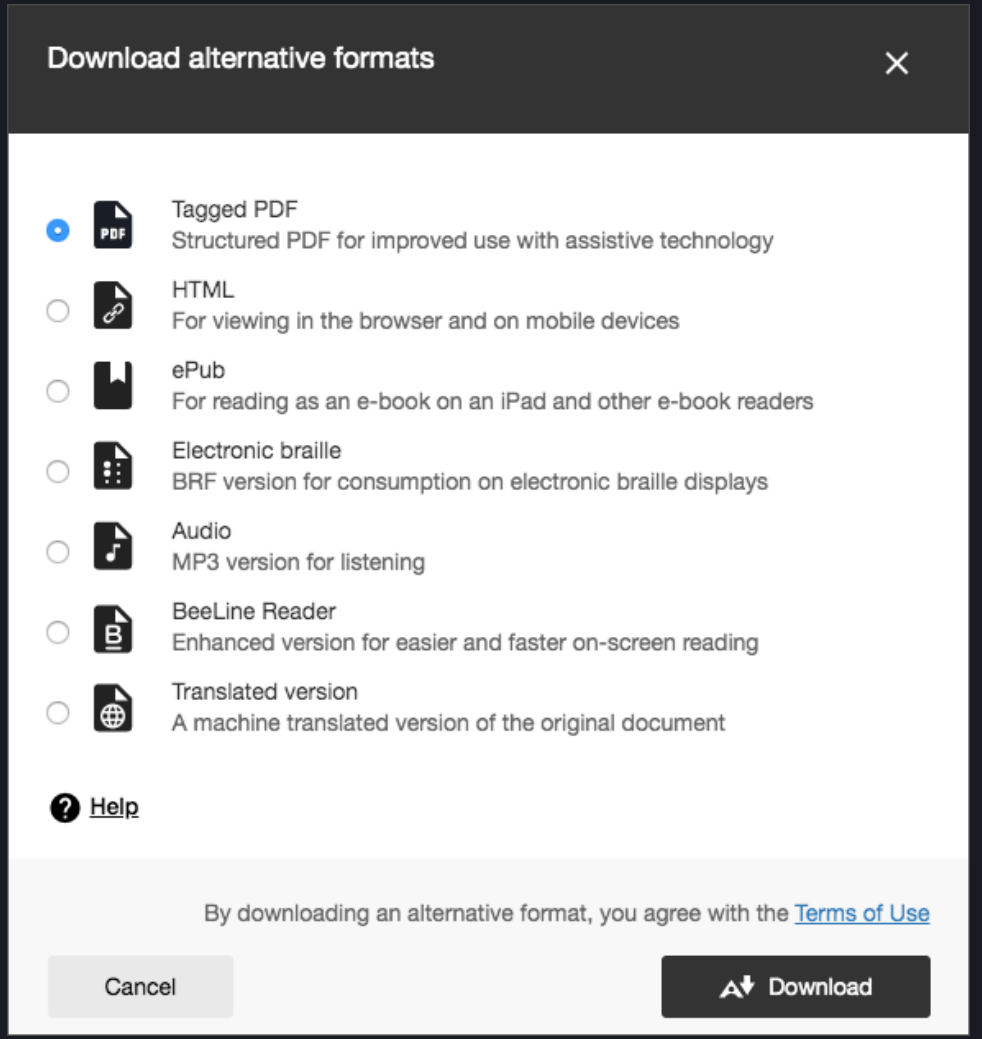
- Provides students options to engage with their course content
- Offers options for offline use
- Allows for unlimited downloads of the different alternative formats
- Supports different learner needs, preferences, abilities, and devices

Alternative Formats for Files

Semantic HTML
High quality semantic html version of the content

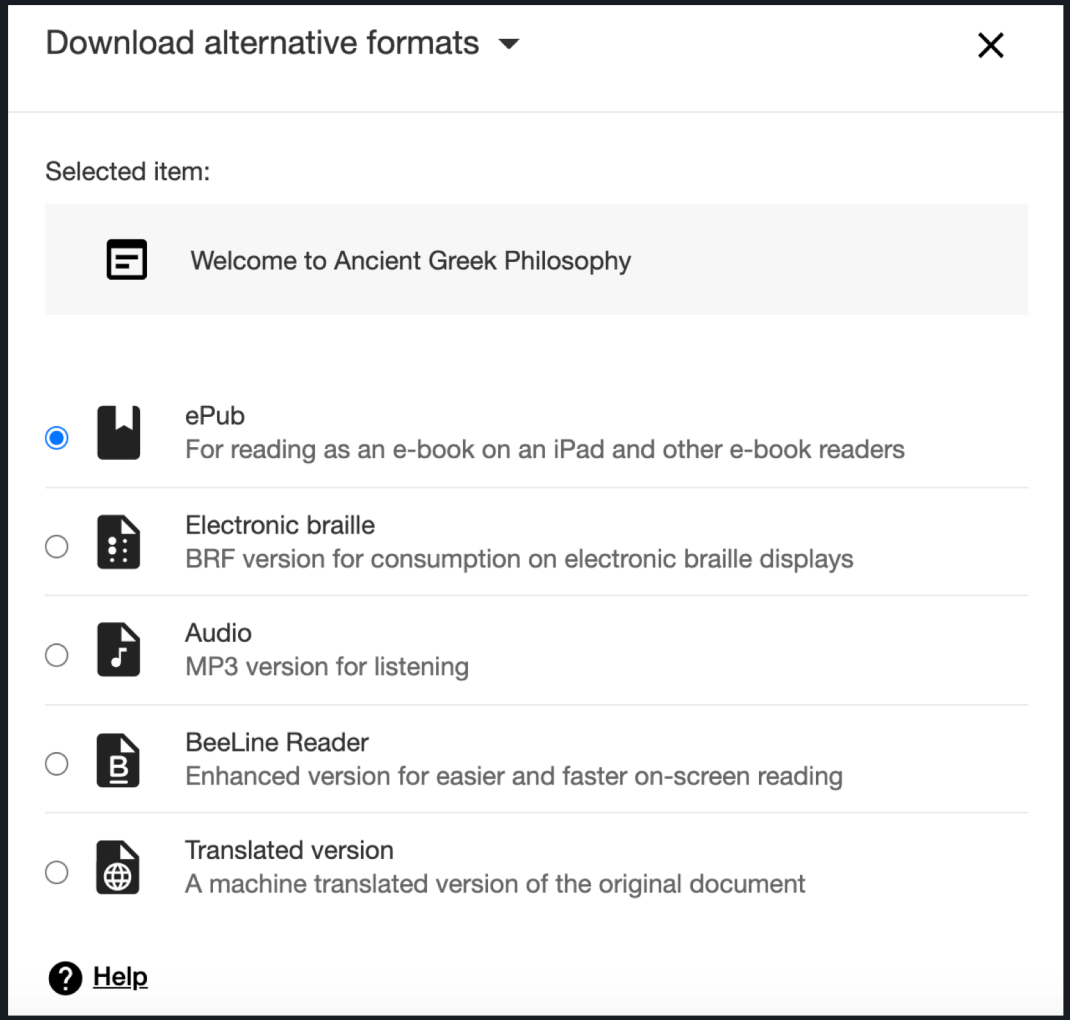
Other Alternative Formats
ePub, audio, electronic braille, etc.

OCR
Automatically OCR all scanned documents

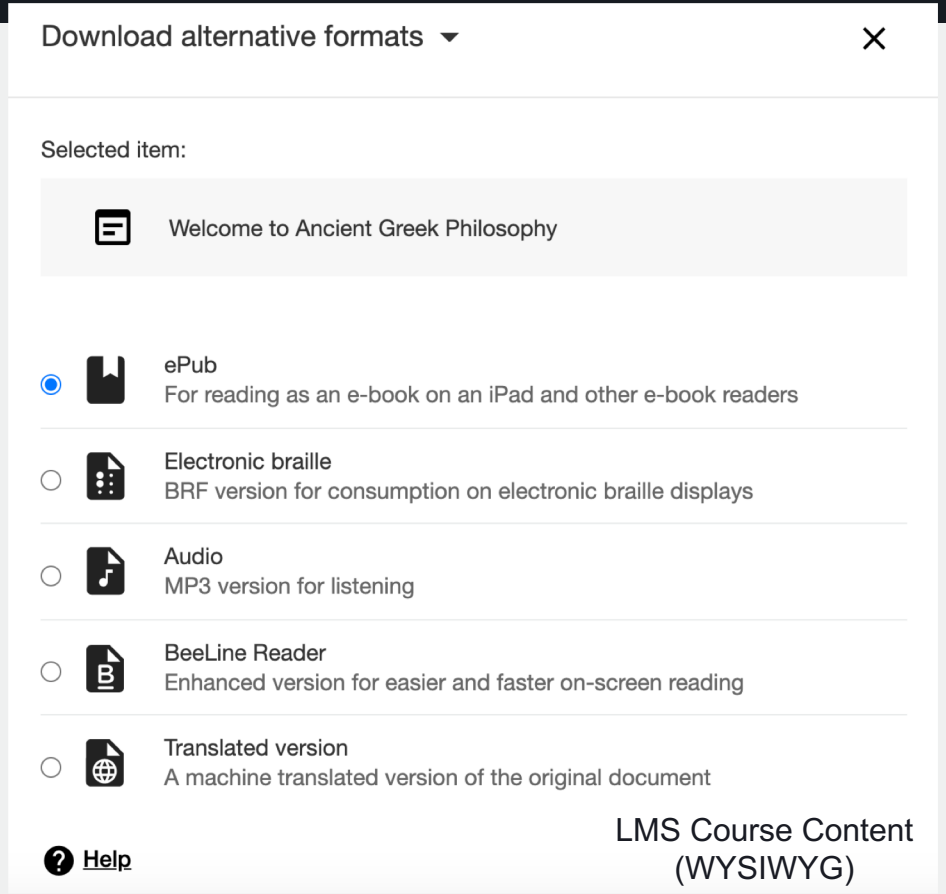


Alternative Formats for LMS Course Content (WYSIWYG)

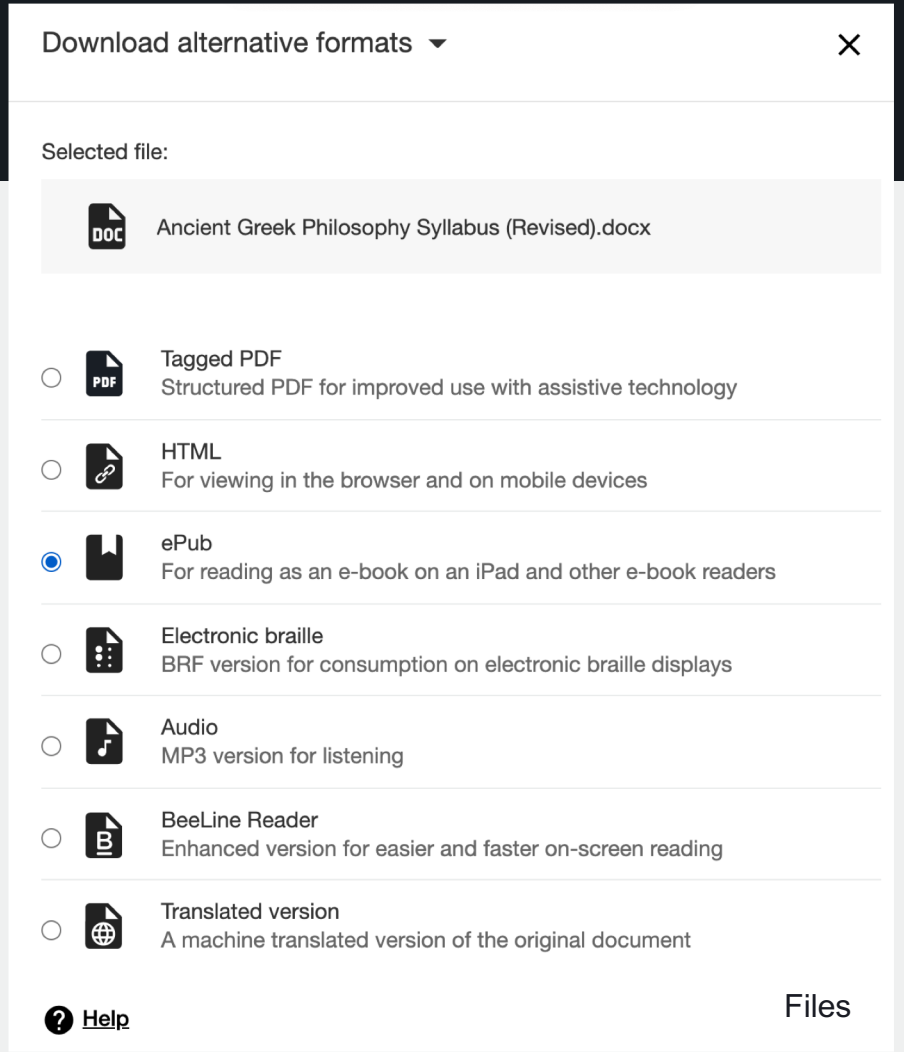
- Tagged PDF and HTML are not options
- Support for LMS is high priority but dependent upon their APIs



Options for LMS Course Content vs Files

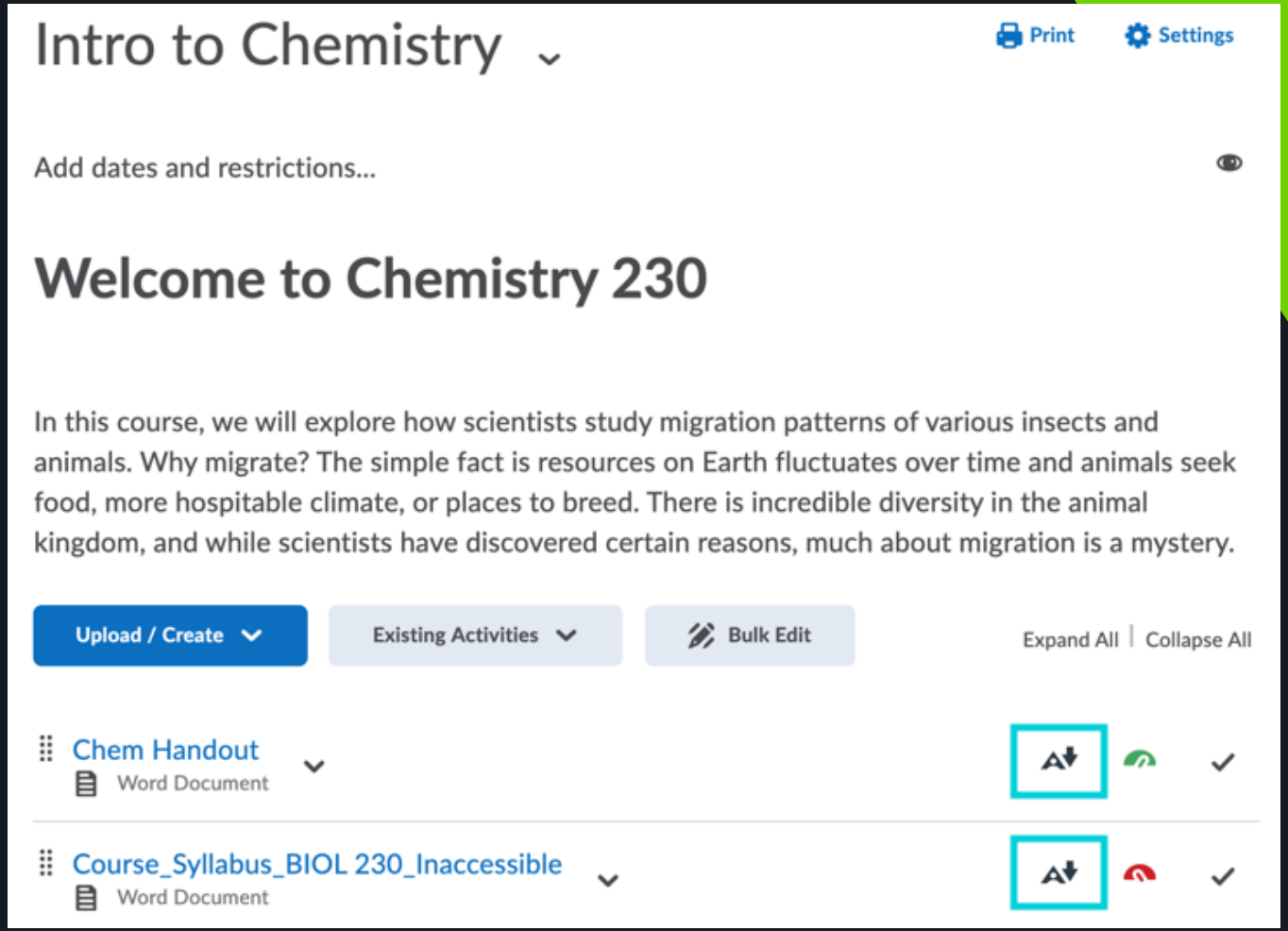


LMS Course Content (WYSIWYG)



Files

Alt Format Options in D2L



OCRed PDF

- Optical Character Recognition for scanned PDFs
- Student benefits:
  - Extracts text from pages to create searchable document
  - More accessible for students using assistive devices

Available for **Files** (scanned PDF documents only).

Tagged PDF

- PDF with semantic information included
- Student benefits:
  - Helpful for devices without MS Office
  - More accessible for students using assistive devices
  - Frequently used on mobile devices as these can natively render PDFs

Available for **Files** (Word documents and PowerPoint

HTML

- Responsive and mobile-friendly HTML version
- Student benefits:
  - Easier use of content on mobile devices
  - Works best with existing assistive technology

Available for **Files** (PDF documents, Word documents and PowerPoint presentations).

ePub

- For use with an E-book reader.
- Student benefits:
  - Offers customizability:
    - Font and size
    - Text and background colors
    - Annotation and highlighting
    - Other built-in features
  - Mobile friendly

Available for **Files** (PDF documents, Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and HTML files) and **WYSIWYG** content.

Audio

- Utilizes text-to-speech technology.
  - Includes semantic information into speech
  - Current 100,000 character limitation (~ 2.5 hours) per document.
- Student benefits:
  - Easy listening on mobile devices
  - Bimodal presentation
  - Makes it easier to consume content on the go (student athletes, students taking care of families, commuters)

Available for **Files** (PDF documents, Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and HTML files) and **WYSIWYG** content.

Electronic Braille

- BRF (Braille Ready File) format.
  - Used with electronic braille display or refreshable braille display.
  - Grade 2 Unified English Braille (contracted) for English document.
- Student Benefits
  - Some campuses have lessened the need to emboss (print) or ship hardcopy Braille
  - Provides students who are blind or low-vision more options for engaging with content

Available for **Files** (PDF documents, Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and HTML files) and **WYSIWYG** content.

Example of a Refreshable Braille Display

BeeLine Reader

- Mobile friendly version of content that uses color gradients to guide eye through text.
- Student benefits:
  - Aimed at improving on-screen reading experience
  - Originally designed for speedreading
  - May be helpful for dyslexia, ADHD, vision impairments, screen fatigue, etc.

Available for **Files** (PDF documents, Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and HTML files) and **WYSIWYG** content.

Alternative Formats Benefits

- Provides students options to engage with their course content
- Supports different learner needs, preferences, abilities, and devices
- Offers options for offline use
- Doesn’t change or interrupt existing workflows

Your study needs	Electronic braille	Audio	PDF, OCR	PDF, Tagged	HTML, Semantic	ePub	Translated Version	BeeLine Reader
Adjust text, font, and background color					●	●		
Adjust audio playback speed		●						
Commuting		●	●	●		●	●	●
Commuting, driving		●						
Copy, paste, and search			●	●	●	●	●	
Format adapts to device, responsive					●	●		●

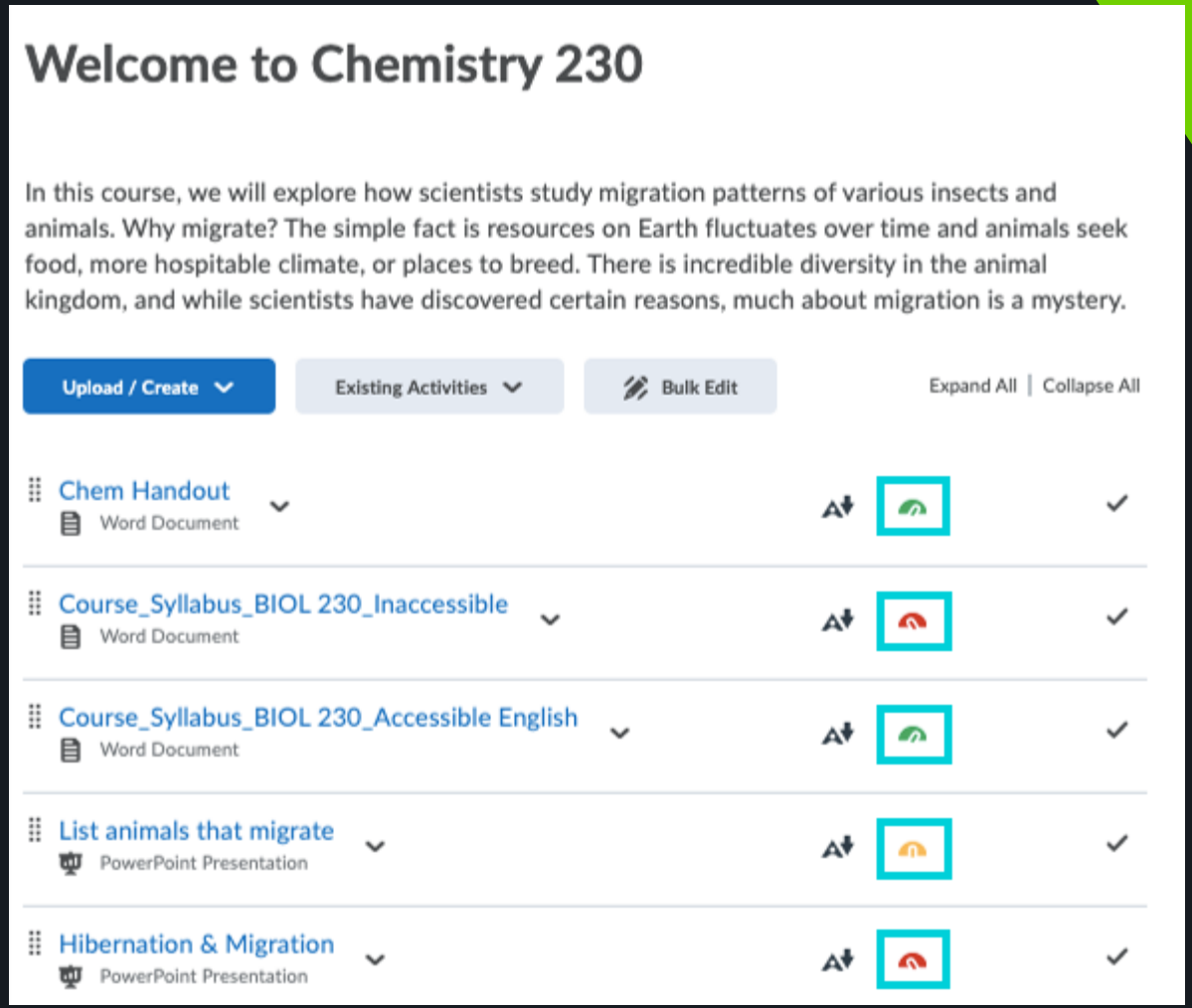
Instructor Feedback

Instructor Feedback Overview

- Provides feedback to faculty about accessibility of their course content
- Provides guidance on how to fix accessibility issues
- Goal: change in behavior over time

Accessibility Indicators

D2L



What do the indicators mean?

- Accessibility indicator is shown next to content

– **Low (0 - 33%)**
Needs help! There are severe accessibility issues.

– **Medium (34 - 66%)**
A little better. The file is somewhat accessible and needs improvement.

– **High (67 - 99%)**
Almost there. The file is accessible but more improvements are possible.

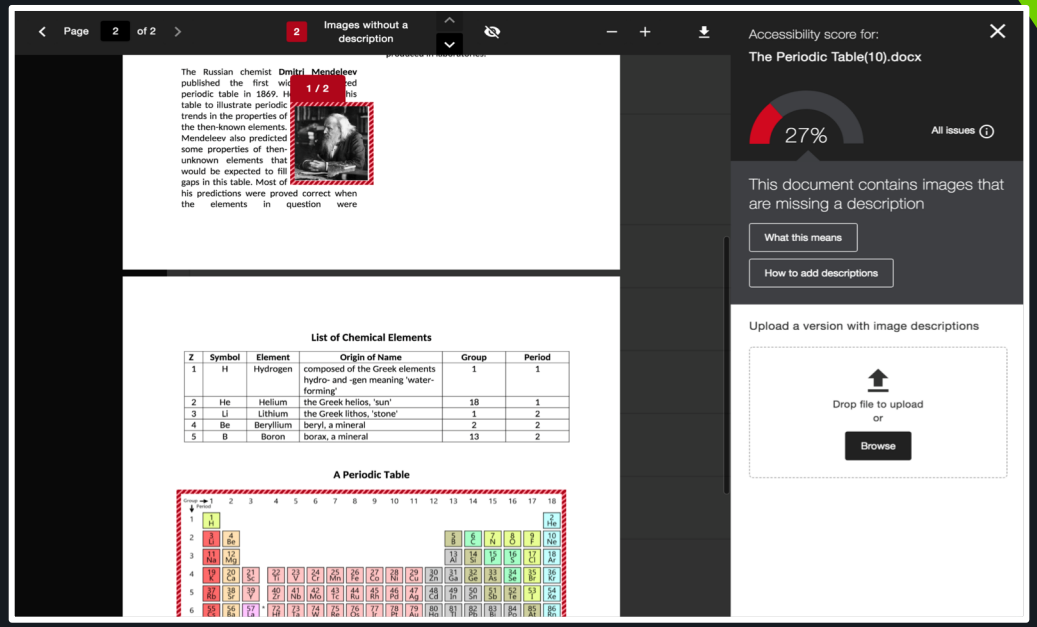
– **Perfect (100%)**
Ally didn't identify any accessibility issues but further improvements may still be possible.

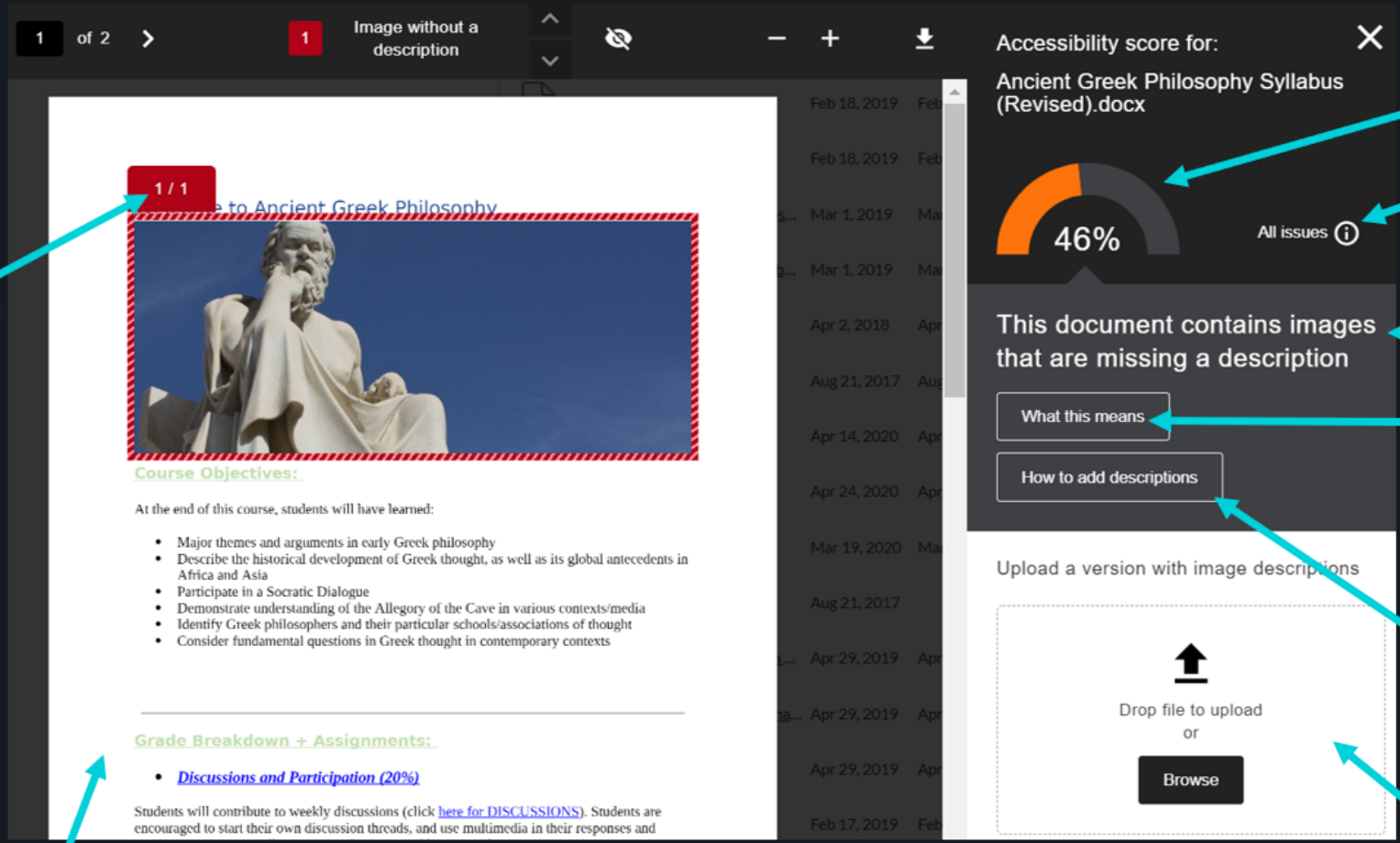
- Accessibility indicator is never visible to students
- Weighted average of results, based on W3C research

How to Open the Instructor Feedback

1) Select the Indicator

2) View the Instructor Feedback




1 of 2
1
Image without a description
1 / 1
Course Objectives:
At the end of this course, students will have learned:
Major themes and arguments in early Greek philosophy
Describe the historical development of Greek thought, as well as its global antecedents in Africa and Asia
Participate in a Socratic Dialogue
Demonstrate understanding of the Allegory of the Cave in various contexts/media
Identify Greek philosophers and their particular schools/associations of thought
Consider fundamental questions in Greek thought in contemporary contexts
Grade Breakdown + Assignments:
Discussions and Participation (20%)
Students will contribute to weekly discussions (click here for DISCUSSIONS). Students are encouraged to start their own discussion threads, and use multimedia in their responses and
Accessibility score for:
Ancient Greek Philosophy Syllabus (Revised).docx
46%
All issues
This document contains images that are missing a description
What this means
How to add descriptions
Upload a version with image descriptions
Drop file to upload
or
Browse
Issue highlight
In-browser preview
File accessibility score
View all identified issues
Identifying 1 issue
Answers "What does this mean?" and "Why should I care?"
Step-by-step guidance
Upload improved version

Notes about Preview and Highlights

- Previews are available for
  - Images
  - PDF
  - Word Document
  - PowerPoint Document
- Highlights are available for documents containing
  - Images without a description
  - Text with contrast issues
  - Tables without table headers

Instructor Feedback

Summary & Benefits

- Doesn’t change or interrupt any existing workflows
- Clicking on indicator opens the feedback
- Provides in-context information about their own content
- Fixes are dependent on content type and identified issues
- Raise awareness to many faculty who have not considered content accessibility before
- Meant to help enforce the need to create accessible content
- Fixing content will help Ally to produce better alternative formats for students

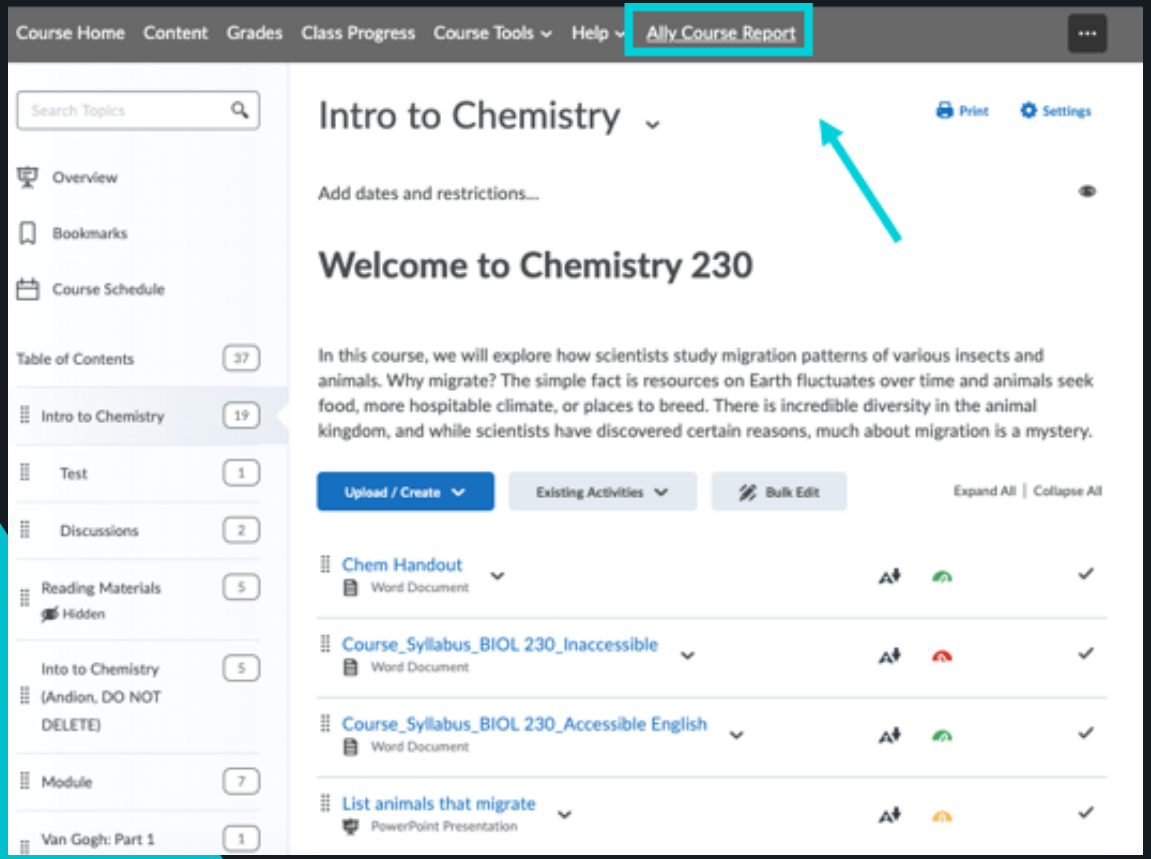
Course Accessibility Report

Course Accessibility Report

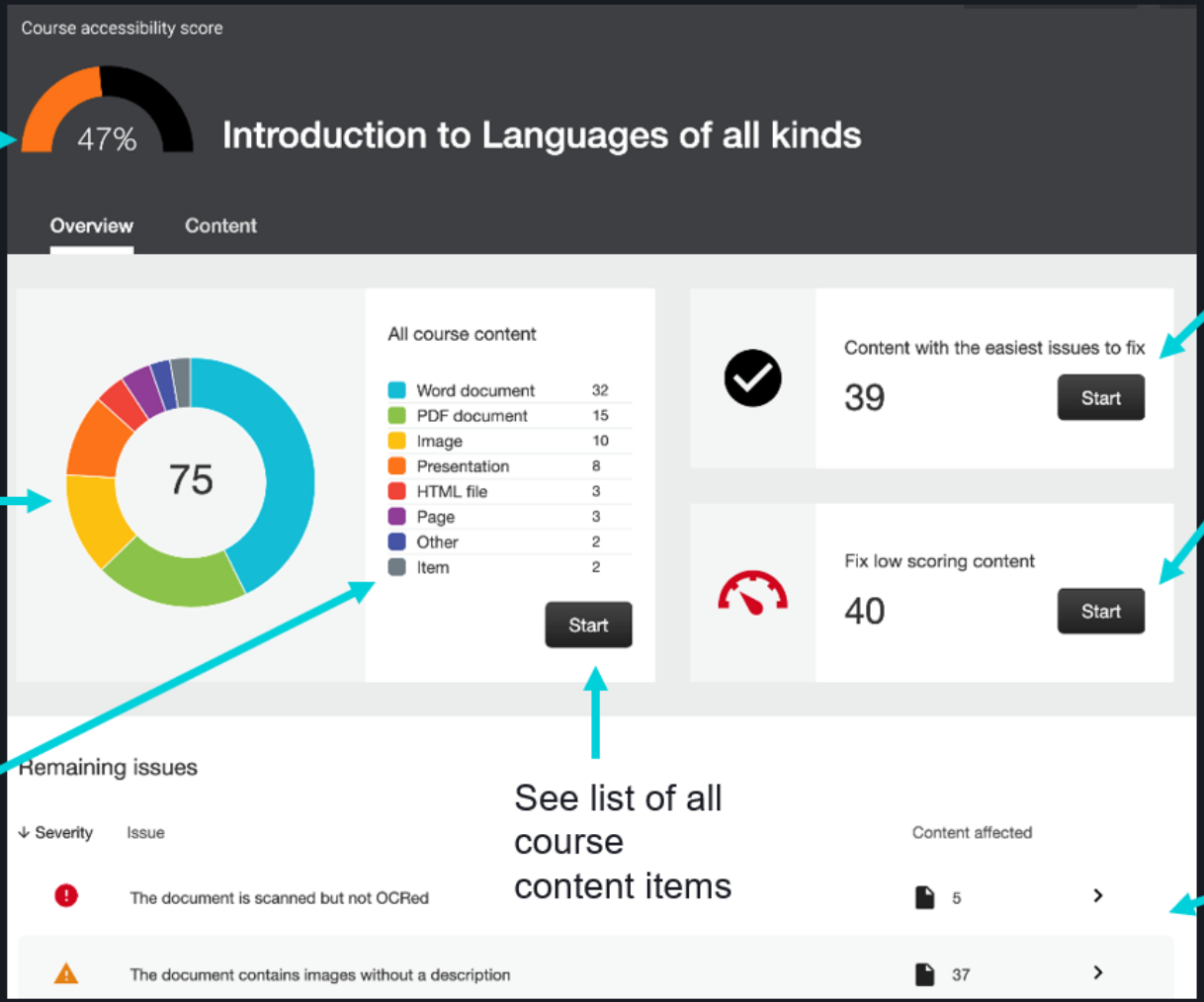
Overview

- Faculty-facing course accessibility report
- Accessibility summary at the course level
  - Complements the in-context accessibility indicators
- Helps with prioritization
- Helps faculty work through remediation more quickly
- Instructor Feedback can be triggered from the course accessibility report
- Course accessibility report is never visible to students

Accessing the Course Accessibility Report in D2L

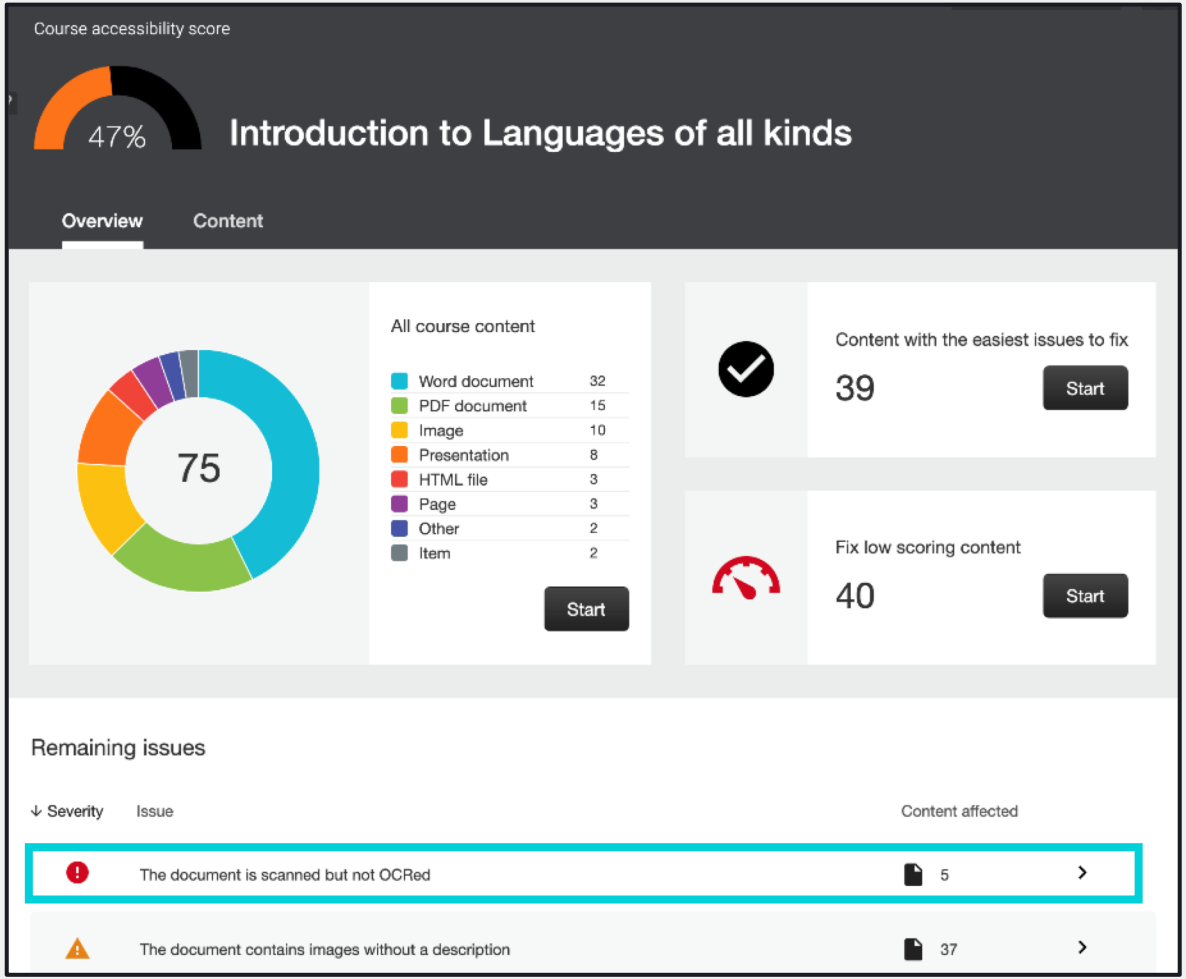


- Available in top navigation
- Students do not see this

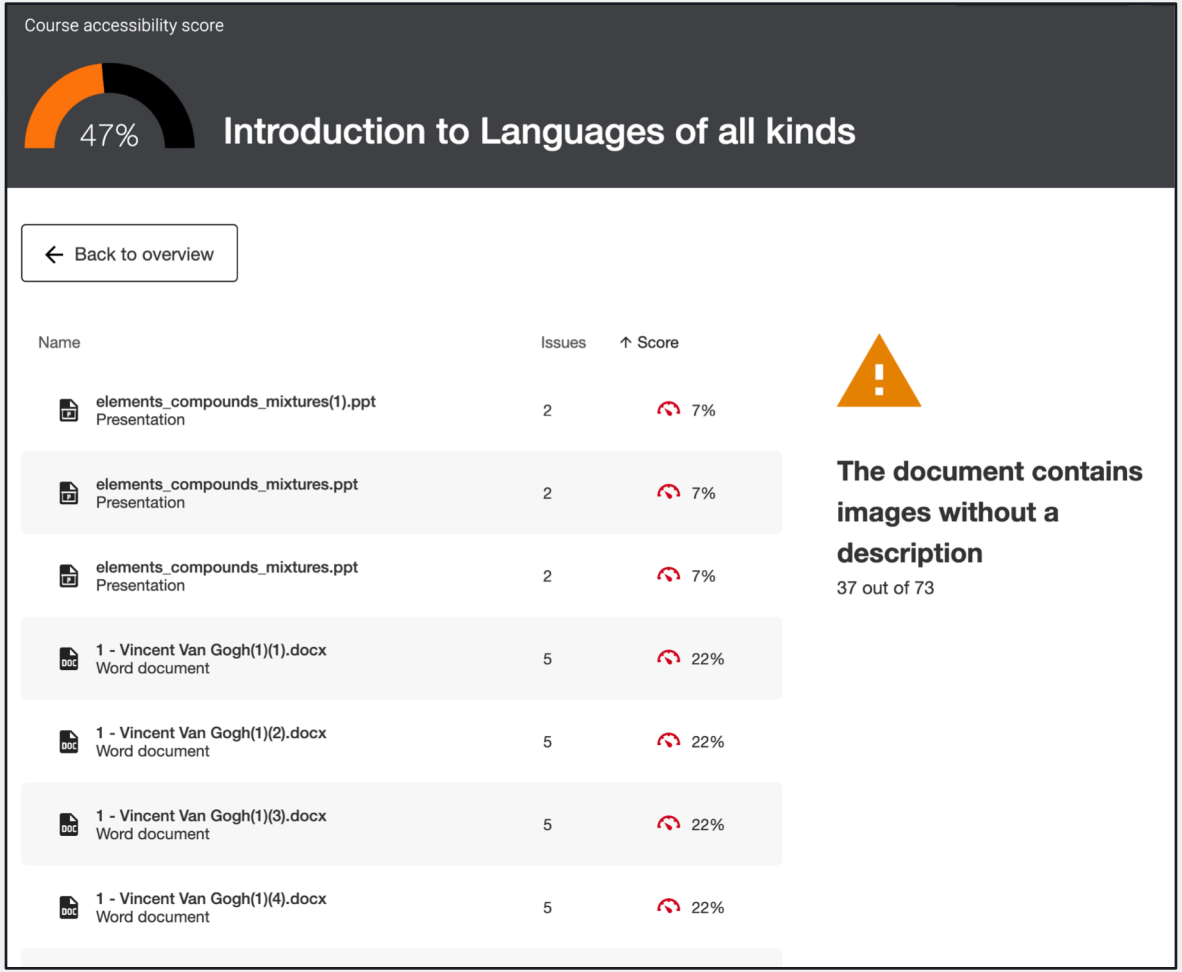

Course accessibility score
47%
Introduction to Languages of all kinds
Overview
Content
All course content
Word document 32
PDF document 15
Image 10
Presentation 8
HTML file 3
Page 3
Other 2
Item 2
75
Start
Content with the easiest issues to fix
39
Start
Fix low scoring content
40
Start
Remaining issues
Severity
Issue
Content affected
The document is scanned but not OCRed
5
The document contains images without a description
37
Overall Course Score
Total number of content items in course
Breakdown of content items by type
See list of all course content items
"Easy" button
"Make the most impact on the score quickly" button
Issues by severity

Remediation

Option 1 (Specific Issue)

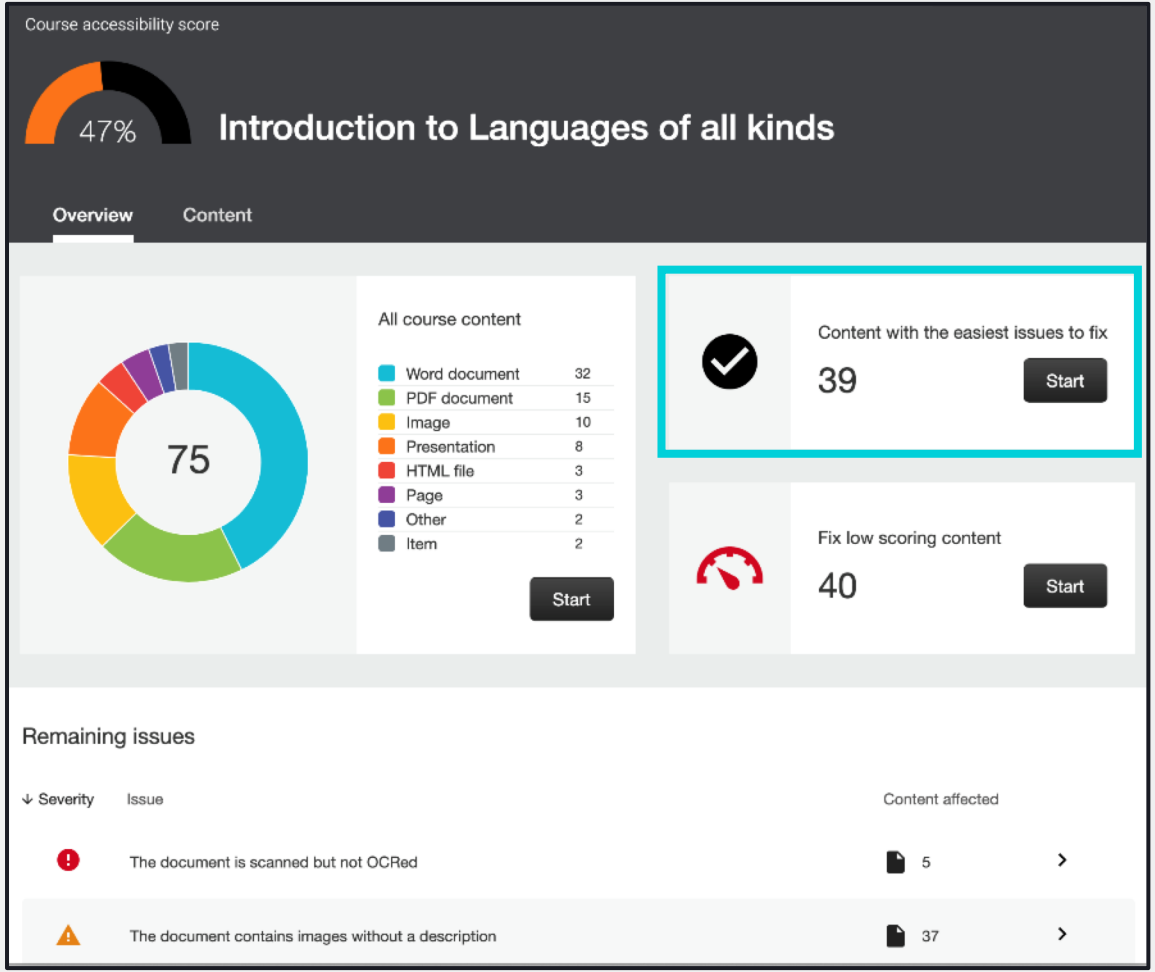


List of files with a specific accessibility issue



Remediation

Option 2 (Content with easiest issues to fix)

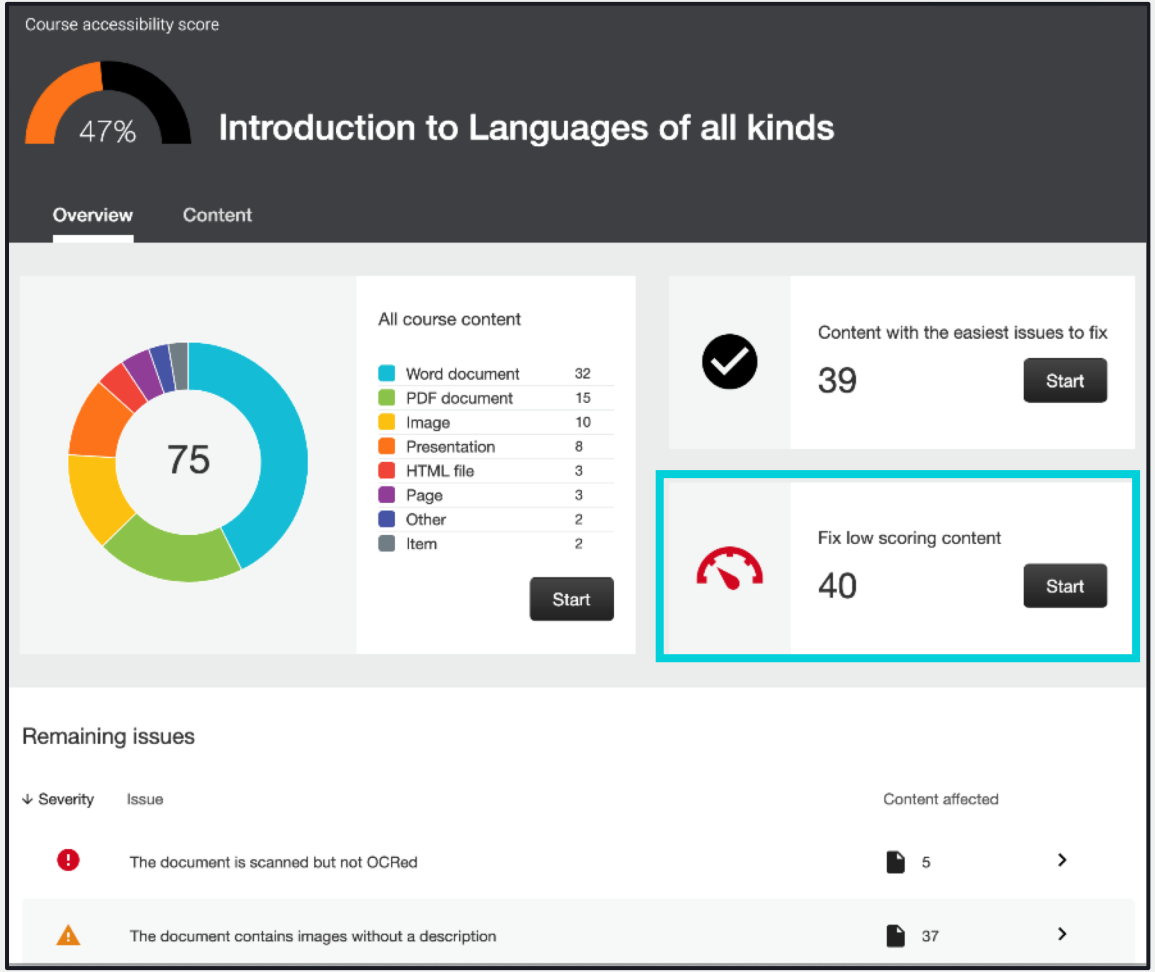


Prioritization: Easiest Issues

- **Images**
  - that can cause seizures
  - without a description
- **Word documents**
  - without headings
  - with images without a description
  - that contain text with insufficient contrast
  - that contain tables without headings
- **PowerPoint documents**
  - without headings
  - with images without a description
  - that contain text with insufficient contrast
  - that contain tables without heading

Remediation

Option 3 (Fix low scoring content)



Prioritization: Most severe issues

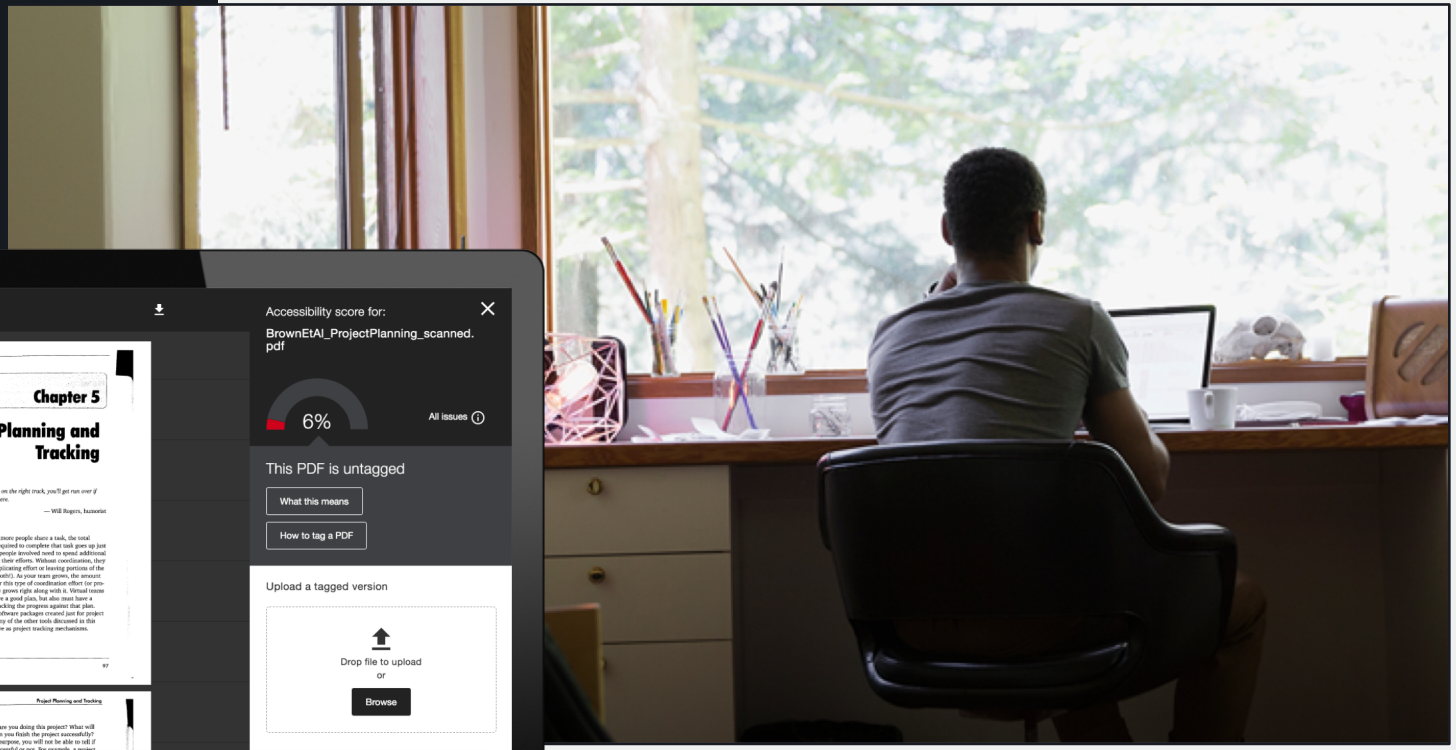
1. Content with a low accessibility score (0 – 33%)
2. Content with severe issues
3. Content with a medium accessibility score (34 - 66%)
4. Content with major issues
5. Content with a high accessibility score (67 – 99%)
6. Content with minor issues

Course Accessibility Report

Summary & Benefits

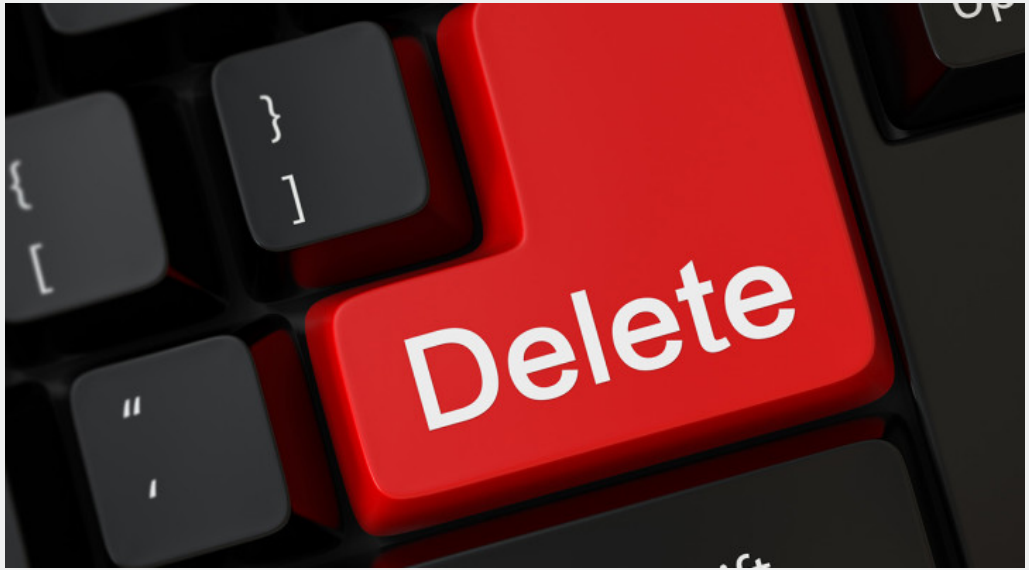
- See the overall accessibility of the course, with the option to drill down to specific issues/content items
- Provide information to help them decide how to prioritize remediation fixes
- Track their progress after fixing content
- Easier for training purposes
  - Have a concentrated training on fixing alt text, then faculty can easily identify their specific alt text issues
- Bring awareness as to how much and what type of content is in their course
  - May encourage removal of outdated content
  - Can help with better course design

Demo


Chapter 5
Project Planning and Tracking
Accessibility score for:
BrownEtAl_ProjectPlanning_scanned.pdf
6%
All issues
This PDF is untagged
What this means
How to tag a PDF
Upload a tagged version
Drop file to upload
or
Browse

Where to start: Recommendation 01

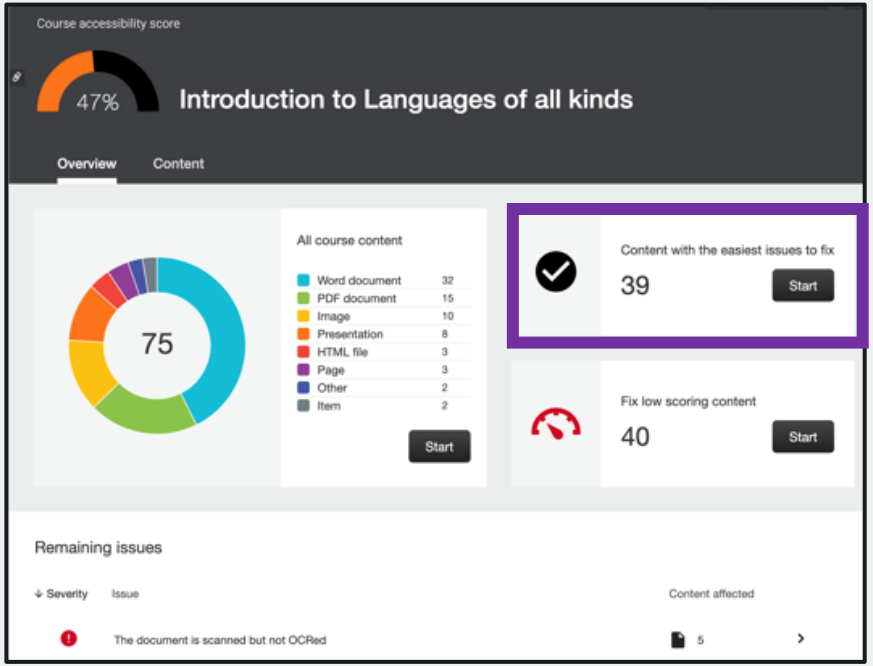
- Delete old, unused content from:
  - current / upcoming courses
  - master courses
  - courses that will be re-taught



Where to start: Recommendation 02

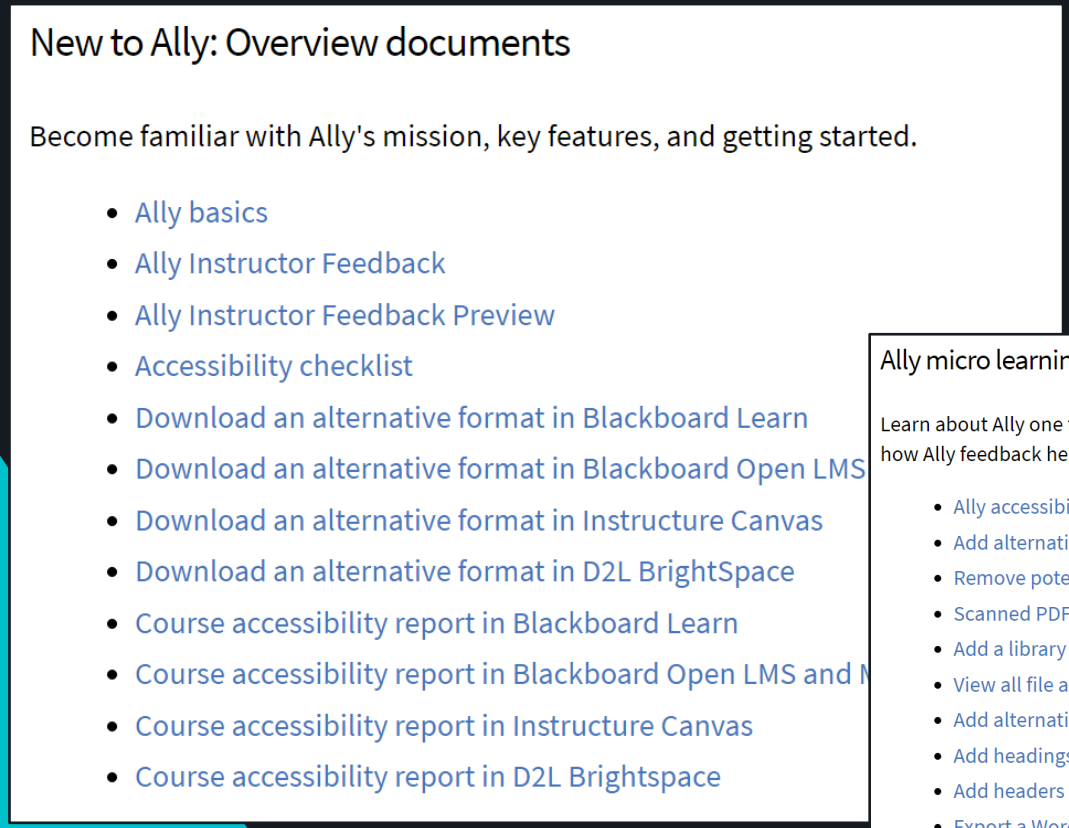
- Start with easy fixes.
- Here are a few easy fixes to begin with:
  - Images missing a description
  - Word and PowerPoint files containing text with insufficient color contrast
  - Word documents missing headings
  - Files with yellow or green gauges next to them

– Helpful tip: Use the “Easiest issues to fix” pathway in the Course Accessibility Report to find these issues in your course content

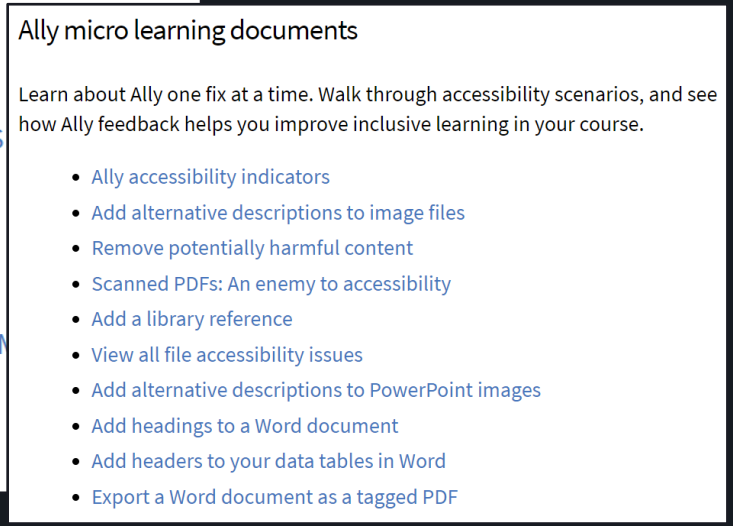


Useful Resources

Communication and Adoption Toolkit



- Available at http://bit.ly/AllyCAT
- 1-pagers for communication and training



Ally Research

Research Papers

Throughout 2020, we've been publishing the Inclusive Learning Research Series whitepapers on the Ally User Group. These exploratory papers follow an academic research format, which includes study context, research questions, analysis, and implications sections.

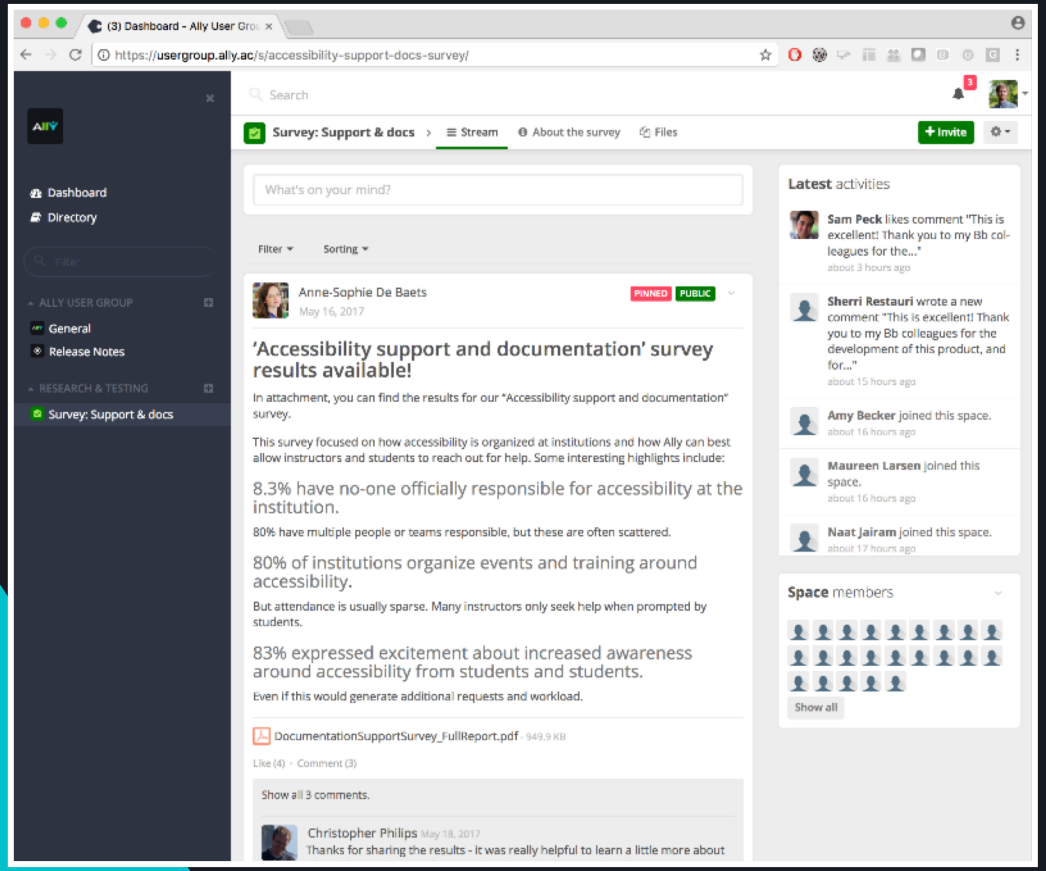
Choose your Format: Usage of Alternative Formats of Course Content

Accessibility Trends and Ally Usage: Associate's and Technical Colleges

Accessibility Trends and Ally Usage: Doctoral Universities

- Research from quantitative usage and accessibility data
- Sheds light on global trends in digital content accessibility
- Find more at https://ally.ac/research/

Ally User Group



- Community of global Ally users
- Receive updates about Blackboard Ally
- Participate in UX research, usability testing, early access, etc.
- Sign up at: https://usergroup.ally.ac

Blackboard

Making course content accessible