

Blackboard

More than a Virtual Learning Environment?

Panna Karlinger, Lecturer in Education
pzk@aber.ac.uk





Background and Context

- ▶ Playing around
- ▶ Trial and Error
- ▶ No master course template
- ▶ The move to Ultra
 - ▶ Initial idea: forced sequences and locked contents
 - ▶ Questions:
 - ▶ How do I make the students learn?
 - ▶ Is it my job to make them learn?
 - ▶ Can I force the students to learn?



Initial Feedback

- ▶ First assessment of the system in week 3

- ▶ **Positive views:**

"I feel like this is the only module where I know what's going on"

"I really like how it's all laid out and there is a lot to do even if we don't come to lectures and seminars"

"Some modules are a bit confusing but I like how Panna made it all very organised, her teaching style and Blackboard is perfect for my ADHD brain"

- ▶ **Some critical:**

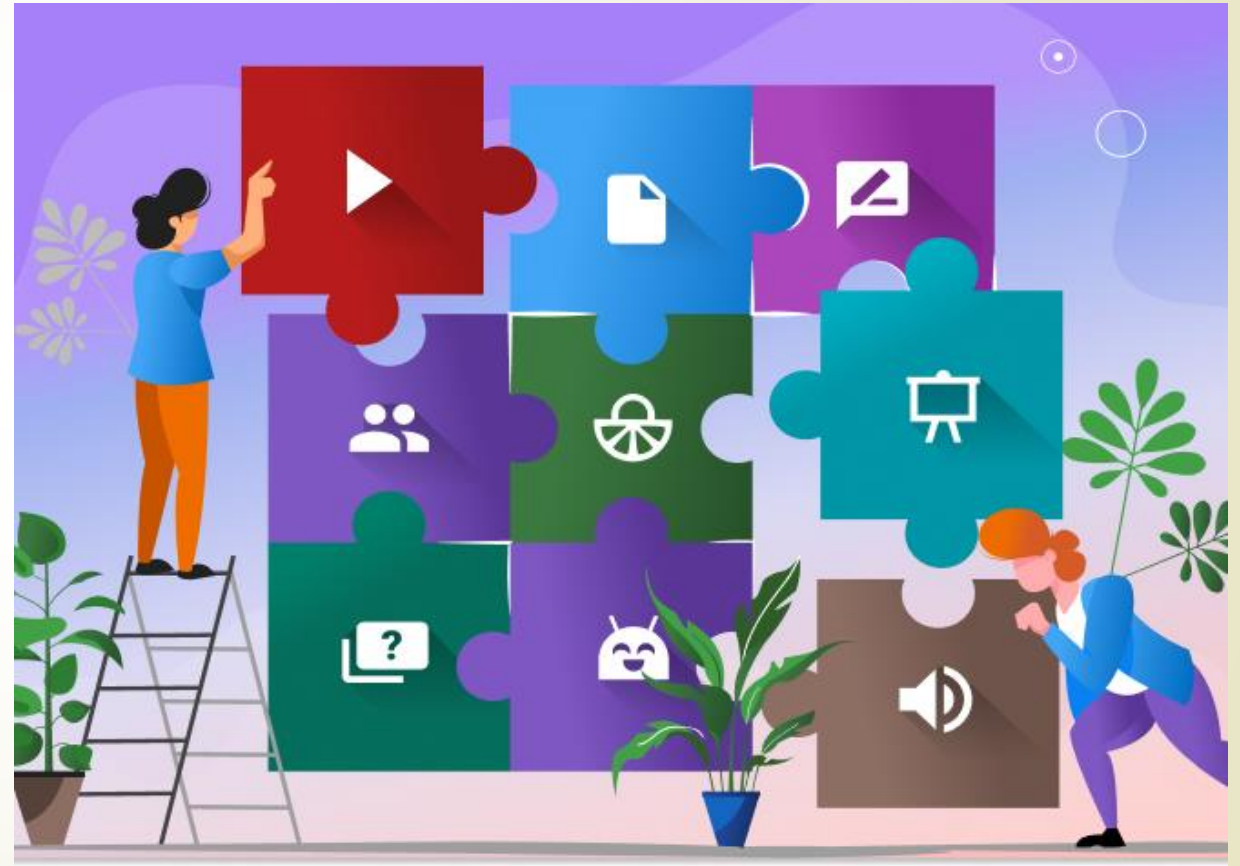
"Remove the weekly locks, too much pressure"

"I can't learn linearly like this, I have ADHD"

"The quizzes are useful but can there be more time given for them?"

Adjustments

- ▶ Removed locks
- ▶ Removed forced sequence
- ▶ Gave extra time for the completion of quizzes
- ▶ Questions
 - ▶ Am I designing a course that benefits most students but puts a handful at disadvantage or the course needs to be designed for the lowest level of ability/engagement?
 - ▶ What am I doing wrong?
- ▶ 'Teaching is a failing profession' – Jose Perez 😊





Further Influences

- PhD on cyberbullying in HE
- Staff victimisation by students
 - 2 in 3 academics get victimised
 - Mostly via email & online feedback forms
- Marketisation of HE
 - Increased demand from students
 - Customer attitudes
- Compromised teaching quality out of fear

The Second Iteration

- ▶ New term, round 2
- ▶ The development of 2 different paths
- ▶ Path 1: A dumpster of all essential content
 - ▶ lecture slides, notes and recordings
 - ▶ seminar prep activities, slides and handouts
 - ▶ reading list and recordings
 - ▶ assessment information
- ▶ Path 2: The full learning experience (what you're paying for)
 - ▶ No forced sequence (Panopto), and locked content (but with a 2 week buffer)
 - ▶ Extra learning opportunities: weekly AI tool, BB journals (assignment prep and engage with content), Padlet Q&As
 - ▶ + all of the above from Path 1
 - ▶ Vision for a Student Experience Platform





Student feedback

➤ Positive

“The journal aspect is especially helpful for preparation for the assignments, it helps with reassurance as I have no idea what I’m doing”

“The Padlets are useful especially for assignments and muddiest points”

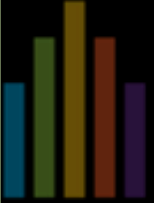
“I like the new blackboard more than the old one, it’s a lot more intuitive and I just know where I can find everything and it’s also pretty :D”

➤ Critical

“There is too much to do”

“I don’t have time to do it all, even if I want to”

Blackboard Tour - now

 anthology + Blackboard®



Does it even matter?

- ▶ The Third Iteration
 - ▶ Identical to second, but more icebreakers and Kahoot weekly
 - ▶ However....
- ▶ Student Experience Platform or Virtual Learning Environment?
- ▶ Distance learning / online vs on-campus courses

- ▶ Takeaways:
 - ▶ Lots of hidden hours and possibly little return
 - ▶ Be mindful of keeping track of too many platforms
 - ▶ Cohorts are very different, this is a dialogue
 - ▶ Embrace flexibility
 - ▶ Look after your own wellbeing first



Thank you for
the attention

Any questions?

