

How Technology Helped Edge Hill University Create an Inclusive and Engaging Learning Environment for All Students

A holistic approach to inclusive learning supports students from all backgrounds.



Edge Hill
University

A Higher Learning Leader from Lancashire

Based in Ormskirk in the North West of England, Edge Hill University is dedicated to delivering opportunities for learners of all backgrounds. Currently supporting nearly 18,000 learners—spanning full and part time, undergraduate and graduate programmes—they believe strongly in the transformative power of education, starting in their local community and expanding globally. Such is the diverse coalition of students that populates their varied academic programmes, Edge Hill's [vision](#) is as instructive as it is simple: “To provide every encouragement and every opportunity for our students.”

INSTITUTION TYPE:
PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

LOCATION:
ORMSKIRK, LANCASHIRE,
ENGLAND

STUDENTS:
18,000

**ANTHOLOGY PRODUCTS
AND SERVICES:**
Blackboard
Anthology Ally
Blackboard Course Catalog
Anthology Course Design and
Development Services



The Challenge

Providing a Learning Environment that Caters to a Diverse Student Body

Higher education in the United Kingdom, as with many other parts of the world, has placed an increased emphasis on inclusion in recent years. As outlined by [Universities UK](#), “Anyone who would benefit from a university education should have access to one. We want to support . . . inclusive environments where all students enjoy their experience and achieve their study and career goals.”

At Edge Hill University, this involves accommodating the changing demographics of their local area and welcoming new cohorts from overseas. As the number of international students at Edge Hill grows, with particular increases from Africa and Asia, their team has invested heavily in programmes to help all learners feel comfortable in the university’s courses and community.



The Solution

A Holistic Approach to EdTech and Learning Best Practices

Edge Hill has embraced the breadth of Anthology’s teaching and learning portfolio to develop an inclusive environment for all students. This includes:

- Updating their Anthology® Blackboard **learning management system** (LMS) to Ultra, providing access to amazing new features such as broader assessment types and test functionality that reduces student stress
- **Advanced accessibility and inclusion** capabilities via Anthology® Ally—allowing alternative formats to be seamlessly created for important course content, as well as detailed reporting on their adoption across the institution
- Using Blackboard’s **Course Catalog**, formerly the Training and Development Manager, to facilitate the creation of non-credit courses, including for new student orientation programmes
- Leveraging **course design best practices**, as outlined by Anthology’s team of experts, to elevate instructional design and make content engaging for all



Modern learning is multi-faceted and complex and learners' expectations about their digital experience have fundamentally changed/shifted. We envisaged a holistic approach for staff and students, which Anthology helped us deliver through both their technology and expertise.

—**Scott Farrow**

Head of Digital Learning, Edge Hill University



Insights Delivered

A Profound Improvement in the Student Experience

All the above initiatives have achieved great results, which when combined, amount to a more engaging learning environment for all of Edge Hill's 18,000 students.

- Student feedback resoundingly endorsed the upgrade to Ultra. **Over 90%** of learners agreed that they **"liked the new layout better"** and **"liked that base navigation is the same in every module,"** while **more than 80%** felt it made it **easier to find key information**—including on mobile devices.
- Learners are also full of praise for the alternative content formats provided by Anthology Ally. Crucially, this has assisted not only students with particular accessibility needs but also allowed different learning preferences to be supported.

"Anthology Ally has helped me a lot, because I'm definitely a visual learner. I learn so much faster when everything's right in front of me and I can read it. Using alternative formats in Ally has meant that I can convert things in my modules, like videos and podcasts, to ePubs to download onto my iPad or eBook, which has helped me massively."

—**Maya**

Second-Year Student Studying Film and Television Production

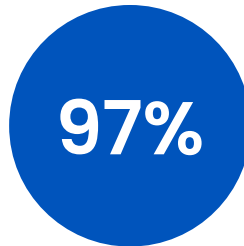
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"(Converting written content into audio files) is useful as it means you can do other activities whilst listening to your studies; for example, you can go for a walk and get some exercise in while keeping on with your revising or studying."

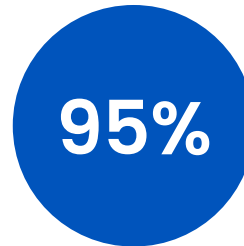
—**Callie**

Second-Year Student Studying History with Politics

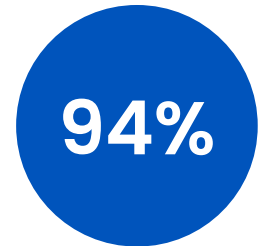
- Finally, the team at Edge Hill has used Blackboard Course Catalog to create an engaging pre-arrival course for international students. This was developed based on course design best practices, with a mobile-first approach to support students from nations with high mobile use, clear language, branding, and terminology throughout, and regular use of video to introduce Edge Hill in a personable and entertaining fashion. The results have been incredible:



of students found
the course **easy**
to navigate



felt more prepared
after completing
the course



knew where to
go for **further help**
and support

Our partnership with Anthology has been crucial to developing an inclusive learning environment for students from all backgrounds. It feels like a true partnership; our views and suggestions are listened to and implemented. Anthology products are at the core of our digital learning ecosystem within every stage of learners' journey with us. The result is an accessible, valued VLE that is utilised to its fullest, helping learners maximise their potential from pre-arrival right through to graduation.



—Scott Farrow

Head of Digital Learning, Edge Hill University





Epilogue

Anthology thanks Edge Hill University for its ongoing partnership and support of initiatives to make higher education more inclusive and accessible. Their outstanding pre-arrival course was a winner in last year's Anthology [Catalyst Awards](#), and they have been a vocal advocate for Ally's annual Fix Your Content Day for many years.



Ready to create a learning environment that caters to the needs of all students? [Access a FREE, 30-day trial of Blackboard today!](#)

Products and services highlighted in this customer case study:

[Anthology Ally](#), [Blackboard](#), Blackboard Course Catalog, and Anthology Course Design and Development Services

Learn more at anthology.com



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