

Accessing Canvas with a Screen Reader: Hints and Tips

Introduction

This document offers advice for York Online students or staff who use screen reader software when accessing Canvas. The advice presented below is based on feedback from user testing and our understanding of the user experience. It complements information presented in the University of York's [Canvas Accessibility Statement](#). To avoid duplication, the 'known issues in Canvas' from the accessibility statement are not repeated here - we recommend checking those if you haven't already.

If you have any questions or feedback about this document please contact Nathan Page (n.page@york.ac.uk) or VLE support (vle-support@york.ac.uk).

Navigation, Links and Headers

1. In general when navigating in Canvas (whether within a specific module or not), you should find that listing the links is a useful way to navigate between content (e.g. between areas of a module). This is because menu items such as 'Dashboard' (where you can access your modules) and 'Units' (where you can find the learning materials within a module) are presented as links in Canvas rather than headers.
2. Once you have accessed a page from within the units menu, you can then move forwards or backwards within the module (one page at a time) by using the 'previous' and 'next' buttons which appear at the bottom of pages.
3. Headers are used on pages to subdivide content, so these are also useful for navigation within pages. Please note that some pages might not use multiple headers, especially if they are short.
4. It's possible that you will experience duplicated headers and links when accessing content via screen reader software. One of our testers experienced this and Canvas could not provide an explanation of why it was happening.
5. When navigating the units menu via either tabbing or arrowing down, you are likely to hear 'page', 'discussion', 'quiz' etc announced before the title/link to that content. This is for information only (to specify what type of content follows)
6. When accessing documents in Canvas, typically the link to open a preview of the document comes first, and a button to download it follows that. It's possible that the

behaviour of the document and its link will vary e.g. whether it previews in a new tab, on the same page or as an overlay.

7. The module navigation menu (starting with Home, Links and so on) may change slightly during the course of the module. In particular the 'Announcements' and 'Provisional Marks and Feedback' links may only appear when content is released within those areas.
8. If 'Panopto videos' appears on the module navigation menu, please ignore it as that will not contain any content
9. Sometimes the sequence of content on a page may not be fully ideal from an accessibility point of view, e.g. a link coming before the instructions that explain what the link is for. For this reason you might want to consider whole pages of content before taking actions with links, downloads etc.

Homepage

10. The numbers 1-7 are presented as links on the homepage which will not make sense out of context. These numbers can be used to access the unit menu at the point where the relevant unit (1-7) appears. They do not take you to the first page of the relevant unit, that will require following the link to that specific page.
11. Apart from sub-dividing content on the homepage, you should find that areas called 'To do' and 'Recent feedback' are also formatted as headers.

Video

12. For the most common type of video you will encounter (created and added by York staff rather than external ones), the title given to that video will appear as a header, and this is always set at level 1 (H1) regardless of whether that fits the current page layout. In many cases you will find that the word 'video' starts the title, to help identify what the content is from the header (the whole title should hopefully be meaningful). It is possible that you will encounter video titles/headers that are not formatted in this way.
13. Currently when accessing these internally-made videos, 'play' may not initially be accessible as a button - instead you may need to tab or arrow to the video and start it manually (note: after the video has played for the first time, 'play' should appear as a button based on our testing).