Jisc learning analytics discovery service

Context

Institutions are increasingly aware that the data generated by learners can provide important insights into identifying, quantifying and solving key institutional issues. Institutions have expressed particular interest in exploring this data in the context of driving student retention and progression or understanding academic adoption and effective curriculum design. In seeking to develop a well-defined vision for the use of data regarding student engagement, performance and retention, institutions aim to collect, analyse, and create actionable knowledge and share this knowledge across a broad range of stakeholders.

Engagement summary

On behalf of JISC, Blackboard will provide a learning analytics discovery service that will discover, analyse and report on institutional readiness for adoption of learning analytics tools. Assessment of institutional readiness will encompass strategy readiness, technical readiness and cultural readiness, including policy, processes, systems and people. The engagement would look at the institution's data-decision requirement and its existing policies and process and its internal capacity and capabilities to make effective use of learning analytics tools.

Key considerations explored in the engagement include:

» What are the institution's short term learning data needs and longer term data aspirations to provide key insights regarding the student experience?

» What is the current gap between available data and desired data and information?

» How does institution convert learning data into actionable knowledge?

» How does institution present this knowledge effectively and efficiently to key stakeholders?

» What are the requirements regarding policies, processes, systems and people to support effective adoption of learning analytics?

» What is the institution's current institutional readiness (maturity) to address those requirements and where there is a gap how can that be closed?

» What options are available regarding tracking and monitoring performance over time?

Engagement outcomes

Deliverables for the engagement will include a report to the institution on their readiness for the adoption of learning analytics and a product agnostic solution profile (or feature set) so the institution can make informed decisions about the solutions they need to implement.

About Blackboard consulting

Globally, the Blackboard consulting team has more than 150 employees who specialise in strategic, operational and technical services. The team encompasses highly specialised practitioners, many of whom joined Blackboard after holding roles in educational institutions, with personal experience in developing, managing and delivering institutional strategies to drive digital initiatives, enhance the student experience and process improvement.

Blackboard consulting provides platform agnostic strategic services to many institutions across the globe and prides itself on making recommendations that are objective and impartial. Engaging Blackboard consulting in this learning analytics discovery exercise does not assume, nor does it require, the use of Blackboard technologies either at the start or as an output recommendation of the engagement.
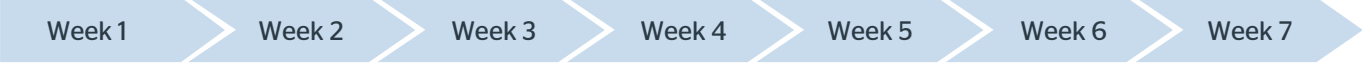
Project management

Project management facilitates communication within Blackboard and with the customer related to this engagement, and coordinates Blackboard's activities for this engagement. The goal of project management is that project objectives and milestones are met in a timely and cost effective manner. To achieve these outcomes, Blackboard will appoint a project manager who will be responsible for the overall engagement delivery, documentation, status reporting, and resource management.

Project timeline and approach

The timeline below represents the time from project kick off to completion. The discovery stage will run over a seven week timeframe (at institutional level), this may be extended to ensure maximum participation by key staff in the onsite component (ie week 3 might be pushed out to accommodate institutional availability, however the project will be intended to conclude four weeks after onsite engagement). Engagement should run to a maximum timeframe of ten weeks.

Table 1: Project timeline and approach

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7

Phase	Week	Project activity	Location
1	1	Project initiation and scheduling	Remote
	2	Literature review and remote preparation	Remote
2	3	Discovery, interviews, workshops (3 days)	Onsite
3	4	Analysis and recommendations	Remote
	5		Remote
	6		Remote
	7	Institutional readiness report	Remote

Phase 1: Planning and preparation

Once the institution has confirmed to Jisc that it wishes to participate in the engagement, a joint introductory call will take place between the institution, Jisc and Blackboard. Following this a more detailed conference call with the participating institution will be arranged by the Blackboard project manager. This will walk through the framework, goals, approach and participants required to undertake this discover stage. The pause between the two calls is intended to give the institutional point of contact time to consider who should be involved in the call. Following this Blackboard will draft a detailed agenda and schedule for the onsite for review and refinement in collaboration with the University. This agenda will form the basis of tasks to be completed during the onsite.

Prior to the onsite, Blackboard will review responses to a brief self-assessment survey alongside relevant documents including university strategies and goals, operational plans and existing learning analytics use cases.

Phase 1 Artifacts
» Kick-off call agenda
» Onsite schedule – (opening forum, interviews, exit briefing)
» List of participants

Phase 2: Onsite discovery and strategy

A 3 day onsite discovery engagement will consist of the following elements:

» An opening forum for all participants to set context, goals, and expectations; present analytics concepts and methods; review the types of data available and explore at a high level the structures and processes necessary to make effective use of data

» Blackboard consultants will then conduct up to 12 face-to-face interviews and focus group sessions with key stakeholders identified by the institution to inform plans – these will encompass data and technical, policy and process, and human resources and skills development considerations

» A strategic planning workshop, identifying the key themes, workstreams and timelines to achieve institutional goals

» An exit briefing will provide high level feedback to executive sponsors, and/or all participants if desired

Phase 2 Artifacts
» Interview and focus group protocol
» Interview and focus group questions
» Opening forum presentation deck

Phase 3: Analysis and reporting:

Following the onsite, the Blackboard consultants will analyse all the data and information collected throughout the engagement. The findings will be reviewed, interpreted and documented against a subset of Blackboard's proprietary set of 100+ rubrics spanning effective practices areas in; strategic change, effective use of educational technology and digital learning in higher education. This engagement would focus on the **'Data-driven decision making effective practice areas'** and **'Supporting student retention/Throughput effective practice areas'** rubrics. This is an established and rigorous evidence-based maturity methodology. The Blackboard's rubric-based EPA approach is similar to a capability maturity model as it is designed to capture convergence toward effective practice. Distinctively though, it takes into account the diverse organisational cultures and operational goals and objectives of education institutions.

Using this methodology, the Blackboard consultants will provide a report as to the institutional readiness to make effective use of learning analytics tools. This report will represent the final deliverable of the engagement.

Phase 3 deliverable

This Institutional readiness report will include:

» A well-defined vision and strategic themes for the use of learning analytics and a recommended data dictionary of actionable data

» Assessment of institutional readiness against key maturity metrics – policy, processes, systems and people

» Recommendations of how to close any gaps between current state maturity and future state requirements

» Recommendations to establish foundations for growing a culture of data-driven decision making and support the ability to replicate the process for future use cases

» A defined, repeatable process in using data for improvement

» A product agnostic solution profile (or feature set)

Client institution requirements

Blackboard's engagement model assumes active participation from the institutional team. In particular for this engagement, Blackboard will require a high level of participation from relevant leadership and key stakeholders with direct responsibility for student retention, student throughput and learning data-driven decisions.

For the successful delivery of this engagement the client is responsible for:

» ensuring the availability of key staff, including the institutional leadership team, for participation in the onsite activities

» identifying and providing institutional documents and materials relevant to the project (for example, existing strategies, plans and reporting). Blackboard will provide a list of typical items in a written request as part of the projects

» ensuring the staffing resources on the project that have the necessary strategic, functional and technical knowledge to participate in the engagement

» arranging the interviews with key stakeholders and forum sessions as agreed upon by the institution and Blackboard in project planning discussions

The client will designate a single individual to serve as the project lead and to coordinate these and other project-related requests and work with the Blackboard project manager to keep project activities on schedule.