

## Transitioning from Vital to Canvas

### Podcast Transcript

**Scott Farrow:** Hello and welcome to the CIE podcast. My name is Scott and I'm an educational developer at CIE and in this episode, we will be discussing our transition over to our new VLE, Canvas.

We had previously been using a VLE called Vital, as it's known, and that's our current virtual learning environment, Blackboard, which we've had since the day we started using a VLE at Liverpool and we've recently been making the switch to Canvas with some pilot courses and staff members

I'm delighted to introduce our guests. Today we've got Dr. Freya Jarman, Dr. Andy Bates, Dr. Laura Corner and Dr. Gary Brown.

If you wouldn't mind to just give us a quick introduction of yourselves and your Departments and also your first impression of Canvas.

**Laura Corner:** Hi yes. So I'm Laura Corner and I'm a lecturer in the Department of Engineering. I haven't been using Canvas to teach yet. I am going to be teaching in the autumn of 2020, a second-year module on the computer programming language, MATLAB with about 200 students in it.

So I've been transferring my module from Vital to Canvas and I think my first impression of Canvas is it looks a lot more modern than Vital, which when you open it up is quite an old-fashioned text-based interface now, whereas Canvas looks much more-, something like people are used to in sort of like a better interface that looks more modern.

I would say that was my first impression.

Thank you, Andy?

**Andy Bates:** Yes, my name is Andy Bates. I'm from the School of Life Sciences.

And I was involved in sort of the first round of piloting Canvas. I did a practical module for second year biochemists there, about 90 students in the first half of Semester 2 last year and I was particularly interested in the group work aspects because the students work in the lab as groups and then they write up a report, also as groups and so I was interested in the group work and I was interested in a tool called BuddyCheck. Terrible name, but which does peer evaluation of contributions to group work and that's something we had done previously with another much clunkier tool. I can tell you more about Buddy Chat later maybe, but it integrates very smoothly with Canvas.

So my impressions were that everything was very smooth and I agree with Laura about this sort of look and feel of Canvas. It looks a lot cleaner and nicer when you first you first look at it and it's probably more easily customizable in terms of what we want and it actually looks like. So I liked that about it.

**That's great, thanks. Freya?**

**Freya Jarman:** Yes, sure my name is Freya Jarman. I'm a reader in the Music Department here. I was teaching a module for second year undergraduates called Music, Gender and Sexuality during the second semester of last year.

And again, my immediate impressions were positive, particularly in terms of the aesthetics, and I think as a result or alongside that - the ease of use.

I guess the first thing I really was drawn to you was how much it invites participation. There are all sorts of little mechanisms in there that kind of invite you to think about students being actively engaged with the VLE.

**Thank you finally, Gary.**

**Gary Brown:** Yes, I'm Gary Brown from the management school in the University, currently director of online programs. Primary remit for looking after the purely online programs for the management school and managing the transition from an existing partner to a new partner.

So I'd stepped into this in that context, partly with a view to understanding better what Canvas had available, whether or not what we were planning to do with canvas at anything in particular that could be learned in respect of what we're doing with the online provision. At one point we were having conversations about whether Canvas could potentially be the platform to use for the purely online programs. As it turned out that that wasn't the case, but I stepped in in that context.

I agreed to be involved in the pilot project with Canvas, which commenced with the second-year module of mine and undergraduate module in January of this year. Transferring a module over looking at identity, culture, and organisation. An elective module with about 45 students. A history of kind of really, really good quality feedback from the students going to high levels of feedback from the students so I was reluctant in one respect to introduce anything significantly new that might disturb the feedback. It might lead to greater problems, but I stepped in anyway because I thought why not, you know.

Like others have commented, I think I'd issues with the existing BLE with Blackboard in particular. It's stated nature, it's clunky nature, or the fact that you wanted anything interesting. It takes, you know so much longer and it was high risk I guess as well. So we fall into a pattern of behaviour I suppose and we weren't really experimenting.

And then Canvas came along and I thought now we have a chance to experiment in terms of experiences with it. The aesthetics are really important. I think from a student point of view, students are used to give engaging with online material with online platforms where there's a lot of thought given to the aesthetics and that was the case, certainly with canvas so it was an absolute straightforward win in that respect to a lot of improvement.

And the other one, I think. See, this could be unpacked in a lot of different ways, but functionality. I think tones available, integration, ease of use of the tools available, made life much easier and I certainly find when we moved into the lockdown period being on campus was a real-life saver in a respect. You know, I wouldn't like to have done what I did with canvas with Blackboard and I'm really grateful that I had Canvas available to me when we moved into that phase, particularly with respect to things like the Conference facility we had used and the Studio facility. I found both of those particularly helpful.

The other thing I found really helpful was student analytics. The level of engagement and so on.

**Thank you all for those introductions. Seems to be some good sort positive things coming out there in relation to Canvas, particularly around tools, and I'm kind of picking up a theme on with all of you around kind of the tools that encourage active learning within Canvas,**

**which is good so will potentially come back to touch on that in a little bit just leading on from something you just said there, Gary, in your introduction, I know it's really hard not to be biased when we've got brand new shiny VLE. Do you think with Vital it was just kind of something that had been over used by people and it was kind of feeling old? Because we've kind of had it for so long and kind of the new interface of Canvas has given everyone a bit of a kind of refreshed view on how they can teach using the VLE. Or do you think that was down to the tool tools itself?**

**FJ:** I think it's probably partly a bit of both. I mean, the The entire vibe of Vital sort of takes me back to days in the late 90s playing Minesweeper. It's like a very kind of boxy, like Windows XP, sort of look to it. And you know that that does sort of you know, put you in a particular mind space of thinking. Oh well, this probably is not a very imaginative space to be in and the look and was kind of, you know, just small things about how you move things around and how you engage with the tools that are there sort of feel like there are space where you can be modern in your thinking.

The other thing to say is that actually simply by virtue of having to redesign it, redesign the organisation of stuff because Canvas and Blackboard think so differently. Because of that, it does sort of force you into a place where you go right? OK, what is it that you do want to achieve? And maybe you could have mostly got there on Blackboard.

With enough digging abounds and you know enough work arounds, you might have got somewhere close, but Canvas kind of invites you to think of that and invites you to sort of redesign your thinking about the module I guess, so that's what I would say.

**LC:** I've got a perspective of not having used Vital for too much. I'm a relatively new lecturer to the University. I've been here two years, so the 1st first time I run my module I only found out I was the module coordinator a few weeks in advance, so I was so busy panicking to get through my course that really, I barely looked at Vital, and then the next year I was really concentrating on how to improve the assessments and the way that the course was delivered. So to be honest, I never really looked into making Vital better because it was kind of the lower end of my priority than actually making my teaching and delivery better, and so it became very much just repository for the lecture slides and the lecture cap.

Kind of pretty much what I did with it, and I think the difference about Canvas is of course you are forced to think about it properly rather than in my case inheriting a design from someone else, but also using the Commons, I was able to essentially nick really good ideas for layout and stuff from other people. I never knew or found out if there was a way to pinch good design ideas from other people and vital. Whether you just really couldn't design something in vital, but I found a lot of good ideas by looking at other courses in the Commons, in Canvas, and I was able to go, "Oh, that's a really good way of doing that. I'm going to make that for my course and I found that really helpful.

**Yes, that's a really good tip as well. For anybody listening that is new to Canvas. The Common store is kind of just a vast array of different courses and module types and structures in that. It's good to kind of have a look and see what's available and what might work for your courses.**

**FJ:** Not just large-scale structures, but actually just individual resources. So I shared a-, I wrote a page today about online etiquette for my students

and I just, you know, sent it around the Department and said, if you would like to use it, it's now available on Commons. Some people have deployed it, some people haven't. So yes, just kind of individual little bits that you might find handy as well.

**That's great. It's really useful, so I know you might have covered this slightly in your introductions, but could you just give us a bit of an update on where you guys are with your process of transferring from Vital to Canvas and how you have found that to date?**

**GB:** I don't mind starting that one. I mean, in terms of the transferring of existing material, certainly the first time in the pilot projects again back in January this year with the second-year module. That started with the transfer process which involved lifting existing material initially at least from within the Vital area.

But what I liked in terms of what was available to do was that I could curate, as I saw fit, what could be moved across. Not only in terms of what I could include for students who are coming into the new module in the new VLE, not only in terms of how we present what material I share but also how I presented it.

So the transfer across I found relatively straightforward, but I must admit I didn't do the transfer across of material, personally, it was done in advance, so I don't know if that has any impact on how we would respond to that question, Scott, but certainly it was. It was helpful for me to be able to work with the material transferred directly across and decide which I wanted to keep, which you wanted to replace, which you wanted to move around, and so on.

It made me think actually differently about how the students consume the material that came across, and I hadn't really been able to do so previously under the prior VLE. So it made me think fresh about how to present that material.

**AB:** Yes, so well, I think I think it's certainly true that the way the material came across forced you to think about it, but that's partly because it, in a way, it almost looked worse after an immediate transfer than it did before! Which, you know, which is fine. The stuff was there, you could do what you want with it.

Actually for my pilot module, which I did-, I actually started that with a clean slate, I have to say, partly because I didn't have so much material. As I said my module was a practical module. A lot of the actual sessions were real-life in the lab sessions so it was really background material that was there. And as I say my main interest was in the group work aspects. So for that module, I did start from scratch. For other modules with a lot of material it probably would be useful to start with the transferred material.

But really, as Gary is sort of said, you do need to do quite a lot of rearranging at that point, but it does force you to think about what's key. What to throw away, you know, how to actually organise the material that you have brought across, so that's a good discipline anyway. I think, as somebody already pointed out, you know to be forced to think about how to use the material in the new context is a valuable thing actually.

**FJ:** I had a similar sort of thing that all my material had been transferred over for me last semester and I was glad to see it all in there because it helped me understand something of how Canvas was sort of comfortable with the material being organised. Like what Canvas', kind of *modus operandi* was in terms of how one might organise the material and it



became very clear, very quickly that the best thing for me to do was actually scrap it all and start again. Pretty much in terms of the organisation.

Not least because I used to organise stuff by types of materials, so I would have the week's PowerPoints in one folder. I would have reading in another folder and you know all these different contents areas in Vital for different types of material. And then I decided instead to organise by the date. So all of this moved through the course purely by chronology rather than anything else. And I grouped all of week one's materials together so it was cutting the cake in a completely different on a different axis. Really so it was much more helpful to rethink it, but I was glad to see the material in there. As I say in the 1st place. Yes, just do a big tidy up operation.

**LC:** I have to say I completely agree. Mine with was transferred for me and it was quite interesting to see what kind of almighty mess it looked. Not least because you know there was stuff that I hadn't touched in the previous two years. So like a number of you, I started my new course as a blank shell and brought across what I needed from the transferred course for me. One of the things that took a lot of time was I had a number of short multiple-choice quizzes in my old title module used for summative and formative assessment. And to be fair, we had been given a heads up that the quiz material in particular might not transfer well and I can confirm that. So I had a lovely solid afternoon going through all my quiz material, correcting things that came over badly.

In particular things with equations and stuff just didn't play nicely at all, but again, that had the virtue of sort of like forcing me to think about whether these questions were useful. Well, if I was going to have to put the

effort in then they were going to have to earn their place on the course so that did help. But it did take a fair chunk of my time to sort that out.

**GB:** There's one other thing I would add is when I was looking at the material being transferred across and whether or not it was good idea because part of me thought at the time, actually would be better to start with a blank sheet not to have material transferred across because of course that would force me to think differently.

However, given the time constraints at the time, it's better to have it moved across and then I can do what I need to afterwards. But I was also thinking about-, I used to be Director of Education for one of the subject groups and I used to manage workloads for staff and we started conversations about new modules, new materials, new process is and so on. And at that point I had that hat on. I wasn't in the role anymore, but I was thinking if I was in that job still thinking about "what's the challenge here to try and get staff engage with this? What kind of thing do we need to do to make sure they engage with it effectively? They spend their time accordingly. "

I suppose that I came to the conclusion absolutely for individuals to engage, we need to make sure they've got that material in there in place as they see fit to use it. But again, given the way that the materials presented when they arrive after that, that task is done for them. It will compel them to engage and to think again, to think afresh so that I was thinking it's really important we do this, and I'm glad that the way it's done, because for those staff who would be reluctant or wouldn't have time - they have many other priorities. It's really important for them that they have that material there in that way as Canvas presents it, you know.

So part of my positivity at the time when I'd seen what it happened and now again is kind of influenced by that. You know those other staff members who may be reluctant, maybe not as positive to engage with VLEs like I guess we are. They don't need an additional reason not to engage with the VLE so that was really positive and remains a positive I think.

**Thanks Gary, that's great.**

**Some really interesting points that you all took a very similar approach to copying everything across first and sorting your content out from within Canvas rather than just picking only the best elements to take across. So it's really interesting to all talk about that.**

**We're just going to move on to the next section. So I listened to a podcast called Canvascasters, and if you haven't listened to that yet, they share tips and tricks. Really interesting guests that either have used Canvas for a long time and share their direct experience and People that are also quite new to Canvas sharing their experience as well, so there's a good podcast to check out.**

**They have something in their podcast called the Teacher Backpack, so I'm going to pinch the idea slightly and ask you if there's one Canvas tool that you can have in your Canvas backpack that wouldn't leave you. What tool would that be?**

**LC:** So the thing that I've found really exciting and I'm looking forward to using with my students is that I've been able to integrate coding assessments as an external tool directly within Canvas, so I've been using external website for students to do assessments where they write a short piece of computer code and it's marked automatically, but for the last

couple of years the students had to sign up for that individually and access it through a separate website.

I've been able to integrate that now into my Canvas course, they literally just click on assessment and it's presented there for them. It has to be said that there have been some technical issues with that. I've been chasing those down for the last month or so and that there are still some things that aren't quite right about it yet, but I think anything that presents the material right there for students rather than having to send them off out of external links or make account somewhere else is useful. So that's something I'm looking forward to using. It is an improvement on my Vital course.

### **What's that tool called Laura?**

**LC:** [Matlab Grader](#)

### **Matlab Grader.**

**AB:** So one of the one of the reasons or one of the things that persuaded me to pilot Canvas in the first place was because my module involves group work and I had previously used the tool called [Web-PA](#) you may have come across it previously – people are nodding!

Yes. So Web-PA is quite a clunky thing, what it does is it allows students to rate theirs and their colleagues' contributions to group work in a way that will allow you to modify an overall grade given for a piece of combined work so that individuals within the group actually get a modified score, so either a higher or lower score depending on their perceived contribution.

That was all great, but it was a bit like what Laura was just saying. This was an external tool which wasn't really integrated and was variously clunky in the way that it works, and so we've been able to replace that with this tool

called [BuddyCheck](#), which is a terrible name, as I said before, or somebody else told me they thought it was a great name, but I can't see it myself. But anyway, this is a beautifully integrated tool, actually in Canvas which does the same job and more.

So what's really great about it if you're doing group work, you need to set up groups within your VLE so that the students can collaborate together, share files and those kinds of things. Those systems are pretty good in Canvas, actually quite easy to manipulate, I found that pretty smooth, but what's great about BuddyCheck is it takes those group sets that you've created and just imports them very straightforwardly for you to set up this assignment where they are rating each other's contribution. Okay, so what we're talking about here is - they write a group report. I assess the report, give it a mark, but the students are assessing each other's contribution to that by basically answering a set of Likert questions which you can either use a sort of standardized set which are other general but quite good actually. Or you can invent your own bespoke questions.

And to cut a long story short, the output of that is twofold. BuddyCheck produces a really nice report which itemises the marks a student has been given on these different questions, aggregates all that together, along with any comments that the other students may have made anonymously, although students are quite reluctant to do that, in general into a kind of report on how they contributed to the group work, which they get back. OK, so that's really nice.

The second thing it does, which is what Web-PA did, but in a much clunkier way, is to produce a factor and multiplier of the mark. So if everything is working well and it's a very cohesive group, those multipliers are going to be quite close to one, and so you multiply the base score that

you've given for a particular piece of work by this multiplier to alter the mark a little bit.

It's not perfect. None of these things are perfect, actually, in the way they work, but what it does do is it causes the students to see that you're paying attention to the fact that some people will have made a greater effort or a lesser effort to the group work.

But in the end, you still have to say to groups of students, "suck it up. This is what life is like and some of the time you're going to feel that you did the effort and somebody else got the benefit." And there's an important life lesson in all of that.

But the fact that there's a mechanism for at least showing that you're paying attention to that and you're doing something about, it actually helps the students perception of all this quite a lot eventually, and so I would definitely recommend that if people are doing any group work where you're grading a collaborative effort of some kind, then

BuddyCheck, which is built in and available to us in Canvas, is a really great way to help the process along in various ways. Even if in the end it doesn't really make almost any difference to the marks. That's not really, in a way, the points of it. The point is that students get feedback and they perceive that there's a process in place to at least address any unfairness is that they may see. That's important and useful and so I would definitely recommend that.

Web-PA, you could recommend it, but you'd say it's going to be a struggle to make it work, whereas honestly, BuddyCheck within Canvas is seamless and very straightforward. Absolutely recommend.

**FJ:** Yes, I would say something related which is simply about the groups. The ease of using groups generally actually in Canvas, it is again perfectly possible to do it within Blackboard, but actually assigning groups having students sign themselves up to groups, is much more intuitive all round. There's a really kind of easy drag and drop thing if you want to assign students manually and so on.

And actually using the groups space from a student perspective, as far as I can tell anyway, having not actually been a student of course, but using the group space seems to be, again, very intuitive for file sharing and discussion boards and things like that. So I really like that.

The other thing I really like if I could just take maybe a small extra thing in my backpack would be the ease of using prerequisites for different chunks of Canvas material. So unhelpfully, the language of Canvas has these chunks called modules, so that's not very useful, But you can very easily set one module to be a prerequisite for another, which I found very useful in terms of saying students. OK, I need you to read this really important information about how the course works and what we'll be doing each week, and you know, kind of code of conduct for behaviour when we're discussing difficult topics. I want to know that you've read that.

And the way that I make that happen is to actually not have any of the rest of the course material unlocked until they have clicked through all of those pages. So I think the ease of using prerequisites would be the other thing that I would want to take in my backpack.

**GB:** I think for me, it is not another immediately evident to in some respect, but valuable. I don't think I could live without it is Studio. Again, how I have used Studio previously in respect of the pilot module over the course of lockdown. The additional kind of functionality, I suppose, I've

been able to squeeze out of Studio that I would never have used in respective Vital. I don't think I could live without.

I mean, I think when I look back I've been able to pull together, quite quickly, recorded messages to go to students, for example, fairly short notice in a way that I could rely on.

On the back of that and associated with it, the fact that we've got the closed caption functionality was very helpful too. Again the speed with which those closed captions could be produced, albeit with some editing required on my part, especially given my accent I suppose, was particularly helpful - so that that I couldn't live without.

There is one-, I mean, taking a leaf from Freya's book, there is one other thing I might sneak into the backpack. It's thinking forward rather than during the course of the pilot project, and it's the accessibility traffic light system, so I think that in future is going to become very much invaluable. I think as we move through different iterations of this particular module and future modules as well.

I mean that's really kind of been very helpful in flagging in a way that I can't avoid where there are issues with regard to some other resources that are available, so just probably in future include that one.

**FJ:** Yes I would. I would say the second thing about the closed captions there. I mean I have a reasonably standard English accent and when I'm recording things for the purposes of having closed captions on them. My trying to speak nice and clearly and so on. I've used Zoom closed captioning, automated service and it was utter drivel. I mean, it was quite bizarrely beautiful poetry, but not at all any of the things I said.



I also used can't Camtasia's, which is what I use to record the things in the first place. And that was also, I mean, that was even worse than Zoom. But the accuracy of Canvas Studio automated closed captions was quite impressive. I thought it still needs some editing, particularly for specialist terminology, but it's really pretty good.

**LC:** I think that's really interesting, because actually from a science side, we've been moving away from sort of recommending Studio for closed captions and that you actually get more sense out of the closed captions in Teams. Or doing it as a recorded PowerPoint Presentation, that there's a wider vocabulary and learning aspect to those ones, whereas the Canvas ones, even if you correct something, it won't learn to correct it at the moment.

That might be something that's brought in, but I've been hearing from colleagues, particularly, I'd be interested to know what you think about this, Andy, but when you're dealing with some very highly technical terms in biochemistry or something that there are real problems with this, so people have been moving slightly more towards recording lectures and stuff externally and importing the captions from something like the PowerPoint notations, but I guess we all work out what works for us best.

**AB:** Yes, I certainly-, we've been sharing particularly egregious stroke/various technical terms. Yes, that's definitely true. I think we've got a bit of a mixed economy right now where people are using things and people are using PowerPoint, as you say, people are using Teams.

Obviously, we're also recording live sessions either in zoom or in Teams and wanting to get captions into those. So there's at the moment, I don't think an absolute best way of doing all this, and I guess we will converge

on something which works best for our perhaps articular suite of technical terms or something like that.

In terms of plain English. I have been impressed with Canvas Studio transcription. I have to say as Freya said, that's been pretty good and yes, but I do know that people with accents further from standard English probably do have a bit of a problem. I have a generalised sort of northern English accent I suppose or something, and Canvas seems to deal with that.

**Yes, one thing is for sure. I think we're going to larger backpacks. But yes, I've heard similar things to be honest with you about the captions. I think they're all going to need a little bit of work from the tutor's input. But I think from my perspective, if we if we think about it from the students that require these captions, if we're giving them a ballpark figure, 80% accuracy as opposed to zero captions at all, then I'm sure those that need it will take the 80% accuracy any day.**

**AB:** Absolutely agree with that that. Something that is a big plus.

**LC:** Yes, possibly, unless what you get back is actually factually incorrect because it's swapped one term for another because the 80% you get is the "Hello. Welcome to biochemistry Lecture 3" or whatever. And actually what it totally messes up is, "This is an L-amino" or whatever and you get something that's completely bizarre and makes no sense.

**AB:** So that's true. I mean, I think you do have to have a look through for technical terms. I think you can edit it down to perfection, right? That's just going to be a never-ending task and I don't think any of us have got the time for that. I think we probably have got time just to scan through for particularly egregious things and sort that out. That's probably OK, isn't it?

**FJ:** Yes, but I think it's also really worth. I mean, I haven't, I haven't tried it with any of the technical terms that that I've used in my own discipline, and I haven't tried some of the tools that Laura was saying, but I think if there's a a earning aspect to some of those other ones I think you know. Of course, we're never going to reach 100% accuracy, not in the foreseeable future at least, but I think it is worth knowing about and testing out the ones that might actually work-, work harder for certain disciplines.

**LC:** Yes, I agree, and that will hopefully help. This stuff will sort of like settle as we discover what works, but Gary, I think you brought up issues of workload, something that has been circulating amongst people I've spoken to is this feeling that it takes you an awful lot longer to record, you know, two 20 minutes lectures, check all the captions, correct them, upload them than it ever did for you to go in and give you 45 minute lectures off-spec in a lecture theatre. So there really is a significantly increased workload here.

**AB:** It's front-loaded, isn't it? I mean, you know, hopefully we can reuse these things to some extent based, and the labour will have been up front I suppose but, but you're actually right. I mean, it's not a not a trivial task to do these things. I think we have to be non-precious about the gaffs that are in these things, even though they're recorded and not worry about it. Just like we wouldn't it in an ordinary lecture. Actually doing multiple takes is definitely not an option.

**GB:** I think we've had staff members do that in the past and they had-, but not with Canvas I must admit, with our standard streaming service where for whatever reason there's been a technical glitch, whether it's audio issues or video issues, sometimes both, and then the staff member has felt obliged to after the event, to record the full lecture again.

There have been occasions where they said things in the midst of video recordings, but they wanted to go back to fix and take themselves to go back and re-record the lecture. Not necessarily something that they've been forced to do, I must admit, no one has sat them down and said "you must go back and fix that", but they felt obliged for peace of mind, as much as anything to go back and do so.

I think it's probably something similar with regard to the closed captions for peace of mind, in many cases we would go back and look and change and so on.

Although Laura obviously your point about some of the terminology in the transcript not being paramount is significant too. I mean, some of our subject areas, our economic subject area probably in accounting and finance, for example, getting some of the equations wrong, or some of the model terminology wrong could cause significant issues, leading to appeals, of course, from students who repeat exactly what you've told him in a lecture and in essay responses. So absolutely. I mean it's a significant chunk of work that.

**AB:** It is a chunk of work! The one that amused me most was. I'm Director of Admissions for Life Sciences, and I recorded something about the typical offers that we make and all this kind of thing and Studio turned all the places where I said ABB into "a baby," for example.

I then have to go back and make sure they were absolutely correct because this is crucial to what we're telling the prospective students about what sort of offer They might receive.

**FJ:** Even just the difference between you know, has it has it captured that I've said "is", I suppose or "isn't" or "does" as opposed to "doesn't."

**AB:** Yes, Yes,

**FJ:** Right? So that, that can change the entire meaning and interpretation of something you know, regardless of technical terminology. So yes, I mean we're perhaps digressing somewhat, but I think. Yes, I like that it's mostly reliable, at least because it's certainly less work to do afterwards.

**Cool, thank you very much for those thoughts. So just kind of going back towards this. This backpack of tools, the last question on this. What, if anything, do you feel is missing from your kind of Canvas backpack of tools? So, thinking back to some of the things you maybe used to use in Vital or maybe just, just something that you've come across when you've been looking at a different way to present your content in Canvas. Is there anything that you thought is missing that you could do with in the backpack that you'd like Canvas to develop?**

**LC:** So, my wish list thing was part of assessments. So, you could set up quizzes very easily in Canvas and I do sort of have some little formative quizzes and you can have set up multiple attempts and set it to keep the highest mark for student. However, if you set up assessments that isn't a quiz, so a tool through for example this automated tool map upgrader that I use, if I set it to have multiple attempts, then I can't ask for the highest mark of those attempts to be put into the gradebook.

It will just take the last one that the student submits, not the highest. And that means I'm faced with the prospect of being fair to the students by going through multiple submissions by over 200 students and checking that they each have the highest grade they achieved, rather than the last grade they achieved actually in the grade book. And I have to say, I'm not looking forward to this, and it seems to me not a difficult thing to ask for, but isn't currently doable.

**Yes, that does not sound like fun.**

**FJ:** Yes, so I've got a couple of things which I used to use easily and to reasonable effect within Vital. One of them is the sort of timed release of items, so you know if we uploaded a file or you put in the equivalence of what is a page in Canvas. If you do that within Vital, I think the terminology was in fact an 'item'. It was very easy at the bottom just to kind of set when exactly that would be editable, viewable rather, by students.

Now I've found a way by which I can make a file viewable from a certain time within Canvas, but it doesn't seem to be so easy just to say, I don't want this thing to be unlocked until you know six o'clock tonight or whatever.

I know it's possible to do it with an entire Canvas module an entire chunk of pages that you can do, but if I didn't want to proliferate dozens and dozens of modules then that that's a thing that I did find easier and Vital. The other thing is journals and kind of reflective writing stuff.

You and I have been in touch about and I think using [PebblePad](#) may be the nicest way to do it, but it seems like using a sledgehammer to crack it. Really, when all I really need is a kind of notepad type place for students to do some journaling work. I mean, you know, we'll see how it works. I've not used PebblePad or Atlas before, so it may actually prove sufficiently elegant and more flexible than Vital's journals tools in ways that mean that I actually much prefer it, but it seems an awfully long way round.

**Yes, yes, just this seems a big gap, doesn't there? Between the vast amount of things that something like PebblePad can offer you.**

**FJ:** Yes!

**And say for example Blackboard's Journal tool which was essentially just switch it on and the students could use it.**

**GB:** When the transition was first made we anticipated that we would have greater control over the front-end. That is, things like the landing page, the visuals, you know what students encounter when they arrive at a given page. So I'd anticipated more control and more opportunity I think for a degree of additional creativity. So, we can move away from a kind of presentation, easy, more easily move away from presentation material in a chronological matter for example. Not that there's anything wrong with that per say, but I just thought at the time and I haven't heard anything since that would suggest otherwise that we should have had greater ability, I think, to be able to make decisions about, you know, whether we want to present things in magazine format rather than in this kind of format.

Now, I think it can be done, but the steps required to do that seem pretty substantial and, in the end, therefore we are going to have setups in each of the pages, where the landing page is looking very, very similar. You know, with lists of things or maybe with some imagery that we can click on to get into pages, for example, but I'd anticipated more ability to curate to be more creative to play around with the visuals to present things very quickly.

**AB:** Any page can be the landing page though, you know that.

**GB:** Yes, I do. I think it was the general set-up. I suppose what I had in mind was potentially having the landing image about great flexibility over how students engage with what we have in that image in greater opportunity to create an ease of use if you like and perhaps presenting them with a narrative, a story, if you like to take them through the module

content rather than the usual kind of temptation to deliver on a week by week basis. So it's doable, but just again it still feels a little bit clunky from my point of view. Or maybe I'm asking for too much. And suggesting that that's something that's missing at the moment.

**LC:** I'd be really interested to find out how you'd envisaged that really. Because I've tried to work quite hard with my module to make the front page at least quite welcoming and clickable. Eventually you get forced back into list of stuff approach. There's not a huge amount I can do about that, but I did try to do some of the things you have done, whereas rather than just talking about everything straight away I've got a set of clickable images leading to different sections with a guide on which ones you should be looking at first.

So, I have tried to do that, but I think perhaps you have something more ambitious in mind and it would be interesting to know how you saw that.

**GB:** I think it was. So we were doing something similar to working on a template to be used by staff in the school. It's similar to that. We got images, students click on the images and they go through to the back content, but eventually you land on again, a set of materials in the usual way.

I think what I wanted to do is to try and-, can it be a little bit more creative to play around. Actually, not necessarily knowing exactly what it would look like until it had chance to play around and develop something different.

We'd had a model of this design by the existing online partner where they were moving to a magazine format for presenting content. It doesn't necessarily sound great in the sense that you know it can appear perhaps



a little bit shallow in some respects. You know, people don't always feel the magazine format can present serious academic matter, you know, does that really make sense? Is that really what we want to do? But it looks really good.

And I had sort of anticipated being able to do something a little bit similar, or at least being a little bit more creative and having greater control over what we could present than in the end we've had, so I don't know that that's ever going to be possible? As we move forward, it may be too ambitious, too much to expect

**Thanks for that Gary.**

**Just move on to these final two questions and then we'll just wrap up with any final thoughts, so if that's OK. So, does anybody have any resources that they can share with anybody that might be listening that are trying to get a little bit more information about Canvas in general. That might be Liverpool staff or anybody further afield that might be using Canvas for the first time. Any resources that would be worth sharing with others.**

**AB:** Well, I can say one thing - not so much a resource, but I've got a [video about group work and BuddyCheck](#) which has done the rounds variously in the University and that's certainly available if anybody would like to use it to familiarise themselves. So it's not something that they can use in Canvas themselves, it's a sort of familiarisation resource if you like. If that would be helpful.

**Great thank you, Andy.**

**FJ:** I just want to second Laura's suggestion from earlier and remind people about the Commons feature. I think it's incredibly helpful, even just

sort of seeing how people are using Canvas as well. As I say, kind of taking little elements. Perhaps a quiz, perhaps a page, whatever it is. Yes, I would check out Commons at the first available opportunity.

**LC:** I've also found it useful to have the image store, so we do have to be careful about copyright of what we put up first. I think it's easy to get a little bit too casual about that, but maybe let's not get into bad habits about loading copyright material, so I've been finding access to accessible, non-copyrighted images to populate my course with really useful.

**That's a really valid point as well. I've also found it really useful. I don't know if any of you have seen Canvas themselves as the LMS on YouTube, they do a lot of live content videos and they tend to schedule all those a couple of weeks in advance so you know what they're talking about. A couple of recent ones have been around customising home pages. They get guests on from kind of different schools. Further education colleges, higher education settings to talk about what they're doing with things like customising home pages for students.**

**The analytics tool and how they can be kind of used more frequently; engaging group work, things like that. So yes, so Canvas on YouTube is a good one to have a look at. And as I mentioned earlier, the [Canvascasters podcast](#), which is not an official Canvas podcast, but it's a couple of guys from the States basically just talking really, honestly about Canvas, how they've used it, some really interesting guests on there as well, so it's a good one to listen to.**

**Ok, so the final question from me, ready to you is if you could give one tip to anybody that's just about to take on this migration at Liverpool, from Vital to Canvas, could be any shortcuts, tips or just kind of icebergs to avoid what once, if would that be?**

**FJ:** Yes, I would say don't panic! I know that's easier said than done and yes, it's not necessarily very practical advice except to say that the enormity of the migration can be overwhelming in the abstract, but I think once you're in there and playing around with stuff, it quite quickly becomes obvious that it's a reasonably friendly environment.

Certainly to do stuff, you know, if you're not trying to do anything complex, then it's incredibly easy just to sort of get the hang of it, and I think we've all got sandbox modules that we can just sort of play around in. So, just getting there pressing buttons it won't break and just yes press buttons and try things out. That's what I would say.

**LC:** I would say the corollary to that there is to start sooner rather than later because some buttons that I press didn't do what I expected to do and you know 90% of it goes really well, and then I've spent a month on a 10% annoying thing that's just really irritating me and you might as well find those bugs sooner rather than later.

**FJ:** Yes, certainly if you have got a particular thing in mind that you very much want to do. I had a chat the other day with somebody who wanted to get a Twitter widget into a Canvas page and she been wrestling with it for you know, three days solidly or something and just not managed it. And I think I managed to get it sorted by following a user, but not a hashtag and you know, it was a very specific thing that that she wanted to get sorted. And yes, obviously went down a rabbit hole of, yes, Canvas and Twitter widget hell.

**LC:** Yes, I ended up editing far too much, kind of like basic HTML-esque code just to make something look the way I needed it to look. And that yes, that just went into went into a space I didn't really want to be in at the time.

**GB:** So, Scott, I would suggest editing out this last couple of minutes of discussion of the management school staff might run.

(laughs)

No, actually, I think I would say the tip for anyone-, one would be persevere and take the opportunity to do what you can with the tools that you have at your disposal. Don't just fall back into prior habits in terms of how you present your material. That kind of approach you might take. It's understandable that staff might do that in some respects, but here's an opportunity I think to do things differently.

The other one is not simply to struggle on your own. If there's something you want to do. You know, whether it be a Twitter widget for example, or something else for that matter, not understanding why the Turnitin process, the Turnitin integration works, take opportunity to reach out the others and discuss with them what you want to do.

Typically, I think now given the pilot phase, is that we've had additional resources that are available. There will be answers and guidance on the vast majority of things that are available, but again, persevere with it.

**AB:** Yes, I mean, I think I agree with that. Just use the experience of the people around here and you know there's a lot of it now. A lot of people have been playing with it. I feel even though I was in the pilot, my module was relatively uncomplicated and I feel that lots of people have already surpassed my expertise will have been bugging about with admissions over the summer, for example, which as you can imagine, anybody who wasn't involved in it can imagine what a nightmare that actually was.

**Great tips there! Thank you very much for sharing and thank you very much for sharing your experiences across the whole podcast.**

**Just for anyone listening. If you've got any questions or further thoughts or any more discussion you want to add then please do get in touch with us via <mailto:cie@liverpool.ac.uk>.**

**Thank you very much for listening and join us again on the next CIE Podcast.**