



Canvas VLE terms of use for academic and administrative staff

Education Committee

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Version history

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2.1	February 2023		Updated post DETSG feedback and Approved by Taught Degrees Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Oxford's terms of use for Canvas are stated in this document. These terms of use are applicable to academic and administrative staff. By using Canvas, you are agreeing to comply with these terms of use.

2. What is Canvas?

- 2.1 Canvas is the centrally supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for the University. A VLE is a web-based platform that can support and enhance teaching and learning. Most universities have (at least) one VLE and use it for a range of teaching and learning purposes, including sharing learning materials, supporting learning activities, supplying course information, conducting and managing assessment, communicating with students and supporting collaborative (group) work.
- 2.2 A key benefit of Canvas is that it is designed to present resources, activities and interactions within a course structure, and to organise students and staff into cohorts, groups and roles. Canvas has been integrated with other University data systems in order to obtain that course and user information.
- 2.3 Canvas is provided as a service by Instructure, an educational technology company. The University has its own instance of Canvas, hitherto referred to simply as 'Canvas'. The Saïd Business School has a separate instance of Canvas, which is not covered by this definition or this policy.

3. Overall compliance

- 3.1 Users of Oxford's Canvas VLE must also comply with the University regulations, external legal requirements, rules, policies, and guidelines which govern the use of IT at the University, as published on www.it.ox.ac.uk/policies-and-guidelines.
- 3.2 Canvas course owners are fully responsible for ensuring that their course content adheres to current copyright, accessibility, privacy and other relevant legislation.
- 3.3 The use of Canvas is also governed by [Instructure's International Acceptable Use Policy](#).

4. Governance

- 4.1 There are two primary layers of governance overseeing the Canvas Service, the Canvas Operations Group and the Digital Education Technologies Steering Group.
- 4.2 IT Services projects related to Canvas are overseen at project level through a Project Board, established specifically for the project's aims and objectives. The governance processes relating to any Canvas projects are then overseen by the IT Services Portfolio Management Office, Project Scrutiny Group, and Education IT Committee.
- 4.3 The Canvas Operational Group is led by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and meets weekly to oversee configuration/change management, communications and user engagement, end user support and data and infrastructure. Members include colleagues from the CTL, IT Services and others with high level administration rights. They consider and review the performance of the service, alongside trends and any issues that may arise. The key outputs of the group are operational decisions, including reviewing changes, and providing guidance for best practice in using

Canvas. In addition, all enhancement requests and any user requests that require a decision are considered for progression by the Operational Group.

- 4.4 The Digital Education Technologies Steering Group is the senior governance layer. Its remit is to provide strategic oversight, coordination and escalation for decision-making for the Canvas, ORLO, Teams and [Replay services](#).

5. Duration and nature of access to Canvas

- 5.1 Users can have access to Canvas for the duration of their studies (students) and affiliations (academic and administrative staff) with the University. Due to the nature of the Canvas licence agreement, access will cease when the study or the association with the University ceases (unless the course content is made public by its creators/owners).
- 5.2 Further information about technical data retention/deletion in Canvas is available from the Canvas Guides (Deletion of user records and courses).

6. Acceptable use of Canvas

- 6.1 The primary purpose of Canvas is **to support teaching and learning** across the collegiate University. It is endorsed for this purpose by the Taught Degrees Panel and the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education.
- 6.2 These are the only uses that are supported by the Canvas Service.
- 6.3 Canvas can be used to support the entire life cycle of study, from school through undergraduate and postgraduate education to professional development and lifelong learning. Canvas can also support different modes of teaching e.g., in-person, hybrid, blended learning and online (distance) learning.
- 6.4 Examples of acceptable uses of Canvas for teaching and learning are listed in the sections 6.5 to 6.13. Where courses are not for Oxford students or access or admissions activities, they are capped at 50 participants to ensure that adequate support is available.
- 6.5 Undergraduate and postgraduate teaching:
- provision of learning materials, including in [accessible formats](#) to support inclusive teaching
 - learning activities such as student presentations, quizzes, discussions, group work etc
 - support for tutorials (before, during and after the in-person meeting)
 - formative assessments (assignments, quizzes, graded discussions): online submission, online marking and feedback (SpeedGrader)
 - access to educational recordings (via the [Replay service](#)) access to reading lists (via the use of other teaching and learning tools linked to Canvas (e.g. LTI and other tools such as Vevox, MS Teams)
 - asynchronous student/tutor communication and interaction
 - student-to-student collaboration and teamwork
 - supporting students in vacations, field trips, placements, electives, year abroad
 - teaching shared by students in Oxford and at another institution.

- 6.6 Research students
 - training in research methods and associated skills
 - supervision support
 - research collaboration between students.
- 6.7 Wider student support
 - Courses, training and resources developed by support services such as Disability Advisory Services or the Careers Service.
- 6.8 Students in receipt of study offers from the University
 - courses to support transition from school to undergraduate or postgraduate study
 - online academic inductions for freshers
 - pre-sessional Academic English language courses.
- 6.9 Access and widening participation activities with school students
 - engagement with schools, e.g. tutoring and mentoring
 - online versions of the regional conferences and summer school activities
 - online taster courses to encourage applications
 - extending the reach of teacher conferences through online support.
- 6.10 Personal and professional development education or training
 - for members of the University
 - for the general public.
- 6.11 Alumni
 - alumni-focused learning opportunities.
- 6.12 Administrative functions that support teaching and learning
 - provision of core course information e.g. course handbooks, examination conventions etc.
 - publishing class, lecture and other timetables
 - signing up for teaching events and tutorial sessions
 - announcements (e.g. to notify students about lecture or venue changes).
- 6.13 Training
 - training courses for students which aid the development of skills that they need in their studies
 - training courses for academic and administrative staff, in order to support student learning.

7. Other uses of Canvas

- 7.1 Canvas is designed to support teaching and learning and has been specifically selected by the University of Oxford to deliver this purpose. Other uses are not permitted. CTL, IT Services and Instructure will not provide any assistance to users wishing to use Canvas for those purposes, and the University reserves the right to remove content in violation of this policy, UK laws, other University policies and guidelines, or contractual arrangements.
- 7.2 Summative assessment is not usually permitted in Canvas and Inspira should be used instead. However, if Inspira is not suitable there is an option to explore the use of Canvas subject to final agreement from Education Policy Support.
- 7.3 Examples of uses of Canvas that are **not permitted** include:
 - Secure sharing of exam papers by examiners

- Secure document sharing (e.g. sharing confidential reports, or job applications)
- Storage and exchange of committee papers (even if students serve on such committees or are entitled to read the minutes)¹
- Storage of student dissertations and theses which are managed by academic and administrative staff
- Departmental intranets
- Exchange of files and materials which are not directly related to teaching and learning
- Collaborative activities which do not directly enable or support teaching and learning
- Courses for more than 50 external (non-Oxford) users
- Other administrative purposes which do not directly support teaching and learning.

8. Responsibility of local managers

- 8.1 Divisions, faculties, departments, colleges, and other units are responsible for the management and administration of their own areas in Canvas, by their Local Canvas Coordinator and/or Unit Administrator. It is the responsibility of local managers to ensure that Canvas is used in an acceptable and appropriate way, and that its use complies with this policy and other relevant University policies and guidelines.
- 8.2 These policies include, but are not limited to, data protection, GDPR compliance, copyright, accessibility, information security, access restrictions, intellectual property rights, and educational recordings. Local managers are also responsible for adherence to any Canvas at Oxford Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Instructure's International Acceptable Use Policy (www.instructure.com/policies/intl-acceptable-use). The University's IT-related policies and guidelines can be found at www.it.ox.ac.uk/policies-and-guidelines.
- 8.3 Divisions, faculties, departments, colleges, and other units are responsible for monitoring their Canvas administrators. If a member of staff with administrative access leaves the department or University, the existing administrator is responsible for removing the member's administrator role in Canvas.

9. Monitoring of use of Canvas

- 9.1 The Canvas Operational Group will monitor compliance with the policy on behalf of the Digital Education Technologies Steering Group and the Taught Degrees Panel.
- 9.2 Content in Canvas will be reviewed by the Operational Group following any query or report of non-compliance, which should be sent to canvas@it.ox.ac.uk.
- 9.3 The group reserves the right to perform further occasional reviews of Canvas content to monitor policy compliance and has the authority to remove any content in Canvas which does not comply with this Canvas Terms of Use Policy. Different types of unacceptable content necessitate a different kind of response (details in the table below).

¹ SharePoint Online is recommended for committee papers and document storage. For advice on this and similar kinds of collaboration support, see: <https://help.it.ox.ac.uk/topics/collaboration-support>.

Level	Unacceptable content is	Response
1	Illegal content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove content immediately. Notify course owner and Unit Administrator. Report to disciplinary authorities: staff to Personnel, and students to Proctors and their college.
2	Against University regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove content immediately. Notify course owner and Unit Administrator. If University disciplinary regulations are breached, report to disciplinary authorities: staff to Personnel, and students to Proctors and their college
3	Violates this policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the course owner and the Unit Administrator to remove the content. If the content is not removed, then escalate as per below (see Escalation).

10. Escalation

- 10.1 Queries and issues with non-compliance can be escalated to appropriate channels, as described below. In most cases an initial conversation with a content owner/Unit Administrator will be enough to resolve the situation and have content adapted/removed and brought into line with these terms of use. Only when that informal approach has failed to achieve a resolution will the matter be escalated further. First the Director of CTL, to the Head of the Department or Faculty and then with the director of Education Policy and the Divisional Office. Final consideration of whether the content is in line with the policy is the responsibility of the Taught or Research Degrees Panel, as appropriate.
- 10.2 If Departments or other Canvas users want to review decisions made by the Canvas service, these can initially be escalated to the Canvas Operations Group by contacting canvas@it.ox.ac.uk, and if this does not resolve the issue then the Digital Education Technologies Steering Group by emailing contact@ctl.ox.ac.uk. Again, the final consideration will rest with the Taught or Research Degrees Panel, as appropriate.

11. Review of this policy

- 11.1 The policy will be reviewed by the Digital Education Technologies Steering Group every two years in Hilary term.

12. Queries and advice

- 12.1 CTL will be happy to provide advice on whether a proposed use of Canvas fits the acceptable and supported uses outlined in this policy – the contact address is canvas@it.ox.ac.uk. A key criterion is that in order to be eligible for creation in Canvas, courses must directly support teaching and learning scenarios.