

How Two Key Institutions Partnered with Anthology to Develop and Responsibly Introduce AI Innovations in EdTech

Highlights from Jisc's case study



Northumbria University
NEWCASTLE

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Northumbria University and the University of Westminster are among the most respected higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Both are committed to advancing teaching and learning, including through the use and development of EdTech tools and innovations. A recent **case study** from Jisc, the United Kingdom's leading authority on digital technology in higher education, examines how the two universities collaborated with Anthology on how to responsibly introduce AI in EdTech, resulting in the development and release of **AI Design Assistant** in Blackboard® Learn.

The insights from the University of Westminster and Northumbria University demonstrate that Anthology has made strong and grounded progress in making AI tools more widely available to the sector.



Tom Moule, Senior AI Specialist at The National Centre for AI in Tertiary Education, Jisc

About Northumbria University

INSTITUTION TYPE:

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

LOCATION:

NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND

POPULATION:

40,000

About University of Westminster

INSTITUTION TYPE:

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

LOCATION:

LONDON, ENGLAND

POPULATION:

19,000

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:

 **Blackboard LEARN**





The Challenges

Planning a Responsible Path to AI, Across Policy and Technology

As generative AI rises to prominence, institutions are looking to craft policies that balance both the potential and the risks that it presents. This extends to learning technology, and institution leaders are turning to EdTech providers for guidance on how to maximize innovation while also addressing the concerns of different stakeholders and maintaining academic integrity.

According to Jisc, the University of Westminster “emphasized that the ideal situation would be for all stakeholders to be open about where AI is used (and how/why), but that this can be hard to achieve without clarity over which use cases are appropriate, and which are not: a line that is difficult to draw at this stage. Staff, for instance, may sometimes be unsure whether the use of AI constitutes taking shortcuts or not fulfilling their duties in full. Meanwhile, students continue to have concerns around how far AI can be used before questions of academic integrity arise.”



The Solutions

A Collaborative Approach

In April 2023, Anthology and Microsoft began to investigate how incorporating the power of generative AI into Blackboard Learn could empower instructors. They collaborated to pioneer the use of AI to boost efficiency and improve learning outcomes, all while prioritizing data privacy and security. Customer partners were invited to participate in the collaboration and to ensure that the approach was appropriate for education. The **AI Advisory Council**, comprised of 19 Anthology customers, including the University of Westminster and Northumbria University—worked hand in hand with product development teams across a series of working sessions, ultimately resulting in the development and testing of the AI Design Assistant.



Following this collaborative approach, the AI Design Assistant was launched in Blackboard Learn Ultra in September 2023—reinforced by institution-wide frameworks for the responsible use of AI across policy and technology. In support of these frameworks, Anthology has developed a **Trustworthy AI Approach** that enables users to benefit safely from artificial intelligence. Professor Gunter Saunders, associate director digital engagement and library services at the University of Westminster, and Dr. Doug Specht, assistant head of school at the University of Westminster, “highlighted this framework as a clear demonstration of Anthology’s values and their commitment to responsible innovation.”

Northumbria University also responded favorably to Anthology’s attention to AI ethics. Lee Hall, director of academic technology services at Northumbria University, “cited their Trustworthy AI Approach, as an example of commendable practice, and noted that educators constantly feel in the driving seat while using AI on Blackboard Learn Ultra as they can easily control which features are used in which contexts.” Hall believes that “Anthology has shown discernment and responsibility, as well as innovation in their adoption of AI functionalities.”

A further takeaway was the need for clarity over what constitutes acceptable use of AI. Frameworks and guidance play a pivotal role not only in safeguarding against harm, but in giving organisations the confidence to innovate responsibly. Given this, Anthology’s Trustworthy Approach to AI deserves particular merit.



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Insights Delivered

Responsible AI has enabled the institutions to comfortably and confidently leverage AI Design Assistant in Blackboard Learn.

Contributions from the University of Westminster toward the development of AI Design Assistant included requests for “the ability to create assessment rubrics based on course content and learning objectives . . . These would help educators to communicate with students at scale the knowledge, understanding, and skills that needed to be demonstrated in their work.” This feedback was applied, and rubric generation is one of the key capabilities of AI Design Assistant in Blackboard Learn.

According to Jisc, “Northumbria University has recently started using the AI Design Assistance in Learn Ultra to generate formative assessment activities, using the in-built AI test generation tools; and they are also making use of the image generation tools.” Since its launch, suggestions for formative test questions based on course content has been the most popular feature within the AI Design Assistant, indicating a clear area of opportunity for further AI innovation.

The University of Westminster and Northumbria University are just two of more than 420 global institutions that have enabled the AI Design Assistant, powering 270,000+ unique education tasks. An incredible 95% of instructors surveyed agree that the AI Design Assistant saves them time, reflecting that when educators are engaged in the product development process, the benefits follow in the classroom.

Epilogue

The University of Westminster “is actively fostering discourse around the use of AI, so that stakeholders can voice their excitements, ideas and hesitations; thus shaping clear institution-wide frameworks for the responsible use of AI.” At Northumbria University, Lee “hopes that some of the more prickly problems surrounding the development of AI models will assume greater prominence and start to be addressed.”

Blackboard Learn is evolving in close collaboration with Anthology’s global learning community. The **Anthology Idea Exchange** is one way customers can share, like, vote, and comment on favorite ideas proposed and submitted by Anthology customers. Since the inception of the Anthology Idea Exchange in July 2022, customer contributions have directly informed 200+ new features in Blackboard Learn.

Products highlighted in this customer case study:

 **Blackboard** LEARN

Learn more at anthology.com



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