

BLE Highlight Report

September 2019

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| I. About the BLE | 3 |
| What is the BLE? | 4 |
| Mission Statement | 5 |
| The BLE Team | 6 |
| BLE Partner Institutions | 7 |
| II. BLE Enhancement Themes | 8 |
| Bloomsbury Enhancing Assessment and Feedback | 9 |
| Assessment and Feedback Research | 10 |
| Assessment and Feedback Events | 11 |
| The Book: Assessment, Feedback and Technology | 12 |
| Digital Capabilities for Students and Staff | 13 |
| CMALT | 14 |
| ‘Get Interactive’ MOOC | 15 |
| Digital Skills Awareness Course for Students | 16 |
| Digital Capabilities Events and Activities | 17 |
| III. BLE Core Services | 18 |
| Software and Licencing | 19 |
| Responding to Our Community’s Needs | 20 |
| Bloomsbury Media Lab | 21 |
| IV. Communication and Outreach | 22 |
| Communication and Branding | 23 |
| Outreach Beyond Bloomsbury | 24 |
| User Groups | 25 |
| V. Looking Ahead | 26 |
| Future Plans | 27 |

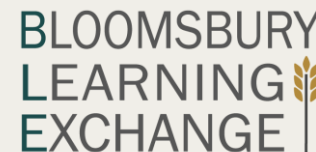


Introduction

This report presents the development of the Bloomsbury Learning Exchange (BLE) digital education service during the past four years, and includes an overview of our projects, events, core services and outreach activities. It's been a busy and productive time. We welcomed new institutional partners, won awards and completed projects that have successfully served the BLE partnership base as well as the wider HE sector in the UK and beyond.

Highlights

- We welcomed the University of London and UCL into the BLE partnership.
- We completed the Bloomsbury Enhancing Assessment and Feedback project, which culminated in the publication of an ebook.
- We launched 'Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology', the BLE's first global MOOC, which won the 2018 Roger Mills Award for Innovation in Learning and Teaching. The Get In MOOC team was shortlisted for the 2017 ALT Learning Technology team of the year award.
- We developed the 'Digital Skills Awareness Course' for new students, currently being implemented by BLE partners and adopted by HEIs across the UK.
- We rebranded and changed our name to reflect more accurately the mission and purpose of the organisation.



I. About the BLE

"I'm proud to support and chair this valuable and successful collaboration."

Jonathon Thomas, Associate Director of Learning Solutions at University of London Worldwide and Chair of the BLE



What is the BLE?

The Bloomsbury Learning Exchange (BLE) is a digital education service, which exists to share good practice between its partners and enable collaboration on technology enhanced learning projects. We are a partnership of six co-located HE institutions in Bloomsbury, central London: Birkbeck, LSHTM, RVC, SOAS, UCL and the University of London.

The BLE:

- designs and creates resources and materials to develop the use of technology for learning and teaching
- organises training and awareness-raising events
- provides special interest groups for its partners to foster supportive networks
- engages in research into best practices and openly publishes the findings
- negotiates shared software licences, which support learning, teaching and research across the consortium
- secures external funding from organisations such as Jisc and UCISA

The BLE's work is conducted through a fixed term, project-based approach, steered by an Advisory Board and defined by an enhancement theme.

Working together as a consortium enables the BLE partner institutions to share expertise and support that they might be unable to offer individually and allows them to benefit from cost efficiencies.

The BLE was established in 2004 and has grown steadily. As learning technology has changed, the BLE has adapted and changed with it.

Awards

Over the past 12 years, the BLE and its Service Manager have been recipients of a number of exciting and prestigious awards:

- The BLE Service Manager was re-awarded the Blackboard Catalyst Award for Community Engagement in 2019, ten years after she first received it in 2009
- The BLE's 'Get in MOOC' team were joint winners of the 2018 Roger Mills Award for Innovation in Learning and Teaching
- The same team had been shortlisted for the 2017 ALT Learning Technology Team of the Year
- The BLE TEL Support Team were highly recommended by ALT in 2010

Mission Statement

The Bloomsbury Learning Exchange

- is committed to supporting innovation through sharing good practice in Technology Enhanced Learning.
- works collaboratively, developing new and exciting ways of improving learning and teaching that would be difficult for the partners to achieve alone.
- supports its partners with cost efficiencies from software negotiations and economies of scale.

“The BLE is an outstanding and unique group for the consultancy and support that it provides to its partners. HEIs have a tendency to 'go it alone' when it comes to sharing good practice and resource development. The BLE provides a framework that works to create a culture of sharing and support amongst the partners. In addition its online courses such as the Get Interactive MOOC and the Digital Skills Awareness course for students support ongoing staff development and advocate for the importance of digital skills. RVC is proud to be part of the BLE!”

Dr Michele Milner, Director of Learning and Wellbeing, RVC

The BLE Team

BLE Executive



Sarah Sherman
BLE Service Manager

The BLE is centrally staffed by a full-time Service Manager, employed jointly by the partners, who holds overall responsibility for the coordination, implementation and development of the service. She is also involved in the development of e-learning within all partner institutions and regularly meets with their respective digital learning and TEL teams. The Service Manager is also responsible for leading the Bloomsbury Media Lab, a brokering service for the partner institutions.

Since 2016, a Digital Learning Specialist has been supporting the work of the BLE Service Manager and leading on specific projects and tasks, such as course design and development, research and graphic design.



Nancy Weitz
Digital Learning Specialist

BLE Steering Group

The BLE is overseen by a Steering Group, which comprises representation from each of the participating institutions from a range of stakeholder groups (e.g. Digital Education, Academia, Library and IT). The Steering Group, which manages the strategic drive of the collaboration, meets on a termly basis to discuss the plans and implementation of the BLE.

BLE TEL Support Team

The staff that oversee the day-to-day implementation of learning technologies within the individual partners collectively form the BLE TEL Support Team. On a regular, termly basis, the Team meets to troubleshoot and share technical and pedagogical developments; meetings are chaired by the BLE Service Manager. The members work together - both in person and virtually - on mutually beneficial digital learning projects as well as supporting and advising on each other's work.

BLE Partner Institutions



The BLE partner institutions are **Birkbeck, LSHTM, RVC, SOAS, UCL** and **the University of London**.

Staff of the institutions participate in a range of BLE groups:

BLE Project Advisory Board: The BLE Project Advisory Board is responsible for assisting the BLE Service Manager to guide the BLE's theme of work over a fixed period of time (typically three years). The Board approves the development of the theme, and serves to ensure that all partner institutions are represented, meeting their respective needs and requirements.

BLE Special Interest Groups

BLESS (Bloomsbury Library E-Systems and Services Group): The Group exists to bring about greater collaboration between the libraries of the BLE partner institutions and Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) colleagues by sharing, designing and developing future projects where technology is used to support online pedagogical offerings and associated information systems.

MOOC Group: The Group comprises experts in MOOC development and moderation from across the consortium and meets termly to share current practice and help members to resolve challenges.

BARDG (Bloomsbury Academic & Research Developers Group): The aim of the group is to exchange academic and research development practice, looking at ways of potentially working together to share resources and projects e.g. developing HEA fellowship schemes, reciprocal participation in PGCert (and equivalent) courses, arranging joint training sessions and meetings with external agencies and similar.

Other Working Groups are set up as needed for specific projects.

II. BLE Enhancement Themes

“Belonging to the BLE gives us access to the collective expertise and ideas across the Bloomsbury partnership plus the opportunity to be part of projects that as a single institution we would have struggled to deliver.”

Hilary Sellars, Chief Information Officer, SOAS



Bloomsbury Enhancing Assessment and Feedback

In 2014, the BLE initiated a broad research and dissemination project over a two year period, focusing on the use of technology in assessment and feedback.

Our aim was to understand and improve processes, practices, opportunities and tools available to the institutional partners of the BLE Consortium.

From the project, we produced three research papers investigating current practice and 21 case studies describing both technology-enabled pedagogy and technical development.

“UCL Knowledge Lab members have worked with colleagues across BLE to realise some of our ambitions for online and blended learning... for digital assessment and feedback.... These collaborations have always been positive, bringing extra resources, community and support. This has been so important for projects that were too big for us to run on our own.”

Professor Diana Laurillard, Professor of Learning with Digital Technologies, UCL



Assessment and Feedback Research

Contextualising the Electronic Management of Assessment Lifecycle in Bloomsbury

The first task in the project was to identify current practices of online assessment and feedback across all BLE partners. This was conducted by developing a Matrix, which identified the usage of a series of provisions, methodologies and techniques (e.g. online submission, online marking, online formative quizzes, clicker technology to collect feedback in classes) for each partner institution. The data collected during this exercise was used to provide an overview of current practice, which was applied to the Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA) Lifecycle - developed originally by Manchester Metropolitan University and adapted by Jisc. This research helped to examine the e-assessment practices and offered recommendations about improvements; therefore, a useful paper beyond Bloomsbury.

Assessment, Technology and Innovation in Distance Learning in the BLE Institutions

This study provided an overview of the technology used across the BLE partners that offer distance learning (DL), including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and offered recommendations about future improvements. A series of interviews and surveys were conducted and a model was developed to categorise the various approaches to assessment. The study served as a good examination into current assessment practices in distance learning and what we can learn from these.

Administrative Perspectives of Electronic Management of Assessment

Assessment and feedback are generally understood as key elements in the work of academic staff and in the education of students, yet the vital roles performed by administrators tend to be overlooked in the management of assessment methodologies and practices. We therefore invited administrative staff from the BLE partner institutions to an event specifically aimed to identify how they were involved in the process of EMA. Attendees were asked to create 'process maps' depicting the EMA workflow in their situation, indicating where their input is required and where their 'pain points' lay. The research served to capture the ways in which administrators are involved in EMA activities and highlighted the challenges it posed to them, leading to some important recommendations.

Assessment and Feedback Events

During the two years of the project, 14 separate events were organised by the BLE Service Manager and were supported by various members of the Project Advisory Board. The majority of these were software demonstrations led by vendors and users of an assortment of assessment and feedback tools. On other occasions, staff from the partner institutions were brought together, offering the opportunity to share practice and learn new ways of managing assessment and feedback.

These events attracted individuals from across the various stakeholder groups within the BLE partners. Some events were also advertised to the London TEL community (via the M25 Learning Technology Group) and nationally via the Heads of e-Learning Forum. This raised awareness of the project externally.

Evidence from the post-event evaluations submitted by attendees indicated that the variety of guest speakers, range of topics covered and numbers of institutions involved were highly valued. The feedback also indicated that attendees appreciated having the opportunity to share experiences, learn from peers and hear from providers about new technologies. Where possible, the events were recorded and live-streamed (using in-house solutions such as Panopto and Blackboard Collaborate), which enabled wider access to the sessions for remote and offline participation.

Key Events and Registrations

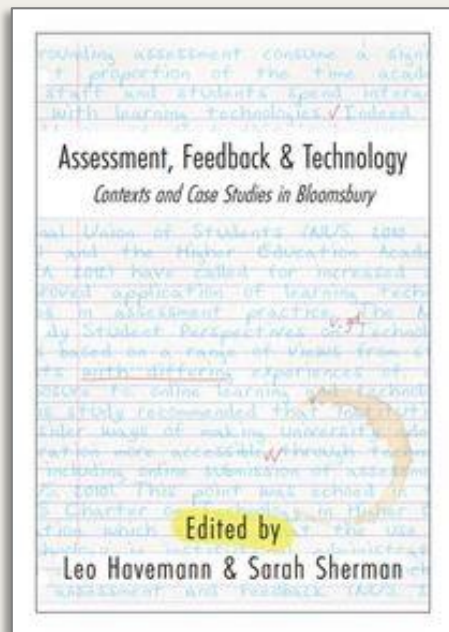
| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Peer Assessment Workshop: 14 | RefME Demo: 56 | RefME Update: 25 |
| Assessment Literacy Meeting: 12 | Turnitin Service Review meeting: 17 | |
| Xerte Show & Tell: 43 | Online Assessment Platforms demo: 59 | |
| Bloomsbury Administrators' Summit: 115 | Online exam demos | |
| URKUND demo: 64 | Rogo demo | |
| SOAS Learning & Teaching Conference: Innovative Approaches to Assessment & Feedback | Project closure event: 43 | |

The Book: Assessment, Feedback and Technology

Assessment, Feedback and Technology: Contexts and Case Studies in Bloomsbury

Edited by Leo Havemann (Digital Education Advisor, UCL) and Sarah Sherman (BLE Service Manager).
www.ble.ac.uk/ebook (pdf download from the BLE website)

The culmination of the research project is presented as a free ebook. The book offers a flavour of the variety and breadth of the BLE's activities as a contribution to the education sector's widening focus on the interplay between assessment, feedback, pedagogy and technology.



The first section of the book contains three papers about the research we conducted, which captures macro-level snapshots of practice at the time of writing. Here, we focus on technology used across the assessment lifecycle, the roles played by administrative staff in assessment processes, and technology-supported assessment in distance learning.

The subsequent sections contain case studies of digital assessment and feedback practices, which operate at the micro-level of specific modules to give insight into the pedagogy underlying the adoption of particular tools, and the associated benefits and challenges. The final section contains case studies of technical developments, which have been undertaken by individual institutions to improve their practices.

There has been much interest in the findings presented in the book: to date, there have been more than 1700 downloads and 2500 views online.

“This project enabled the BLE partners to see how are we using learning technologies to support assessment and feedback - in both pedagogic and administrative senses. By examining the landscape we were able to gain a better understanding of current practices across the consortium, and this enabled the further sharing good and innovative practices.” Leo Havemann, Digital Education Advisor, UCL

Digital Capabilities for Students and Staff

Expectations of digital literacy and competence of our staff in Bloomsbury is now greater than ever before yet many staff have lacked either the motivation or opportunity (or both) to develop these skills.

Our student-facing staff are regularly presented with current students and new starters who have arrived at our institutions with little or no understanding of what an online learning environment is. The fact is, they often lack the digital skills required to navigate through their studies before they get anywhere near graduating.

To address the development of digital capabilities for our staff and students across the BLE institutions, we have designed resources, conducted a number of activities and organised events. Digital Capabilities became the new enhancement theme for the BLE in 2017 and it continues into 2019-20.

“The BLE has and continues to provide Birkbeck with a number of benefits that would be extremely difficult if not impossible to arrange independently. In particular the opportunity to support the development of staff who are critical to our work in the learning technology field is invaluable.”

James Smith, Director of IT, Birkbeck University of London



CMALT

CMALT is the professional accreditation scheme developed by ALT (the Association for Learning Technology) for anyone whose work involves learning technology. Accreditation is achieved by successful submission of a reflective, online portfolio, which evidences skills and experience in learning technology across four core areas and a specialist area.

The BLE CMALT Scheme

The BLE scheme offers a route for candidates to work through the requirements of the portfolio as a group, which helps to keep everyone on track. There are monthly meetings with guest speakers and structured activities, a supporting Moodle course containing guidance, and a mailing list for communications.

Since the BLE scheme started four years ago, nearly 80 staff members from across the BLE partners have set off on their CMALT voyage and many have now achieved their CMALT accreditation. Previous cohorts included academics, librarians, learning technologists, careers advisers and professional support staff who all have a strong interest in learning technology.



“The big take-away for me in undertaking CMALT accreditation was the reflection aspect to my portfolio. I have now incorporated a reflective learning process into my teaching, which has had a positive impact on my students.... I found the whole process very rewarding and would wholeheartedly encourage anyone thinking of the CMALT qualification to engage with a structured approach such as organized by the BLE.”

Steve Hirons, Researcher and Lecturer in Earth and Planetary Sciences, Birkbeck

'Get Interactive' MOOC

In 2017, the BLE launched its first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), 'Get Interactive: Practice Teaching with Technology', on the Coursera platform. The course originated from the 'BLOOC', the BLE's successful Moodle course designed for academic and support staff.

'Get in MOOC' is a 3-week introduction to some of the popular technologies that educators use to make their teaching engaging, interactive and dynamic. Each week focuses on a particular topic: 1. Using **multimedia** for learning and teaching; 2. Encouraging student **collaboration**; 3. Formative **assessment** and feedback. The course has been running continuously every four weeks since the launch and includes a team of locally-based mentors for support. Visit www.ble.ac.uk/getinmooc.

In addition to local PGCE groups and staff across the BLE partners, the participant base around the world has been growing steadily:

- 30,911 people have visited the course
- 6,749 total learners
- 4069 active learners
- 258 payments had been made (a quarter of which comes directly to the BLE)

'Get In MOOC' received the University of London's 2018 Roger Mills Prize for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, and the 'Get In MOOC' team (Sarah Sherman, Eileen Kennedy and Nancy Weitz) was shortlisted for the Association for Learning Technology's 2017 Team of the Year award.



Map of participants

"This MOOC has helped me to understand the simple yet effective ways to design and improve online courses. The course follows a clear route and practices what it preaches; it shows learners how the course is designed along the same principles, and using the same tools, it is teaching about. Not only has it helped me to hone my skills but it has encouraged me to learn more about certain aspects of learning design and seek further knowledge and experience in learning technologies."

Hiifah Tariq, Programme Officer, University of London Worldwide

"I am working as an instructional designer at the Open University of Tanzania. I would like to thank you all for this wonderful course, it has been an eye opener to me in various ways. I have learned many new things which will help me in my job. Thank you!"

Course participant

Digital Skills Awareness Course for Students

The BLE's Digital Skills Awareness course originated in 2017 from a request made by a Birkbeck colleague for a resource to help students know what kinds of digital skills they would need for a successful learning experience at university.

Through two years of development and successful piloting with BLE partner institutions, we created a "template" course, to be customised and localised by individual institutions, outlining the key digital capabilities students need for their studies, that helps them identify the skills they already have and the ones they need to acquire or improve. The course provides valuable tips from a variety of sources, including university support staff and students, as well as helpful resources and videos.

Each unit focuses on a particular topic:

1. **General Technologies:** Working with files, Microsoft Office applications, browsers and search engines
2. **Learning Technologies:** Online learning environments, forums, assignments/assessments and video
3. **Access, Sharing and Safety:** Accounts/access, safety, social media and sharing
4. **Getting Organised:** Notetaking, referencing and digital wellbeing

In the interest of sharing educational resources, the course was made available in summer 2019 for HE institutions across the UK. To date, the BLE has received 140 requests to adopt the course and many are currently implementing it.

For more information, watch our introductory video or visit www.ble.ac.uk/digitalawareness.



"Just wish I'd had this when I first started! All relevant info for studying and helping to use the technology at Birkbeck. All in one place!" Pilot participant

Digital Capabilities Events and Activities

In addition to these three key activities, we also arranged a wide programme of events and workshops. The following are some highlights.

Jisc Digital Student Tracker

In 2017, five of the BLE institutions jointly participated in the Jisc Digital Student Tracker research. The Tracker, delivered as an online survey, was advertised to all students at each institution and produced 330 responses in total. We were able to make a number of recommendations, using the national data as a benchmark, including suggested improvements to Moodle and the use of learning technology created by teaching staff. Minor issues, voiced by our students, can be used by e-learning, IT, academic and information services staff as evidence to support and enhance digital learning provisions.

Where's your digital at?!

In 2018, the BLE ran a series of lunchtime workshops for staff to identify any gaps in their own digital skills and to learn how to address them. We trialled the Jisc Discovery Tool - a new platform which is designed to:

- help participants reflect on their current level of digital expertise and confidence
- find out how to make use of digital technologies
- get recognition for the skills they already had

The workshop gave participants a personalised report with links and access to resources and guidance.

ABC Learning Design 'Training the trainer' workshop

The ABC team at UCL ran a dedicated session for the BLE partners regarding their exciting ABC learning design approach. We joined the growing community of users to find out why ABC is an effective and engaging hands-on workshop, which is used extensively at UCL and is growing nationally and internationally. Course teams can work together to create a visual 'storyboard', which outlines the type and sequence of learning activities (both online and offline) required to meet the module's learning outcomes. At this two-hour session, arranged specifically for the BLE, Natasa Perovic and Clive Young demonstrated how the BLE partners can deliver the ABC workshop at their own institutions.



ABC workshop

III. BLE Core Services

“We have found the BLE invaluable to maintain positive supplier relations; keep in touch with sector best practice; and to combine efforts with other institutions for platform enhancements. The BLE allows its constituent partners to deliver an excellent service, well above what could be achieved working in isolation.”

Dave Cobb, Director of Enterprise Applications, SOAS



Software and Licencing

Shared software, technology, systems and licencing have all been foundational for the BLE and remain central to the core services. Over time, partners have found it necessary to have independent systems, but there are still instances of sharing and the cost efficiencies associated with group licences for some software, which have been beneficial for the consortium. In addition, the BLE holds events for demonstrations, meeting vendors and sharing practice using the technologies.

Licencing

Through BLE negotiations, partners receive:

- 15% discounts off Echo360 and Panopto
- Consortium deals for Blackboard Collaborate and Moodle hosting



Demonstrations

Internal requests for software demonstrations are regularly received by the BLE Service Manager, who makes careful, prudent selections as to which service providers she invites to demonstrate their products. For example, a demonstration of two competing online tutoring solutions took place in Bloomsbury primarily for academic support staff in February 2019; Brain in Hand, an app for students with mental health and learning difficulties, was demonstrated in January 2018.

Service review meetings

The BLE Service Manager conducts a monthly service review meeting with CoSector, our Moodle hosting provider, acting as a conduit between the BLE partner institutions and the service provider. Any issues are collated before the meeting and an institutional report is fed back afterwards.

Termly or biennial service review meetings are arranged when a representative from a specific provider attends a meeting for BLE learning technology staff. Attendees share individual updates on their respective progress/issues/challenges, enabling them to learn from each other. The representative then delivers a service update/roadmap regarding their software before responding to any queries or concerns the attendees may have. Individual one-to-one meetings are also offered before and/or after meeting for those that want it.

The BLE organises service reviews with Turnitin, Blackboard Collaborate, Panopto and LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com).

Responding to Our Community's Needs

The BLE strives to make sure its partner institutions' needs are met. Key ways to achieve this is through arranging events and meetings with suppliers, organising training sessions and developing materials to assist colleagues in preparing for changes in the law or culture of learning and teaching. These activities often involve contributions from external experts. When a request for a software demonstration is made by one institution, all are invited to attend. The three examples below demonstrate the BLE's responsiveness to its partners.

GDPR Compliance

Ahead of the GDPR legislation coming into effect in 2018, the BLE organised a workshop to examine the new regulations and the impact compliance would have on anyone who administers or manages learning technologies. James Smith, Director of IT at Birkbeck, provided an excellent overview of GDPR and led us through some useful discussions about how the new law would affect our work.

Accessibility Regulations

In May 2019, a workshop was held for anyone supporting, influencing or leading on the design of online course materials regarding how to make Moodle courses comply with the new accessibility regulations. In July, a second workshop followed which focused more broadly on what the new legislation demands of university sector websites and how we should respond.

MOOCs for Beginners

The BLE MOOC Group has been running since 2018 for expert developers of MOOCs. Since this time, requests have been received from Bloomsbury colleagues who are interested in developing MOOCs for the first time to join the group and learn from collective experience. It was felt by the Group that this would dilute the purpose of sharing current practice, so a MOOC for Beginners workshop has been offered instead to provide new MOOC developers an opportunity to learn top tips and discuss methodologies. This enabled several of the attendees to start working on their own proposals.

"The [MOOC] workshop was really useful and my colleague Fran and I are already brainstorming some ideas!" Dr Nicole Blum, Senior Lecturer, UCL IoE

Bloomsbury Media Lab

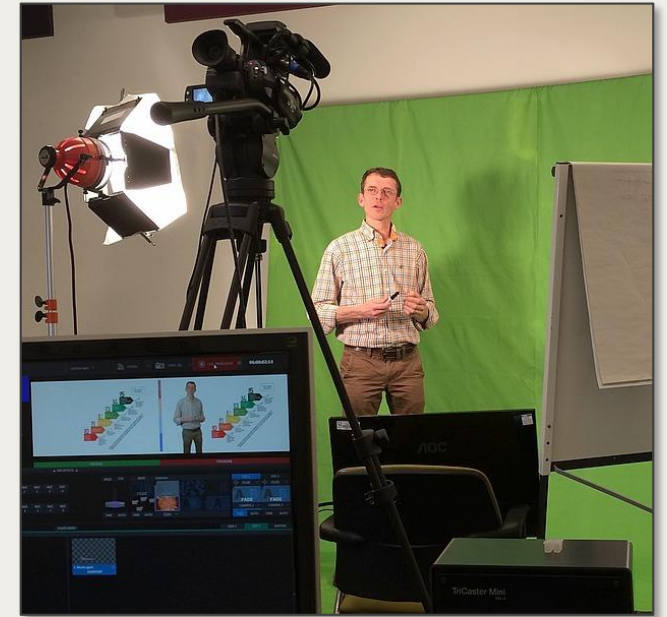
The Bloomsbury Media Lab is a shared media brokering service set up for the partners of the Bloomsbury Learning Exchange. The service exists to help coordinate, develop and support media and TEL related activities across the partner institutions. This service provides reliable, quality and cost-efficient access to technology and expertise within Bloomsbury and beyond. The Lab works with a range of internal and external specialists in digital media, as well e-learning and pedagogic experts. For more information, visit www.ble.ac.uk/media-lab.

We work with a number of professional freelancers in the areas of:

- Animation
- Assistive Technology
- Audio services
- Copywriting
- Photography
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Training
- Video production
- Video editing



SOAS Radio Studio



LSHTM Multimedia Studio

IV. Communication and Outreach

“The BLE is an important organisational member of the Association, actively engaging with the development of leading professional practice and recognition on a national scale. Particular examples of this is the achievements of the CMALT cohorts, which have established a blueprint which other organisations have successfully adopted.”

Dr Maren Deepwell, Chief Executive, Association for Learning Technology (ALT)



Communication and Branding

In 2017, the BLE began a programme to expand and modernise its communication portals with the aim of bringing a fresh and professional look to the outward face of the consortium and to make it easier to disseminate its activities to the partner institutions as well as the world.

Name change and branding

As part of the rebranding exercise, in 2019 the BLE changed the “E” in its name from “Environment” to “Exchange” to reflect the current nature and aims of the organisation.

The previous BLE logo, which had been in place since the inception of the BLE, featured the use of an ear of wheat or grain, as suggested by the meaning of “blé” in French. The new logo set, designed in 2018, clarifies and foregrounds the wheat motif but retains the original colours: dark teal, gold and grey.

New BLE logo



Old BLE logo



BLE website

Website and Blog

The BLE website (www.ble.ac.uk) underwent redesign in 2017 and was brought onto the Weebly platform in order to provide a fresh look, a responsive structure (for different devices) and to simplify updates. The Blog, redesigned in 2018 and linked to the website, is used by the Service Manager for important messages, news and announcements. The BLE also took ownership of the ble.ac.uk domain for email in 2019.

Social Media

The BLE also uses Jiscmail lists and Twitter ([@ble_tweets](https://twitter.com/ble_tweets)) for communicating to partners and the world beyond Bloomsbury more generally. We have also created a Facebook page.



Wheat border design

Outreach Beyond Bloomsbury

In an ever-changing world of learning technology, it is important that the BLE is at the forefront of developments for the benefit of its partner institutions. The following external groups support and enrich the BLE community by extending the reach of our network. Interaction with these groups provides a wider pool from which the BLE partner institutions can learn and develop practice whilst at the same time offering the BLE greater visibility and reputational leverage in the wider national and international HE sector.

Association for Learning Technology (ALT)

In addition to running the BLE CMALT scheme, the BLE Service Manager has been a Trustee of ALT since 2013 and her second term comes to an end in September 2019. During this time, Sarah was the chair of the Membership Development Committee, which helped to ensure all BLE institutions were getting the most out of their ALT memberships. Sarah – and other BLE colleagues - have regularly presented at the ALT Annual Conference.

UCISA Digital Education Group (DEG) Committee

The BLE Service Manager is a member of the UCISA DEG's organising committee, which ensures that the needs of the BLE institutions can be met by the Group's activities. For example, in 2018 she was involved in organising a lecture capture conference and a Tweetchat regarding minimum standards for the VLE as well as contributing to the biennial UCISA TEL Survey and supporting case studies.

Jisc

Since originally being a staff member at Jisc, Sarah has ensured that the BLE is involved in Jisc activity by delivering presentations at conferences (e.g. the Jisc Digital Capability Community of Practice), piloting new services (e.g. the Digital Student Tracker) and taking part in Jisc co-design events, which are used to inform new areas of focus for Jisc.

Heads of e-Learning Forum (HeLF)

As a regular attendee at this termly event and a contributor of the Forum's mailing list, the Service Manager represents the BLE institutions and feeds back to staff on the outcomes of meetings. She has regularly presented at meetings showcasing the work of the BLE.

User Groups

University of London User Experience Group (UoL UXG)

The BLE Service Manager co-chairs the UoL UXG, which aims to bring about greater collaboration between the University of London and its member institutions in designing and developing future online pedagogical offerings and associated information systems based on a User Experience approach. The Group meets termly and has coordinated two UX conferences since its launch in 2014.

Blackboard Mobile & Collaborate User Group (MoCo)

The BLE Service Manager was the co-founding moderator of MoCo, which brings together users of Blackboard's Mobile and Collaborate platforms; all but one BLE institution uses Blackboard Collaborate, and leading that half of MoCo ensures that the needs and requirements of our institutions are met when organising termly hybrid events and monthly online drop-in sessions. In 2019, Sarah won the Blackboard Catalyst Award for Community Engagement for her efforts in co-running the Group.

Moodle User Group Greater London (MUGGL)

The BLE Service Manager founded MUGGL in 2011 and continues to co-manage the Group. MUGGL brings together Moodle administrators and developers to share practice, seek mutual help and guidance and to discuss developments and improvements to usage. MUGGL is open to all Moodle-using HE institutions within the M25 area; it meets termly and offers members an active mailing list.

M25 Learning Technology Group (M25LTG)

A regional members' group of ALT, the M25 LTG meets termly and has an active mailing list; all partner institutions of the BLE attend meetings and make use of the mailing list. A member of the BLE TEL Support Team is part of the M25LTG Organising Committee. As a consortium, the BLE has regularly presented at meetings on current projects and ongoing work to disseminate but also gain insightful feedback from local experts.

"I just wanted to thank you so much for the [UoL UXG] meeting today... it was such a breath of fresh air to have you facilitating in a direction that acknowledged the challenge but also focused on actual action." Danielle Johnstone, E-Learning Visual Designer, King's Online, King's College London

V. Looking Ahead

“The BLE is an integral part of SOAS’s approach to the realm of Digital Learning and technology; we’ve learnt a great deal and will continue to do so. Sarah Sherman’s leadership is exemplary: a model of sensitivity and understanding. We’d be lost without it.”

Dr J Simon Rofe, Global Diplomacy Programme Director & Reader in Diplomatic and International Studies, SOAS



Future Plans

Looking ahead to 2019-20 and beyond, the BLE plans to be engaged in:

- Further embedding of the Digital Capabilities theme, primarily through:
 - creating a Moodle version of the Digital Skills Awareness course aimed at teaching staff
 - establishing a partnership with FutureLearn to develop a MOOC version of the Digital Skills Awareness course for students
- Consulting with key BLE stakeholders to set a new theme for 2020-21
- Implementing Google Suite for Education to improve BLE administration whilst ensuring GDPR compliance
- Designing a new MOOC for prospective PhD students, co-developed by Bloomsbury-based PhD students
- Improving support for BLE mentors (for the MOOC and CMALT)
- Developing a BLE Communications Strategy



Many thanks to our key supporters, who have been instrumental in shaping and guiding the BLE to success: the Steering Group, the TEL Support Team, the Bloomsbury Heads of Administration and other colleagues and staff members of partner institutions.

The BLE Executive Team



BLE

Contact

ble@bloomsbury.ac.uk | www.ble.ac.uk/contact