Excerpts from presentation for Blackboard Ally EU User Group (25/03/21)

Ally, a11y, and online

University of Brighton

Information Services

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This presentation is about Blackboard Ally…

…it is also about the services and people that operate **around** Blackboard Ally

Background : Proto Persona

University of Brighton

Four campuses in Brighton and Eastbourne

Behaviours and Actions

- Emphasis on Inclusive Practice
- Widening participation a crucial driver
- Management buy-in due to auditing functions
- Recognised need to improve resources

Demographic and Psychographic Details

- **Student population** 18,987
- **Staff population** 2,600
- **Schools** 13 (moving to 6)
- **Disabled students** 21%
  Learning disability: 13% or 1 in 8
- **Disabled staff** 8.8%
  as compared to sector average of 5%

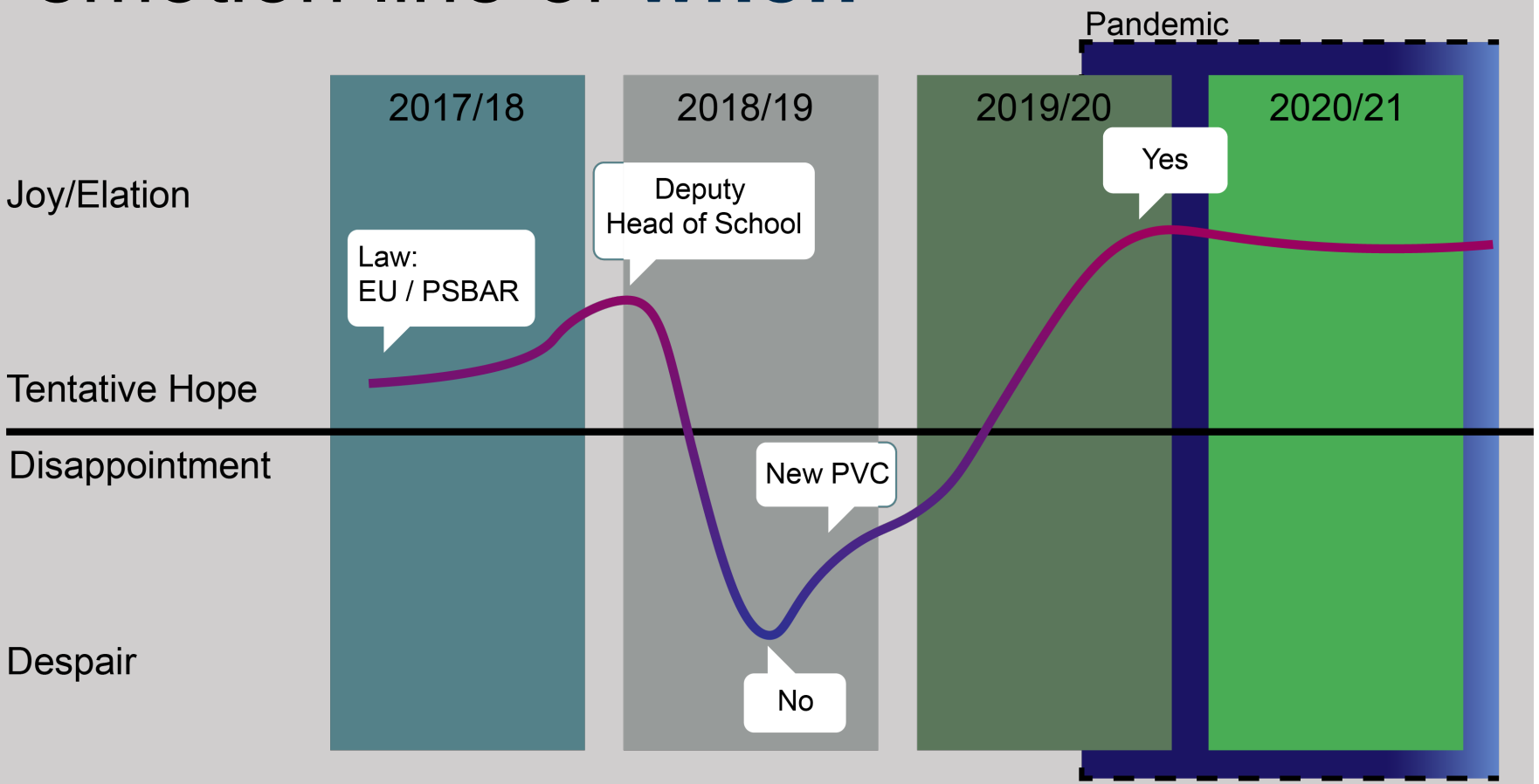
Needs and Pain Points

- Student communications and support
- Limited staff resource dedicated to accessibility – no internal assistive tech team
- The pandemic: academic staff burnout
- Academic staff misunderstanding and apathy
- Mismatch between expectations and outcomes

a11y

~ a [ccessibilit] y
~ a [string of 11 characters] y

The emotion line of **when**



ally

~ an add-on for Blackboard VLE.

Blackboard Ally improves the experience for all users by providing alternative document formats.

Blackboard Ally provides feedback to staff so that accessibility can continually improve.

Our **to-do** list

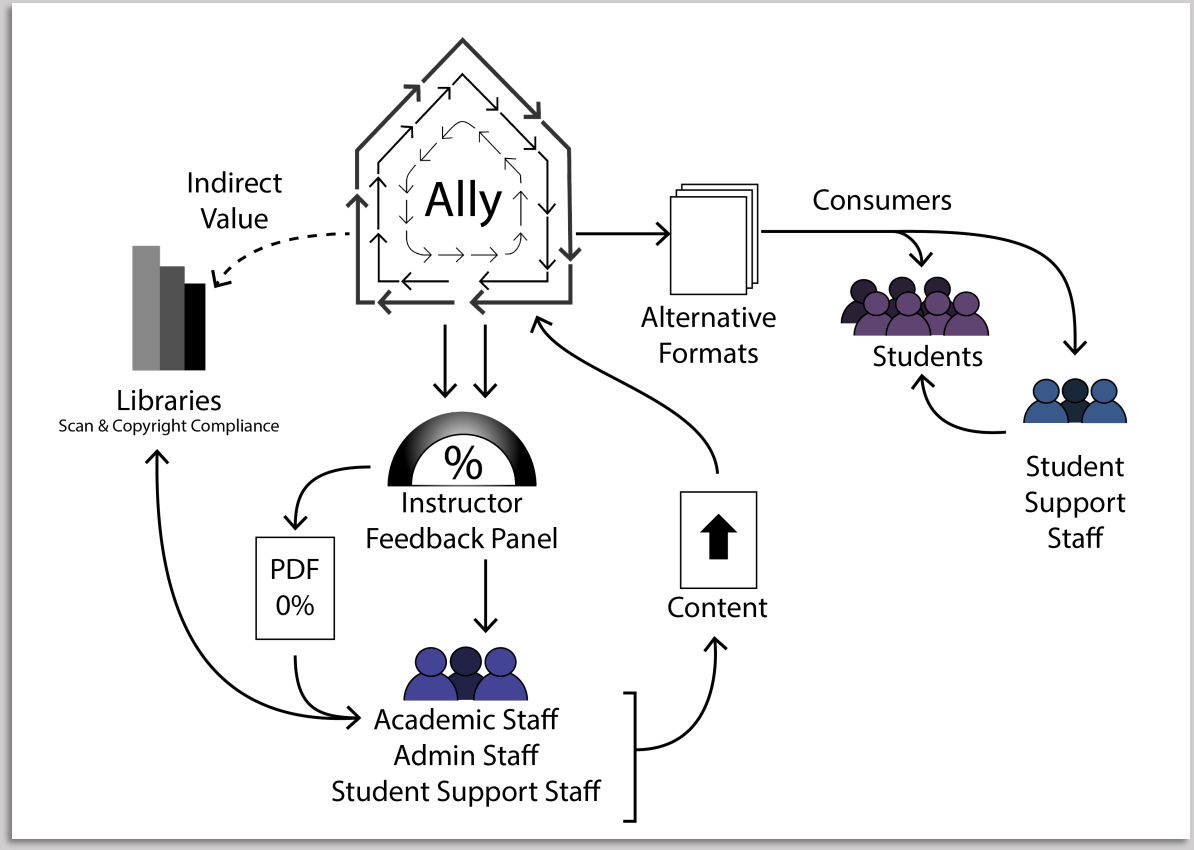
1. **Who:**
   - Identify and communicate with stakeholders
   - Win over hearts and minds
2. **What and When:** Plan for a phased roll out of Blackboard Ally
3. **Where and How:**
   - Deliver training completely online
   - Self-service training and documentation

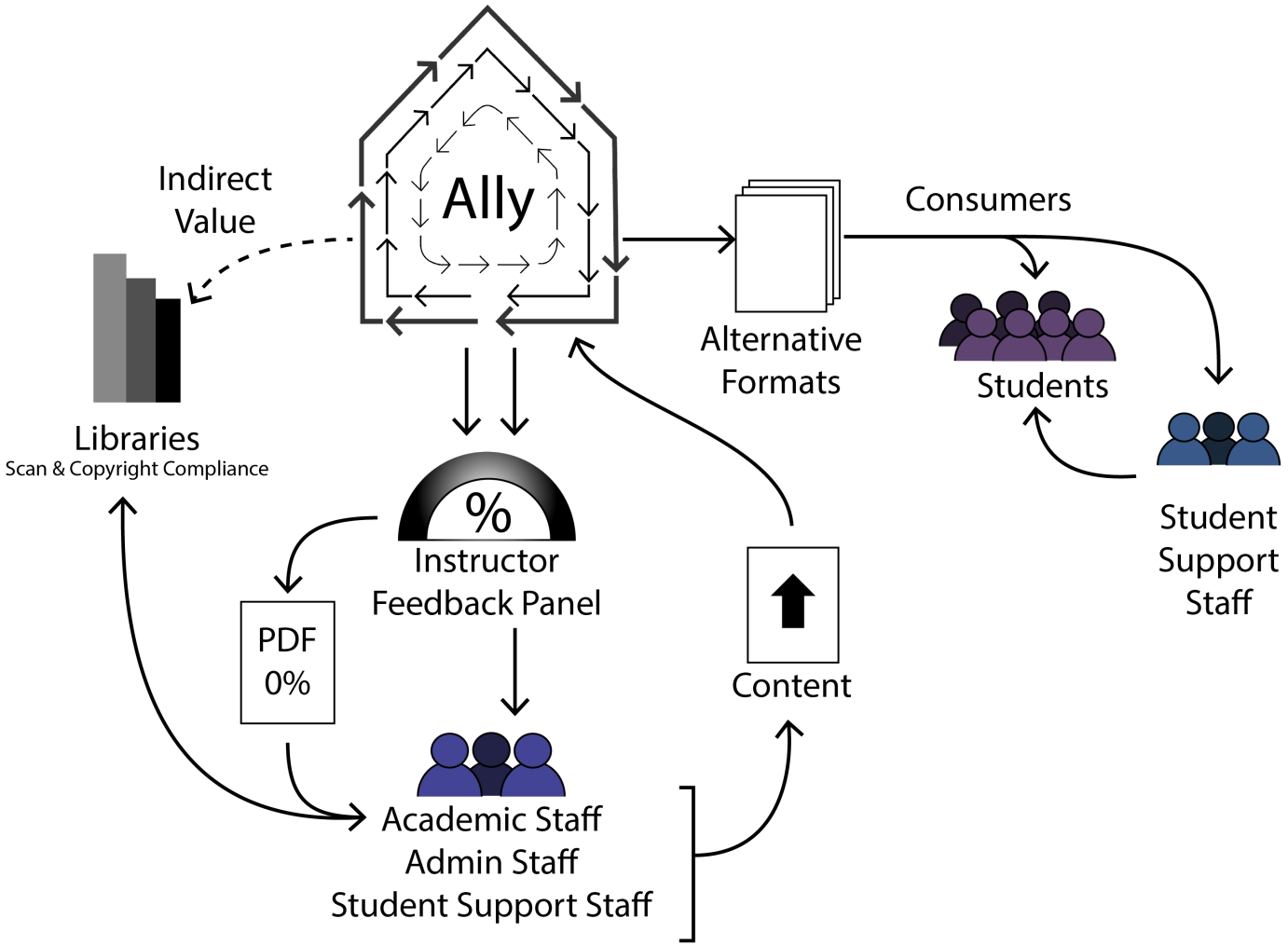
to-do

1.1 **Identify** and communicate with **stakeholders**

Always start here…

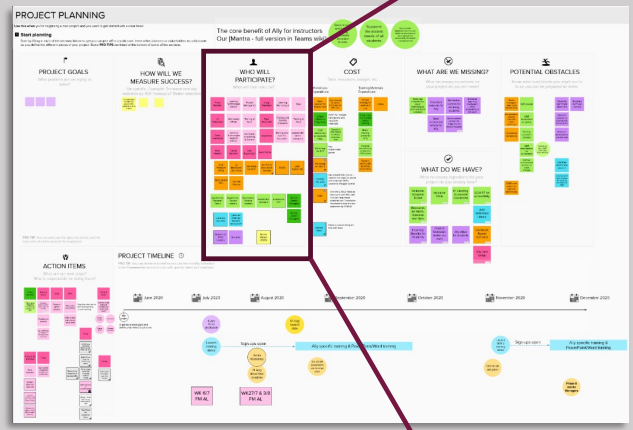
Know thy service users




Ally
Indirect Value
Libraries
Scan & Copyright Compliance
Alternative Formats
Consumers
Students
Student Support Staff
%
Instructor Feedback Panel
PDF 0%
Content
Academic Staff
Admin Staff
Student Support Staff

to-do

1.2 Identify and **communicate with stakeholders**



An opportunity to build and strengthen internal collaborations

Mural Template

to-do

1.3 Win over **hearts and minds**

Key points

Minimise tracking/auditing due to perception as surveillance.

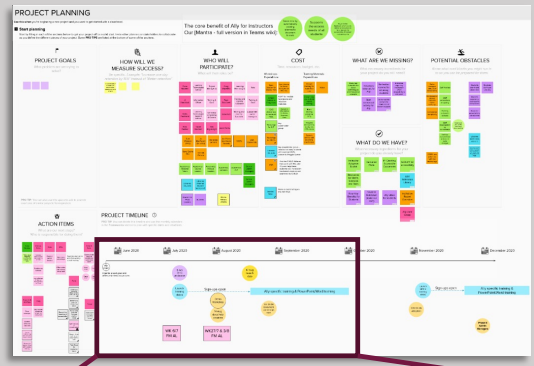
Create a core message.

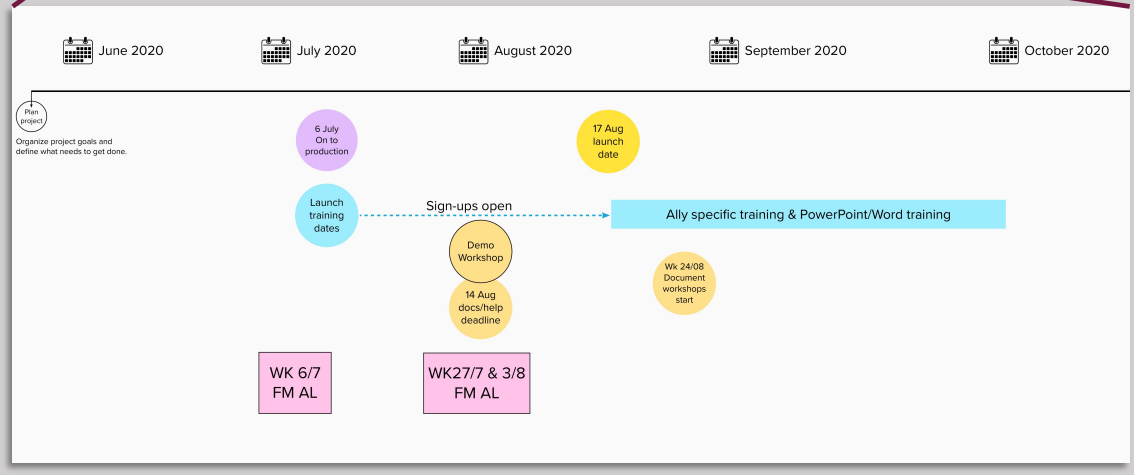
Core Message –
Three Things you Need to know about Ally

1. Ally saves time by automatically creating alternative document formats
2. Ally supports the access needs of all students
3. Ally provides feedback which is only visible to instructors to help improve the accessibility of content in My Studies

to-do

2. Plan for a phased roll out of **Blackboard Ally**





Two phases were planned with the ethos of **improvement first**, **statistics later**

online

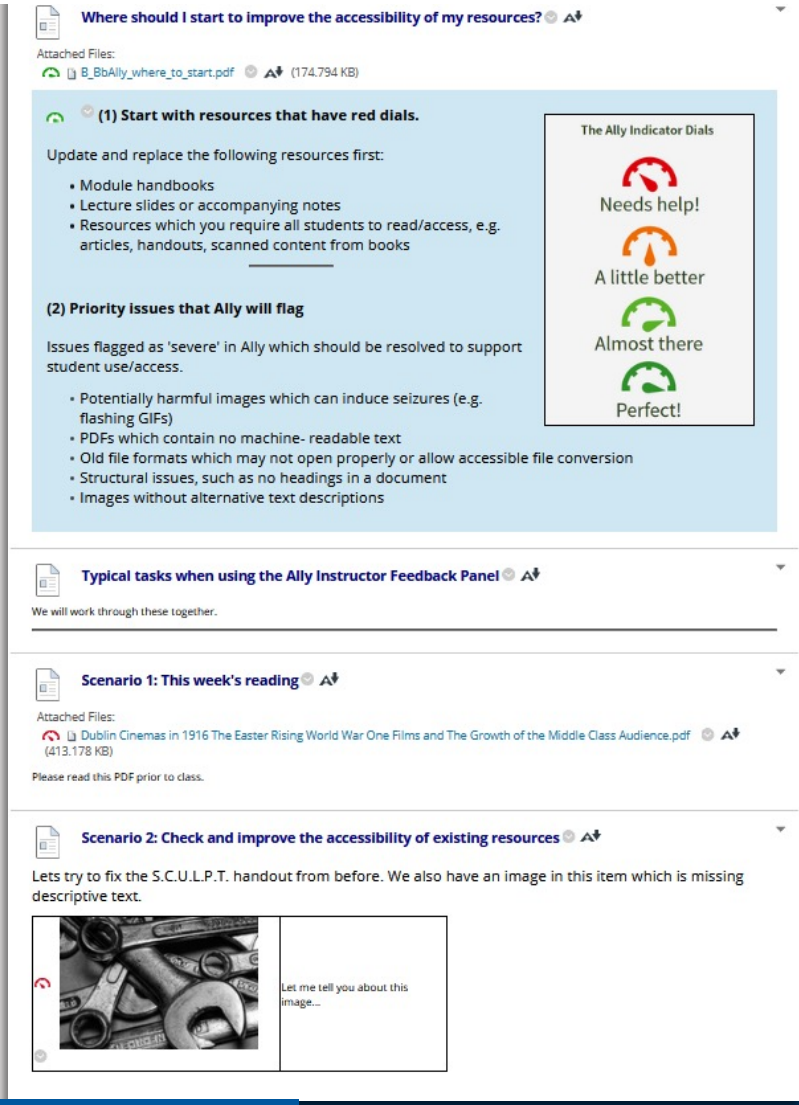
~ the challenge of working during a pandemic even when you are *techies*

to-do

3.1 Deliver training **completely online**

Via MS Teams but using the VLE with task scenarios

With companion session: ‘Creating Accessible Digital Documents’



to-do
3.2 Self-service **training** and **documentation**

- In CPD module for staff
- In Emergency Teaching Blog
- Use of gov.uk digital standards (GDS)
- Use of S.C.U.L.P.T. acronym
- Guidance for Libraries and Service Desk
- Guidance for students

Two pronged approach with harmonisation across the eLearning Team and the IS Workshops Training Team.

Summary – Top 5 tips that work

1. Focus on **tool-based tasks and values** to stay concise
2. Craft consistent and **simple messages**
3. Opportunities to **collaborate** are chances to **remind and refine**
4. Celebrate and **cherish people who attend workshops/events**
5. Iterate, iterate, **iterate**

References [1/2]

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Images:

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