

# Ally for Instructors



## Introduction

Each of your students is unique, with diverse learning abilities. To support them, Ally provides alternative and accessible versions of your original content items. Alternative formats provide greater opportunity for everyone to access the information they need, in the way they need it. In many cases, accessible course content benefits all students, including those without a disability. Accessibility is often closely connected to the quality and usability of the course materials.

For example, Ally can provide your content items as **HTML** for improved reading on mobile devices, **Electronic Braille** files for use with braille displays for the visually impaired, and as **MP3 audio** files for learning on the go.

Ally will automatically scan your original content items, generate alternative formats of them and make them available for download by you and your students. The scan process does not require any interaction on the Instructor's behalf.

**Note:** Your original file will not be affected by the alternative formats. Ally **does not** store a copy of the original content item, move the original, or delete it. In addition, Ally does not scan or provide alternative formats for any student-generated content or files.

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## Available Alternative Formats

For the following original content file types:


- PDFs
- Microsoft Word documents
- Microsoft PowerPoint presentations
- OpenOffice/LibreOffice files
- Uploaded HTML files

Ally can generate these alternative formats:

- OCR'ed (Optical Character Recognition) version – automatically extracted text from scanned documents for improving reading and searching.
- Tagged PDF (currently for Word, PowerPoint and OpenOffice/LibreOffice files) – structured PDFs for improved use with assistive technology.
- Mobile-friendly HTML.
- ePub – for reading as an e-book on a mobile device or other e-book reader.
- Electronic Braille – BRF version for electronic braille displays.
- MP3 Audio version for listening.
- BeeLine Reader – enhanced version that uses an 'eye-guiding colour gradient' for easier and faster on-screen reading.

A **Translated Version** file format that uses machine-translation to convert the original content item into a total of 50 different languages, will be coming soon.

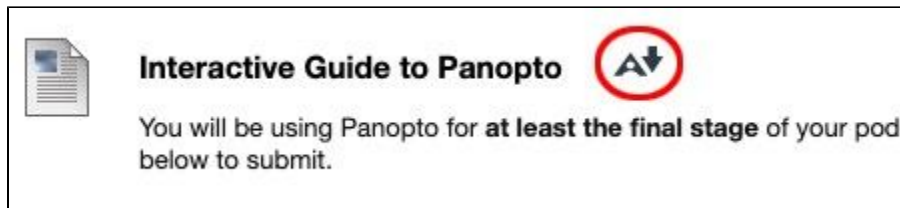
### Downloading Alternative Formats

You can download the alternative formats anywhere you see Ally's alternative formats download icon: 


Just look for the Ally Alternative format icon next to file links:



And next to content items:









To download the Ally Alternative format version of your content:

1. Roll your mouse pointer over the content item and select the **Ally alternative formats download** icon: 
2. The **Download alternative Formats** pop-up window will open:






Download alternative formats ▾ ✕

Selected item:

-  Adding a file to a content area in Blackboard
-  ePub  
For reading as an e-book on an iPad and other e-book readers
-  Electronic braille  
BRF version for consumption on electronic braille displays
-  Audio  
MP3 version for listening
-  BeeLine Reader  
Enhanced version for easier and faster on-screen reading
-  [Help](#)

By downloading an alternative format, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#)

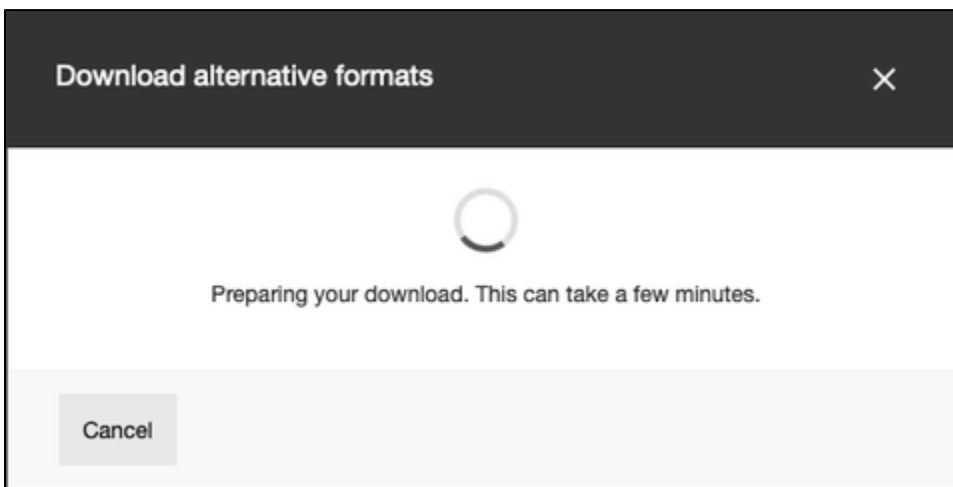
3. Choose the alternative format you wish to download by selecting the radio button next to it. In the example below, the Audio (MP3) format has been selected:

-  ePub  
For reading as an e-book on an iPad and other e-book readers
-  Electronic braille  
BRF version for consumption on electronic braille displays
-  Audio  
MP3 version for listening
-  BeeLine Reader  
Enhanced version for easier and faster on-screen reading
-  [Help](#)

4. Then select the **Download** button:



5. If this is the first time that alternative format has been requested, Ally will need to prepare the file for download:




For large, or complex files, the file preparation process can take several minutes to complete. You can continue to use Blackboard Learn by closing the **Download alternative Formats** window. You can then return to the alternative formats when the file preparation is complete.

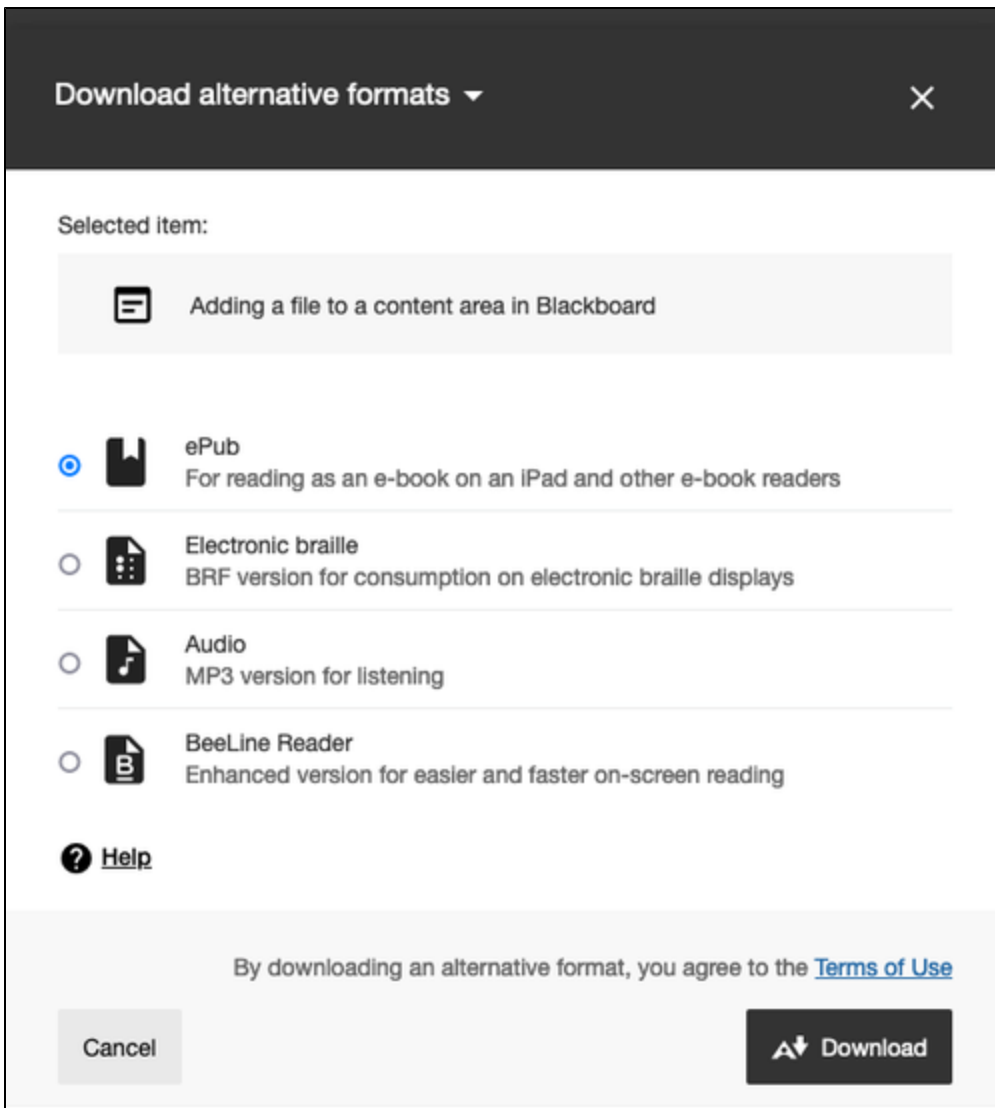
**Note:** Alternative formats files are removed from Ally **after 30 days**. A new request for the file after 30 days, will regenerate the alternative format file.

#### Disable alternative formats (for individual files)

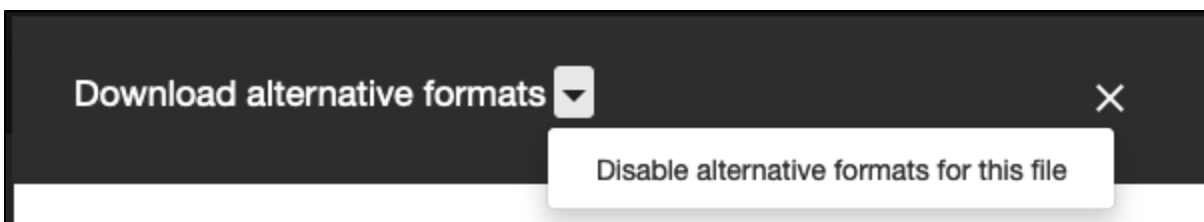
As an instructor, you may prefer to turn off alternative formats for individual content items.

To do this:

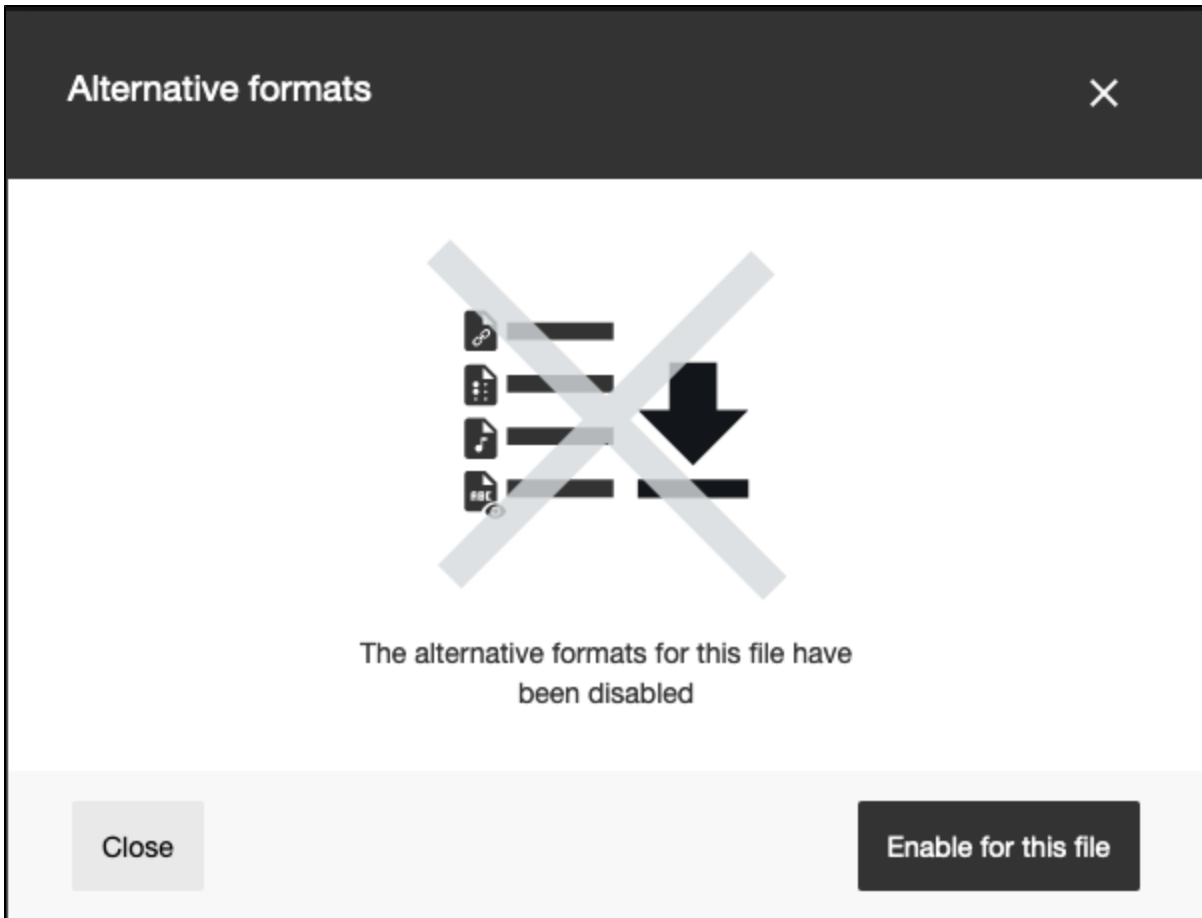
1. Roll your mouse pointer over the content item and select the Ally alternative formats download icon 
2. The **Download alternative Formats** pop-up window will appear:



3. Select the arrow to the right of **Download alternative formats** and choose **Disable alternative formats for this file** from the drop-down menu that appears:



4. The pop-up window will change to indicate that Ally has disabled alternative formats for this file:



5. Select the **Close** button to save the changes, or select **Enable for this file** to re-enable alternative format versions of the file.

**Note:** If students try to download alternative formats of a file, when the option has been disabled, they will see a message telling them that alternative formats for that content item are no longer available.

## Accessibility Feedback

In addition to providing alternative content formats, Ally also scans your course content and provides you with accessibility feedback.




### Ally Indicators

Accessibility feedback is displayed as an **Ally Indicator** next to a file or content item. Ally's accessibility checklist is based on [WCAG 2.1 AA \(Web Content Accessibility Guidelines\)](#), with Ally performing additional accessibility checks.



**Note:** The Ally indicators are **never** visible to students.

The **Ally indicators** look like this:



	<p><b>High (Light Green, 67-99%):</b> File is accessible but could be improved.</p>
	<p><b>Medium (Amber, 34-66%):</b> File is somewhat accessible and could use improvement.</p>
	<p><b>Low (Red, 0-33%):</b> File has severe accessibility issues and needs attention.</p>

The Ally indicators appear next to the content items like this:

	<p><b>Audio Podcast - SHOW NOTES template</b></p>
	<p><b>Audio Podcast - PEER EVALUATION form</b></p>
	<p><b>Audio Podcast - Three stages of Podcast Production</b></p>

For content with **Low** to **High** scores, Ally displays the accessibility issues and provides step-by-step guidance on how to improve them (see the notes on the **instructor feedback panel** below for more information).

#### Instructor Feedback Panel

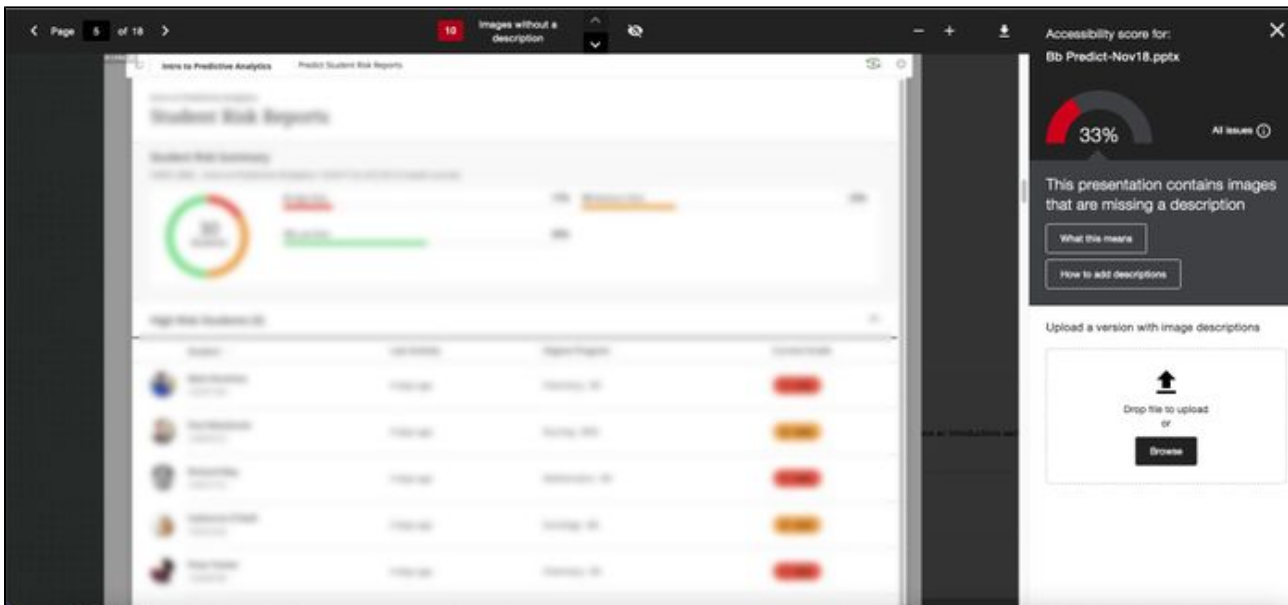
For content that has been identified as having accessibility issues, Ally will explain the issue(s) and give advice on how to fix them.

To do this:

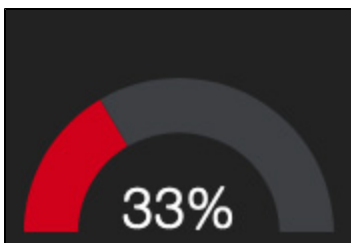
1. Select the **Ally indicator** next to the content item. This will open the **Instructor Feedback Panel**:



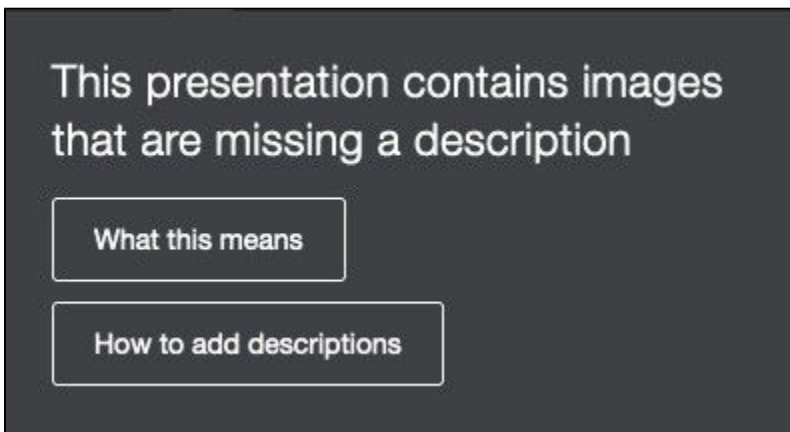
2. The Instructor Feedback Panel's will contain an **Accessibility Report** for the document (see example below):



3. The right-hand panel of the Accessibility Report display's the documents accessibility score:

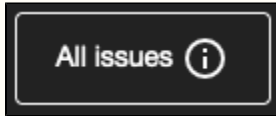


and a description of the document's main accessibility issue (in the example below, the issue has been identified as the images in the document do not having descriptions):

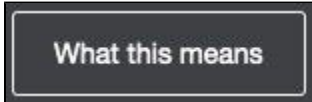




**Note:** Select the **All Issues** button to see a list of all the document issues:




4. For an explanation of the accessibility issue, select the **What this means** button:



The explanation will look something like this:

## What is an image description?

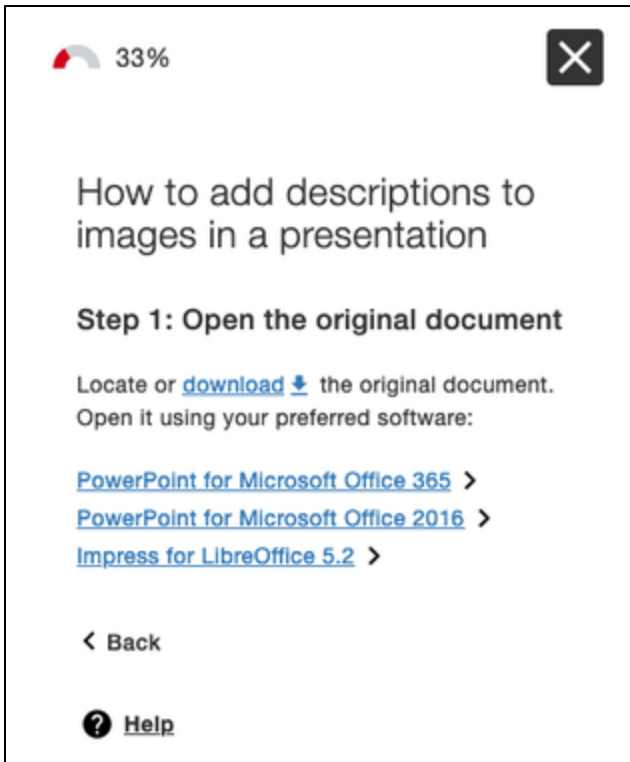
An icon consisting of a computer monitor on the left and a speech bubble on the right. The monitor screen shows a simplified webpage layout with a header bar, a main content area, and a small image icon. The speech bubble contains three horizontal lines representing text.

An image description, sometimes referred to as 'alternative description' or 'alt text', is a textual alternative for an image. It makes it easier to connect the image to its context and allows students with visual impairments to perceive the image. Descriptions should be added to all images, including those embedded within PDF, Word, PowerPoint and other documents.

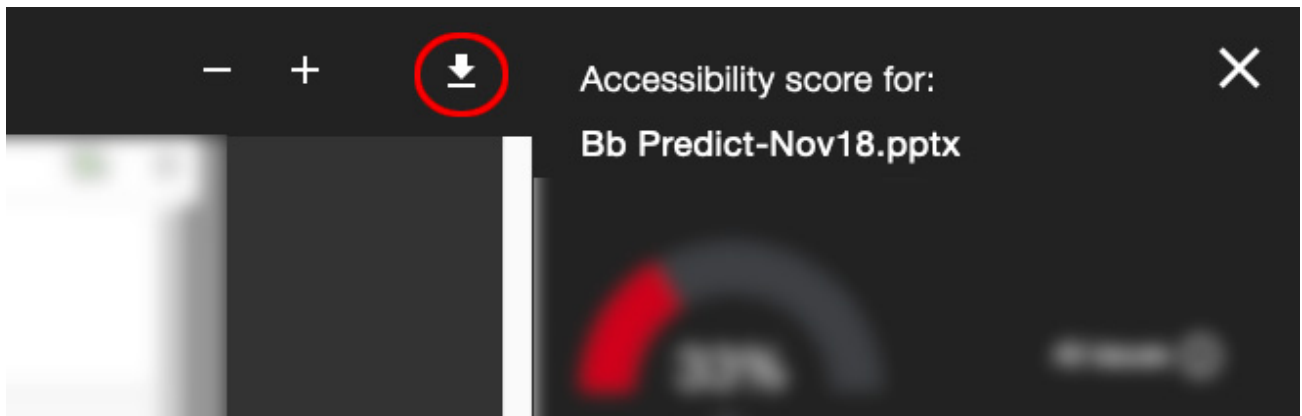
5. For instructions on how to fix the issue, select the **How to...** button:



You will then be shown step-by-step instruction for fixing the issue. For example:



- To make the necessary changes to the document, download the original file using the **Download** button (highlighted in red in the image below) then edit it (using the instructions from Ally as a guide to fixing the issue):



**Note:** Most file types can be editing using Microsoft Office. However, for some files (e.g. PDFs) you may need specialist software.

- When you have completed the edits, save the file and either drag and drop it onto the **Upload area** (drag and drop is not supported in all browsers), or select the **Browse** button to locate the file and upload it:

Upload a version with image descriptions



Drop file to upload  
or

Browse

PDF Instructions