Introduction

Blackboard Learn 9.1, the Virtual Learning Environment that MyAberdeen is based upon, won awards for its accessibility, however certain question types within the Quiz Tool can be extremely difficult to navigate and answer using a screen reader. Drag and Drop questions are not accessible, questions involving combo boxes may prove almost impossible for all but the most expert screen reader users and are best avoided. Defining the question type will help screen readers users decide which key strokes they need to use in order to answer a question. For timed tests screen reader users and students with Dyslexia should be allowed considerably more time, this entails making multiple versions of the same quiz with selective release.

Quiz Tool question types and accessibility

It is recommended that some brief help text be included before each question to enable JAWS users to know how to interact with the question, for example ‘this question requires you to select from one of four radio buttons’, ‘this question requires you to select one answers from each set of four combo boxes’. The most difficult question types for screen reader users are those that include combo boxes (drop down boxes). Combo-boxes are used in Jumbled sentence, ordering and matching text questions. Combo boxes give a selection of possible answers in the form of a drop down list. Combo-boxes may precede text, come in between sections of text, or follow text.

Question types

Fill in the Blanks / Open Text questions

Although one of the simplest type of question the Fill in the Blanks question can be awkward to navigate through with a screen reader. Specify in the question text that a text box needs to be completed and whether the box precedes or follows the question text.

Multi Choice and Multi answer question types

Multi Choice and Multi answer question types utilize radio buttons. These questions should present no real difficulty for screen reader users. Quick Guide 0012 entitled Accessing MyAberdeen with JAWS for screen reader users is currently available in draft form.

Jumbled Sentence, Ordering and Matching Text questions

Jumbled sentence questions can prove to be the most difficult question type to answer for JAWS users for three reasons,

- toggling between text and combo-boxes can be difficult
- if there are numerous combo-boxes in one sentence it can be very difficult to decide which combo-box relates to which part of the text, especially if the some of the information you need to make your selection comes both before and after the combo-boxes
- JAWS users cannot get their screen reader to read the sentence with all of their selected answers as a complete sentence before submitting their final answer.

If you include Jumbled sentence Ordering or Matching Text questions in a test you should prepare a version of the test in an alternative format, such as a word document, or consider authoring the quiz in Questionmark Perception. You should be testing your students’ academic skills and not their advanced screen reader user skills.

Drag and Drop questions

Drag and Drop questions are not accessible to JAWS users or by keyboard access. There is no option to add an additional part of the question which could represent an either or version of the same question. An alternative to the Drag and Drop question can be offered on a screen reader version of the quiz provided its learning objective is the same and degree of difficulty comparable. There is limited for interactive feedback with the Drag and Drop question making the pedagogical value of such a question questionable. Questionmark Perception gives you far more flexibility should you want to use such question types and gives the possibility of multiple versions of the same question for screen reader users.
Test option settings
Once you have added questions to your test and are about to publish you will be presented with a set of Test Options. Under Test Options you can decide whether or not to permit multiple attempts, and whether to specify unlimited attempts or a given number of attempts. Even if you do not permit multiple attempts students will be able to save answers and change them up until the point they select Save and Submit, even if they leave the quiz and return to it later (provided the course tutor has not selected Force Completion, which forces the student to answer all the questions in one sitting). A timer can be selected to make the quiz time restricted, although this is not recommended as it introduces further complexities in that if you are using a timer for the test you will need to make multiple versions of the quiz for students with disabilities who will need more time to complete the test. Students with Dyslexia will need more time and those using screen readers may need considerably more time due to the complexity of using such assistive technology with the Quiz Tool. Deciding on how much extra time to allow is not an exact science and is extremely difficult to determine, contact the AT advisors at atech@abdn.ac.uk for more details. By default the test will not give feedback apart from the scores, this can be changed. Although it is possible to have the Quiz Tool show only one question at a time, this is not recommended due to the additional navigational complexities this introduces for JAWS users. By default JAWS announces which options have been selected to screen reader users.

Accessibility advice for staff and students
Guidance for using MyAberdeen with the screen reader JAWS is available as Accessing MyAberdeen with JAWS (QG0012) from http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eLearning/myaberdeen/student-documentation/. For any specific questions relating to the accessibility or usability of MyAberdeen courses contact clt@abdn.ac.uk. More general accessibility advice is available on the eLearning Accessibility website at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eLearning/accessibility/. For advice on using assistive technology see: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/assistivetechnology/ or contact atech@abdn.ac.uk.

If you would like to become an eLearning champion and help to suggest further improvements to the documentation for using MyAberdeen with JAWS users please contact atech@abdn.ac.uk or clt@abdn.ac.uk.