Quick Guide – MyAberdeen: Expectations and Limitations of Ally (Staff guide)

Expectations of Ally

The University is legally obliged to ensure that it takes all reasonable steps to make learning resources accessible to all students. Launched on MyAberdeen in 2018, Ally starts a new era of improving the accessibility of documents for students. Only staff see the accessibility feedback from Ally, and they will decide where adjustments should be made.

The expectation is that staff make reasonable adjustments when creating new learning materials based on the feedback from Ally, not that all existing material is immediately revised. If staff would like an opportunity to do this before students access material, this can be done before the course area is made available, or by setting individual files to be unavailable whilst that process is underway.

Limitations of Ally

Ally uses cutting edge technology and is continuously under development to add new features. Ally works extremely well with text documents. Ally can process common document formats, but does not process Apple Pages, or Apple Keynote. Staff should be aware of these and know when to direct the students to the original file and not the Alternative Formats.

Staff can also disable the *Download Alternative formats* option for the documents that Ally does not support. In order to do that, they can click on the Ally icon and then click on Disable alternative formats for this file
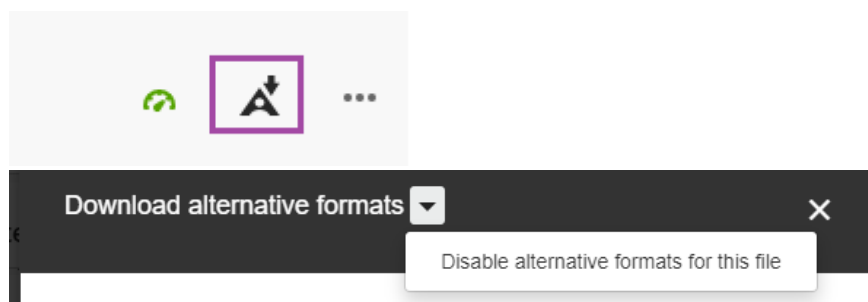

Figure 1 Disable alternative formats

Images

If an image has alternative text, Ally will use this description in the audio/braille versions or display the image as normal in the other alternative formats. Courses with many images may provide those descriptions elsewhere (e.g. lecture recording).

Equations and Formula

Ally cannot convert some methods (made with Latex or MS Office) of notating mathematical equations or chemistry formula. Staff are advised to guide the students to use the original document and not the Alternative Formats.

Languages

Ally can process text in many different languages; however, if the document language setting and the content do not match, Ally will not be as effective. For documents with more than one language, Ally also might not be as effective. Staff would be advised to use the same document language setting with content.

Music

If music notation is shown in a document using images, then any Alternative Text would be read out in the audio version. Images would be shown in the text formats. Courses with music notation may provide the description elsewhere (e.g. lecture recording).

Copyright

If an electronic version of a book or journal is available, then the preference is to provide a link to the item. Any materials scanned or uploaded under the terms of the CLA licence MUST include a valid copyright notice available from the copyright section of the library website. Students should be advised not to use the Ally Alternative versions with this content as this may breach the licence agreement unless the student is a "print disabled student". Alternatively, material scanned and uploaded under the CLA licence can be protected (tagged) using Adobe Acrobat DC to prevent Ally from processing the document.

Disclaimer

Ally can provide guidance, for staff, on how to make the document that they uploaded more accessible. However, staff should be aware of the strengths and weakness of the system, and direct students to either use the alternative formats or the original file.

Further Resources

Visit the Toolkit resource on Accessibility

Quick Guide: Creating Accessible eLearning Content

Visit Blackboard Help page on Ally

For further eLearning advice, visit: www.abdn.ac.uk/elearning

For course design information, check our Course Design Guidelines.