

How to use Blackboard



Blackboard is an online resource for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Tertiary students, Sign Language students and NZSL interpreters. Once you know where everything is and some basic instructions, it is a very easy-to-use system.

This is a brief set of instructions on what you can find on Blackboard and how to use most of the simple features.

The links on the left-hand menu

Each of the following sections are on the blue menu on the left-hand side of your screen. The sections can be accessed by simply clicking on their button.

➤ **What's New?**

This is where announcements from different people are put to keep you up to date on what's happening. If you have an announcement that you think others would like to hear about, email Jennifer Jackson-Hall at jjackson@aut.ac.nz

➤ **Discussion Forum**

The Discussion Forum is a place where you can post messages and discuss different topics with other members. There are a number of topics in the discussion forum section.

To access a particular topic, such as “Photo Section” or “Sign Language Club”, click on the name of the forum.

To start a new conversation about a particular topic (a new conversation is called a “thread”), click “Add new thread” at the top of the page. You can then fill in the details of the message such as the subject and what you want to say. You can even add an attachment in the space provided (e.g. photos)

To reply to another message, open the message by clicking on it, then click the “Reply” button on the right hand side of the page.

➤ **Introductions**

The Introductions section contains video-clips in NZSL of members introducing themselves and some information about certain university facilities. If you would like to post an introduction or some relevant information, please contact Jennifer Jackson-Hall at jjackson@aut.ac.nz

➤ **Learning**

The Learning section contains documents, links and information of interest on a range of topics including exam preparation tips, newsletters, articles about deaf culture, scholarships and more.

➤ **Forms**

The Forms section contains some official university forms for you to download, such as “Application for Exam Arrangements for AUT students” form.

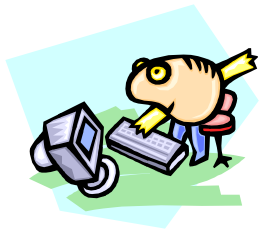
➤ **Internet**

The Internet section contains links to a wide range of websites such as the International sign dictionary, SLIANZ, KDEC, Ngata Dictionary - Maori and English, Deafquip and more.

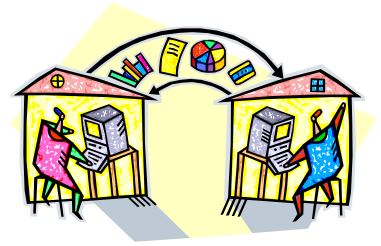
➤ **Staff Information**

The Staff Information section contains information on staff from many of the major polytechnics and universities as well as information on interpreters and the Advance Centre for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Tertiary Students. You can find the names, titles, emails and photos of many of the staff here.

➤ **Surveys:** There are no surveys yet.



The Communication Tools



There are a number of communication tools that you can use to interact with other users. Some of these we have already covered above and you can access them directly through the blue menu on the left-hand side of the page. Others are new tools which will be described below.

To access the communication tools, click on the “Communication” link in the grey and white Tools menu on the left-hand side of the page. Each of the following communication tools can then be accessed by simply clicking on their names.

- **Announcements:** links you to the “What’s new” announcements page (see above)
- **Collaboration:** The Collaboration tool allows users to participate in virtual classrooms and chat sessions. To join a virtual classroom or chat session, click the “Join” button on the right-hand side of the page next to the session you would like to join.

What is the difference between a virtual classroom and chat?

- **The virtual classroom** is a more organized communication session. It allows users to ask questions, draw on the whiteboard (similar to “Microsoft Paint”) and participate in breakout sessions. Users can ask questions by selecting “Compose” in the “Ask Question” area. The questions are sent to the Question Inbox where they can be viewed by others and responded to.
 - **Chat** is a more informal chat session. It allows the users to interact with each other via a typical text-based chat. To write a message, type the message in the compose field and click send. You can also send private messages to a User by selecting the Username in the Participant list and then clicking Private Message.
- **Discussion Board:** links you to the “Discussion Forums” (see above)
 - **Groups pages:** allow smaller groups of users to communicate with each other. Currently, there are two group pages set up:
 - one group is for NZSL interpreters
 - one group is for Deaf and hearing impaired students

You will be a member of only one of these groups, so you and other users will only be allowed to access the group to which you belong. In the group

pages, you can send emails, exchange files, enter discussion forums, or enter chat/virtual classroom sessions with other members of that group.

- **Messages:** This allows users to send private messages to other users in a similar way to sending emails. Each user has their own Inbox and Sent Folder set up within Blackboard and can mark messages as read/unread etc. The difference between messages and email is that you cannot send messages to users outside of Blackboard.
 - **To create and send a message**, click the “New Message” button near the top of the page. To choose who you would like to send the message to, click on the “To” or “CC” buttons and a pop-up box will appear which lets you choose any of the users on Blackboard.
 - **To read and reply to a message**, open the message by clicking on the subject. From here you can view attachments, reply to the sender by clicking the reply button, forward the message or reply to all.
- **Roster:** The Roster is a list of people who are users in the organization. You can search the roster for different users by using a number of variables including their first name, last name, email address, “starting with”. You can then click on the name of a user to view their homepage or click their email address to send them an email.
- **Send Email:** This allows users to send an email to other users in Blackboard. Each users usual email address has been entered into the system, so when you send them an email, it is delivered to their usual email inbox and not to their Blackboard inbox.
 - **To send an email**, click on the “Send Email” link and then select who you would like to send the email to from the list provided:
All users or select users, All groups or select groups, All instructors.
Next, click ok and write the email as you usually would (You can also add attachments in the space provided)



You now know the basics of Blackboard!

For those of you who are keen to learn more, you can find a user manual by clicking on “Organisation Tools” in the grey and white Tools menu on the left-hand side of the page, then selecting “User Manual” at the bottom of the list.