

What to Consider Before Renewing with Canvas

Crucial steps to future-proof learning
technology at your institution



Your next LMS contract is crucial to your institution's success

We are entering a defining period for higher education.

Enrollment declines, funding uncertainty, the rise of generative AI, changes in student demographics, and a turbulent global economy combine to form a point of inflection for the sector, and institutions will need to evolve to achieve growth.

Learning technology is an essential part of this. Institutions need a platform that promotes student engagement, establishes a culture of accessibility, streamlines production tasks for instructors, supports varied modalities, and much more, all while ensuring that user data is stringently protected. In short, technology providers must also be willing to evolve—to understand what institutions need and move quickly to update the learning environment accordingly.

Your next LMS contract is an important decision for your institution's future.

Before you renew with Canvas, ask the following questions:

1. What do you want to achieve during the contract period, and is Canvas investing in areas of growth for your institution?
2. Does Canvas have a clear and forward-thinking AI strategy?
3. Will the user experience in Canvas continue to meet students' expectations?
4. Are you able to influence the Canvas roadmap?
5. Can Canvas provide the insights you need to inform strategy?
6. Does Canvas offer the highest level of data security?

Blackboard offers an alternative for all of these areas. In this guide, we'll review each question, outline how Canvas and Blackboard® LMS compare, and provide important considerations to help your institution make an informed decision on your preferred partner for learning technology.

1.

Is Canvas investing in your institution's future?

Evaluating learning technology starts with your institution's strategy for growth. Are you, for example, seeking to attract new student demographics and elevate your focus on accessibility? Are you expanding your use of microcredentials to increase employment opportunities post-graduation? When you picture your student body in 2030 or 2035, how might learning technology need to change to meet their preferences?

Having identified your opportunities for growth, a further question emerges: Which providers of learning technology are investing in these areas?

Once a leader in EdTech innovation, Canvas has slowed its rate of development significantly in recent years, focusing on acquisition and integration with third-party tools rather than modernizing its core platform. At a time when institutions need innovative technologies to seize emerging growth opportunities, Canvas is falling behind in important areas. In fact, in each of the last four years, Canvas has released fewer new capabilities than Blackboard LMS.

39%

of employable skills will change by 2030

-13%

"traditional-age" incoming students by 2041

88%

of leaders believe microcredentials are important to the future of HE

Did you know?

- Blackboard LMS significantly outpaces Canvas for innovation according to leading analyst firm Tambellini, as noted in its 2025 Teaching and Learning Starchart.
- In 2025, Blackboard added more than triple the number of new features (241 vs 77).
- This includes exclusive, native capabilities that align with growth areas for higher education: AI, accessibility, badging, mastery learning, and more.

2.

Does Canvas have a clear AI strategy?

While there are many factors causing disruption within higher education, the rise of generative AI is inarguably among the largest. Including the potential to impact every academic and administrative process on campus, AI will also fundamentally change the workforce which students are graduating into. In short, having a clear AI strategy is imperative—for institutions and technology providers alike.

Canvas has trailed the market in adding generative AI capabilities. Its Ignite AI platform, announced in July 2025, includes capabilities such as AI suggestions for course, assessment, and rubric creation, which have already been available in Blackboard LMS for more than two years. Further, the timelines, costs, and third-party requirements for the Ignite AI rollout have been unclear for many institutions and **changed since the initial announcement**.

Blackboard LMS, in contrast, has been first to market with AI capabilities, included the majority within the core license, and provided transparency on timelines and costs throughout. The result is that these AI capabilities are now making a difference at scale, providing insight to fuel ongoing development.



Blackboard's AI Approach is Driving Results



5.9 million

learning tasks powered



800 +

global institutions using
Blackboard AI tools



96%

of instructors report
time savings

*as of January 2026

Did you know?

- Blackboard LMS has exclusive AI capabilities that improve instructor efficiency and student engagement. Check out the [Blackboard LMS AI](#) page to learn more about the results these are driving for leading institutions.
- Blackboard has also supported partner institutions to develop ethical AI policies. This includes a [global tour attended by thousands of education leaders](#), as well as whitepapers on [the future of assessment in the AI era](#), [leveraging AI to reduce instructor burnout](#), [the environmental impact of AI in education](#), and [AI plagiarism and academic integrity](#).

3.

Will the user experience in Canvas continue to meet students' expectations?

Students' needs will evolve significantly across the course of your next LMS contract. Demographics will continue to diversify, as will learning modalities, and you'll need a learning environment that can respond to these changes. New students will arrive at your institution with the expectation that their learning platform is as easy to use as other digital tools that shape their daily lives.

Canvas once set the standard in this area. However, it has now been **more than a decade** since significant changes were made to its interface—meaning that first-year university students are greeted with a course view designed when they were still in elementary school. Before renewing with Canvas, it's essential to assess whether it is investing in its platform to ensure that the user experience updates in line with student trends.

Blackboard LMS is adding significant innovations to reduce clicks and maximize learning. This includes the new **Full Screen Course View**, which simplifies navigation within and between courses and allows more screen space for students to focus on important learning tasks.



Love these changes. The whole experience just seems more snappy!"

—**Faculty Leader**, United States, in response to Blackboard's new and exclusive Full Screen Course View.

[Read the full blog post →](#)

Did you know?

Blackboard LMS will be rolling out many exciting usability innovations through 2026 and beyond. Check out our [quarterly roadmap webinars](#) for the latest information.

4.

Are you able to influence the Canvas roadmap?



The LMS market is a contentious one, but where Blackboard is ahead of the competition is undoubtedly their connection to the community.”

—**Stephanie Richter**, Director of Teaching Innovation and Support, Northern Illinois University

[Read the full LinkedIn post →](#)



It has made a huge difference for us to be able to circle back with faculty and say, ‘Remember the feature you were asking for? Well, guess what—it’s in the next release!’

—**Kim Kenward**, Director of eLearning Technologies, Grand Valley State University

[Read the full case study →](#)

When all the varied challenges in higher education are considered, it is clear that neither institutions nor technology vendors can address them in isolation. Partnership is essential, based on a shared commitment to combining technology with pedagogical best practices to improve learning outcomes. This should be clearly reflected in a transparent roadmap process, where user feedback directly shapes the development of the platform.

Canvas, **by its own admission**, is not adequately responding to institutions’ feedback about its platform. The avenues it offers to share ideas have changed several times in recent years, but institutions continue to report a lack of transparency, delays in feedback being addressed, and that limited attention is paid to their suggestions—even when they are only proposing minor tweaks to the product.

The same isn’t true with Blackboard LMS. The Idea Exchange provides a robust forum for institutions to provide product feedback, and user suggestions are being incorporated into the roadmap with speed and scale.

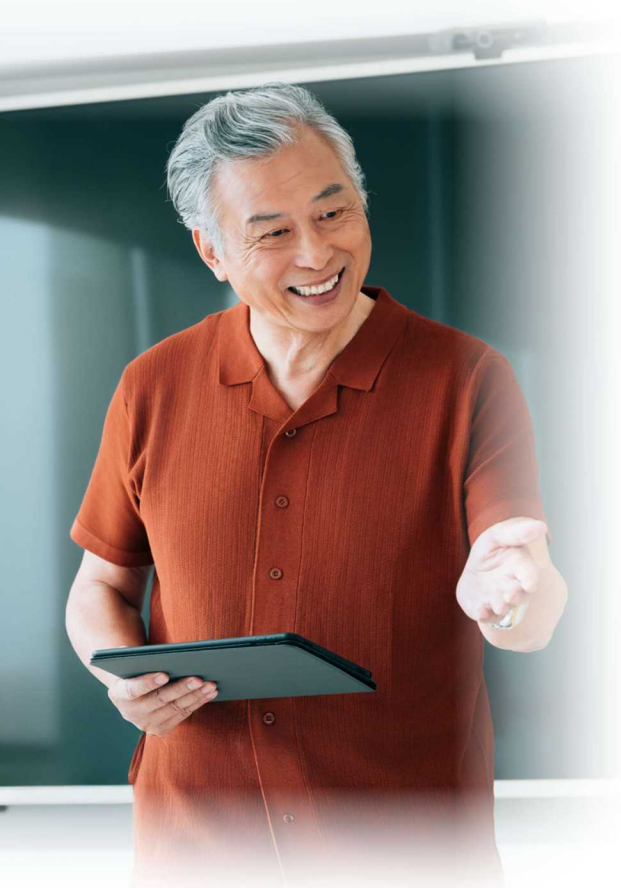


Did you know?

- In this financial year alone (July 2025 – January 2026), Blackboard’s Idea Exchange has received 214 unique ideas and 3,373 votes from partner institutions around the world.
- These ideas directly inform the Blackboard LMS roadmap; in each **quarterly roadmap webinar**, new capabilities are presented along with vote tallies to demonstrate how user feedback is directly shaping the product.

5.

Can Canvas provide the insights you need to inform strategy?



Demonstrating the effectiveness of learning is a crucial consideration moving forward. By understanding how students are interacting with learning materials and advancing through their courses, institutions can implement strategies that optimize their experience and attract new students to enroll. This data is also incredibly valuable for regulatory compliance and protection of government funding.

The core Blackboard LMS license includes vital data insight capabilities that Canvas either doesn't offer or charges a premium for. Blackboard® Outcomes, for instance, provides comprehensive, institution-wide outcomes assessment and accreditation reporting—capabilities that require additional licensing costs or third-party tools to achieve in Canvas. Indeed, many Canvas institutions use Outcomes to compensate for the limited capabilities included in their LMS.

More leaders and campus stakeholders are realizing the potential of data for improved planning and decision-making. Indeed, nearly every department within the institution—from academic departments to advancement to facilities to HR—can uniquely benefit from more thoughtful engagement with data for planning and programmatic purposes

[Educause Top 10 Trends for 2026](#)

Did you know?

- A canonical data model for detailed, institution-wide insights is also included in the core Blackboard LMS license.
- Blackboard® LMS: Adopt provides granular insights on user behavior within Blackboard LMS and in-app communications to optimize experiences; leading institutions find it superior to Impact by Instructure—check out these case studies from [Southern Cross University](#) and the [University of Pretoria](#).

6.

Does Canvas offer the highest level of data security?



All themes discussed through this guide—especially the rise of AI and insight-informed learning—place increased emphasis on data security. Protecting students' data is not just a regulatory imperative, it's fundamental to building a relationship of trust between the learner and your institution.

As [Educause](#) explains, “Students need confidence that their institution cares about them. Protecting students' privacy is one way to demonstrate that. Consequently, faculty and administrators need to be able to show that they're managing students' data and their privacy effectively.”

Blackboard LMS is the only major LMS to achieve Department of [Defense Impact Level 4 \(IL4\) authorization](#). This signifies that Blackboard LMS has the required security infrastructure to handle controlled unclassified information (CUI), such as that managed by the US military and other important government departments. Canvas **does not offer this level of security**, nor the ISO 27017, 27018, and 27701 certifications that Blackboard LMS has achieved.

Before renewing your contract with Canvas, ask yourself: Does Canvas provide the security required to build a relationship of trust with students?

Blackboard Security Credentials



Did you know?

- In this financial year alone (July 2025 – January 2026), Blackboard's Idea Exchange has received 214 unique ideas and 3,373 votes from partner institutions around the world.
- The stringent data security standards in Blackboard LMS make it the learning platform of choice for the US Army, US Navy, USDA, Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy, and more.

Changing your LMS is easier than you think

If you've answered "no" to one or more questions and are interested in considering alternatives for your next LMS contract, rest assured—moving to Blackboard is a streamlined and supported process. We'll provide a detailed transition plan, adoption insights and communications, proprietary tools for course migration, and supporting resources to ensure that you are up and running as quickly as possible with your new LMS.

ILERNA, Spain's leading vocational institution, [moved from Canvas to Blackboard to better align its learning programs with workforce needs](#). Despite its large size and complex needs, ILERNA was able to make a smooth and quick transition to Blackboard LMS.



The 21st century economy is rapidly changing, and to compete and succeed, our learners expect training that equips them with the tools they need delivered in a modality that fits their busy lives. Blackboard provides the flexibility our learners demand and product innovation that will continue to fuel the personalized experience that sets us apart"

—**Jordi Giné**, Founder and CEO at ILERNA



Ready to consider alternatives to Canvas? Book a [Blackboard demo online today!](#)