



10th September 2026

Teaching Smarter, Learning More Inclusively

What's new in Blackboard, Ally and AI

PRESENTED BY:

Ruben Jacquart
Senior Solutions Engineer

Our journey today

Five practical steps from content creation to measurable progress

- 01 **CREATE** Blackboard Documents
- 02 **ASSIST** AI Design Assistant
- 03 **PERSONALISE** Alternative formats and Enhanced Reader
- 04 **FIX** Smart fixes and PDF remediation
- 05 **MEASURE** Aberystwyth usage and roadmap

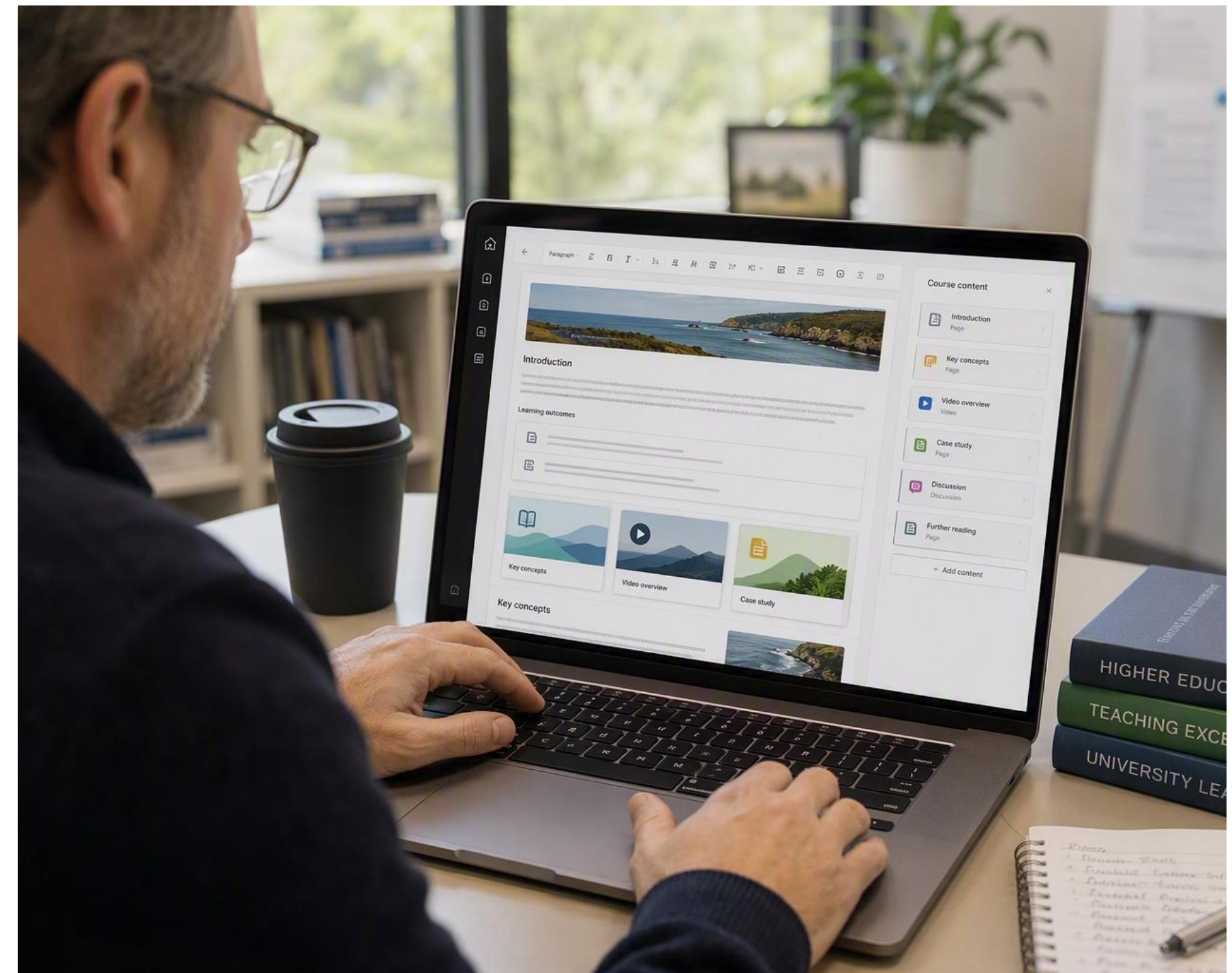


WHY THIS MATTERS

Accessibility is a learning experience

Design for variability from the start

- Better structured content
- More ways for students to engage
- Clearer guidance for instructors
- Evidence to support institutional action



A new content editor



More accessible, more consistent, and easier to use across Blackboard LMS.



Simpler Authoring

Reorganized menus and a streamlined toolbar



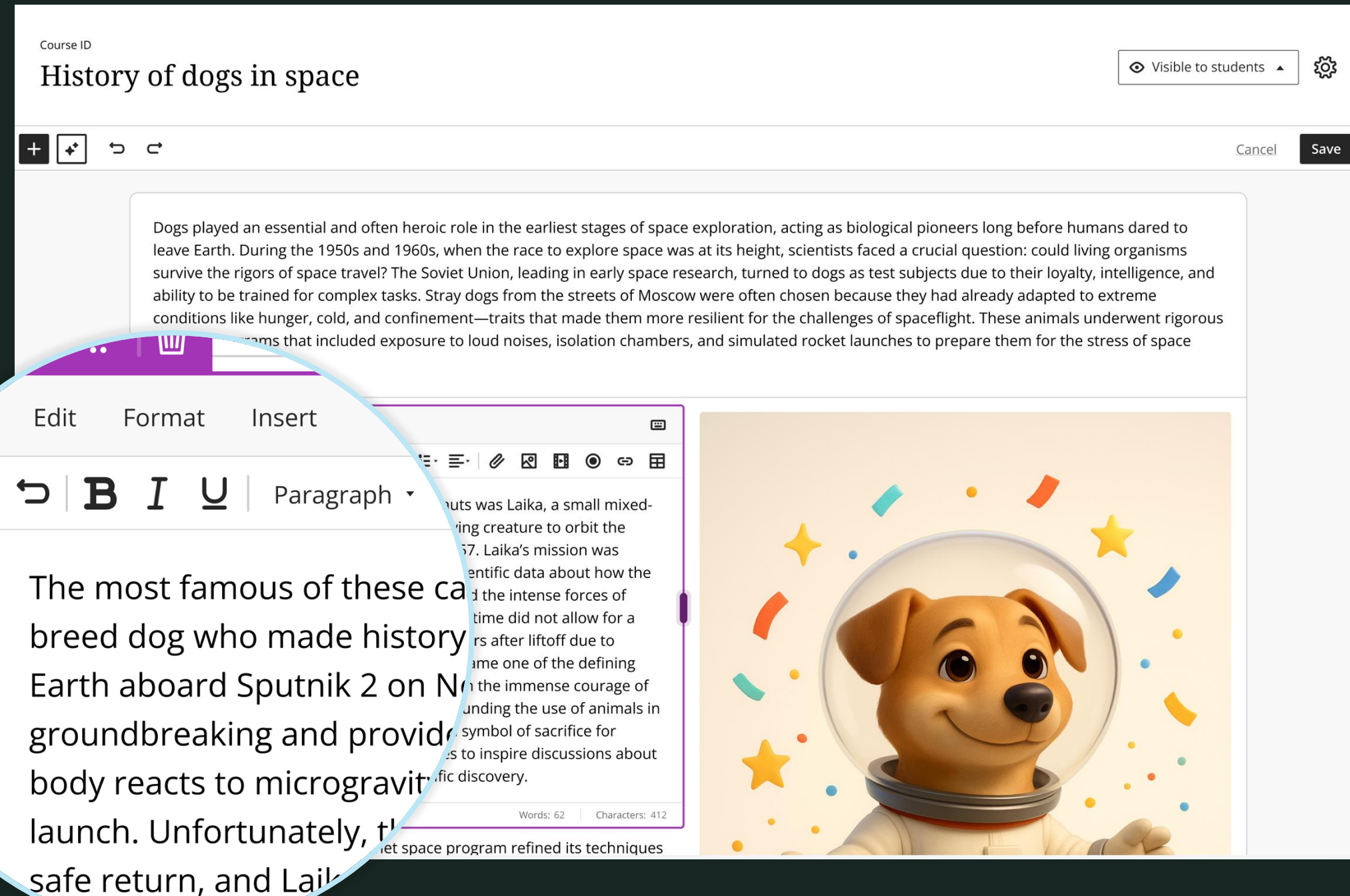
Powerful Formatting

Better lists, tables, and familiar editing controls



Built for Accessibility

Better keyboard navigation, modern shortcuts, and a future-ready foundation



AI Design Assistant: useful starting points

COURSE DESIGN

Learning modules and structures

ASSESSMENT

Assignments, rubrics, tests and question banks

ENGAGEMENT

Discussions, journals and AI
Conversations

DOCUMENTS

Images and automatic document layouts

Human judgement remains central: review, edit and adapt every suggestion.

PERSONALISE



Give students choice in how they engage

Alternative formats turn one source into multiple ways to access content.

Audio

Tagged PDF

ePub

Electronic braille

Immersive reader

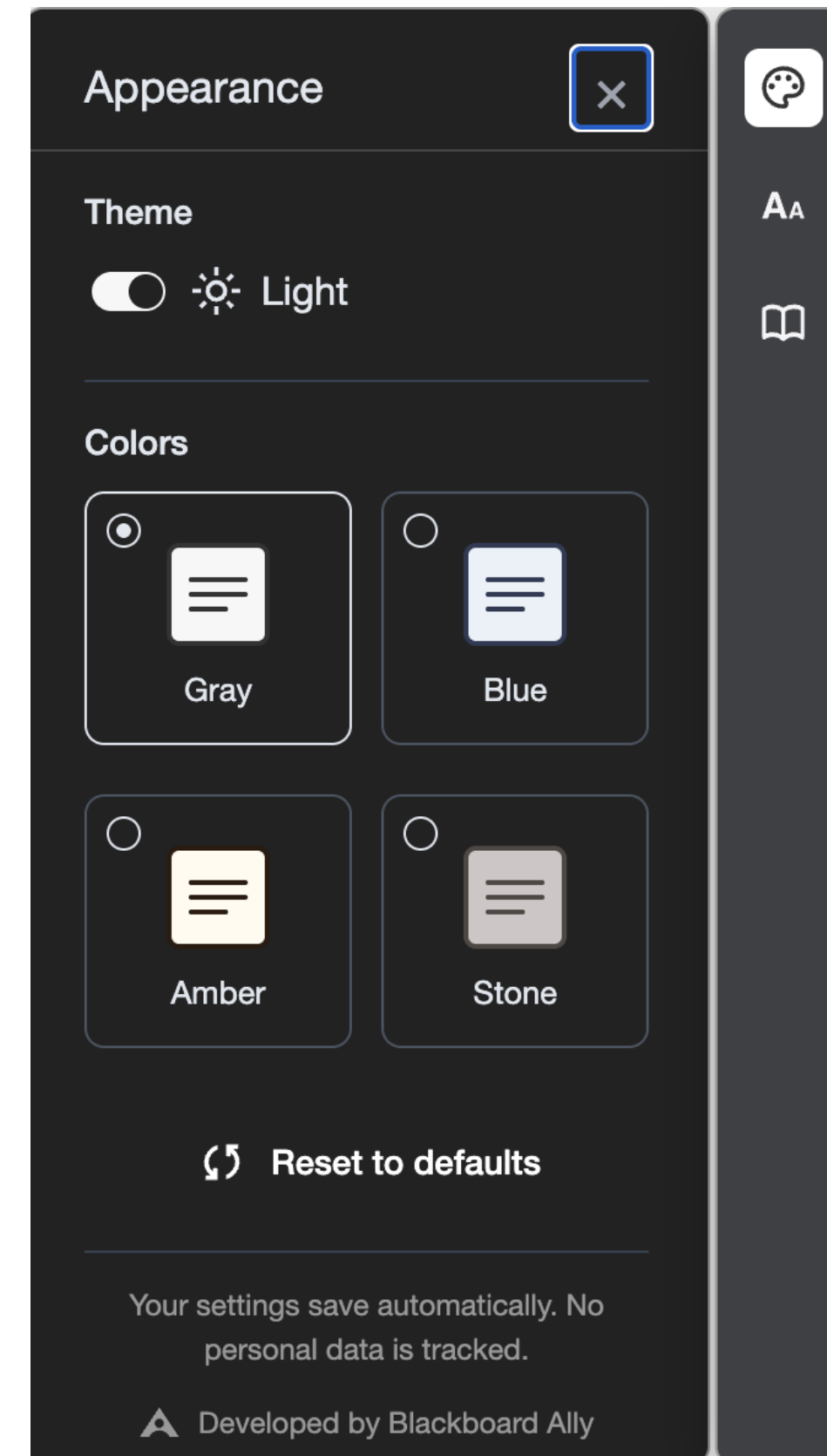
Beeline Reader



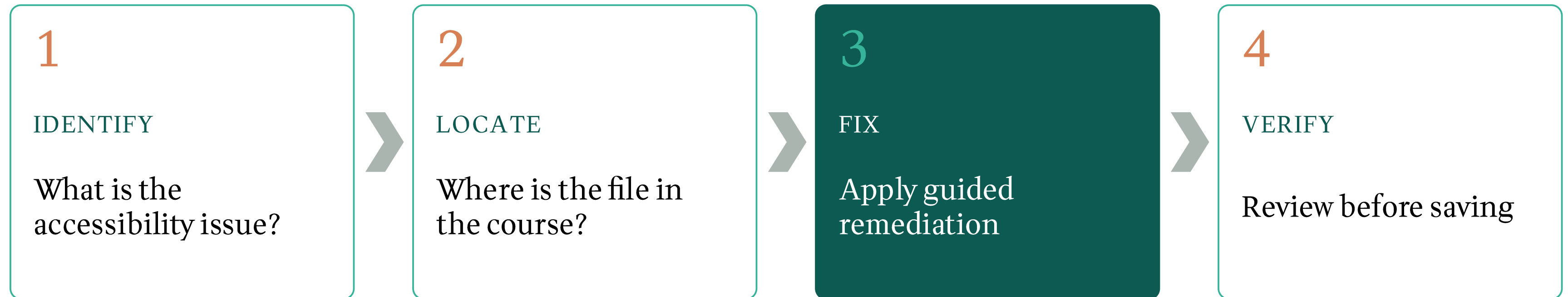
TARGETED FOR THE NEXT 1-3 MONTHS

Enhanced Ally Reader

- Word emphasis to guide focus
- Reading ruler to keep place
- Font and spacing customisation
- Dark mode and reading presets
- Preferences persist across files using local storage



From finding issues to completing fixes



File location in the existing Course Report is targeted for the next 1–3 months.

AVAILABLE NOW

PDF Auto Tagging

Turn an untagged PDF into a structured starting point

GENERATE Apply the Auto Tagging process

REVIEW Inspect the proposed tag structure

APPROVE Save the tagged version back to the course



LIVE DEMO

Untagged PDF
→
Tagged structure

Instructor stays in control

TARGETED FOR THE NEXT 1-3 MONTHS

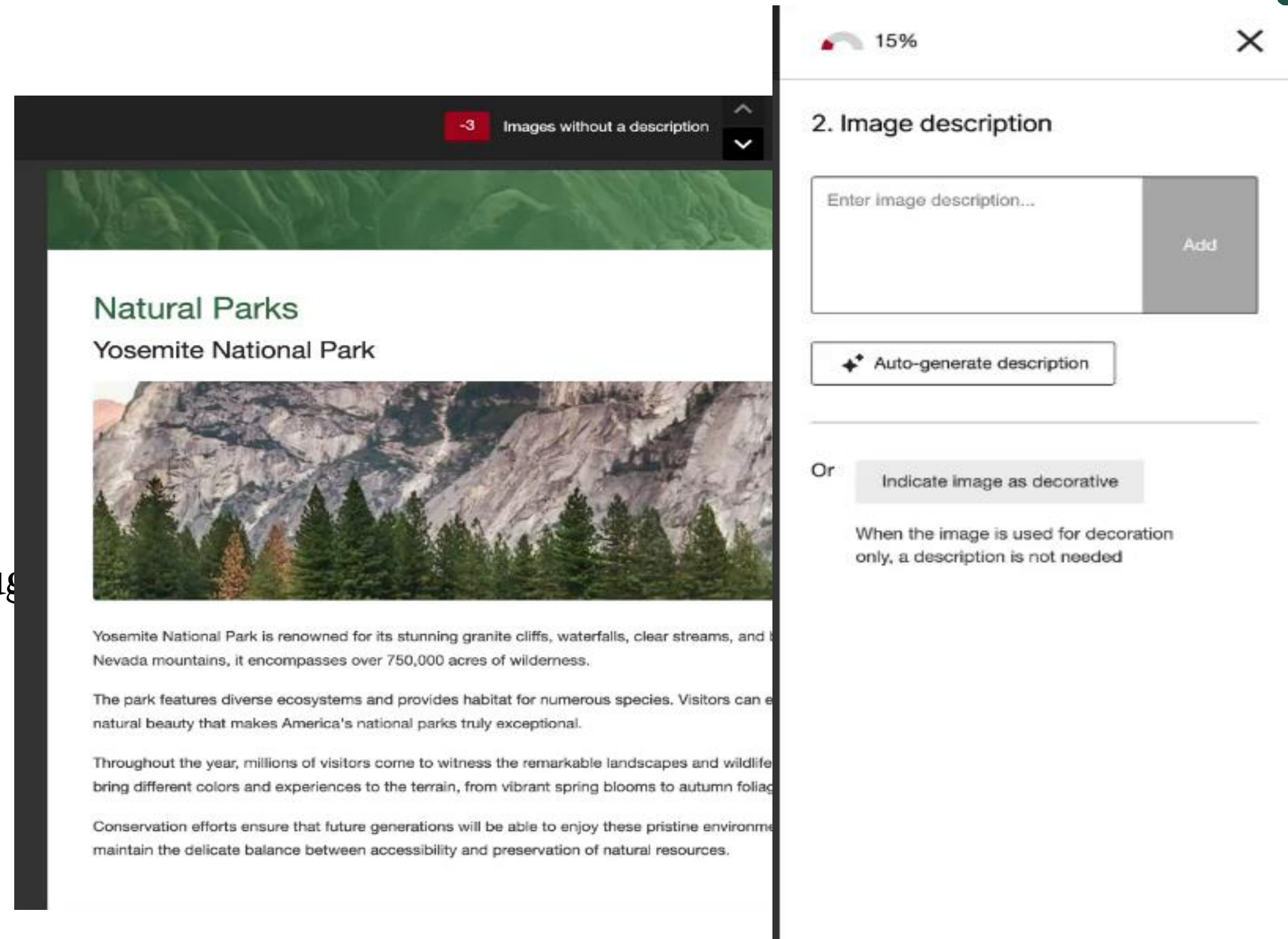


AI Alt Text Assistant for PDF images

A contextually relevant suggestion.

A human decision.

- Extends the Ally AI Alt Text Assistant to images inside PDFs
- Supports suggestions for more complex images
- Writes the accepted description back through Instructor Feedback
- Configurable by administrators





The next wave of PDF Quick Fixes

NOW	Auto Tagging	Available now
NEXT	Table Header Quick Fix	1–3 months
NEXT	Decorative image workflows	3–6 months
LATER	Individual tag editing	6+ months
LATER	Contrast Quick Fix	6+ months

What does usage tell us about student choice and teaching practice?

STUDENTS

Alternative-format
engagement

INSTRUCTORS

Instructor Feedback
and fixes

INSTITUTION

Progress, priorities
and next actions

Aberystwyth Ally usage: Student / alternative formats



How students use alternative formats across courses

Total courses with downloads
1359

Total unique users
4,110

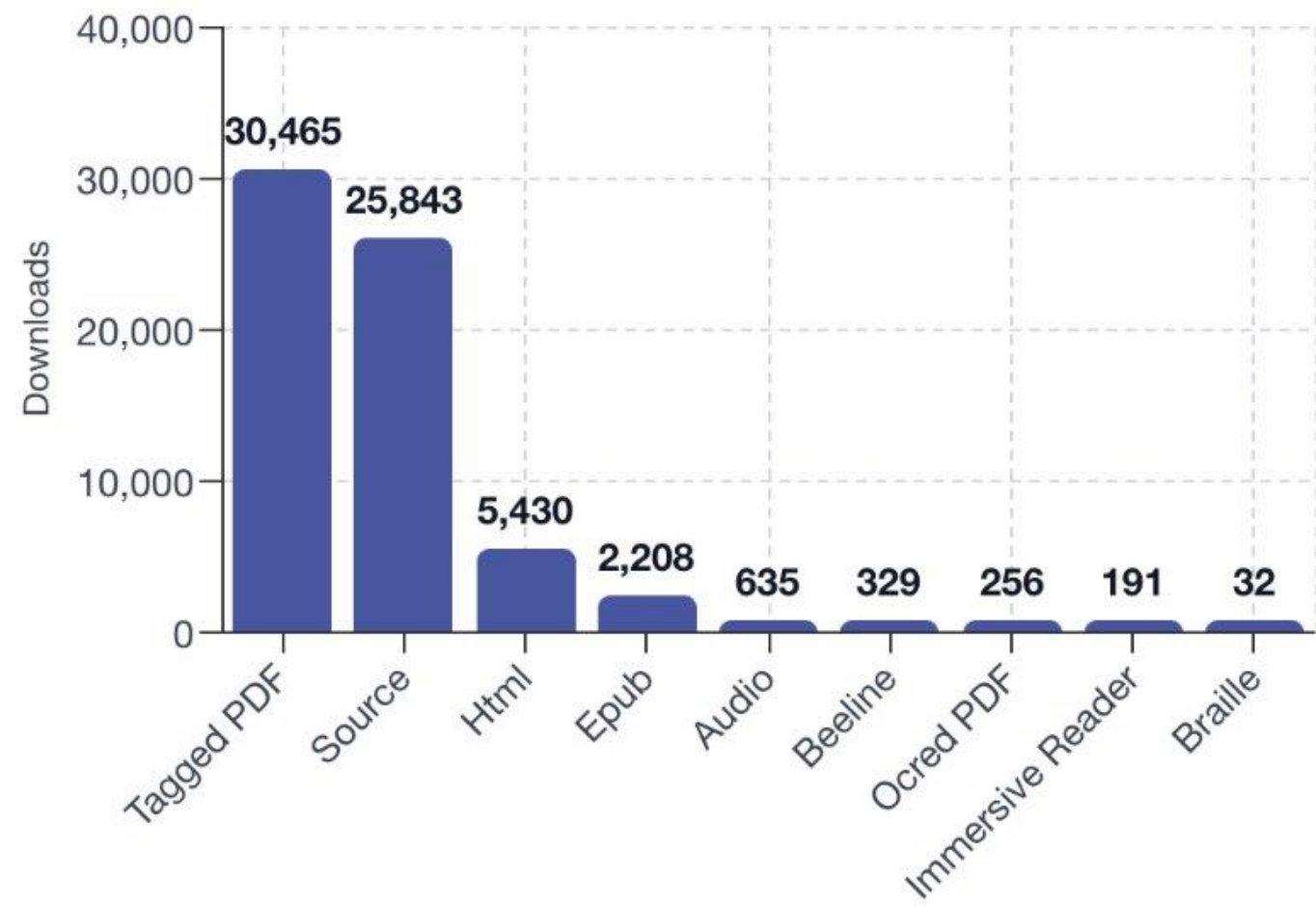
Alternative formats views
89,399

Total downloads
65,389

Downloads by alternative format type

Bars

Table

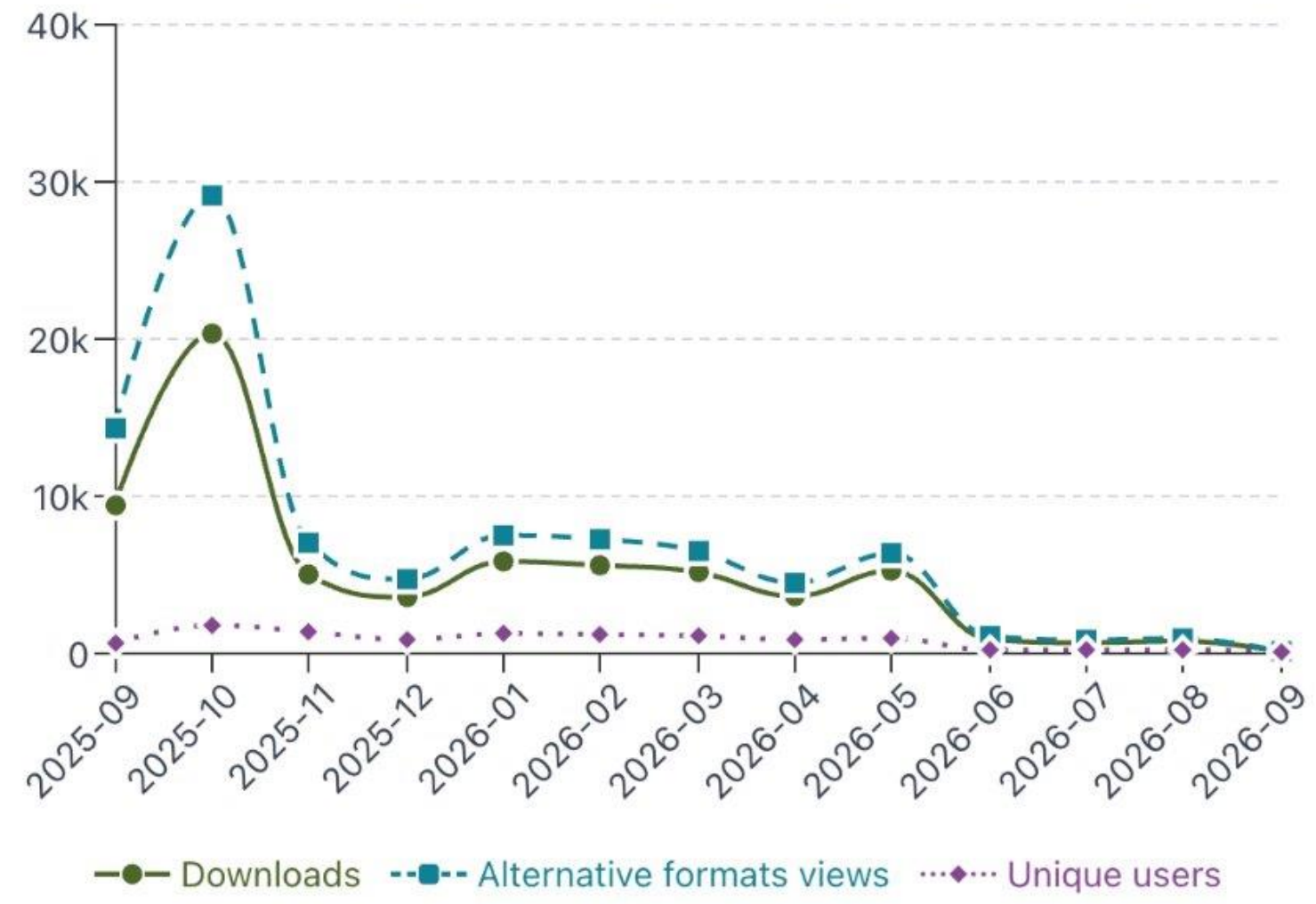


Alternative formats usage

Line

Funnel

Table



Aberystwyth Ally usage: Instructor Feedback



How instructors use instructor feedback across courses

Open course reports

2,291

Open instructor feedback

10,962

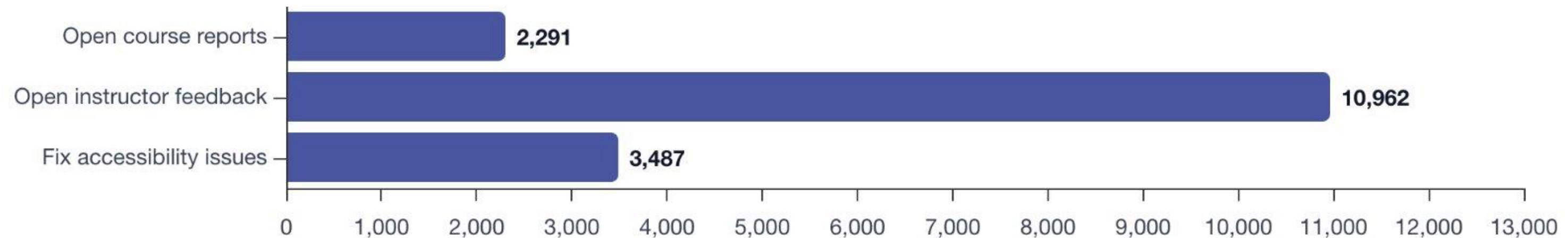
Fix accessibility issues

3,487

Courses with accessibility fixes

166

Instructor activity and content improvements

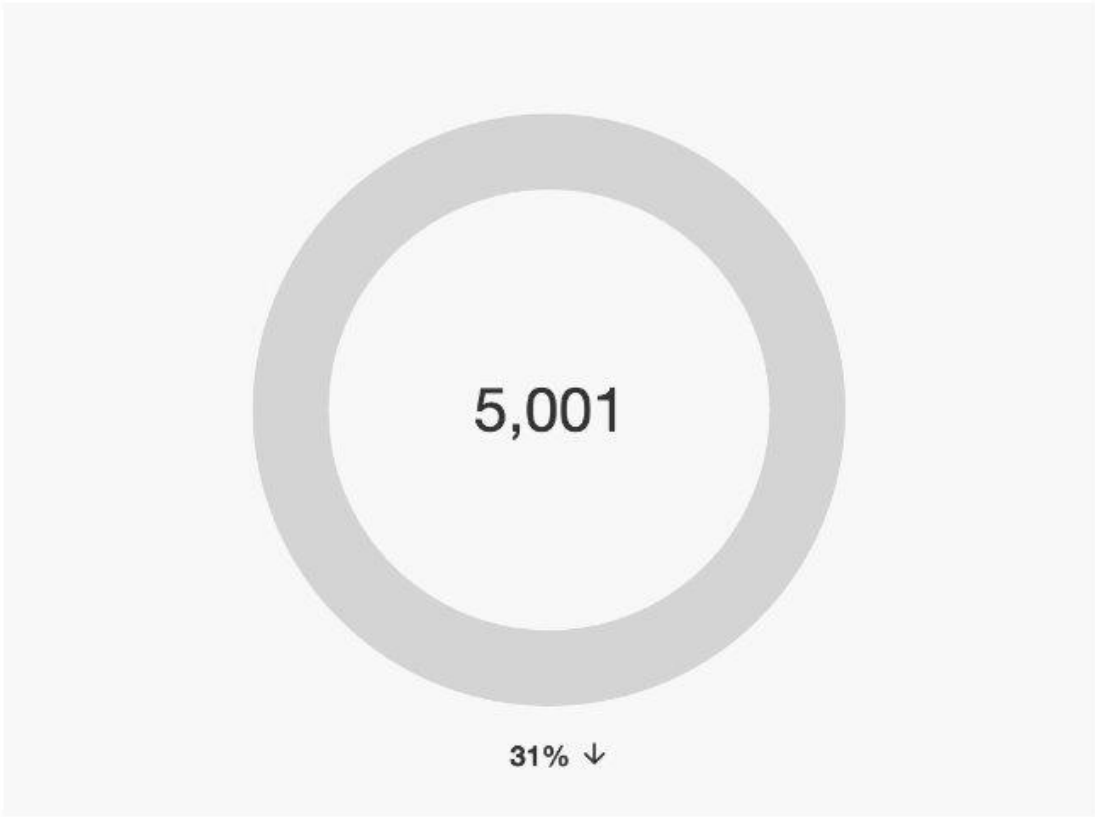


Aberystwyth Ally usage: Institutional Overview

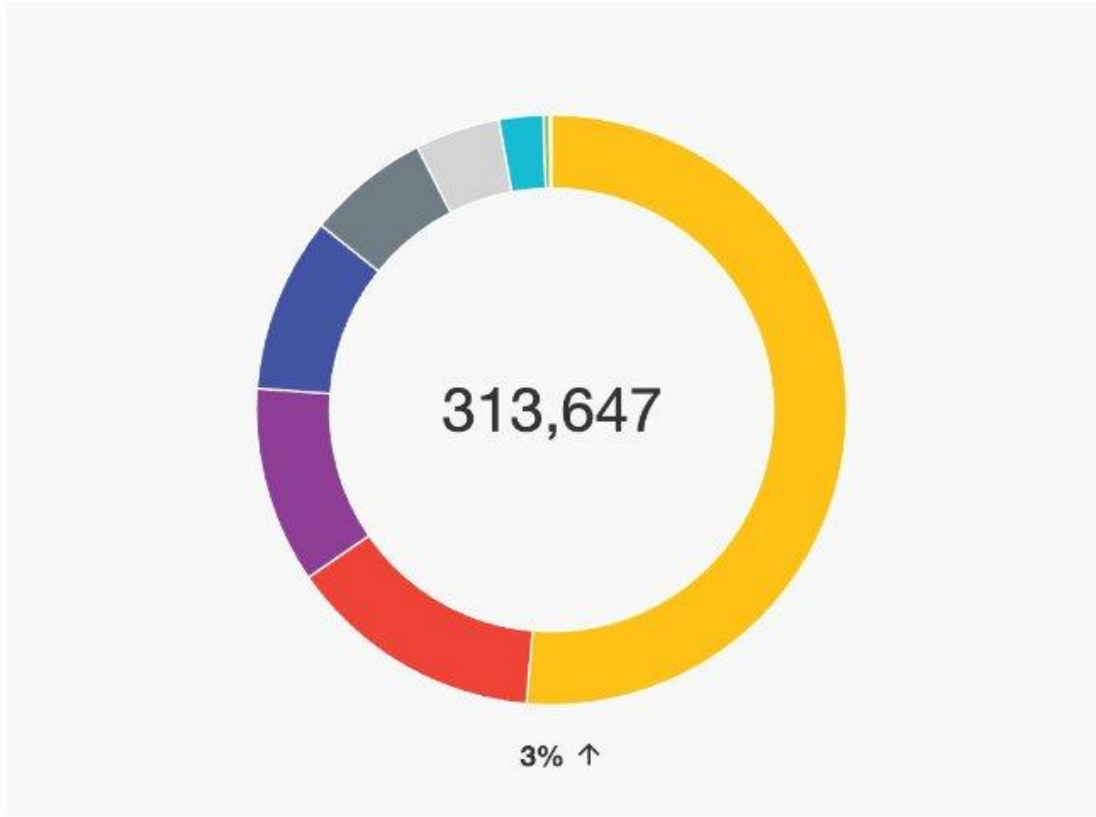


2025-26 ▾

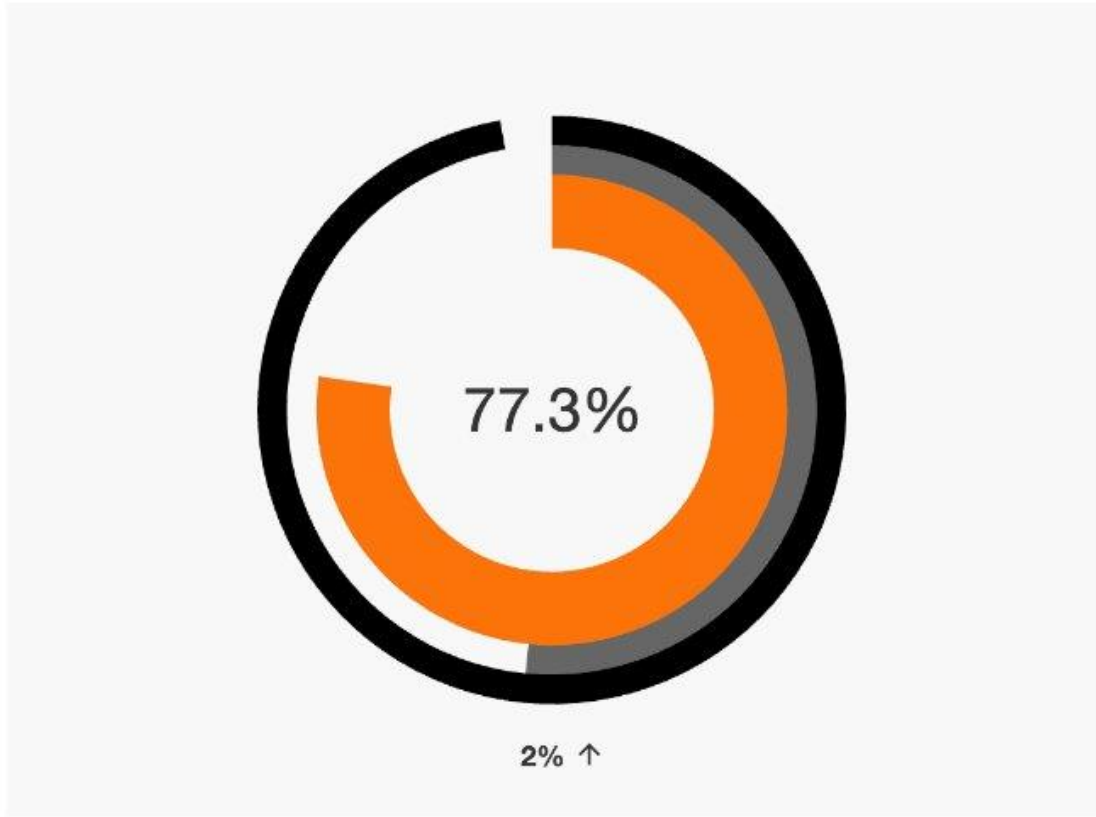
Total courses



Total content created



Overall accessibility score



Accessibility issues

All

Severe

Major

Minor

1. Document: The document has contrast issues	41,132		>
2. Document: The document contains images without a description	37,422		>
3. HTML: The HTML's heading structure does not start at the right level	27,454		>



Blackboard roadmap: usability, guidance and feedback

New Content Editor	Staggered release from September	Reorganised menus, formatting and built-in accessibility
Student To-Do List	Next release	Due work brought together in one place
AI Flashcards	Targeted 1–3 months	Generate flashcards from course material
AVA formative feedback	Targeted 3–6 months	Rubric-aligned feedback before submission
Gradebook Grid View	Next release	A redesigned gradebook experience



Thank you



Up next 10:30-11:00: Using Blackboard
Achievements for Skills Recognition
Ifat Shah and James Woolley