

## Empowering Masters Students Through Online Communication

Aidan Chisholm, Veronica Ianni Andurell  
Academic partner: Dr Wojciech Ostrowski.

### Executive Summary

The origin of this project was the unsatisfactory experience of trying to use Blackboard as a means to interact with other students in our module. We felt the need to create a virtual social space where students could easily communicate with their peers, share ideas, express concerns and raise queries of common interest.

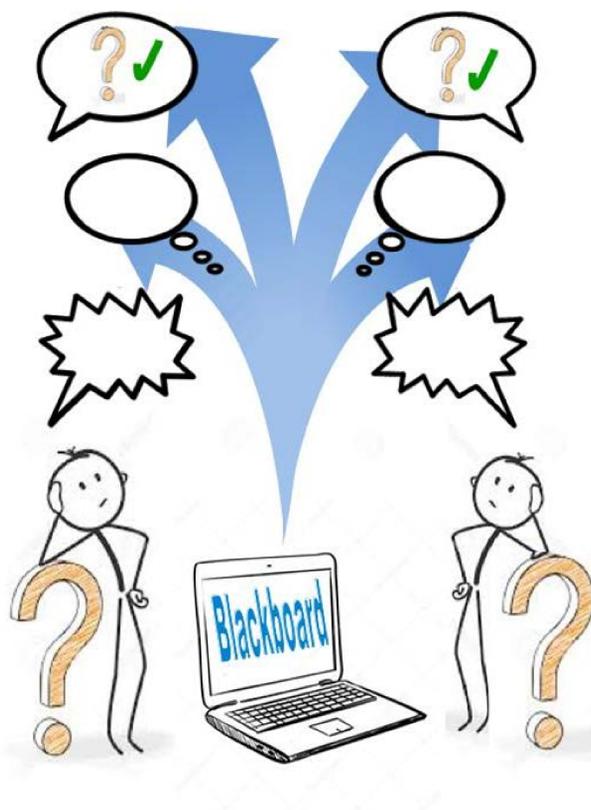
When the necessity and the benefits of upgrading the online ways of communication within the community became evident, we focused on technicalities, policies and implementation issues.

### Aims

Our general goal was to improve the postgraduate experience at the University by expanding the availability of or awareness for the various forms of digital communication made available to Masters students by the University.

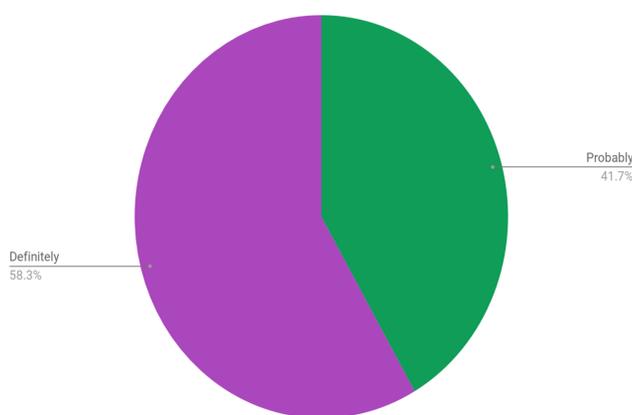
Our specific objectives included:

- Write up an online student survey
- Write up an online staff questionnaire
- Disseminate the survey and questionnaire
- Interview various relevant staff members to discuss the research
- Collate our data
- Report our findings

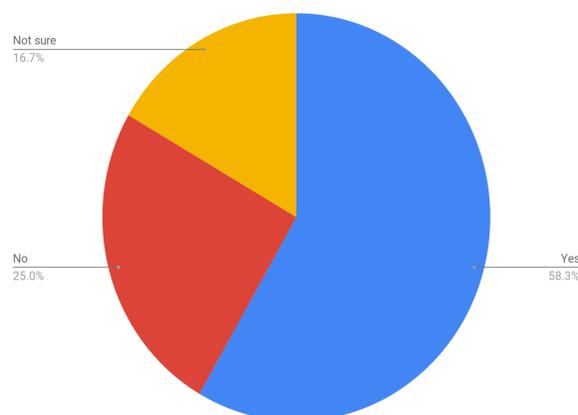


### Results

Blackboard could easily be adapted to make Masters students' experiences more inclusive. Please rate the above using, Definitely not, Probably not, Maybe, Probably, Definitely.



Do you wish you were able to digitally communicate with Westminster Master students on other courses using university media other than emails?



### Methods

A brainstorm attempt through focus groups that had to be replaced by students surveys and staff interviews. In our qualitative research we received the following valuable responses.

- 17 student surveys using Google Forms
- 5 staff interview-questionnaires
- 5 student survey conducted face-to-face

### Recommendation

During our research we found out that Blackboard has the capability of giving students more power through a space called "Profiles and Social Learning Tools" that is not currently activated for use. This space allows countless ways of communication, interaction and networking for students. Our recommendation is to switch on Profiles and Social Learning Tools.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the students and academics that participated in our project and especially to our academic partner, Dr Wojciech Ostrowski and our Project Assistant, Megan Sharkey, for their support and encouragement.