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Ask your vendors

Even if you aren't a Genio customer, we want to make sure you're using the right software for your institution and students. To help with your decision, here are some key questions to ask vendors.

Accessibility

To meet the ADA Title II deadline of April 24, 2026, don't just ask vendors if they're compliant. Here's how to get the details you need:

Key questions to ask

☐ *How does the vendor maintain WCAG compliance and what testing is in place for new features?*

☐ *How does the vendor deal with accessibility bugs in product development?*

☐ *Does the vendor provide appropriate ACR* (VPAT) documentation?*

☐ *Is accessibility testing performed manually, or using automation? Is a third party used for objective testing?*

☐ *Does the vendor's software rely on an accessibility overlay/widget?*

*Accessibility Conformance Report

Compliance and Testing

✓ Has **WCAG compliant features** and a clear remediation plan to fix any known issues.

✓ **Manual testing** takes place before new feature releases to remove accessibility bugs where possible.

✓ This topic is approached with **transparency** and honesty.

✕ Relies solely on automated testing, which can miss up to 70% of accessibility issues (Accessibility Works, 2025). Be wary if they claim 100% WCAG compliance without manual/human testing.

✕ Does not address how they test new features during product development to look for accessibility bugs.

ACR (VPAT) Documentation

✓ Documentation is **readily available.**

✓ Evaluation should include **manual testing,** as automation misses up to 70% of issues.

✓ Evaluation & documentation completed by a trusted **third-party** for credible results.

✕ ACR (VPAT) is not provided or difficult to access.

✕ Evaluation only uses automated testing, which is not thorough.

✕ Evaluation & documentation is not performed by a third-party digital accessibility expert.

Accessibility Overlays/Widgets

✓ Software **does not use an accessibility overlay** or widget, and focuses on creating an accessible codebase to remove foundational issues.

✕ Utilizes an accessibility overlay to mask inaccessible code. Overlays use automation which may miss accessibility concerns, and can introduce new accessibility barriers.

Data security and storage

Protect your institution from legal liability and ensure the safety of your students' personal data.

Key questions to ask

☐ *Who owns the data once it enters the vendor's system?*

☐ *What provisions ensure the vendor treats user data appropriately?*

☐ *What access controls are in place to ensure only authorized persons have access to stored information and notes derived from the recordings?*

Data Ownership

✓ Ownership and intellectual property rights **never transfer** to the vendor in the event it is captured in their software.

✕ Data ownership is not addressed in terms and conditions.

✕ Lack of clarity on this issue.

Privacy & Security

✓ Evidence that **privacy and security policies** align with leading global standards, including GDPR and CPRA.

✓ Security ideally validated by a **SOC 2 Type II** report, dated within the past 12 months.

✓ Privacy and security commitments should be included in the vendor's terms and conditions.

✕ Poor or lacking privacy notice.

✕ Not SOC 2 compliant or the report is out of date.

Access Controls

✓ Access is by **authorized persons only**, based on role and justified business need.

✓ Access to sensitive data is only granted for a limited time on a case by case basis.

✓ Full **access logs** available.

✕ Lack of a clear position.

✕ No clear processes.

✕ No access logs.

Third-party implementation

If you approve a product, you also approve their third-parties! Safeguard student privacy by ensuring ethical data standards and AI usage.

Key questions to ask

- *Is a transparent, readily-accessible list of third-parties available?*
- *What provisions are in place to ensure vendor's third-parties treat user data appropriately?*
- *Are third-parties allowed to train AI models using this data?*

Third-Party Transparency

✓ Readily-accessible **list of third-parties**, including their **processing location** and **reason** for processing the data. This tells you where user data is going and how it's used.

✗ Unable to produce a list of third-parties.

✗ Unclear about the reason for working with each third-party.

Third-Party Vetting

✓ Clarity on its **vendor vetting process** and the security of these third-parties, with clear evidence that their security policies match the vendor's standards.

✓ **Data Processing Agreement (DPA) in place** with each third-party as standard, third-parties ideally have accreditation such as SOC 2 Type II.

✗ Not able to provide details on their third parties and the controls in place, and lacks clarity around this issue.

AI Model Training

✓ Clear statement that **third-parties cannot train AI models** using user data.

✗ Unsure, ambiguous or acknowledges that third-parties can train AI models with their user's data.

Delivering value and impact

Before you take their word that the tool works, check for objective and ideally third-party research to verify their statements. Dig a little deeper to find out their commitment to ongoing support!

Key questions to ask

- *How does the vendor evidence the impact and effectiveness of their tool?*
- *What is the vendor's experience working with different departments to roll out their product effectively, ensuring maximum impact and minimal disruption?*
- *What support does the vendor offer customers and their students post-purchase?*

Evidence and Research

✓ The vendor uses **empirical research** and evidence to demonstrate their impact. Evidence may include internal research, independently-verified research, product certification, and accreditation badges.

✓ **Testimonials** and **case studies** from both student and admin users.

✗ Relies exclusively on select quotes, without being able to evidence impact at scale or over time.

✗ Sweeping statements about impact without facts to demonstrate.

Industry Expertise

✓ The overall brand is focused on using **learning research and best practices to drive learner outcomes.** Rationale can be given for the benefits of key features and updates. Features promote active learning to encourage good study habits.

✓ **Expertise and experience working with different departments** within the higher education system (including accessibility accommodations, student success, IT, and faculty) to address concerns and ensure alignment across the institution.

✗ The company does not mention specific examples of product features or design philosophy that support effective learning practice. May be vague, focus on general productivity, or lean heavily on automated processes rather than active learning.

✗ Lacks knowledge or awareness of the different departments involved in the higher education system. Is ambiguous or vague about the needs of these different job roles.

Customer Experience and Support

✓ Vendor provides clarity on **post-purchase support** for customers and their students, which may include regular touchpoints with a customer success manager and good response times for queries.

✗ Unsure or unclear on what support is offered to customers and their students after licenses have been purchased.

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