Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide

Cuyahoga Community College

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Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to share best practices with faculty and staff to assist with creating documents and materials that are accessible and compliant with Tri-C's Online Accessibility Procedure. All learners benefit from material that is more accessible and this helps to promote a more inclusive classroom environment, regardless of the course modality. Faculty may reference this guide, as well as best practices for accessibility in their own discipline, when creating or editing their course materials.

Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty Responsibility in Online Accessibility

1) All active course material needs to be accessible so that students can stay current within the course.
2) Faculty teaching online, blended or using supplemental Bb sites are expected to utilize the Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide and incorporate the changes identified in the Ally Course Report for each course s/he is teaching in a given semester/term.
3) Prior to the start of each session and/or each week new course material is made available to students. the individual faculty member can refer to the Ally Course Report for assistance in addressing any accessibility flags.
4) In addition to utilizing the Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide and Individual Course Reports, faculty can consult with the College's Digital Instructional Accessibility Specialist in (OLAT), Center for Learning Excellence (CLE), Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office, and Academic Professional Development/Faculty Development for direct support and accessibility training opportunities.
5) When a faculty member is presented a student accommodation letter issued by the SAS office, the faculty must provide the student with the listed accommodation. If the faculty member believes that the accommodation would present an undue administrative burden on the College or that the accommodation would be impossible or unfeasible to administer, they must contact the SAS office, not the student, to request an alternate accommodation. The faculty member, student and Student Accessibility Services office will then work through the interactive process to determine an alternative accommodation, if possible.
6) Any tools (such as faculty created rubrics outside of the LMS or multimedia such as video) used in the delivery of the course (not content and materials) may be substituted with alternatives that are consistent with the individual student's approved accommodation.

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1) The Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide is authored and revised by the Online Learning and Academic Technology (OLAT) department at a minimum every two years in consultation with the Distance Learning Steering Committee (DLSC).
2) All Faculty teaching in-person, online, blended, and web-enhanced/supplemental courses must complete all applicable elements of the Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide.
3) To assist faculty in the utilizing the Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide and to improve accessibility, the College will embed software is its learning management system (LMS) which provides faculty suggestions and methods to improve the accessibility of individual course sites. This software is called "Ally" and is part of every Blackboard Learn course site.

   The College and faculty will use the software to create both institutional and individual course reports to measure the level of accessibility. The College will utilize the Institutional report holistically to measure accessibility and student usage. Faculty will have access at any time to their individual course report to

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identify accessibility issues within their courses. Ally provides a color system; faculty are encouraged to improve to the light green level which indicates any item as being 67-99% accessible. (See below)

Red = 1-33%   Orange = 34-66%   Lt Green = 67-99%   Dk Green = 100%

As part of faculty professional expectations and the College's legal responsibility, faculty have responsibility to provide accessible materials in all online, blended, and web-enhanced/supplemental courses. These responsibilities are outlined above. The college recognizes the importance of academic freedom and that accessibility helps to expand the academic opportunities available to students. As such, the College does not mandate material to be taught or how ideas may be presented. However, faculty are asked to present their chosen material in a manner which all students can access.

Faculty Resources for Online Accessibility

The following College services and offices are available to assist faculty in their role to provide accessible course content, achieving accessibility compliance and in making reasonable accommodations. Accommodations are considered reasonable if they do not substantially change essential elements of the curriculum or course objectives, nor require a substantial alteration in the manner in which the educational opportunities are provided. When necessary, these services will work collaboratively.

1) **Student Accessibility Services** (SAS)
   - Determines reasonable accommodations and provides resources for students with disabilities.
   - Faculty with questions about accommodations or accommodation letters for students should contact the SAS office for their campus.
   - SAS Provides some accommodations such as screen readers & sign language interpreters
   - Link to the Student Accessibility Services Webpage
   - Student Accessibility Services Faculty Handbook.
   - Questions about accommodations for online learning; Online Learning Faculty FAQ

2) **Online Learning and Academic Technology** (OLAT)
   - Provides individual faculty consultation via OLAT's Digital Instructional Accessibility Specialist
   - Provides college-wide technology (e.g. Ally) to assist in making content and the online learning environment compliant
   - Provides training and workshops to promote greater course accessibility
   - Assists faculty in the use of the Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide and in learning how to use the Ally accessibility software in Blackboard
   - Link to the OLAT Digital Accessibility Resources page

3) **Centers for Learning Excellence** (CLE)
   - Provides individual faculty with consultation services to improve ADA compliance
   - Provides training and workshops on additional topics relating to accessibility
   - Assists faculty in the use of the Best Practices for Accessibility Compliance Guide and in learning how to use the Ally accessibility software in Blackboard
   - Link to the main Centers for Learning Excellence (CLE) webpage

4) **Academic Professional Development/Faculty Development**
   - Partners with CLEs, OLAT and other faculty development initiatives to provide support, mentoring, and training to faculty in making courses accessible
   - Promotes awareness of the need for accessible courses
   - Link to the Tri-C Faculty Central webpage

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Blackboard Ally

Ally is an accessibility tool that is integrated within Blackboard Learn, the college's Learning Management System (LMS). Faculty are encouraged to use Ally and the Ally Course Report as a way of assessing how their course content aligns with WCAG guidelines. Federal law mandates that all course material be accessible to all students. As such, Ally can the college comply with federal law by converting an item or file into one of several alternative, more accessible formats for students. Ally can also assist faculty by helping to ensure their course, and all digital course materials, are as accessible as possible. Ally can assist faculty with making content more accessible by:

- Delivering guidance to faculty on how to improve the accessibility of their course content.
- Checking course materials against WCAG standards.
- Providing accessible alternative formats such as braille, audio, and PDF versions.

Ally works best with documents created in Microsoft Word [to create alternative formats]. Faculty can learn more about Ally as well as find an FAQ maintained by Blackboard at this Ally for Instructors webpage.

Ally Course Reports

The Ally Course Report examines the accessibility of each course site as well as the level of potential accessibility of commonly used file types. This report can be found in the *Course Tools* area of each Blackboard Learn course site. Only employees enrolled in a course as an instructor, or with instructor-level privileges, may access an Ally Course Report. Students are not able to access the course report, nor are they able to view the gauges that indicate the level accessibility given to each file. The Ally Course Report is not part of any faculty evaluation nor is there a minimum score required for a course or file. Refer to the Ally Faculty Quick Start Guide.

The Ally score for documents and files is merely one way for faculty to gauge the level of accessibility. Ally cannot determine the context with which a faculty member intends to use a document, nor the academic information they wish to convey. For example, a high score does not guarantee there are no accessibility issues but a low score does indicate more than one issue needs to be addressed. Refer to the Ally Course Accessibility Report.

The college recognizes that there may be pedagogical reasons for not addressing some accessibility issues. However, no student can be denied the protection afforded to them by State or Federal Law. As such, faculty are encouraged to utilize the accessibility resources include in this document to help address any questions. Additionally, faculty who receive an accommodation letter for a student may wish to meet with the CLE, SAS, and/or the Digital Instructional Accessibility Specialist from OLAT to discuss what else may need to be done in order to meet the requested accommodations.

Ally Accessibility Scores

Ally checks new and existing content and assigns course items and content an accessibility score. Each score includes both a numerical score and a colored gauge that reflects that score. Newly added content may take 1-2 minutes to be analyzed before a score is reflected. The algorithms used by Ally to check and score content is always being updated. Some complex documents or files containing equations may score lower if Ally has difficulty reading an image or identifying information embedded into certain document types. Faculty should reach out to their CLE or OLAT for questions about how Ally has scored an item.

Ally checks the following:
- Microsoft Word files
- Microsoft PowerPoint files
- PDF files
- OpenOffice/LibreOffice files
- HTML files
- Image files (JPG, JPEG, GIF, PNG, BMP, TIFF)
- WYSIWYG content (Blackboard specific items, folder, links, etc.)

Ally Score Icons

Ally accessibility scores range from Low to Perfect. Items scored less than 100 percent are given suggestions as to how to improve the accessibility of the file. Any score given by Ally is subjective and based on many different criteria. Each course should score in the High range highlighted below. Every file should be checked to ensure the accuracy of accessibility and to ensure that each file is conveying the correct information and intended purpose. For example, is each image description conveying the correct context the instructor is using it in?

 Low (0-33%): Needs attention as several accessibility issues have been identified.

 Medium (34-66%): File is somewhat accessible but still has issues that need addressed.

 High (67-99%): File is mostly accessible but minor improvements are possible.

 Perfect (100%): No issues detected, but improvements may be possible.

Principles of Accessibility

There are four principles of accessibility that can impact how we create content for documents, presentations, labs, and online content for Blackboard courses. This guide is not comprehensive with regards to every aspect of accessibility that can be adopted. It does include best practices as set forth in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Questions about accessibility should be directed to the campus Centers for Learning Excellence (CLEs) or the office of Online Learning and Academic Technology (OLAT). The four Principles of Accessibility are:

- **Perceivable** - Information must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive.
  - o Information being presented can't be invisible to some users.
- **Operable** - User interface components and navigation must be operable.
  - o This means that *all* users must be able to navigate a document or site.
- **Understandable** - Information and the operation of the user interface must be understandable.
  - o Users must be able to understand the information as well as how elements like video players and web links operate.
- **Robust** - Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies.
  - o This includes mobile devices and different screen sizes as well as assistive tools.

Accessibility Statement

The Tri-C accessibility statement should be made clear to our students. The current Accessibility Statement is included on the OLAT Faculty Digital Accessibility Resources webpage and also on the main Blackboard (Bb) Institution landing page under Student Support Services. Accessibility statements should also be included within the course site and within the syllabus.

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Official Accessibility Statement:

Tri-C is committed to providing online services, software, and electronic information that is accessible and usable by all of our students, including those with disabilities. It is our mission to provide accessible opportunities and services by complying with Federal and State accessibility guidelines.

If you need any special course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability, please visit the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) website or email SAS at cccsas@tri-c.edu. Students have the right to request accommodations at any point in the semester; however, accommodations are not retroactive.

Document Files

The best way to create accessible documents is to follow the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Visit the Faculty Online Digital Accessibility webpage for more information on how to create accessible documents for a variety of programs such as Word and PowerPoint.

Microsoft Word

- Microsoft Word is a preferred authoring tool for creating accessible documents.
- Refer to the General Documents webpage as a starting point for creating your documents.
- Use the Microsoft Accessibility Checker on all MS Word documents.
- The Ally Course Reports can easily check the .docx for Accessibility
- Ally can easily convert Microsoft Word documents into Alternative formats.

Portable Document Files (PDFs)

- Create accessible PDF's from Word or Powerpoint documents.
- Avoid *scanned* PDFs which are usually image-only files.
- Editing a PDF can be done using Adobe DC and is available to Tri-C employees.
- Use the Adobe Accessibility checker.
- Faculty should contact their CLE with questions on creating accessible documents.

Text Accessibility

Consider the following when creating your documents:

- Use headings or the Styles tool to identify different sections of a document.
  - This improves learner visualization and interpretation by assisting devices.
- Color must meet the WCAG Color Contrast Guidelines.
- Avoid using image effects such as Shadows, 3D, etc. A basic image frame is best.
- Content that flashes, blinks or moves too fast or unexpectedly may cause seizures.
  - The Ally Accessibility Checker will flag videos or GIFs with a Severe error.
- For information meant to elicit a response, use text cues such as an asterisk or the word 'required' in addition to bold, italics, or capital letters.
- Avoid abbreviations to avoid confusion when read by assistive technologies. (i.e. February instead of Feb.)

Fonts

Font styles used in any document, course material, or webpage should be easy to perceive by the reader and enable the reader to understand the formulas, symbols, and characters used.

- Use high contrast text that meets the WCAG Contrast Ratio of 4.5:1
- Use a 12-point or larger font size.
- Font types that are simple and easily-parsed work best.
  - Learn more about Accessible typefaces and fonts

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Images
- Use Alt Text for all images that convey content.
  - [How to write effective Alt Text](#)
- As a general rule use 140 characters or less for the description.
- Images not being used to convey content may be marked as *"decorative"* in documents.
- Images marked as "decorative" are not read by screen readers.
- Refer to the [Accessibility Images](#) webpage as a guide.

Graphs/Complex images
- A complex image is one that requires more than 140 characters to describe it with Alt Text.
- Use no more than 280 characters for Alt Text as a rule. (Think of a Tweet)
- Refer to the [Accessibility Images](#) webpage as a guide.
- Describe graphs and complex images using a [table caption](#) or brief descriptive text.

Link
- Ensure the purpose of each link can be determined by the link text alone.
- Link to a page with a description of where or what it is (i.e. [My Tri-C Space](#)).
- Avoid the use of buttons or images for links.
- In Blackboard, indicate if your hyperlink will open in a new browser window.
- The CLEs or OLAT can assist with checking external sites.
- [Refer to the Accessible Links webpage as a guide.](#)

Math and STEM
- Code formulas and symbols for screen readers.
- Use the [Equation Editor in Microsoft Word](#).
- Use the [Equation Editor in Blackboard](#).

Navigation
- Use the Blackboard Learn Course site template as a guide.
- This template is designed to be accessible and is mobile friendly.
- Do not remove, reorder or alter the template. Exercise Academic freedom under each heading.
- Use an organized and consistent layout.
- To assist screen readers, attempt to minimize scrolling and clicking to access materials.

PowerPoint (Presentation Software)
- Presentations made available to, or requested by students, need to be made accessible.
- When presenting in a lecture; images, graphs, and charts should be described. This includes virtual presentations and when recording so captions can be generated.
- Consider using [Subtitles](#) when presenting in person.

When designing PowerPoints:
- Use a built-in template whenever possible.
- Use high-contrasting font colors (refer to the [Color Contrast webpage](#)).
- Use 24-point font sizes or higher when possible.
- When providing PowerPoints to students as course content or a study aid:
- Give images an **Alt Text** description that conveys' both *meaning* and *context* of the image.
- Always use the Microsoft Accessibility Checker.

- Check the reading order and adjust it as needed.
  - [How to adjust the reading order](#)

Tables
- Use the simplest table possible.
- Remember that screen readers read from left to right and then from the top to the bottom.
- Describe only the data from tables that needs conveyed to students in the **Alt Text.**
- If a long description is needed, provide a descriptive text caption to improve understanding.
- Always use identifying headers for rows and columns.
  - [How to make tables accessible](#)

Publishers' Materials
- Select content and materials that comply with this Accessibility Checklist.
- All Publisher websites, eBooks, and digital course material needs to be evaluated for accessibility.
- The CLEs and OLAT can assist with vetting publisher material.
- Faculty should request a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) or check with OLAT to see if the college has a current VPAT on file.
- The [WAVE Website accessibility checker](#) add-on for Google Chrome can check publisher websites however this does not ensure that any downloads or materials are accessible.
- Visit our [Vendor Information](#) webpage for more information.

Other Technologies
- All technologies used within a course should be vetted for accessibility and listed in the course along with their accessibility statements.
- Faculty using a technology that is not sponsored by the college should contact their CLE or OLAT for assistance with an accessibility check.
- Technologies integrated into Blackboard Learn should be vetted for accessibility by OLAT.
- Technology sponsored by the college has been checked for accessibility.

Audio
- Audio files used or linked in Blackboard must have an ADA Compliant transcript.
  - [Record or transcribe in Microsoft Word.](#)
- [Blackboards Alternative Formats](#) can create audio files using it's Text-to-Speech converter or the Immersive Reader formats.

Videos
- Videos must have either captions or a detailed transcript available to students.
- Tri-C provides ADA-compliant closed captioning to videos uploaded to Mediasite
- Get started with the [Mediasite Quick Start Guide.](#)
- If captions are not possible, create and provide transcripts for video files, or provide an alternative version of the video that includes verbal and important non-verbal information.
  - [How to create a transcript in Webex](#)
- [P](#)rovide a text-based alternative for interactive elements.
- Set instructional media files to play upon user demand (instead of auto-play).