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Subject: Intro to Digital Accessibility for Instructional Designers
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Imagine this scenario: Your boss pops into your office and asks you to start making your elearning courses accessible from now on. After a quick Google search, you stumble upon the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and you feel instantly overwhelmed. There are just so many rules, it's hard to make heads or tails of them. And it seems like a huge amount of effort for a small number of learners. You wonder, is it really worth it?

If this sounds familiar, then you're in the right place. At the end of this course, you'll be able to:

- Explain what digital accessibility is
- Explain why it's important and who it benefits
- List the six main things you need to do to create accessible e-learning

Course Accessibility

AU HRD is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse employee population. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please reach out to us at hrddept@auburn.edu.

How this class aligns to Auburn's Strategic Plan

An Introduction to Digital Accessibility for Instructional Designers is designed to help you develop your compliance skills and meet job proficiency and knowledge goals. In this course, you'll be involved in your personal career projection to help Auburn reach its Strategic Plan goal #3, Commitment to Excellence and Innovation.

WCAG and eLearning

What is WCAG Video Transcript

Watch it

What is WCAG? WCAG stands for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. It's a set of guidelines and standards for making web content, and for our purposes, eTraining, more accessible to people with disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, and cognitive impairments.

Because WCAG is a set of standards and not regulations or laws, they're pretty high-level. The federal guidelines don't explain how to specifically make eTraining accessible. They simply provide standards to check if the training you are creating is accessible or not.

This is where things get tricky. Interpreting those standards can be a daunting task because the guidelines can be applied broadly across all types of web experiences. As with many federal guidelines, the language can be abstract, overly technical, or leave you with questions like: "How am I supposed to know which standards apply to self-paced courses?" "How do I know I've correctly interpreted these standards after developing my course?" "Can I even apply the standards in my preferred authoring tool?"

We're all in this together and probably feeling a bit overwhelmed and uncomfortable about all that we don't know. That's why we've created this guide. And if, after this series of modules, you can't find the answer, we'll figure it out together. Let's dive right in.

An Emphasis on Accessibility

Auburn University is committed to making all web-based material accessible. To accomplish this goal, we must all work together so that everyone,

regardless of ability, can learn, grow, and develop as Auburn Employees. Here's why it's important:

- It’s the law: Auburn University Human Resource Development’s self-paced, classroom, and virtual courses are mandated to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG) level A and AA, which concerns digital and web accessibility. Any time we prepare an electronic document that will be posted online or distributed via email, whether it is an internal document or an external document, it must follow the ADA and WCAG guidance.
- It’s the right thing to do: Designing for everyone is simply the right thing to do. It’s inclusive and ensures that everyone has equal access to course content. No one wakes up and says, “Today, I’m going to design a class that doesn’t work for 15% of my learners.” When we don’t consider accessibility, that’s exactly what we’re doing.
- It improves usability for everyone: When we consider that temporary or situational disabilities (broken arms, ear infections, etc.) are likely to impact everyone at some point, we realize that these accommodations actually benefit all of us.

How to Use this guide

This guide has been designed to simplify the WCAG guidelines as they apply to specific elements found in self-paced courses. We can use it as both a learning tool and a quick reference guide as we're creating our projects.

The information has been organized by WCAG criteria to make it easier to follow. We've also tried to explain everything in clear terms to help us understand what we actually need to do to make a reasonable effort at making our courses accessible to all learners.

Compliance Levels

Making our courses and materials accessible is more than just checking a box. It's about building learning experiences that all learners can equally access-including those with auditory, visual, mobility, or learning disabilities.

The WCAG guidelines use a set of three compliance levels to help guide our course development efforts: Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA. Let's take a

look at what they mean. Below, we have an overview of all three compliance levels.

- Level A- Must Have: Level A is the most basic level of compliance in WCAG. These standards are considered must-haves. Auburn strives to go beyond Level A to Level AA.
- Level AA - Should Have: Level AA or "Double A" is the intermediate level of compliance. Auburn considers Level AA to be achievable and it is our goal to meet this standard of accessibility in all of the courses living in ElevatED.
- Level AAA - Good to Have: Level AAA or "Triple A" is the highest level of compliance. While these standards are considered the "best practice", many of them are quite difficult to achieve and are considered a stretch goal.

These levels don't apply to an entire course, but rather to individual criteria found in courses. The individual criteria applies to elements like those found in the list below. If you aren't sure what any of these things mean, don't worry, we're going to take a deeper look later in this course.

- Fonts: size and styles
- Contrasting colors
- Buttons
- Alternative text on informative images
- Closed captioning and transcript
- Customized focus order

WCAG 2.1 Design Principles

The guidelines and criteria listed above can be organized around the following four design principles, which lay the foundation necessary for anyone to access and use web content. Anyone who wants to learn from our online courses must have P.O.U.R.

Perceivable

- With digital courses, it is important that all content is perceivable to all

learners, regardless of their abilities.

- This means that content should be designed with accessibility in mind, including providing alternative text for images, captions for videos, and using high-contrast colors to make text stand out.
- In addition, content should be well-organized and easy to navigate, so that students can easily find the information they need.

Operable

- The interface of an eLearning platform should be operable by all learners, regardless of their abilities.
- This means that the platform should be designed to work with different input methods, such as a mouse, keyboard, or voice command.
- In addition, the platform should be easy to use, with clear and consistent navigation throughout the site.

Understandable

- Digital course content should be designed to be easily understood by all learners.
- This means that language should be clear and easy to understand, and that instructions and feedback should be provided in a clear and consistent manner.
- In addition, the content should be well-organized and presented in a logical sequence, so that students can easily follow along and understand the concepts being taught.

Robust

- Digital courses should be robust enough to work with a wide range of devices and assistive technologies.
- This means that the content should be built using authoring tools and software that have accessibility as a priority and that it should be tested on different browsers and devices to ensure compatibility.
- In addition, the eLearning platform should be designed to work with different types of assistive technologies, such as screen readers and alternative input devices, so that all learners can access the content.

Overall, by applying the P.O.U.R. design principle to eLearning, instructional designers can help ensure that all learners have equal access to what is being taught and that the content is presented in a way that is easy to understand and navigate.

Accessibility at Auburn

"Designing accessible learning opportunities is about more than just checking a box."

Auburn's Accessibility Goals

More than "checking a box", it's about creating a space and developmental content that all learners can equally access—including those with auditory, visual, mobility, or learning disabilities. To meet accessibility guidelines, Auburn provides:

- Online accommodation forms for both students and employees.
- The resources needed to meet Level AA WCAG standards for digital materials.

Who's Responsible for Accessibility at Auburn?

There are three main resources on campus to help us with accessibility needs. Additionally, a fourth should be all of us who are course content creators!

Auburn University Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance

The EOC Office provides reasonable workplace accommodations for employees with qualifying disabilities. Documentation forms may be emailed to eoc@auburn.edu, faxed to (334) 844-4794, or sent to the Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance, 317 Foy Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849.

The Auburn Office of Accessibility

Their mission is to work collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff, to create a more usable, accessible campus and learning environment. This office can be reached at (334) 844-2096 or by email at accessibility@auburn.edu.

Auburn Office of Information Technology

Auburn University is committed to making our websites accessible to all users, including those that use Assistive Technology. Mark Bransby in OIT is available to answer questions, test your websites, and work with you to improve the accessibility of your course. Mark can be reached at bransch@auburn.edu.

All of us

Those of us who publish content to Auburn websites can make our products more accessible by creating content that is easily navigable, taking into account the various needs of our learners. We need to also provide alternative versions of the content, such as audio, video, or text-based options so that learners can choose the format that best suits their needs. With these practices and more, we can ensure that courses are accessible to all learners.

Top 6 Considerations for Accessible eLearning

To help designers create digital products that work for everyone, the Web Accessibility Initiative published a set of guidelines called the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The only problem is that they're extremely detailed, which can be overwhelming. But you don't have to go from zero to 100% accessibility compliance overnight. You can take baby steps towards accessibility by improving the accessibility of your courses incrementally. Here are the six easy—but important—changes you can implement right away to make your courses more accessible.

Fonts: Size and Styles

When designing e-learning, keep text size and style in mind for clarity and readability.

• Use an easy-to-read, San Serif font.

• Make sure all the text in your course is set to at least size 12, so it's easier to read.

• Use bold instead of italics or underlining text.

Use Contrasting Colors

Another simple thing you can do to ensure all your learners can read and

interact easily with your content is to choose colors for foreground objects—like text and buttons—that stand out from the background. The easiest way to do this is by measuring the contrast—or the difference in brightness—between your foreground and background colors using an accessible color checker like this one from Accessible Web.

Color and Text

The color of your text should have a 4.5:1 contrast ratio with the background color. The table below reveals how text and background can pass or fail WCAG standards based on contrast.

Color Combo	Ratio/Grade
Light blue text on top of an Auburn blue background	3.66:1 / Fail
White text on top of an Auburn orange background	3.15:1 / Fail
Auburn orange text on top of an Auburn blue background	5:00.1 / Pass
Yellow text on top of an Auburn orange background	1.93:1 / Fail
White text on top of an Auburn blue background	15.78:1 / Pass (best choice)

Color and Interactive Elements

The color of interface elements—like buttons—should have a 3:1 contrast ratio with the background color. The table below reveals how interactive elements and backgrounds can pass or fail WCAG standards based on contrast.

Color Combo	Ratio/Grade
Light element on top of an Auburn blue background	3.66:1 / Fail
White element on top of an Auburn orange background	3.15:1 / Fail
Auburn orange element on top of an Auburn blue background	5:00.1 / Pass
Yellow element on top of an Auburn orange background	1.93:1 / Fail
White element on top of an Auburn blue background	15.78:1 / Pass (best choice)

Auburn Branding Color Grid

Access Auburn's Color Grid to see how Auburn's branding colors work in

various contrast examples. For more information on contrast, check out this article: Contrast Considerations for Accessible E-Learning.

Buttons

Changing the size of your buttons is another quick win. By adjusting all your buttons to at least 44 x 44 pixels, you're making sure they're easy for all learners to select—even if they have motor impairments. The bigger the button, the easier it is to click because you don't have to make as much of an effort to click in the exact right spot.

Add Alternative (Alt) Text to Images

Another easy way to make your courses more accessible is by adding alt text—descriptive text that screen readers announce to learners—to functional images in your course to explain what an image depicts. If an image is just decorative, you'll want to hide it from accessibility tools so the learner won't have to repeatedly press the tab key or screen reader navigation keys to advance to important elements.

How can you tell the difference between functional and decorative images? Just ask yourself this question: If I removed this image, would the learning experience be impacted? If the answer is yes, it's a functional image. If the answer is no, it's likely a decorative image.

Five Tips on Writing Effective Alt Text

1. Identify the purpose of the image: Before writing the alt text, you should identify the purpose of the image. Functional images are those that convey important information or serve a specific purpose, such as diagrams, charts, or graphs.
2. Keep it concise: Alt text should be concise and to the point. Aim to write between 100- 125 characters (including spaces). This is because some screen readers may cut off the alt text after a certain number of characters.
3. Describe the image accurately: Write a brief and accurate description of the image. Be specific about the content of the image and what it represents. Avoid using generic phrases like "image of" or "picture of".
4. Use proper punctuation: Use proper punctuation such as periods and commas to help screen readers read the alt text properly. For example, if the image is a pie chart, use punctuation to describe the different sections of the chart.

5. Test it: Test your alt text by using a screen reader to ensure that it accurately describes the image and provides important information to the user. If you find that the alt text is not accurate or does not convey the information you intended, revise it until it is accurate and effective.

For more tips on writing effective alt text, read this helpful WebAIM article or get in some practice with this website from Poet Training Tool.

Not sure how to add alt text or hide decorative images from screen readers? If you're using Articulate apps, it's super easy! Check out these tutorials to find out how it works:

- Storyline 360: Adding Alternative Text for Screen Readers
- Storyline 360: Hiding Objects from Accessibility Tools
- Rise 360: How to Add Alternative Text to Images

Closed Captioning and Transcripts

To make your audio and video content more accessible, start including both closed captions and transcripts. For videos, make sure to include visual descriptions in the captions and transcripts so everyone can benefit from the additional context contained in the video. Why include both captions and transcripts? Because people who are deaf and blind can't access captions. Not to mention that transcripts also allow people with cognitive impairments to read at their own pace.

Closed Captioning

We recommend uploading your videos to Auburn's Panopto account. Panopto makes it easy to add Closed Captioning to any kind of video you may be utilizing. Here's a brief tutorial on adding captions to your Panopto video.

How to Add Automatic Captions to a Video Video Transcript

Watch it

In this video, you'll learn How to Add Automatic Captions also known as Automatic Speech Recognition or ASR to a video.

First, find the video session you want to add automatic captions to and open it in the Panopto Editor by selecting Edit beneath the video's title. You will need to have creator access to the video in order to see this option. Once selected, the editor will open in a new tab. From the lefthand side, select

Captions, then select the Import Captions drop-down menu. Please note that if you already have captions, or if you or your organization works with a third-party captioning company, you'll want to select Upload or Request Captions in order to complete that process. Otherwise, for machine-generated captioning, select Import Automatic Captions. Your captions will automatically load with time stamps that line up with the video.

Though machine-generated captions are mostly accurate, you may notice some incorrect talk-to-text translations. Captions for some videos may be more accurate than others based on the audio's quality. You can easily correct your captions; simply hover over the text you want to correct and click on it to enable editing. You'll notice that the timestamp of the text will now line up with the timestamp of the video. Type in your edits and then hit Enter. You'll notice that your edits will automatically save. When you're done making your edits, select Apply at the top of the editor to save the changes to your captions. A pop-up window will appear that says, Changes applied to video. Close the editor. Select OK if you're done editing your video or Cancel if you want to return to the editor to make more edits. Once you've applied all your edits and selected OK, your video will automatically begin to embed and process the captions. Once your captions are ready, you'll notice a small, closed captioning icon underneath your video title, it's a square with two small C's in it.

To view your captions, open your video in the player and select that same CC icon from the bottom right corner to show your captions. One last note, if you do catch a mistake in your captioning, you can always go back to the editor by selecting the pencil at the top of the page to correct it. As always, thank you for watching. For more information, please visit support.panopto.com.

Additionally, here are two tutorials for adding captions to Articulate software projects.

- Storyline 360: Creating and Editing Closed Captions with the Built-In Editor
- Rise 360: How to Add Closed Captioning to a Video

Course Transcripts

Auburn University Human Resource Development (AU HRD) requires any ElevatED Manager or Instructional Designer to provide an accessible transcript via Sharepoint at the beginning of a digital course with meaningful information. If you need to create a course transcript for Elevated, contact AU HRD at hrddept@auburn.edu for access to the ElevatED Course Transcripts

Sharepoint site and to schedule an appointment for training. Here's an example of the course transcript for this training. And to add transcripts specific to Articulate products here's what is recommended:

- For Storyline 360: Add a button that opens a layer with the transcript text on it.
- For Rise 360: Add a single-tabbed accordion block below the audio or video block with the transcript text inside.

Customizing Focus Order (If Needed)

Another thing that has a big impact on the learning experience of learners using screen readers is the order in which on-screen text and objects are read aloud—called the focus order. And it makes sense! Imagine if when learners open a slide with a tabs interaction, instead of starting with the first tab, they were directed to the middle one? And from there, instead of moving on to the next tab, it brought them back up to the slide title? That would be a frustrating experience, wouldn't it? Of course it would! When you don't define a logical focus order, learners using screen readers end up doing extra work to access the same information as other learners—and that's not an equal experience.

Luckily, if you're using Rise 360 the focus order is taken care of for you, so you don't have to worry about it. And if you're using Storyline 360, you can easily customize it by following the instructions in this tutorial: Storyline 360: Customizing the Focus Order of Slide Objects

Accessibility Checklist for Instructional Designers

As Instructional Designers we are responsible for creating inclusive and accessible courses following universal design principles. This checklist is not exhaustive but provides a high-level overview to help us adhere to basic accessibility principles. You may also notice a few items on the list that we didn't cover earlier. In those cases, we've added a hyperlink for more information.

Pre and Post Course Accessibility

- Add an accessible course transcript to the beginning of the course
- Add your accessibility statement to the beginning of the course

- Add the same accessible course transcript to the end of the course

Fonts

- Make sure all text is set to at least size 12
- Use bold instead of italics or underlining text
- Use bold instead of italics or underlining text

Colors

- Choose colors that stand out from the background (measure the contrast)
- Text color should have a 4.5:1 contrast ratio with the background
- Buttons should have a 3:1 contrast ratio with the background

Language

- Identify the main language used in the course
- Explain all abbreviations
- Readability: Your language should be understandable and clear to all audiences. Write content in a simple way.

Images

- Add alternative (alt) text to functional images
- Mark decorative images as such to hide them from accessibility tools

Buttons and Interactions

- Put navigation items in a consistent place in your layout
- Provide clear instructions or labels
- Give your links context
- Make buttons at least 44 by 44 pixels

Keyboard Navigation

Ensure the course is navigable with a keyboard
- Define a logical focus order
- Show learners what part of the content has the focus

Audio

- Include a play/pause button and volume control
- Add closed captions
- Provide a transcript

Video

- Add closed captions
- Provide a transcript
- Some videos may require an audio description track

Animations

- Allow learners to pause, stop, or hide content with automatic motion
- Ensure nothing blinks more than three times per second

Resources & Conclusion

Who to Call and Where to Look...

There's a lot of information out there about accessibility, here on campus and in the wider world. These are a few general resources to bookmark for future research.

Auburn Resources

- Auburn Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance
- Auburn Office of Accessibility
- Auburn Office of Information Technology

Federal Resources

- Section 508 Website
- Web Accessibility Initiative
- Americans with Disabilities Act

Authoring Tool Resources

- All About Accessibility
- Articulate 360 FAQs: Accessibility
- Creating Accessible Projects in Adobe Captivate

Other Resources

- Poet Training Tool
- Accessible Web Browser Extension
- PDF Remediation for Accessibility Training Wichita State University

View in SharePoint

How was the formatting of this email?

AUBURN

This email is generated through Auburn University's use of Microsoft 365 and may contain content that is controlled by Auburn University.