

## Tech Snacks: Accessibility

Upcoming Department of Justice requirements will lead to a new standard for Web Content Accessibility at public institutions, including universities. While the new changes to accessibility standards can seem overwhelming, implementing these new standards will be a positive for teaching and learning.

## Meeting Department of Education Guidelines

While these changes are coming directly from the Department of Education under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, their standards were adopted from the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C, the web's governing body) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG Version 2.1, Level AA). The DOJ has established a staggered timeline for compliance. Public entities that serve populations of 50,000 or more must comply by April 24, 2026. Those that serve less than 50,000 have until April 26, 2027.

To help clarify what population size entities like public colleges and universities should use to determine their compliance date, the DOJ offers the following in "Requirements by Entity Size" on page 112 of [its ruling](#):

"As another example, a public State university located in a town of 20,000 within a State with a population of 5 million would be considered a large public entity for the purposes of this part because it is an instrumentality of the State. However, a county community college in the same State where the county has a population of 35,000 would be considered a small public entity for the purposes of this part, because the community college is an instrumentality of the county."

## WCAG 2 Overview

Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust (POUR):

- **Perceivable:** Alt text, captions, contrast, no color dependency
- **Operable:** Keyboard friendly, visible focus, controllable timing
- **Understandable:** Clear language, predictable navigation, clear page titles
- **Robust:** Use accessibility formatting features, verify third-party tools or links are accessible

## Examples of Accessibility Checkpoints

There are many ways to make your courses, documents, videos, etc. more accessible, some of which you might already be doing. Below are some examples of ways to enhance your accessibility and inclusivity within online spaces. Keep in mind that these examples can also provide awareness of accessibility barriers in online spaces:

### Basic Accessibility Checkpoints:

- Provide alt-text for all non-text elements. This includes images, graphical representations of text (including symbols), image map regions, tables, animations/GIFs, sounds, video.
- Ensure that all information conveyed with color is also available without color. For example, when using red marks in grade markups, also provide text explanations.
- Ensure that foreground and background color combinations provide sufficient contrast when viewed by someone having color deficits or when viewed on a black and white screen.
- Use the clearest and simplest language appropriate for a site's content.

### More Advanced Checkpoints:

- When an appropriate markup language exists, use markup rather than images to convey information.
- Use navigation mechanisms in a consistent manner.
- Use header elements to convey document structure and use them according to specification. You can check your documents using a screen reader within the LMS.
- Clearly identify changes in the natural language of a document's text and any text equivalents (e.g., captions or tagging in Word and PowerPoint).

### Accessibility Tools

- Microsoft has built in accessibility checkers that can be found in Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Review > Check Accessibility.
- Yuja Video is a Canvas integrated tool for video that will provide captions that are searchable, transcripts, and allow students to add notes while watching.
- Yuja Panorama is another Canvas integrated tool that provides faculty an overall accessibility check for the entire course and students with alternative formats.

### Resources

[ADA's Fact Sheet about the new rules for accessibility provided by ADA.gov](#)

[Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#)

[WebAIM](#): A non-profit based at Utah State University providing web accessibility tools.

Full DOJ Rule: [Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability; Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities](#)