UF College of Dentistry
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Office of Academic Affairs

Dentistry Accessibility Guide

Department of Justice updates to regulations for Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act go into effect on **April 24, 2026**. Under the new regulations, all online content must be accessible to people with disabilities. This applies to course materials, including documents uploaded to Canvas, prerecorded lecture videos, and third-party content such as online textbooks.

To Our Faculty, Staff, and Students

At the University of Florida College of Dentistry, we are dedicated to helping every student succeed. We see accessibility not just as a requirement, but as an opportunity to build a welcoming and supportive environment for all learners. When our courses and resources are accessible, all students can immerse themselves in their learning, explore their ambitions, and grow into skilled dentists.

Our office is committed to supporting you as we transition into these updated requirements. This guide provides practical steps, examples, and resources to make accessibility achievable and manageable.

What is Title II of the ADA?

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits state and local governments from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. Title II covers the University of Florida as a state institution. This means we must provide equal opportunities and access to all programs, services, and activities -including course content and learning environments- for all students.

The updated Title II regulations require all state and local government websites and digital content to conform to **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA**. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Websites
- Online courses
- Learning management systems
- Digital documents
- Videos
- Mobile applications
- Social media content

When selecting or purchasing digital tools, platforms, or services for your courses or research, prioritize those that are explicitly accessible and meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards. Contact UFIT for guidance on evaluating vendor accessibility.

For more information, visit:

- THE ADA AND TITLE II AT UF
- 8 STEPS TO COURSE ACCESSIBILITY

UFCD's Canvas Courses

The University of Florida's College of Dentistry courses are built with accessibility and Universal Design for Learning in mind. Each course is designed according to best practices to reflect the following:

- Each curriculum stream aligns with a particular **color theme**, reflected in the Canvas templates.
- Didactic, pre-clinical, and clinical courses that follow a weekly schedule utilize the same basic course structure, while courses that do not follow a weekly schedule all have the same basic structure. This consistency aids in providing the best user experience for our students.
- Canvas templates have been designed by the Instructional Design team to be accessible to all learners; maintaining the provided format is critical to our program's success.
- Materials are presented in multiple ways to increase access to a variety of learners (e.g. pre-recorded videos, Mediasite videos, PowerPoint presentations, PDF documents, etc.).

Key Principles of Accessibility

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is a framework to improve teaching and learning based on how people learn. The UDL promotes learner agency that is purposeful, resourceful, strategic, and action-oriented.

Reasonable Accommodations

A variety of reasonable accommodations can be made for students who qualify based on a documented disability. More information can be found at the links below:

- UF's Disability Resource Center
- UFCD's Academic Accommodations

Equitable Access

Access includes the ability for students to navigate physical spaces, utilize technology and learning materials, and communicate with all stakeholders (peers, staff, and faculty) in an equitable manner.

Writing Effective Alt Text for Images

Alt text (alternative text) describes an image for people who cannot see it, such as users of screen readers or those with slow internet connections. Good alt text should be concise but descriptive. For example, instead of "dental exam," write "endodontist examines patient to determine if a root canal is needed." Most programs let you add alt text by right clicking the image and selecting format or properties options.

- **Be Concise:** Keep it brief and descriptive (usually under 125 characters).
- **Be Specific:** Describe the content of the image, not just its file name.
- **Context Matters:** The alt text should relate to the image's purpose within the context of the material.
- **Decorative Images:** If purely decorative, use empty alt text (alt="").
    * Alt text is now a requirement for all images in all document types.

Accessible File Formats

Microsoft Word (.docx) / Apple Pages (.pages)

- Use built-in heading styles for structure.
- Add alt text to all images.
- Ensure sufficient color contrast.
- Save as a tagged PDF if sharing externally.
- Run the Accessibility Checker:
    1. Go to the **Review** tab.
    2. Click **Check Accessibility**.
    3. Review the inspection results and fix issues.

PowerPoint (.pptx) / Apple Keynote (.key)

- Use built-in slide layouts for structure.
- Add descriptive alt text to images and graphics.
- Ensure readable font sizes and sufficient color contrast.
- Avoid using only color to convey meaning.
- Export to PDF with tags enabled if distributing.
- Run the Accessibility Checker:
    1. Go to the **Review** tab.
    2. Click **Check Accessibility**.
    3. Fix issues flagged for slides, images, and reading order.

Excel (.xlsx) / Apple Numbers (.numbers)

- Use headings for rows and columns.
- Create proper data tables (not just formatted cells).
- Add alt text for charts and graphs.
- Provide a text summary of key data.
- Run the Accessibility Checker:
    1. Go to the **Review tab.**
    2. Click Check **Accessibility**.
    3. Review flagged issues with tables and charts.

Plain Text (.txt)

- Highly accessible but lacks formatting.
- Use strategically for simple information.
- Ensure proper line breaks and minimal extra spacing.

PDF (.pdf)

- Use **tagged PDFs** for screen reader compatibility.
- Avoid scanned images of text (use OCR if necessary).
- Add alt text to images.
- Ensure logical reading order.
- Run the Accessibility Checker:
  1. Open the file in **Adobe Acrobat Pro**.
  2. Go to **Tools > Accessibility**.
  3. Select **Full Check** to identify and fix issues.

Google Docs and Google Slides

- Use built-in heading styles (Docs) and slide layouts (Slides).
- Add alt text to images.
- Ensure sufficient color contrast.
- Share with “anyone with the link can view” for easier access.
- Run the Accessibility Checker:
  1. In Docs/Slides, go to **Tools > Accessibility.**
  2. Enable accessibility features (screen reader and captions).
  3. Use add-ons such as **Accessibility Checker** if available.

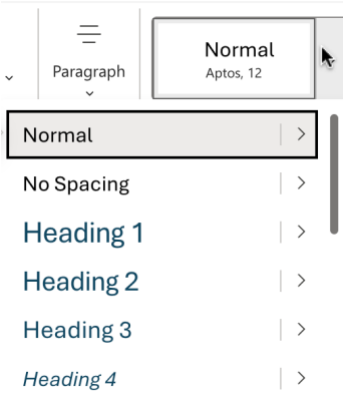
Microsoft 365 Online (Word, PowerPoint, Excel via OneDrive/SharePoint)

- Same principles as desktop versions: use heading styles, alt text, clear fonts, and contrast.
- Accessible whether the file is stored in OneDrive or SharePoint.
- Run the Accessibility Checker:
  1. Go to the **Review** tab.
  2. Select **Check Accessibility**.
  3. Fix issues shown in the inspection panel.

Best Practices

Course Materials

Here are some basic examples of how to make your course materials more accessible:

Lacks Accessibility	Best Practices
Manual formatting: Using only bold or larger font sizes for headers. Screen readers won't recognize this as a structure. Example: ***Basics of Periodontics***	Heading Styles: Use the built-in headings styles (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2) in Word or Canvas. This creates an outline that can be navigated. Example: Basics of Periodontics 
Vague Links: Links like "click here" don't tell users with screen readers where the link goes. Example: Click here to see.	Descriptive Links: The link itself should describe its destination, providing clear context. Example: Gross Anatomy Virtual Learning
Images Without Context: Visually impaired students won't know what an images shoes without alt-text. Example: (image alone) 	Add alt text: Describe the image's content and purpose. Example: Close-up of teeth and gums of a 5-year-old. 

- **Digital Documents**: Ensure documents are text-searchable (not scanned images). Use clear headings, alt text for images, and sufficient color contrast.
- **Videos**: Provide captions and transcripts for all audio content, and include audio descriptions for visual elements like procedures and diagrams to support students with impairments.
- **Presentations**: Use a large, readable font size, sufficient color contrast, and describe visuals verbally.
- **Learning Management System (LMS)**: Use accessible file formats when posting content to Canvas or similar LMS platforms.

Regular Accessibility Auditing

Periodically review your course materials and digital content to identify and address accessibility barriers. Utilize accessibility checkers built into software like Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

Clinical Rotations & Lab

- **Physical Accessibilit**y: Be aware of physical barriers in clinical settings. Work with the DRC to address necessary accommodations.
- **Equipmen**t: Consider adjustments or alternative equipment if standard equipment presents a barrier.
- **Communication**: Ensure clear communication with students regarding clinical procedures and expectations.

Assessments

- **Alternative Formats**: Be open to providing exams and assignments in alternative formats (e.g., large print, Braille, digital).
- **Extended Time**: Recognize that some students may require extended time for assessments.
- **Assistive Technology**: Allow the use of assistive technology, as approved by the DRC.

Communication

- **Be Proactive**: Include an accessibility statement in your syllabus outlining your commitment to accessibility and directing students to the DRC.
- **Respond to Accommodation Requests**: Respond promptly and respectfully to accommodation requests from the DRC.

Faculty Training & Resources

Register for the University of Florida's self-paced online course**,** Accessibility Fundamentals**,** to learn how to design accessible course materials.

For further assistance and information, please utilize these valuable resources:

- University of Florida Electronic Information Technology and Communication Accessibility Policy - Outlines UF’s commitment to making electronic information and communications accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- University of Florida Disability Resource Center - Campus support services and accommodations for students with disabilities
- Web Accessibility Perspectives Videos: Explore the Impact and Benefits for Everyone - Short videos demonstrating how accessibility improvements benefit all users
- Top Tips for Accessibility - Quick, practical guidance for making content more accessible
- Accessible UF - University of Florida's central hub for accessibility resources and tools