

Course Materials Compliance Guide

Notice: *Completing this guide does not guarantee full ADA Title II or WCAG compliance. True accessibility requires ongoing manual review, constant maintenance, and careful evaluation of third-party tools. This guide covers the most critical content-creation standards. Full WCAG 2.1 AA compliance includes 50 criteria, many of which are handled by our IT department and underlying software. However, this roadmap is an excellent starting point and serves as strong documentation that a good-faith review has been conducted should an audit occur.*

This comprehensive guide is designed to support faculty in developing accessible online courses in preparation for updated DOJ compliance deadlines. Whether you are looking to make quick improvements or need a thorough audit of your course materials, this checklist maps directly to [WCAG 2.1 AA compliance standards](#).

Easy First Steps (Quick Course Fixes)

If you are short on time, start here. Tackle your course one micro-task at a time.

Structural Foundations

- ☐ **Heading Hierarchy:** Use H1, H2, and H3 styles in your syllabus rather than just bolding or enlarging text. (WCAG 1.3.1 / 2.4.6)
- ☐ **Table Tangle:** Remove any merged or split cells from your data tables and designate header rows. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ **List Formatting Check:** Ensure you are using built-in bulleted or numbered list buttons, rather than manually typing dashes or numbers. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ **Native Format Preference:** Prioritize posting native files (like Word documents or clean LMS web pages) over scanned PDFs to preserve screen reader compatibility. (WCAG 1.3.1)

Visual Clarity & Navigation

- ☐ **'Click Here' Cleanup:** Change all "Click Here" or "Read More" links to descriptive text that explains the destination. (WCAG 2.4.4)
- ☐ **Contrast Correction:** Run the color contrast checker on your main slide deck to ensure text stands out against the background with a minimum 4.5:1 ratio. (WCAG 1.4.3)
- ☐ **Color Independence:** Ensure color is never used as the *only* visual means of conveying information, highlighting, or indicating error states. (WCAG 1.4.1)
- ☐ **File Naming Fix:** Rename poorly named files (e.g., change final_v2.pdf to FA26_Syllabus.pdf) before uploading them to D2L. Ensure file names are descriptive and free of spaces/special characters. (WCAG 2.4.2)

☐ **Metadata Setup:** Ensure document Title, Author, and other metadata properties are properly set in your files. (WCAG 2.4.2)

Multimedia

☐ **Alt-Text Dash:** Add short image descriptions to all graphics in your first module. (WCAG 1.1.1)

☐ **Standard Images:** Alternative text provided for standard images. (WCAG 1.1.1)

☐ **Complex Images:** Complex images (graphs, maps) have long text descriptions provided below them. (WCAG 1.1.1)

☐ **Decorative Images:** Decorative images are marked as such (or have empty alt="" text). (WCAG 1.1.1)

☐ **Caption Check:** Verify that auto-captions are enabled on your welcome video or weekly introduction video. (WCAG 1.2.2)

☐ **Photosafety Check:** Ensure no animations, videos, or GIFs flash or blink more than three times per second to prevent triggering seizures. (WCAG 2.3.1)

☐ **Typography Sweep:** Remove ALL CAPS or heavy italics from long paragraphs, and utilize sans-serif fonts to improve overall readability. (WCAG 1.4.8)

☐ **Language Specification:** Ensure your document properties or D2L page is set to the correct primary language (e.g., English) so screen readers pronounce words correctly. (WCAG 3.1.1)

☐ **Target Size Check:** Ensure interactive elements like buttons and download links are large enough (at least 24x24 CSS pixels) to be easily clicked or tapped. (WCAG 2.5.5)

☐ **Accessibility Checker Challenge:** Aim for a 100% score using the built-in checker on a single Word document or D2L page!

Software-Specific Self-Audit

Ready to audit specific file types? Use these comprehensive checks for deep reviews.

Microsoft Word

☐ Styles used for all text formatting (Headings, Normal, Blockquote). (WCAG 1.3.1)

☐ Alternative text added for all images, charts, and graphics. (WCAG 1.1.1)

☐ Hyperlink text is meaningful and descriptive out of context. (WCAG 2.4.4)

☐ Table headers are clearly identified using Table Tools. (WCAG 1.3.1)

- ☐ Table structure is simple (no blank rows/columns, no merged cells). (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ Lists are created using built-in Word list tools. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ Document primary language is specified in settings. (WCAG 3.1.1)
- ☐ Any change in language mid-document is noted in text properties. (WCAG 3.1.2)
- ☐ Document Title, Author, and metadata properties are properly set. (WCAG 2.4.2)
- ☐ Word Accessibility Checker run with no persistent errors.

Microsoft PowerPoint

- ☐ Slide layouts (Title, Content) are used consistently rather than inserting floating text boxes. (WCAG 1.3.2)
- ☐ Each slide has a unique title for navigation. (WCAG 2.4.2)
- ☐ Reading order checked and verified in Outline View / Reading Order pane. (WCAG 1.3.2)
- ☐ Alternative text added for all visual elements. (WCAG 1.1.1)
- ☐ Closed captions provided for any embedded audio/video. (WCAG 1.2.2)
- ☐ High contrast between text and slide background (4.5:1). (WCAG 1.4.3)
- ☐ Animations and slide transitions used sparingly and can be paused/stopped. (WCAG 2.2.2)
- ☐ Speaker notes provided to explain complex visuals to all students. (WCAG 1.1.1 / 1.2.3)

Microsoft Excel

- ☐ Sheet names are clear and descriptive. (WCAG 2.4.2)
- ☐ Alternative text added for charts and images. (WCAG 1.1.1)
- ☐ Table headers identified and distinct from data cells. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ No blank rows or columns used for formatting within the data range. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ No merged cells in data tables. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ Data validation and instructions used clearly for user input fields. (WCAG 3.3.2)
- ☐ Hyperlinks have meaningful text rather than raw URLs. (WCAG 2.4.4)
- ☐ Excel Accessibility Checker run with no errors.

Adobe PDF

- ☐ Document is formally tagged for accessibility. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ Logical reading order is established in the Tags tree. (WCAG 1.3.2)
- ☐ Alternative text added for images and figures. (WCAG 1.1.1)
- ☐ Bookmarks included for navigation in documents over 9 pages. (WCAG 2.4.5)
- ☐ Form fields are properly labeled with tooltips. (WCAG 3.3.2 / 4.1.2)
- ☐ Tables have header rows (<TH>) identified. (WCAG 1.3.1)
- ☐ Document primary language is specified in Advanced Properties. (WCAG 3.1.1)
- ☐ Security settings do not restrict access to screen reader APIs. (WCAG 4.1.2)

Video & Audio Content

- ☐ **Video:** Closed captions provided and synchronized. (WCAG 1.2.2)
- ☐ **Video:** Text transcript available alongside the video. (WCAG 1.2.1)
- ☐ **Video:** Audio description provided for important visual info not spoken aloud. (WCAG 1.2.5)
- ☐ **Video:** Player controls are fully keyboard accessible (Spacebar to pause, arrows for volume). (WCAG 2.1.1)
- ☐ **Audio:** Text transcript provided for podcasts/audio files. (WCAG 1.2.1)
- ☐ **Audio:** Volume controls easily accessible and independent of system volume. (WCAG 1.4.2)

Math & Science Content

- ☐ **Math:** MathML or Equation Editor used for equations (do not use images of math). (WCAG 1.3.1 / 1.4.5)
- ☐ **Science:** Chemical formulas properly formatted with structural text alternatives. (WCAG 1.1.1 / 1.3.1)
- ☐ **Science:** Tactile or sonification alternatives offered for complex spatial visuals if applicable. (WCAG 1.1.1)

Web Content, LMS Pages & Interactions

- ☐ Clear, concise language used; abbreviations/acronyms explained on first use. (WCAG 3.1.4)
- ☐ Keyboard navigation possible without requiring a mouse. (WCAG 2.1.1)
- ☐ No keyboard traps (users can Tab in and out of all elements). (WCAG 2.1.2)

- ☐ Focus indicators (outlines) are highly visible when tabbing. (WCAG 2.4.7)
- ☐ Skip navigation link provided at the top of custom HTML pages. (WCAG 2.4.1)
- ☐ ARIA labels used appropriately for custom interactive elements. (WCAG 4.1.2)
- ☐ Error messages for quizzes/forms are clear, descriptive, and identify the specific error. (WCAG 3.3.1 / 3.3.3)

Advanced Web & LMS Settings (Often Handled by IT)

- ☐ **Orientation:** Ensuring content works in both portrait and landscape mode on mobile devices. (WCAG 1.3.4)
- ☐ **Reflow:** Ensuring content can zoom to 400% and reflow into a single column without requiring horizontal scrolling (Controlled by LMS responsive design). (WCAG 1.4.10)
- ☐ **Text Spacing:** Ensuring no loss of functionality if a user overrides line/paragraph spacing in their browser settings. (WCAG 1.4.12)
- ☐ **Parsing:** Ensuring custom HTML code is clean, properly nested, and error-free. (WCAG 4.1.1)
- ☐ **Character Key Shortcuts:** Ensuring any single-character keyboard shortcuts can be turned off or remapped. (WCAG 2.1.4)

Beyond the Basics: Institutional Compliance Factors

Third-Party Software and Publisher Content: Universities are responsible for the accessibility of third-party tools required for students. If you assign an online lab, simulation, or platform from a publisher, it must meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards. Work with your department or IT to vet these tools prior to adoption.

Mobile Applications: If your course requires the use of a specific mobile app, that app must also be WCAG 2.1 AA compliant.

Alternative Access Plans: If you create a complex, interactive assignment (e.g., a virtual reality tour) that cannot be made fully accessible under current technology, the law requires a pre-planned strategy for providing an equally effective alternative assignment.

Legacy Content Navigation: Understand the specific rules regarding archived content and pre-existing documents. When in doubt, update legacy materials to current standards.