

Subject: Mandatory Accessibility Essentials Training & Federal Compliance Deadlines

Dear Faculty and Instructors,

We're writing to share an important requirement related to digital accessibility in our classes and to clarify the upcoming deadlines required by the federal government to bring us into compliance. These deadlines are relevant for all course materials and web content at the University of Utah.

At the U, accessibility is not just a compliance requirement—it is a reflection of who we are and how we show up for students. Creating digital environments that are usable, inclusive and welcoming for all learners is essential to student success, and it is work that many across campus are already leading with care and intention. More information is available in [this @theU story](#).

What you need to do – deadlines

By April 24, 2026, all academic web content, online course materials, and institutional digital content must conform to [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1 Level AA](#) accessibility standards.

The U.S. Department of Justice's new ADA Title II digital accessibility rule sets this compliance deadline, which applies to state and local government entities, including public universities like ours. Starting on that date, accessibility requirements are enforceable, and failure to comply can result in complaints, enforcement actions, or legal risk.

What you need to know – Accessibility Essentials

The [Accessibility Essentials](#) content on the Center for Teaching Excellence site outlines critical practices for making course materials accessible to all learners — including students with disabilities. This includes clear expectations for:

- WCAG 2.1 AA standards for digital content (Canvas pages, documents, images, videos, etc.)
- Alternative text for images
- Closed captions/transcripts on videos
- Proper color contrast and text formatting
- Descriptive links and accessible PDFs

All of these practices help ensure equitable access for students using assistive technologies such as screen readers. You can access training regarding how to meet these accessibility requirements here:

<https://cte.utah.edu/instructor-education/accessibility-essentials/index.php>

Why this matters – Federal legal requirements

Under federal law (Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act), institutions receiving federal funds — including public universities — must ensure accessible digital content for people with disabilities. This includes course content used in Canvas, departmental websites, instructional materials, and other electronic information.

What this means for your work

As soon as possible, please review the information, training, and tools available on the [Accessibility Essentials website](#). What you find there will help you take the following steps prior to the April 24 deadline:

- Review all Canvas pages, syllabi, and course documents for accessibility.
- Add alternative text to images and ensure descriptive link text.
- Provide closed captions and transcripts for multimedia.
- Check PDFs and other files for accessibility using tools like CIDILabs Accessibility Suite or Adobe accessibility checkers. Note that some exceptions may apply, if the online content in question is not currently being used and will not be used in the future. Please see the ADA.gov [Fact Sheet](#) for more information.
- Contact the Digital Learning Technologies team for help — they can assist with audits and remediation: classhelp@utah.edu.

What this means for all university websites

University professionals from IT and UMC are managing compliance with these new regulations for department and college externally facing websites.

For example, all UMC-hosted sites have been added to its AxeMonitor platform, which provides access to each site's dashboard to review current accessibility scans. UMC is also working on testing themes and widgets to make sure its underlying framework is accessible.

If you're managing content on a university website and need additional information, reach out to the campus digital teams and webmasters who have helped you set up your website, including:

- University Information Technology—Barb Iannucci, email barb.iannucci@utah.edu
- University Marketing and Communications—Sravi Garikipati, email sravi.garikipati@utah.edu
- U of U Health Marketing and Communications—Makenna Homer, email Makenna.homer@hsc.utah.edu

Additional resources

- Accessibility Essentials video series and how-to guides linked on the [CTE Accessibility page](#)
- Digital accessibility support from Digital Learning Technologies (more information on the CTE Accessibility page)
- Campus accessibility offices and training workshops
- ADA.gov [Fact Sheet](#)

Ensuring accessible content benefits all learners and helps us comply with federal law. Thank you for your attention to this important requirement.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bob Carter, EVPHS

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