Accessibility Guidelines for Faculty
Teaching Online Courses

About this Document

The document contains an initial draft of guidelines for creating accessible content and materials for your online course. These guidelines are currently being reviewed by a variety of support units on campus and are subject to revisions; a revised and finalized version of these guidelines will be made available in Summer, 2017.

Support units across campus will be working together during the summer and fall of 2017 to create support documentation and training opportunities to assist instructors with implementing these guidelines into new or existing online courses. In the meantime, if you would like to get started with implementing some or all of these guidelines, contact staff in the Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy and they can assist you (fcip@luc.edu).

If you have general questions or concerns related to these guidelines, contact the Director of Online Learning (Sarah Dysart, sdysart@luc.edu).

Accessibility Project Timeline:
● Summer 2017: Guidelines reviewed, finalized, and posted online
● Summer 2017-Fall 2017: Planning and creation of support documentation and training opportunities for faculty
● December 2017: List of supporting materials and information about training opportunities for faculty will be made available to faculty
● January 2018-May 2018: Piloting of support materials and training events

Guidelines

Text

Avoid using only visual characteristics to communicate information

When color or spacial references are used to provide instructions or information to users, individuals who cannot perceive these characteristics lose that information. For instance, statements such as, “click on the button at the bottom of the page,” or “assignments listed in red are due this week” are meaningless for someone who cannot view color or location on a page.
How do I do this: Include additional or alternative ways of communicating information so that visual appearance such as shape, size, visual location, or orientation are not the only way to convey information. For instance, if you are listing all assignments due this week in red, also include a textual indicator, such as [due this week] next to the item.

Provide appropriate contrast between text and background color

A document or webpage can be very difficult to read if there is too little contrast between text and the background. Providing stronger contrast between text and the background of a page will help ensure that users with visual impairments can read the text.

How do I do this: Make sure there is sufficient contrast between text and the background of a page. Tools are available to help test whether the contrast between text and background is adequate.

Link text should be meaningful

The text used to link to another page or to different content on the page should be meaningful, not rely on context, should not be used more than once on the same page, and should help users understand where the link will take them. For example, using link text such as “click here” for every link on a page does not help users understand where they are going, and will not allow users to distinguish between one link and the next.

How do I do this? Provide descriptive, meaningful text for each individual link on a page. For instance, instead of saying “click here for more information about Loyola Online” with “click here” as the linked text, use something such as “access the About Loyola Online webpage for more information” with “About Loyola Online webpage” as the linked text.

Media

Provide alternative text for images

Providing alternative text for images (i.e. images, charts, graphs) allows users who cannot see the image to gain access to the information that the image is meant to convey to the user.

How do I do this? For images that convey simple information (e.g. a picture or an icon), a short description of what the image contains can be attached to the image. For images that convey more complex information (e.g. a graph or chart), a longer description should be provided that conveys whatever information is most salient to the reason you are including that image.

Provided alternative options for multimedia (video and audio)

If you’re using video or audio in your course, providing alternative options will allow users who cannot see or hear to access the information conveyed through the media.
How do I do this? Audio content should be accompanied by a transcript of the recording. Video content should include closed captioned text of the audio track (for those who are unable to hear). Additionally, video content should either be developed in a way that ensures that all important visual information is accessible through the audio track, or should be accompanied by a separate audio description of what is visually being displayed (for those who can’t see).

Content

Avoid using content that flashes or flickers

If the content you are using flashes or flickers more than three times per second, it can trigger seizures for certain individuals and should be avoided.

How do I do this? Choose alternative content or content that flashes less than three times per second.

Provide appropriate structure to content

Using appropriate element types within a document to identify lists, headings, tables, and paragraphs can help screen readers better identify the type of element being conveyed to users. For instance, if you typically use hyphens to identify items on a list, this does not tell a screen reader that those are actually list items, making the overall structure of the document more difficult to understand for users who cannot see. Similarly, using tabs to separate tabular data will be confusing users who cannot visually see how that information is structured; putting the data in an actual table will provide accompanying data for the screen reader that allows it to convey separations between content.

How do I do this? Use the document elements (i.e. headings, lists, tables) in text editors to identify structural elements within webpages and documents.