



Implementation Plan for Accessibility of Online Learning  
Western Kentucky University  
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## ***Introduction***

Since accessibility of online learning is a process, assessment of the process is the most appropriate tool to evaluate the effectiveness of WKU's implementation of our policy on ADA/Section 508 accessibility.

Online learning runs a continuum from technology-assisted face-to-face instruction to 100% online instruction with no instructor-student face-to-face interaction – what we typically refer to as ***distance learning***. In all cases of online learning, technology is critical to facilitating communication and interaction to promote teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence in learning.

Accessible technologies allow students with disabilities to take advantage of WKU learning opportunities. Creating accessible online course sites is a process. While the most minimal steps can be learned quickly, as teaching and technology change, those steps will change. Technical and legal standards for accessibility also change over time.

Therefore:

- Training should be continual, updated, and extend over a long period;
- Adding on accessibility after a course is created is more difficult than beginning with accessible design considerations;
- Accessibility is a required element of design.

## ***Implementation***

This continuous improvement plan fits with Western Kentucky University's Strategic Plan, Challenging the Spirit, in assuring a process for accessibility of online learning that will prepare students of all backgrounds for lifelong learning and success; the [Strategic Plan](http://www.wku.edu/convocation/documents/challenging_the_spirit_action_plan_12_18.pdf) can be found online at [http://www.wku.edu/convocation/documents/challenging\\_the\\_spirit\\_action\\_plan\\_12\\_18.pdf](http://www.wku.edu/convocation/documents/challenging_the_spirit_action_plan_12_18.pdf). Implementation of this plan will address faculty new to online learning as well as ongoing teaching using technology. This plan covers available, ongoing, and just-in-time faculty resources; services for students; evaluation of the process; and analysis and planning for improvement.

Units of WKU with responsibilities to implement and facilitate continuous improvement of accessibility of online learning are:

1. Faculty
  - a. Pass the required accessibility training;
  - b. Develop accessible course sites;

- c. Include the accessibility statement in each syllabus;
  - d. Accommodate students with disabilities when notified by, and in conjunction with, the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS).
2. Information Technology (IT)
    - a. ADA accessibility online training modules are developed and required for all instructors new to Blackboard. This training will ensure that all new instructors of distance learning courses have been made aware of the laws in place, the minimum accessibility requirements for WKU online learning, and the resources available to support the instructors in their work;
    - b. The IT division has first responder duties and is responsible for guiding faculty and students to available resources;
    - c. Faculty support through the Technology Resource Center (TRC) is available for help with conversion of multimedia into accessible formats.
  3. Office of Distance Learning (DL)
    - a. Consultation on Universal Design (UD) of course materials and best practices in online teaching that lend themselves to high quality, accessible student learning experiences.
    - b. Instructional design support for faculty teaching using technology that includes accessibility in the core of the design.
    - c. Every online course development agreement includes a statement assuring that course materials will be accessible in their design according to WKU policy.
    - d. Distance Learning will support closed captioning for multimedia.
    - e. Consultation with faculty on an individual basis will be available.
    - f. Accessibility is an essential component of the Online Teaching Certificate (OTC), leading to advanced training of faculty teaching online.
  4. Office of Student Disability Services (SDS)
    - a. Training and resources for accessibility resource statement to be included in all distance learning course syllabi.
    - b. SDS will work closely with IT and DL to respond to distance learning students who self-identify.
    - c. SDS will be knowledgeable of assistive technologies and be a resource to IT and the DL in order to keep training, consultation, and support at the highest level of quality.
    - d. SDS will serve as the back-up in identifying unanticipated student accessibility issues. IT and DL will then work with faculty to address the issues and facilitate student learning.
  5. Libraries
    - a. Because students in distance learning courses use the libraries in their coursework and research, library resources are vital to online course delivery. Libraries have developed an implementation plan for accessible library resources for students in online courses. This plan can be found at: [http://www.wku.edu/library/deansoffice/policiesandprocedures/ada\\_policy\\_on\\_accessibility\\_for\\_electronic\\_resources.pdf](http://www.wku.edu/library/deansoffice/policiesandprocedures/ada_policy_on_accessibility_for_electronic_resources.pdf)
  6. Distance Learning Advisory Committee (DL Advisory Committee)
    - a. This committee will be appointed by the Provost with representation from faculty, the Libraries, Information Technology, and Distance Learning.
    - b. This committee will receive data from the metrics and provide feedback.
  7. University ADA Coordinator
    - a. The University ADA Coordinator will share the report with the WKU administration and provided feedback to Distance Learning and Information Technology.

## ***Evaluation and Plan for Continuous Improvement***

Accessibility of online learning is a process that requires periodic assessment, review, and revision. The Office of Distance Learning will collect identified metrics, review progress of this plan, and recommend revisions. The final report of the assessment will be sent to the University ADA Coordinator on an annual basis with documentation from each office listed above.

1. Metrics will be reported annually and include the following:
  - a. Number of new instructors who taught online courses who completed the ADA online training modules and passed the assessment. (Responsibility of IT)
  - b. Number of instructors who attended face-to-face instruction on ADA accessibility of online learning. (Responsibility of DL)
  - c. Number of helpdesk cases regarding ADA/section 508 issues received from students and from faculty. (Responsibility of IT)
  - d. Number of multimedia objects converted and number of faculty supported by Technology Resource Center and the Office of Distance Learning. (Responsibilities of IT,DL)
  - e. Number of instructors trained in best practices of online learning that included accessibility of online learning. (Responsibility of DL)
  - f. Number of faculty who signed online course development agreements and whose courses were reviewed by DL. (Responsibility of DL)
  - g. Number of closed captioned videos produced by DL. (Responsibility of DL)
  - h. Total number of minutes closed captioned by DL (Responsibility of DL)
  - i. Number of faculty who completed the Online Teaching Certificate. (Responsibility of DL)
  - j. Number of cases referred by SDS to the Office of Distance Learning for course retrofit based on identified student disability. (SDS, DL) (Note: this metric will serve as a check and balance to help the Office of Distance Learning and IT refine the overall plan with the goal of reducing this number to zero.)
2. For compliance purposes, an in-depth evaluation of distance learning courses will be conducted. This evaluation will be completed by the Office of Distance Learning in collaboration with the WKU Compliance Office and Academic Technology. A set of DL sections will be chosen each academic year for an in-depth review. Areas of noncompliance or questionable compliance will be identified. The DL instructional design staff will work with the instructor to address any course materials that are not ADA compliant.
3. The Office of Distance Learning will compile reviews of the DL sections and the metrics into a ADA Compliance report.
4. The report will then be used by IT, DL and the Office of Compliance to review and revise components of the implementation plan to streamline accessibility of online learning.