Quick Facts about Accessible Instructional Materials

Instructional materials are the curricular content (printed and digital books, journals, course packs, articles, music, tests, videos, instructor-created PDFs and PowerPoint documents, web pages, etc.), as well as the technologies required (hardware, firmware, software and applications) for the manipulation, annotation and dissemination of content. This definition also includes any other required instructional software and applications used to facilitate the teaching and learning process, including learning software, courseware/learning management systems, digital “learning objects,” library databases, and others.

## What This Means

Universities must ensure that all technology, including websites, instructional materials and online courses, and other electronic and informational technology for use by students or prospective students, is accessible.

“Accessible” means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally and independently as a person without a disability.

All instructional materials and online courses created by a college, department, program, unit or professor must be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities at the same time they are available to any other student enrolled in that program.

## How Can This Be Accomplished?

* Select textbooks with accessible digital versions available upon request. A quick call to the publisher can confirm this option.
* When creating documents, such as your syllabus or grading rubric, save as a Text or Word File.
* When scanning documents to convert into PDF for distribution, be sure to use an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) program so that the PDF will be readable by screen readers.
* Departments should consider purchasing software to assist with OCR conversion.
* Seek assistance from TLTC or DSS in learning how to create accessible materials.
* When students identify as needing accessible electronic documents, be sure to send the materials to them via e-mail, BlackBoard, or on a flash drive. Students should have access to these documents at the same time as other students in the class receive hard-copies in order to ensure an equal opportunity to participate in the class session and their studies.
* Be proactive by selecting and creating accessible instructional materials during the initial course design phase, rather than waiting until you receive a request for such materials. It is much easier and timelier to build accessibility into a course from the beginning than to retrofit the course.

## Why Is This Important?

Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act both require universities to ensure that no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination by the University.

The general prohibitions against discrimination under Section 504 and the ADA prohibit different or separate services or benefits for persons with disabilities unless necessary to provide a qualified person with a disability services or benefits that are as effective as those provided to others.

## Where Can I Learn More About Creating Accessible Materials?

The following resources offer easy-to-follow instructions and tutorials to improve accessibility of Microsoft Word, Power Point, PDFs, and more:

Web Accessibility in Mind: <http://webaim.org/articles/>

IT Accessibility Quick Guide: <http://accessibility.oit.ncsu.edu/training/it-accessibility-quick-guide.php>

7 Ways To Make Your Class Accessible: <http://www.sc.edu/cte/7_ways_to_make_your_class_accessible.php>

References:

Report of the Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities (December 6, 2011).

Settlement Agreement between the United States of America, Louisiana Tech University, and the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (DJ# 204-33-116)