



Virtual learning must be accessible.

“With the increased use of online and e-learning resources as a response to the COVID pandemic, it is even more important to consider disability and digital access in higher education.”

—ADA National Network research brief¹

¹Gould, R., Mullin, C., & Parker Harris, S. (2021). *Digital access for students in higher education and the ADA: An ADA Knowledge Translation Center research brief*. ADA National Knowledge Translation Center.

Web Accessibility at Colleges and Universities

Virtual learning is quickly evolving, but obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) remain the same for colleges and universities. Both the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that postsecondary educational institutions be accessible. With careful planning and by following best practices, such as using the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), schools can help all students succeed.

What does the law require?

Americans with Disabilities Act

- Under Titles II and III, public and private universities (with the exception of religious-controlled universities) must ensure equally effective communication and equal access and opportunity for all students.
- While the Department of Justice has not published official web accessibility standards, its enforcement efforts point toward WCAG 2.1 Level AA for Title II and III entities.

Rehabilitation Act

- Section 504 covers recipients of federal funding, and this includes most post-secondary institutions.
- In enforcement activity, the Department of Education has required WCAG.

WCAG 2.1 goals for a website:

- *Perceivable*: Can a person with a disability understand and recognize the website content and interface while using assistive technology?
- *Operable*: Can a person with a disability navigate and interact with the site?
- *Understandable*: Can a person with a disability understand and interpret the website’s content?
- *Robust*: Are accessible features consistent across different technologies?

Tips for administrators:

- Determine a web accessibility policy and point of contact.
- Set accessibility benchmarks, and conduct ongoing accessibility testing.
- Train staff about new policies and digital accessibility, including accessible documents.
- Budget for digital accessibility costs.

Learn more about the ADA: www.NortheastADA.org | 1.800.949.4232 | NortheastADA@Cornell.edu

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