

# Accessibility of Technology Services

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## Purpose

The University of Mississippi (UM) recognizes the importance and value of providing Electronic and Information Technology (EIT) services that are accessible to everyone and that can be used on a broad spectrum of devices. The primary reason for adhering to the principles of "universal design" is to meet the needs of those who use assistive technology to overcome physical disabilities; however, the reality is that well-executed universal design can help everyone. Attention to accessibility can result in better, more usable displays when sites are viewed from small format devices such as smartphones or mini-computers. Federal laws require equitable use of educational technology, including all programs, services, and communication systems, as well as online and digital environments. This policy details the accessibility requirements and standards for UM departments as they develop websites, computer labs, and all other EIT services. This includes, but is not limited to, learning management systems, audio and video files (podcasts and vodcasts), and course software.

## General Guidelines

The two most current and widely accepted EIT accessibility standards are:

- (1) Section 508: <https://www.section508.gov> and
- (2) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20>

Section 508 is federal law requiring that a federal agency's electronic and information technology services be accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 addresses all kinds of technology including software applications, telecommunications products, and personal computers, whereas WCAG focuses on the accessibility of websites. UM and most other institutions use [Level AA compliance with WCAG 2.0](#) as an industry standard.

UM departments that deploy EIT services must become familiar with these standards and make reasonable efforts to adhere to them. The department head is ultimately responsible for ensuring that EIT services deployed by that department are accessible. This policy applies to information technology services hosted locally as well as those offered "in the cloud" and those provided or supported by third parties. Contracts involving EIT services must acknowledge and confirm compliance with the accessibility requirements outlined in this policy.

When a technology-related service is requested by an individual with a disability, if that service is not already accessible in the manner required by the individual making the request, the department will promptly offer the service in an alternate, accessible format. The department will simultaneously seek a long-term solution to address any future cases. Extreme

circumstances related to technology compliance should be addressed to the Accessibility Compliance Committee consisting of the Chief Information Officer, the Associate Provost for Outreach and Continuing Studies, and the Executive Director of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance. An example of an extreme circumstance might be a non-compliant, hosted, online service that is required for accreditation and is offered by single vendor. Initial inquiries may be made by emailing [it@olemiss.edu](mailto:it@olemiss.edu).

Failure to comply may result in restriction of services for a department or other limitations as determined by the Accessibility Compliance Committee. Department heads and individuals providing electronic technology and information sources are ultimately responsible for compliance. Intentional or extremely negligent noncompliance may subject individuals to disciplinary action. See the "Investigation and Disciplinary Action" section of the [IT Appropriate Use Policy](#) for the protocol in reporting cases.

The UM Accessibility Statement, <https://olemiss.edu/info/access.html> offers points of contact for reporting barriers and complaints.

### **Specific Requirements for Official Web Pages**

Official UM Web Pages must pass all error checks in the Wave Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool (<http://wave.webaim.org>) in order to be minimally compliant. Each department should additionally ensure the general usability of their web content by adhering to [WCAG 2.0 Level AA](#) when creating new content. The Official Web Page Policy defines an "Official Web Page" to be "a Web page presented on behalf of UM, sanctioned by the appropriate UM unit." That policy also requires an "Accessibility" link to <https://olemiss.edu/info/access.html> on the primary home page for each UM unit.

Some websites are not conducive to evaluation by WAVE. Examples are websites that require a username and password or are highly interactive. These may be evaluated using other means but must meet the standards included in the WebAIM Section 508 checklist: <http://webaim.org/standards/508/checklist>. In extreme circumstances, where compliance is not technically possible or requires extraordinary measures due to the nature or the intent of the website, exceptions may be approved on a case by case basis by The Accessibility Compliance Committee. Failure to comply will result in having the page disabled from public viewing.

### **Resources**

The following articles and websites offer valuable advice and additional details for deploying accessible technology services:

1. "Universal Design for the Digital Environment: Transforming the Institution," by

Cyndi Rowland, Heather Mariger, Peter M. Siegel, and Jonathan Whiting in the November/December issue of EDUCAUSE Review (vol. 45, no. 6).

<https://www.educause.edu/>

2. Resources for Understanding and Implementing Section 508:

<https://www.section508.gov>

3. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>

4. Web Accessibility Initiative: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/>

5. Wave Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool: <http://wave.webaim.org>

6. WebAIM Section 508 Checklist: <http://webaim.org/standards/508/checklist>

7. University of Mississippi Accessibility Statement:

<https://olemiss.edu/info/access.html>

8. University of Mississippi Policy for Official UM Web Pages:

<http://secure4.olemiss.edu/umpolicyopen/ShowDetails.jsp?istatPara=1&policyObjidPara=10644177>

9. University of Mississippi's Accessibility & Technology Solutions:

<http://accessibility.olemiss.edu/>