E-Learning Accessibility Guidelines

Approved: 1/23/13

This document is intended to provide practical guidelines for improving accessibility for web-enhanced, blended, online learning at the University of South Alabama (USA). The basic premise of these guidelines is as stated in Section 504, 29 U.S.C. Sec. 794: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability …shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance…." An "otherwise qualified individual" is defined as someone who meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in the education program offered. Applicable law requires that an educational institution such as USA must make reasonable modifications or accommodations to allow access to the educational program unless such modification or accommodation would fundamentally alter the program. The guidelines below (right column) are based on an interpretation of (left column) and referenced to three applicable federal laws listed at the end of this document and corresponding regulations. Accommodation is an interactive process in which the student registers with USA's Special Student Services and the student and faculty member, with the assistance of Special Student Services, determine what accommodation, if any, is both reasonable and effective. The focus of these guidelines is the reasonable accommodation of students whose eyesight or hearing is impaired. Many of these design features would serve these and other students by providing a variety of options and modalities.

Interpretation	General Guidelines
Students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified to participate in e-learning courses at USA are entitled to an equal opportunity to participate in the same educational programs and compete academically with their non-disabled peers if to do so would not fundamentally alter the program. (1, 2, 3). This means that these students have been able to meet all academic and technical requirements necessary to enroll in the specific course(s) they are taking but the course(s) may need some adaptation due to the student's particular disability. (1, 2, 3).	1. **Provide captioning of audio or video materials.** 2. **Provide text and audio description of instructional graphics and images.** 3. **Provide all PDF materials in a format accessible by screen readers.** 4. **Inform online or off-campus proctors in advance of examination when Student Disability Services has determined that a student needs extended time for examinations.[1]**

[1] Refer to USA's Policy and Procedures for Proctoring at
http://www.southalabama.edu/academicaffairs/policies.html

In other words, if a student is not academically qualified then he/she would not have been allowed to register.

Reasonable accommodations, which may include auxiliary aids, must be made to enable students with disabilities to communicate and learn in the course, regardless of disability (1).

5. Provide all course materials in a variety of formats such as text only, audio, video with captions, etc.

6. Use available space on the screen

7. Use active voice and shorter sentences

8. Use clear, generously sized fonts with high contrast between background and foreground.

9. Organize layout using a logical progression of information.

10. Incorporate clear and simple navigation.

11. Encourage communication and interaction among students.

12. Provide various ways of communicating regularly with the instructor.

13. Record real time chats for future reference and review.

Vision Impaired / Blind

In order to participate fully in e-learning courses and activities related to these courses, students who are vision impaired must be able to see as well as possible and read for themselves any textual materials that are necessary for course completion and reasonable information retention, just as other students are required to do (1, 2, 3).

1. **Include audio description of graphics, diagrams, or video scenes where knowing the visual details of the material is necessary for understanding and synthesis of relevant concepts.**

2. Provide a text only version of web sites.

If seeing the text for reading is impossible (as in the case of total blindness or severe vision loss) the student must have the option to listen to or otherwise consume the information in whatever manner is reasonably necessary for them to understand and synthesize the information and concepts (1, 3). These students must have a fair opportunity when compared to other students to participate in, enjoy the benefits of, and successfully complete the courses for which they are otherwise qualified. (1, 2)

3. Provide an audio version of all text materials.

4. Offer a high contrast version of all materials.

5. Use generously sized fonts.

Hearing Impaired / Deaf

In order to participate fully in e-learning courses and activities related to said courses, students who are hearing impaired must be able to hear for themselves (as much as possible) any audio that is necessary for course completion including narration, sound cues or examples, video or presentation soundtrack, etc. just as other students are required to do (1, 2, 3).

If hearing the audio is impossible (as in the case of total deafness or severe hearing loss) the student must have the option to view, read, or otherwise consume the information in whatever manner is reasonable and necessary for them to understand and synthesize the material and concepts (1, 3). These students must have a fair opportunity when compared to other students to participate in, benefit from, and successfully complete their courses (1, 2).

1. **Close caption all videos, video presentations, or any other audible course material.**

2. Provide visual cues for any audible notifications or sounds indicating key information or prompting a user response.

   Possible Alternatives:

3. Provide a video interpreter.

4. Provide a full text transcript of any audio material.

Again, it is important to remember that students in need of accommodation must register with the Office of Special Student Services and work with that office to ascertain what is reasonable and effective accommodation for that student's needs.

For more information regarding these and other disabilities, contact Student Disability Services (http://www.southalabama.edu/dss/index.html).

For more information regarding accessibility and e-learning at USA, see the USAonline web site (**https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/usaonline/**).

For additional information regarding web content accessibility guidelines and standards refer to the W3C's Accessibility Initiative (http://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/).

Referenced Laws and Regulations

1.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504
Federal Register/Vol. 45, No. 92, Pg. 30937-30944. (2)(A).
Regulated by –Title 34 Education Subtitle B Regulations of the Offices of the Dept. of Education
Chapter I — Office for Civil Rights, Department of Education
PART 104 — Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance 34 C.F.R. Part 104

2.

The Rehabilitation Act 1973, Section 508
(29 U.S.C. '794 d), as amended by the workforce investment act 1998, (P.L. 105-220)

3.

Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations
Part 35 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services   (as amended by the final rule published on September 15, 2010). Authority: 5 U.S.C. 301; 28 U.S.C. 509, 510; 42 U.S.C. 12134.