Digital & Academic Materials Accessibility Policy

**Custodian of Policy:** Vice President of Academic Affairs

**Relevant Minnesota State System Policy:** [**Board Policies**](https://www.minnstate.edu/board/policy/index.html) 1B.0.1, 1B.1, 1B.4

**Effective Date:** Fall 2021

**Last Review:** Spring 2025

**Next Review:** 2032

Rationale

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) wants to ensure all students have access to a welcoming and accessible environment. It is the shared responsibility of all individuals affiliated with MSUM including, but not limited to, its students, faculty, and staff. Regarding all digital and academic materials, MSUM strives to be compliant with accessibility laws (ADA and Sections 504 & 508 of the Rehabilitation Act) and internationally accepted standards for web accessibility (WCAG 2.2 Level AA). The purpose of this policy is to outline the standards and expectations for MSUM’s campus community regarding accessibility of digital and academic materials.

Policy

Part 1. Standards and Expectations

**Subpart A: Course Materials**

To ensure an accessible learning environment, faculty in collaboration with and support from Accessibility Resources, Online Learning, Information Technology, Faculty Development Center and/or the Library:

Follow any prescribed accommodations/modifications in a fair, non-judgmental, and timely manner

* Maintain the student's right to privacy concerning the disability and any accommodations
* Provide timely access to course materials at the same time all other students receive the materials
* Include Accessibility Resources approved accessibility statements in their syllabi
* Design their courses and course material in an accessible manner following guidelines provided by Accessibility Resources and the Office of Online Learning following accessibility practices including, but not limited to:
  + Syllabi
  + Texts
  + Open Educational Resources
  + Course supplements and platforms
  + Assignments
  + Handouts
  + Tests
  + Faculty web sites

**Subpart B: Marketing & Promotional Materials**

To ensure marketing and promotional materials are delivered in an accessible manner, MSUM will follow accessibility guidelines provided by Accessibility Resources and the Office of Online Learning for materials including, but not limited to:

* Streaming videos
* Digital images
* Social media posts
* Web site content

**Subpart C: Procurement**

All products purchased by MSUM will be Section 508 compliant and meet WCAG 2.0 AA standards.

Part 2: Accessibility Standards

MSUM commits to adhere to the following accessibility standards:

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

[**The ADA**](https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and mandates equitable and timely access to programs, services and activities for individuals with disabilities.

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act**

[**Section 504**](https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor65610) of the Rehabilitation Act states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance.

**Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act**

In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities. Inaccessible technology interferes with an ability to obtain and use information quickly and easily. [**Section 508**](http://section508.gov/manage/laws-and-policies) was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, open new opportunities for people with disabilities and encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals. On January 18, 2017, Section 508 was refreshed to include formal adoption of WCAG 2.2 Level AA as the minimum compliance standard for accessibility.

**WCAG 2.2 Level AA**

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") refers to standards for web content accessibility that have been developed by the World Wide Web Consortium ("W3C"), an international community where member organizations, a full-time staff, and the public work together to develop Web standards. State entities must adhere to WCAG version 2.2 Level AA according to the [**State of Minnesota Accessibility Standard**](https://mn.gov/mnit/government/policies/accessibility/).

Part 3: Undue Burden

An exception for undue burden is only applicable to a material, service, product, activity, event, space, or purchase that cannot be made accessible without imposing significant difficulty or expense on MSUM.

If an exception for undue burden is identified, a written explanation must be developed in collaboration with Accessibility Resources explaining the basis for the decision including why and to what extent conformance to specific requirements would result in an undue burden on MSUM. The custodian of this policy is charged with making the final determination as to whether conformance to specific requirements of the aforementioned accessibility standards would impose an undue burden on the campus community.

Physical Accessibility of the Campus

For questions regarding physical accessibility of the campus, or to request service, contact the Executive Director of Facilities Management. 218.477.2662.

A glossary defining related terminology organized by order of appearance.

Glossary

**Timely Access** – Approved accommodations are not retroactive on a semester basis. Timely access refers to if a student requests or is approved for an academic accommodation, at times, it will involve steps for implementation. For instance, if a student requests a sign language interpreter during week 4 of a semester, it will take time to find an interpreter to fulfil the accommodation.  While in process, alternatives will be provided to the student to access academic content while a sign language interpreter is secured.

**Timely**– This term refers to the time it may take to secure an approved accommodation for an individual once a request is made.

**Open education sources** – Open education sources are websites, organizations, or resources, which can save faculty significant time and effort on resource development and advance student learning inside and outside the classroom.

**Course supplements** – Course supplements are resources/materials to facilitate learning of a topic such as a course specific course pack, model diagrams, and shapes for enhanced learning experiences.

**Course platforms** – Course platforms are utilizing available core technologies (D2L Brightspace, Kaltura MediaSpace, Microsoft 365, Zoom) and other available faculty-elected instructional technologies to facilitate a course objective in a virtual modality.

**Accessible manner** – This terminology refers to content/environment is accessible for individuals.

**ADA** - [**The ADA**](https://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and mandates equitable and timely access to programs, services and activities for individuals with disabilities.

**Section 504** - [**Section 504**](https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor65610) of the Rehabilitation Act states that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under" any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance.

**Section 508** - In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities. Inaccessible technology interferes with an ability to obtain and use information quickly and easily. [**Section 508**](http://section508.gov/manage/laws-and-policies) was enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, open new opportunities for people with disabilities and encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals. On January 18, 2017, Section 508 was refreshed to include formal adoption of WCAG 2.0 Level AA as the minimum compliance standard for accessibility.

**WCAG 2.0 Level AA** - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") refers to standards for web content accessibility that have been developed by the World Wide Web Consortium ("W3C"), an international community where member organizations, a full-time staff, and the public work together to develop Web standards. State entities must adhere to WCAG version 2.0 Level AA according to the [**State of Minnesota Accessibility Standard**](https://mn.gov/mnit/government/policies/accessibility/).

**Undue burden** - Defined as an "action requiring significant difficulty or expense" when considered in light of a number of factors. These factors include the nature and cost of the accommodation in relation to the size, resources, nature, and structure of the operation.  Undue burden is determined on a case-by-case basis.  If a particular accommodation would be an undue burden, an alternate accommodation must be identified that will not pose such a hardship.

**Inaccessible technology** – An individual with a disability is unable to access content, which pertains to any facet of a university process or operation. For instance, if a student with vision loss is applying for housing and the application is inaccessible with a screen reader for access, the process is then inaccessible, and an alternative would need to be identified to ensure access for any individual with a functional need/disability.