

Policy Number	133.000
Policy Title	DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY POLICY
Responsible Officer	Provost
Responsible Office	Provost
Summary	This policy establishes Columbia International University's standards and requirements for ensuring that digital content, learning environments, and technology platforms meet accessibility requirements under the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA.
Definitions	<p>Digital Content: Any electronic information or service delivered or maintained by CIU, including websites, the student portal, learning management systems, documents, images, videos, and online forms.</p> <p>Digital Accessibility: The design and creation of content that is usable by people with disabilities, consistent with WCAG standards.</p> <p>WCAG 2.1 AA: The internationally recognized accessibility standard that guides compliance for digital environments in higher education.</p> <p>LMS (Learning Management System): CIU's LMS is Canvas.</p> <p>Third-Party Tools: Any digital tool, integration, software, or website that interacts with CIU users but is operated by an outside vendor.</p> <p>VPAT/ACR: A Voluntary Product Accessibility Template or Accessibility Conformance Report used to document compliance with accessibility standards.</p>
Approving Body	Academic Council; Administrative Council
Approval Date	Aca C (05.11.2026) ; Admin C (03.25.2026)
Last Revision	March 2026
Re-evaluation Date	Fall 2029
Departmental Impact	This policy impacts University Communications, IT, Online Learning & Instructional Design, Disability Services, Human Resources, and all academic and administrative units that publish or manage digital content.

Failure to follow the following policy may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

Policy Statement

Columbia International University (CIU) is committed to providing a digitally accessible learning and working environment that supports equal access for all students, employees, and visitors, including individuals with disabilities. CIU adopts the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA as its accessibility standard for all digital content, technology platforms, and electronic communications.

This policy applies to the CIU public website (ciu.edu), the student portal, Canvas, all instructional materials, digital documents, multimedia content, and any third-party digital resources used for academic or administrative purposes.

All CIU departments share responsibility for ensuring that digital materials under their control meet accessibility requirements.

Rationale

Compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA is required to meet federal expectations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and best practices in higher education. Ensuring digital accessibility allows CIU to deliver a Christ-centered, student-focused learning environment that supports all members of our community. This policy establishes the standards, roles, and procedures needed to maintain accessibility across CIU's digital ecosystem.

Policy Procedures

1. Accessibility Standards

CIU adopts WCAG 2.1 AA as the minimum compliance standard for:

- The CIU website (ciu.edu)
- The student portal
- Canvas and all course content hosted within the LMS
- All official university digital documents (Word, PDF, PowerPoint, forms)
- All multimedia content, including videos, audio, and embedded digital resources
- Third-party digital tools, LTIs, and integrations
- Online recruitment, admissions, financial aid, and student service platforms

2. Roles and Responsibilities

A. ADA Compliance Officer (or designated Accessibility Lead)

- Oversees CIU's digital accessibility compliance program.
- Coordinates with IT, Communications, Online Learning, and Disability Services.
- Provides consultation on accessibility issues and remediation.
- Maintains documentation for audits and regulatory review.

B. University Communications

- Ensures CIU's public-facing website (www.ciu.edu) and student portal meets WCAG 2.1 AA.
- Reviews website and student portal content, themes, templates, and navigation changes for accessibility.
- Works with IT to test ongoing site compliance.

C. Information Technology (IT)

- Reviews accessibility documentation (VPAT/ACR) for new digital tools before adoption.
- Maintains accessibility tools and monitoring software as feasible.

D. Online Learning & Instructional Design

- Ensures that all Canvas course templates, module structures, and instructional materials follow accessibility best practices.
- Trains faculty in creating accessible course content.
- Conducts periodic audits of online and hybrid courses.

E. Disability Services

- Serves as the point of contact for accessibility concerns.
- Coordinates accommodations when accessibility gaps arise.
- Receives and tracks accessibility-related complaints.

F. Faculty and Staff Content Creators

- Are responsible for ensuring that the digital content they create or upload is accessible, including documents, media, and Canvas materials.
- Must complete required accessibility training.

3. Digital Content Requirements

All new and updated digital content must meet the following at time of publication:

- Proper use of headings, lists, and structured formatting
- Sufficient color contrast
- Alt text for images and meaningful graphics
- Closed captions for all required video/audio content
- Transcripts for audio-only files
- Descriptive hyperlinks
- Accessible PDFs or alternative formats
- Keyboard navigability

- No content that relies solely on color to convey meaning
- Clear, logical navigation structure

4. Third-Party Tools and Software

Before adoption or renewal, CIU will require:

- A VPAT/ACR demonstrating WCAG 2.1 AA alignment
- Review by IT and the ADA Compliance Officer
- Documentation of alternative accommodations if full compliance is not possible
- If a tool fails to meet minimum accessibility standards and no reasonable accommodation exists, CIU will not adopt or will discontinue use of the tool.
- In rare cases where full WCAG compliance is not technically feasible and we are unable to discontinue the use of a tool in a reasonable period of time, CIU will document the limitation, implement interim accommodations, and update accessibility requirements in future procurement or renewal processes if necessary.

5. Monitoring and Compliance

CIU will implement a continuous improvement model that includes:

- Annual accessibility audits of the CIU website
- Semesterly review of Canvas master course templates
- Random sampling of academic courses for accessibility compliance
- Accessibility scanning tools (e.g., Canvas Accessibility Checker, Ally, or equivalent)
- Annual reporting on digital accessibility progress to the President's Cabinet

6. Reporting Concerns

Students, employees, or visitors may report digital accessibility issues to the University Communications team, using their webform. CIU will respond promptly and provide reasonable accommodations while long-term fixes are implemented.

7. Enforcement

Failure to comply with this policy may result in corrective action, including additional training, removal of inaccessible content, or disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, depending on the severity and persistence of noncompliance.

Hyperlinks

www.ciu.edu/policy