
Subject: Information Technology Accessibility

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1. Purpose

This policy is established to support the Virginia Tech community in promoting equal access opportunity to electronic and information technology (EIT) by the application of accessibility standards, guidelines, training, tools and methods consistent with higher education. The aim is to provide this opportunity in a setting that fosters independence and meets the guidelines of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) as amended and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended so that everyone within the university community, regardless of physical or technological readiness, will have the opportunity for appropriate access to EIT. This policy sets forth accessibility standards and guidelines that reflect best practices for achieving the accessibility of EIT for use by persons with disabilities.

The Commonwealth of Virginia Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005 grants institutions additional authority over financial and administrative operations, on condition that certain commitments to the Commonwealth are met. Virginia Tech’s Management Agreement with the Commonwealth provides full delegated responsibility for management of the institution’s information technology architecture, infrastructure, and ongoing operations, of which IT accessibility is a part. This delegation includes the authority to conduct these activities in accordance with industry best practices appropriately tailored for the specific circumstances of the University, in lieu of following Commonwealth-determined specifications. This policy documents the industry best practices with which the university will align its IT accessibility activities.

2. Policy

The procurement, development, and/or maintenance of EIT, including electronic content, functional performance, technical requirements for hardware and software, and user support services will be aligned with accessibility standards. EIT will comply specifically with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended (“The Final Rule”) and conformance with "Web Content Accessibility Guidelines" (WCAG) 2.0 AA from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

Accessibility standards must be designed to evolve and change, as newer technologies are introduced and user needs change. At the same time, the standards will maintain a consistent framework for accessibility training and support services. EIT development, maintenance, training, and support personnel who are responsible for EIT procurement, development, and maintenance will possess professional credentials and/or an appropriate level of technical knowledge and experience related to accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.

2.1 Scope

This policy is applicable to colleges, departments, auxiliaries, research, and administrative entities with the Division of Information Technology organization supporting the programs or services of the university.

3. Procedures

An overview of the university accessibility standards, guidelines, training, tools, and methods is posted on the Division of Information Technology website <https://assist.vt.edu/standards/>.

4. Definitions

Accessibility: refers to the university objective that everyone within the university community, regardless of physical or technological readiness, will have the opportunity for appropriate access to information technology.

Accessible: (As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended) refers to a site, facility, work environment, service, or program that is easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity by a person with a disability.

Assistive Technology: (As defined by Section 508): Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Disability: (As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended): The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual

- (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- (B) a record of such an impairment; or
- (C) being regarded as having such an impairment

Electronic and Information Technology (EIT): Includes information technology and any equipment or interconnected system or subsystem of equipment that is used in the creation, conversion, or duplication of data or information. The term electronic and information technology includes, but is not limited to, telecommunications products (such as telephones), information kiosks and transaction machines, World Wide Web sites, multimedia, and office equipment such as copiers and fax machines. The term does not include any equipment that contains embedded information technology that is used as an integral part of the product, but the principal function of which is not the acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission, or reception of data or information.

5. References

U.S. Government – Americans with Disability Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 504 as amended
https://www.ada.gov/2010_regs.htm

U.S. Government– the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Section 508 standards
<https://section508.gov/refresh-toolkit/revised-508-standards-roadmap>

U.S. Government Access Board
<https://www.access-board.gov/>

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is an international organization that develops inter-operable technologies (technologies that can communicate with each other), e.g., specifications, guidelines, software, and tools, to lead the Web to its full potential. W3C is a forum of information, commerce, communication, and collective understanding. Of particular relevance are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0
<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>
<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/>

6. Approval and Revisions

Approved April 28, 2006 by Earving L. Blythe, Vice President for Information Technology.

Approved June 12, 2006 by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

- Revision 1

General update of verbiage, references, and hyperlinks.

Approved February 9, 2018 by Vice President for Information Technology and CIO, Scott F. Midkiff.