

POLICY

Digital Accessibility Policy

ISSUED ON JANUARY 1, 2024

Purpose

The University of Rochester is committed to its values of equity, accountability, openness, and respect. Creating an accessible digital environment welcomes and ensures an “ever better” experience to the widest possible audience. This policy is established to promote an accessible University environment online through compliance with accessibility standards for websites and digital resources as established by the University’s Web Governance Council under the authority of the Office of the President and the Office of Counsel. The goal of this policy is to remove barriers and ensure usability and equitable access to the University’s digital environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all members of the University of Rochester community who manage, develop, or provide content for new or redesigned web pages and other digital resources published, hosted, or otherwise provided by the University.

What constitutes a web page or other digital resource is to be interpreted broadly, and for example, does not depend upon the type of client or host device, the type of software on the client or host devices, or the technical means by which the client and host communicate over the web.

This policy applies to digital and web resources regardless of whether they are created for an internal audience such as students, faculty, and staff or an external audience that includes the general public, or both.

Policy Statement and Standards

New or redesigned University websites and digital resources shall be in compliance with the most recent version of or successor standards to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (“WCAG”) 2.1 Level AA (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/quickref/?versions=2.1>) (“Policy Standards”), as published by the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium. Legacy web pages and digital resources shall be updated to comply with the Policy Standards according to priorities set by the Organizational Leader (see below) responsible for the web page or digital resource.

A variety of evaluation methods shall be used to test and maintain the accessibility of web pages and digital resources, including automated and manual testing, user testing (including the use of assistive technology), and expert evaluation.

Content on University-affiliated social media accounts shall make use of the accessibility features and capabilities of each platform.

Compliance

University websites and digital resources that are created or undergo a substantial redesign after January 1, 2024, shall conform to the Policy Standards with respect to their platforms, infrastructure, and content.

Reasonable effort shall be taken to bring legacy web pages and digital resources into compliance with the Policy Standards. Site owners should use analytics, their own strategic goals, or other criteria for determining the priority of addressing updates needed to legacy pages and resources.

If requested, the Web Governance Council or other central web or digital accessibility support staff can assist in identifying priority areas for addressing legacy web sites and digital resources, and recommend tools, resources, and training opportunities.

If the University receives a request from an individual who is unable to access a University website or digital resource due to a disability, the site owner must, in a timely manner, either update the requested website or digital resource to conform to the Policy Standards, make the content available in an alternative format, or request an exception.

Responsibility and Accountability

Responsible: For each individual school, unit, or department of the University, the "Organizational Leader" — typically a dean, vice president, department chair, or director — is ultimately responsible for ensuring all new and newly redesigned websites

and digital resources that fall under their domain meet the Policy Standards and are maintained to continue to meet Policy Standards. The Organizational Leader is also responsible for the plans for and approach to addressing the compliance of legacy web or digital resources in their areas.

Accountable: Individual site owners, authors, and contributors—anyone who manages, creates, edits, or publishes a University web page or digital resource—are accountable for monitoring and making the necessary updates, tests, or evaluations to bring their new or newly redesigned websites and digital resources into compliance with the Policy Standards. Site owners are also accountable for creating and implementing plans to address the compliance of their legacy web or digital resources.

Exceptions

If compliance with the Policy Standards would result in a fundamental alteration of the intended function of a University website or digital resource, or pose an undue burden, the Organizational Leader responsible for that website or digital resource may request an exception from the Web Governance Council. (Insufficient funds of a particular unit will not normally be considered a reason for an exception.)

The Web Governance Council or other central web accessibility support staff will evaluate requests for exceptions and make recommendations based on input from the Office of Counsel and other University organizations as appropriate. If an exception is recommended by the Web Governance Council, site owners may be advised to make the website or digital resource available in an alternative format that is accessible.

Glossary of terms

Accessible

A digital resource is accessible if a person with a disability or using assistive technology can “perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with” a website or digital resource.

Usability

Usability is an attribute of a website or digital resources that describes how easy and pleasant that resource is to use by the people who visit that resource online.

Inclusion

Firmly embedded in our University’s Meliora values, inclusion describes a culture where all people are present and seen, and where all people have access to the tools they need to succeed as students, teachers, and staff.

Websites

A collection of related web pages (composed of text, images, multimedia assets, databases, interactions, and functionality) that are grouped together under its own information architecture or navigation scheme; are hosted on University of Rochester-controlled domains; and are used to conduct University business.

Digital Resource

Includes but is not limited to websites, email and e-newsletters, mobile applications, audio and video content, electronic documents, and other information or content that are delivered through the use of digital technology and are used to conduct University business.

Legacy

Web sites or digital resources created before the date of this policy's adoption.

Site Owner

The individual designated by the cognizant vice president, dean, chair, director, or manager of a University unit who creates the content or the code for that entity's University website or digital resources. All websites must have an owner, and it is possible for a site to have more than one owner.

Organizational Leader

The University of Rochester web and digital environment mimics its organizational structure, and is highly decentralized and often nested in nature. A center might be inside a department, which is part of a school, for example. The Organization Leader is the manager, director, dean, or vice president responsible for ensuring that the Site Owner at that level of the web and organizational hierarchy has the resources and time they need to comply with the Digital Accessibility Policy.

ABOUT THIS POLICY

Issuing Authority

University Communications

Responsible Officer

Ewa Zennermann

Contact Information

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