East Tennessee State University

Public Content Accessibility Policy

Responsible Official: Chief Marketing and Communications Officer

Responsible Office: University Marketing and Communications

Policy Purpose

This policy specifies ETSU's strategies and commitment to ensuring that all Public-facing, ETSU-affiliated digital content, including videos, social media content, presentations, documents, and webpages, are accessible to individuals with diverse abilities.

Policy Statement

ETSU is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all students, faculty, staff, and the wider community and to complying with the electronic and information technology accessibility requirements under the federal civil rights laws including Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 508"), the Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 C.F.R. pt. 35, and 45 C.F.R. pt. 92 (or any subsequent standard adopted by an oversight administrative body, including the Federal Accessibility Board) in regard to all Public-facing digital content.

ETSU's content standards shall follow the accessibility guidelines published on the Office of University Marketing and Communications (UMC) website, which will seek to align with current Section 508 standards and best practices. When updates to the guidelines are published, UMC will notify faculty and staff by email. UMC is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy. All members of the ETSU community are expected to assist in ensuring that content shared across affiliated channels adheres to the policy.

I.   Digital Content Subject to this Policy.

This policy applies to all digital content published or presented on ETSU-affiliated websites, via ETSU-affiliated social media channels, or at university-level events that are open to the general public, including but not limited to university webpages, social media posts, video presentations, and documents such as slide decks and reports. It does not apply to content posted in private or classroom channels, such as D2L or on internal networks. Individuals should follow the university's academic policy related to classroom content and accessibility for sharing class and learning materials and/or

make accommodations as necessary for closed-group content sharing.

All new website content will be reviewed for accessibility before publishing via manual or digital methods. Accessibility errors must be corrected prior to publishing. Existing content will undergo regular audits for accessibility compliance and may be removed if it is deemed inaccessible. Exceptions may be made for Archived Web Content (see definitions).

Users can report accessibility issues by emailing umc@etsu.edu or calling disability services. All reported issues will be addressed promptly and, where possible, content will be corrected or an accessible alternative will be provided.

    A.   Webpages.

Webpages will be designed to be accessible and navigable by Screen Readers. Best practices include:

1. Writing page titles that accurately reflect the topic on the page.
2. Using proper headings to organize your information.
3. Avoiding instructions based solely on location on the page. For example, instead of "in the box to the right," combine location and text: "in the box to the right, titled 'Related Links and Publications.'"
4. Ensuring that link text makes sense when read out of context. Be specific about where links will lead. For example, instead of creating links such as "read more" or "click here," use a descriptive link such as "read the President's 2024 Annual Report."
5. Keeping link text to 100 characters or less.
6. Avoiding use of a page URL as linking text.
7. Using built-in editing features to create bulleted or numbered lists. Understand the differences between ordered, unordered, and definition lists—and use them properly. Avoid using lists for visual effect.
8. Using short concise sentences and shorter words when possible. If you need to use long sentences, try to limit it to one per paragraph. Avoid industry jargon.

Information presented in images will be accessible to those with visual impairments using a Screen Reader, ensuring that:

1. All images, form fields, and buttons have appropriate alt text;
2. Text contained within images is replicated on the page as html;
3. If an image is linked, the link destination is described in the alt text; and
4. When using graphs or diagrams, accompanying text to explain the meaning is included.

All text including text in embedded media will meet color contrast ratios for readability.

B. Video Content.

All videos shared on a Public-facing ETSU-affiliated website or social media account must be accessible to those who are vision- or hearing-impaired, and adhere to the following:

1. Accurate, proofread closed captions must be provided when closed captioning is available on the platform where the video is to be displayed.
2. Provide descriptive transcripts in the form of SRT files must be created (and proofread) for all video files. Transcript files should contain not only dialogue but also descriptions of visual elements/scenes and descriptions of non-verbal audio. Even for videos with no audio, a visual transcript must be created. A version of the video with burned-in captions must be provided for use in situations where closed captioning is not available. Graphics added in post-production must not overlap the text area where closed captions appear.
3. If flashing lights or strobe effects are used, the video must contain the following warning at the beginning: "This video contains flashing lights and/or strobe effects that may cause discomfort or illness for individuals with photosensitivity. Viewer discretion is advised."
4. Text and graphics on videos must be accessible to those who have visual limitations. Any text or graphic overlays must meet WCAG contrast standards. Any text must be on screen long enough to be read. A good rule of thumb is to read it aloud two times and leave it on the screen that long. Text must be large enough to read at a distance, for example from the back of an auditorium if shown on a large screen.

C. Audio Content.

All audio shared on a Public-facing ETSU-affiliated website or social media channel must be accessible, and adhere to the following:

1. Complete transcripts must be provided alongside any audio file posted to an ETSU website or social media page. Transcripts may be included in the caption of social media posts. Descriptions of non-verbal audio should be included as well (e.g. "birds chirping") .
2. Audio should be crisp and clear with limited background noise.

D. Social Media Content.

All social posts created for any Public-facing ETSU-affiliated social media account must be fully accessible, ensuring that:

1. Descriptive, relevant text alternatives (e.g., alt text) is provided for images.

2. When text is included as part of a social media graphic, the text is replicated in the caption.
3. Videos shared on social media adhere to the requirements outlined above.
4. Accessible hashTags using CamelCase (where each word in the tag is capitalized) are used.
5. No more than three emojis are included in each post.

E. Documents.

Any document shared on a Public-facing ETSU-affiliated website or social media channel will be fully accessible. This includes but is not limited to slide decks, PDFs, and text files. Best practices include:

1. PDFs will be used sparingly to present web content as including the content directly on webpages is preferred. When PDFs are used, they will be created to be accessible (tagged).
2. Headings, lists, and other structural elements will be properly used for easier navigation.
3. Descriptive text will be used for links and images.

II.   Content Creator Requirements.

In general, those creating content for public consumption on ETSU's official channels should seek to provide multiple ways to interact with the material to accommodate varying abilities and needs. For example, the primary accessibility accommodation for those with hearing impairments is to include proper captioning along with reasonably detailed visual descriptions. For those with vision impairments, the primary accommodation is to provide alt text for visual elements and tag elements appropriately to be read by a Screen Reader.

A. Required Training.

All content creators with access to edit or post on Public-facing ETSU-affiliated websites or social media accounts will participate in an initial training hosted by UMC on creating accessible content, including using the appropriate tools and checking for accessibility. Should creators or editors fail to complete this training in a timely manner, UMC may terminate their access to university websites or social media accounts. Following the initial training, web and social media account administrators may be required to complete additional trainings as necessary to adhere to changes in laws, regulations, or best practices.

B. Training Assistance.

Creators are encouraged to visit the UMC webpage or email umc@etsu.edu to learn of training opportunities and resources.

Authority: Focus Act § 49-8-203, et.seq

Previous Policy: N/A

Defined Terms

A defined term has a special meaning within the context of this policy.

ETSU-affiliated :   ETSU-affiliated websites and social media accounts are those which represent a unit, initiative, program, college, department, or university-sponsored group, excluding student organizations.

Public-facing :   Public-facing sites or channels are any online social media platform or website that can be found through online search and accessed without providing a username and password.

Screen Reader :   Assistive Technology, primarily used by people with vision impairments. Screen Readers convert text, buttons, images, links, and other elements that may be displayed digitally into speech or braille.

Tags/Tagging: Tags are a form of coding used to identify content elements and provide a logical structure governing how a document's or file's content is processed through assistive technology such as a Screen Reader.

Archived Web Content:

In alignment with the federal rule on Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability; Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities (28 C.F.R. pt. 35), Archived Web Content means content that 1) was created prior to this policy's effective date or reproduces the contents of physical media created prior to the policy's effective date, 2) is retained exclusively for reference, research, or recordkeeping, 3) is not altered or updated after the date of archiving, and 4) is organized and stored in a dedicated area or areas clearly identified as being archived. Digital Commons at ETSU is an acceptable archiving platform for these purposes.

Policy History

Effective Date

      a.   Initial: 06/17/24

      b.   Revised:

Procedure

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or more frequently as laws and regulations change. All updates will be communicated to the university community and training will be provided as necessary. The university community will be reminded of the policy's requirements during the fall and spring semesters each year via an email notice. Changes to the policy will also be communicated in this way.

Procedure History

Effective Date

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Related Form(s)