ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION	POLICY NUMBER
Division of Information Technology	IT 5.00
POLICY TITLE	
Digital Accessibility	
SCOPE OF POLICY	**DATE OF REVISION**
USC System	March 4, 2025
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**
Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer	Information Technology

PURPOSE

The University of South Carolina Digital Accessibility Policy is set in place to communicate the expectation that all digital content and technology owned and created by the University falls into compliance under the accepted standard for screen-based information and interactions, the version of WCAG established by the Department of Information Technology.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Assistive Technology (AT): Tools that help people with disabilities navigate and interact with digital products and digital content. These technologies include but are not limited to screen readers, keyboards, speech-to-text software, eye and head control technology, switches and prosthetics.

Digital Accessibility: The ability of digital products, services and tools (websites, applications, software, systems, social media, databases and all user-interfacing technology) to be accessed easily and efficiently by all users, including people with disabilities.

Digital Content: Any material—text, image, video, audio, document or otherwise—used for an interactive context, whether or not it was originally intended for that purpose.

Digital Products, Services and Tools: Any piece of technology that people interact with: websites, applications, software, intranets, systems, wearables, etc.

Disability: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual.

Screen Reader: Software that reads screen-based interactive content aloud, helping people with disabilities (e.g., visual impairment, learning disorders) access and use digital products.

SiteImprove: An online software service that regularly scans the USC website for multiple types of issues, including barriers to accessibility, providing a report of problems and where they occur.

Temporary Injuries and Conditions: Temporary injuries and conditions, also referred to at times as "temporary disabilities," are impairments that substantially limit a person's major daily life activities for a short period of time, rather than permanently.

Testing, Automated: Accessibility testing can be done by an automated program like SiteImprove. Both automated and manual accessibility testing are necessary for finding and remediating issues and ensuring digital content is in compliance with WCAG standards.

Testing, Manual: Manual testing is performed by an accessibility expert using assistive technology like keyboard controls or a screen reader to interact with a screen in-person. Both automated and manual accessibility testing are necessary for finding and remediating issues and ensuring digital content is in compliance with WCAG standards.

Timely/Timeliness: Timely or timeliness is defined as access in sufficient time for an individual with a disability to have an equal opportunity to obtain the same result, gain the same benefit or reach the same level of achievement as persons without disabilities.

USC Sites: Any website, web application or digital functionality housed within the University of South Carolina domains (e.g., sc.edu, usca.edu, uscb.edu, uscupstate.edu)

Users: Anyone who needs to interact with the USC website or any digital products provided by USC. This list could include current and future USC students, USC faculty and staff, parents of USC students, community members, people at other universities and accessibility compliance officers.

Usability: The level of ease with which a person, with or without disability, can engage with a particular website, application or other digital product.

VPAT (Voluntary Product Accessibility Template): A document or web page, provided by the creator of a digital product or service, that outlines exactly how their offering is in compliance with WCAG as well as any ways it is not in compliance with that standard. This is the widely accepted method for companies creating web and digital products to prove compliance with the version of WCAG established by the Department of Information Technology.

WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines): Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are part of a series of web accessibility guidelines published by the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The W3C is an international community of member organizations which work together to develop web standards. WCAG has three levels of standards for digital accessibility, but WCAG Level AA is the commonly recognized standard for compliance.

POLICY STATEMENT

A. This is a system-wide policy, affecting all campuses.

B. This policy applies to all digital content and technology distributed by the University of South Carolina, including but not limited to: websites, documents, videos, audio files, social media posts, digital educational materials, applications, digital signs, third-party tools and databases.

C. All digital content and technology created and/or owned by the University is expected to meet the accepted standard for screen-based information and interactions, which is the version of WCAG established by the Department of Information Technology.

D. All third-party digital products and services used by the University of South Carolina must conform to the version of WCAG established by the Department of Information Technology.

E. Any contract, obligation or agreement which requires the University to purchase, acquire or otherwise accept a digital product or service shall contain a provision indicating that the vendor or provider of the product or service certifies its compliance with the version of WCAG established by the Department of Information Technology via a VPAT document. The vendor or provider must also agree in the contract, obligation or agreement to hold the university harmless for any claims, damages, expenses, fines, costs, attorney's fees and any other liability resulting from the university's acceptance and/or use of the product or service.

F. If time is needed to find an accessible solution or to bring third-party content into compliance, the unit that owns the product or service must provide equally effective alternative access to the content until the third-party product or service can fully comply with this policy. A conscious effort must be shown to replace all interim fixes with long-term accessibility-compliant solutions, and a solution must be reached within a reasonable time frame depending on the complexity of the solution.

G. The Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer has final responsibility for digital content accessibility compliance for the University of South Carolina system.

PROCEDURES

See the University digital accessibility website at https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/digital-accessibility/index.php for more information about continuing procedures as they are developed.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES
CR 1.00 Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment & Sexual Misconduct
Anti-Discrimination Policies and Services
Office of Civil Rights & Title IX Policies and Procedures

Americans with Disabilities Act
Rehabilitation Act of 1973
South Carolina Human Affairs Law
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
July 15, 2020	New policy approval
August 3, 2023	Non-Substantive revisions to reflect current organization structure, policy titles and URLS.
March 4, 2025	Updating IT policy to reflect updated organizational and compliance changes and guidelines.