Web Accessibility FAQ
What is web accessibility?

**Web accessibility** is about removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from using websites.

The goal is for our web content to be **accessible** by people with visual, motor, auditory, cognitive and other disabilities on whatever device they prefer to use.
What does it mean for web content to be accessible?

“A person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.”

WMU Web Accessibility Policy draft, August 14, 2017
What is equally effective access? (part 1 of 5)

“A person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as **fully**, **equally** and **independently** as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.”

WMU Web Accessibility Policy draft, August 14, 2017
What is equally effective access?
(part 2 of 5)

**fully**—all of the information is obtainable, including information conveyed through charts, images and non-verbal communication

**equally**—there are no additional restrictions on freedom or spontaneity of access

**independently**—there is no need to request assistance or special accommodation
What is equally effective access?  
(part 3 of 5)

Example 1: An instructor posts a video on her blog and tells her students to be ready to discuss it in class tomorrow. The video is not closed captioned, but closed captioned copies on DVD are available from Waldo Library.

Does this provide equally effective access?

NO, because hearing impaired students would have to go to Waldo Library during business hours to access the video, whereas other students could access it from anywhere at any time.
What is equally effective access?  
(part 4 of 5)

Example 2a: Your unit has just completed a study of postgraduate success rates. To illustrate change over time, you create a graph and add it to a webpage like so:

<img src="graph.png" alt="Graph showing year-over-year increases in postgraduate success" />

Does this provide equally effective access?

**NO**, because visually impaired users who rely on screen reading software will hear a description of the graph, but not the actual information it conveys.
What is equally effective access? (part 5 of 5)

Example 2b: Your unit has just completed a study of postgraduate success rates. To illustrate change over time, you create a graph and add it to a webpage like so:

```html
<img src="graph.png" alt="Graph showing year-over-year increases in postgraduate success" longdesc="graph.html" /><a href="graph.html">Graph description</a>
```

Does this provide equally effective access?

**YES**, if the linked page describes the trends in detail and provides the data as a table, a visually impaired user will have full, equal and independent access.
Am I required to make my web content accessible?

**YES**

Federal law requires us to provide equally effective access to all web content and web-based services. Failure to do so could expose the University to litigation and damage our reputation as an inclusive institution.

It’s also the **right thing to do**.
What is WMU doing to ensure web accessibility?

WMU has entered into a legally binding agreement with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights to bring our websites into compliance with accessibility standards and ensure that they remain so.

As part of this agreement, the University will enact a Web Accessibility Policy.
How was the Web Accessibility Policy developed?

The current **Web Accessibility Policy draft** was a joint effort by General Counsel, University Relations, Information Technology, Disability Services for Students, Institutional Effectiveness, Extended University Programs, Development & Alumni Relations, University Libraries and other units.

It is based on guidelines provided by the Office for Civil Rights and on similar policies already in place at other major universities.
When does the new Web Accessibility Policy go into effect?

The Web Accessibility Policy will go into effect when it is approved by the Board of Trustees. This is expected to happen at their September meeting.

The Office for Civil Rights also needs to approve the policy, and may require us to amend it after it goes into effect. We expect to hear from them by November.
What types of web content need to comply with the Web Accessibility Policy?

The Web Accessibility Policy applies to all University web content, meaning anything on the web that is acquired, published or hosted by the University or used to conduct University business or activities. That includes:

- web pages, PDFs, Office documents, images, audio and video.
- third-party content from vendors, cloud services, YouTube, etc.
- blogs and faculty websites (if used for instruction, recruitment, marketing or other “official” purposes).
What will be required under the new Web Accessibility Policy?

Major provisions of the Web Accessibility Policy include:

- All web content will need to meet the **WCAG 2.0 Level AA** conformance requirements.

- All third-party web products and web services will need to be approved through the **IT Product Review Process** before acquisition.

- Any staff, faculty or student employee who posts or maintains University web content will need to complete **annual accessibility training**.

- The University will appoint a **Web Accessibility Coordinator** to oversee implementation and convene a **Web Accessibility Committee** to advise and support the Coordinator.
How will the new Web Accessibility Policy be implemented? (part 1 of 3)

Two new positions will be created in University Relations.

The **Assistant Director of Electronic Communication Quality Assurance** will serve as the Web Accessibility Coordinator, and will work with web maintainers to audit their sites and remediate non-compliant content.

A **Web Developer** will also be hired to make needed changes to the CMS templates, incorporate accessibility features into the CMS editing tools, and work with other units to make non-CMS web applications accessible.
How will the new Web Accessibility Policy be implemented? (part 2 of 3)

The University will purchase an **automated auditing tool** to routinely scan all WMU-owned websites for WCAG compliance.

Site maintainers will be able to receive reports detailing non-compliant elements, possible areas of concern and recommended changes.

Some manual auditing will still be required, however, because not all WCAG requirements are machine-testable.
How will the new Web Accessibility Policy be implemented? (part 3 of 3)

Annual training will be provided as online, self-paced courses.

The training will be overseen by the Asst Dir for Electronic Communication QA and will cover your roles and responsibilities under the policy, as well as accessibility standards and best practices.

Completion of the training will be a requirement for CMS access.
How soon does my web content need to be brought into compliance with the Web Accessibility Policy?

Once the Office for Civil Rights approves the Web Accessibility Policy, we will have 180 days in which to complete an initial audit and develop a corrective action strategy.

Between now and then, the Web Accessibility Committee will work with website owners to define remediation procedures and set timeframes for achieving compliance.
Who is responsible for ensuring that web content is accessible?

If you create, edit, post or maintain University web content, then it is your responsibility to ensure that content is accessible.

Web content maintainers are encouraged to make use of the auditing tool and the online training courses as soon as they become available. The Web Accessibility Coordinator will also be available to assist you and answer questions.

Ultimately, though, facilitating equal and effective access is the responsibility of all University staff and faculty. If you become aware of inaccessible web content, please report it to the Web Accessibility Coordinator.
What if I have web content that can’t be made compliant?

The Web Accessibility Policy includes provisions for requesting an exception. However…

The University is **required by law** to make its web content accessible. Thus, units requesting an exception will be required to demonstrate an alternative means by which they can provide equally effective access to the content in question.