

# Accommodating Students with Disabilities

## Supporting Learning via Digital Formats

### Tips for Creating Accessible Course Materials

- **Create document structure (headings and style templates)** that organize and format documents for easier visual and assistive technology navigation
  - Sighted learners often scroll a page looking for headings to get idea of the documents structure and content. Screen reader and other assistive technology users can navigate Word documents by heading structures if Word's Heading styles are used.
  - If users create a "heading" by changing the text directly in a Word document, these changes will provide **visual** structure for some of your users, but the document structure needed for **navigation** by assistive technology users is missing.
- **Use meaningful hyperlinks.**
  - Write useful, descriptive hyperlinks that don't make a reader guess where the link will take them. Avoid phrases like "click here" and "more".
- **Use white space and headings to break up long blocks of text**
  - Provide plenty of space between lines and blocks of text. This helps many users to more easily track text horizontally, and generally makes text easier to read.
- **Use text, not pictures of text**
  - A scanned article will read as an image and cannot be read by a screen reader
  - Materials being uploaded as JPEGs, photocopied or scanned documents are not able to be read by screen readers.
  - Pictures of text become blurry when enlarged by screen magnifiers, take longer to download, and are inefficient for the website author to edit.
- **Add alternate text for images and graphics** (except for decorative images)
  - Alt text descriptions should convey the information of the image, not merely describe the image.
  - Text should be an equivalent substitute for the image.
- **Use colour and contrast appropriately**
  - Do not use colour as the only way to convey content (e.g., not "required steps are in red")

- Use tables wisely.
  - Tables can be useful for communicating and organizing data but can be difficult for screen readers to understand. They should not be used to control layout – consider using columns for layout instead.
- Run the accessibility checker in Microsoft documents

## Accessibility for Lectures and Presentations

- Consider what your students would get out of your lecture or presentation if they were not able to hear the audio portion, or if they had difficulty understanding the spoken word. A text transcript or closed captioning provides students with equivalent information to the audio content in a multimedia resource.
- Recorded Lectures
  - Access to recorded lectures (BlueJeans). The Centre for Teaching and Learning Innovation's Teach Anywhere site provides information on [Recording a Class or Meeting in BlueJeans](#)
- Closed Captioning
  - Kaltura, BlueJeans and YouTube all have auto generated captioning abilities. Automatic transcription/closed captioning is not always accurate enough to provide equal access.
  - Kaltura automatically captions all videos, a CC appears on your video after processing. The captions are machine created with accuracy about 85-95%. If there are inaccuracies, you can go to "Caption + Enrich" feature and edit captions as you watch the video.
    - Captions can also be added to previously created videos.
  - BlueJeans captioning on live classes is coming Fall 2020. It is turned on by users in the Preferences section (anyone in the class can turn them on).

## Exam Considerations

More information on [Digital Exams for Students with Disabilities](#) can be found on the Teach Anywhere site.

- Extra time
  - Wherever possible, instructors will be required to manage the additional time accommodation as per the student's accommodation letter. In the [test availability exceptions section of Blackboard](#), instructors can create exceptions for: number of attempts, timer, availability (date and time test is available).
  - Take home or open book exams often have a very long exam writing window so may or may not require extra time added for students with disabilities.
- Adaptive Technology (e.g., text to speech, voice input software, magnifiers)
  - Students will need to work with DALs on a case by case basis to determine functionality in the specific testing environment.
- In person supports (such as reader, scribe, interpreter, or mobility assistant)
  - This level of testing accommodation will need to be worked out on a case by case basis. A scribe or reader could be utilized via BlueJeans or face to face invigilation with DALs.

## More Information

For more information, visit the [Department of Accessible Learning Services \(DALs\) website](#).

If you have any questions about implementing an accommodation or the accessibility of your courses, please contact a Department of Accessible Learning Services (DALs) faculty member. Consider adding a DALs faculty member to your Blackboard Learn course in the role of guest so that they can get a sense for the structure of your class and support accessibility issues to help students to fully participate online.

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