Creating accessible documents – Tip Sheet

The following handout provides general recommendations for creating accessible content.

Text Formatting and Organization

- **Keep it simple.** Be careful with abbreviations, jargon, complex language, or anything that might confuse the reader.
- Use **illustrations and pictures** to supplement text.
- Check **spelling, grammar, and readability**.
- AVOID THE USE OF **ALL CAPS**. IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO READ.
- **Use Word's Format and Styles.**
- Organize your document using Word's Styles. For example, use headings (sometimes labeled as "H1" "Heading 1", etc.). The document title should be a first-level heading, the next level should be second-level, etc. Avoid skipping levels (e.g., jumping from first-level to third-level headings).
- Use **true bulleted and numbered lists** rather than creating it by using the tab key and an asterisk or number.
- Use true columns instead of other methods (e.g., using the "Tab" key to create columns one line at a time).
- Always use the **Accessibility Checker**

Use of Color

The use of color can enhance comprehension but do not use color alone to convey information. For example do not state "Items in red are due in on May 23, 2015." Instead you can highlight the items due in red but you must also have use the text "are due". Color can not be the only way information I conveyed.

- Choose solid-colored, rather than textured backgrounds.
- Choose high contrasting colors especially between text and background For example, black text with white background is a high contrast. Black text on a dark blue background is not.
- Color-blind individuals should be able to interpret a page successfully

Navigation and Links

- Linked text is descriptive instead of just "click here." Refer to the Faculty Resource Center for more information instead of Here is the link to the Faculty Resource Center.
- Avoid phrases like "Click here", "Here", "More", "More information", "Read more", and "Continue."
- URL's as link text should usually be avoided, unless the document is intended to be printed or if the URL is relevant content.
- Do not use descriptions that rely only on sight. Do not use "click on the box on the left side of the page" or "Due Dates are marked in red").

Tables

- Be care with data tables. Use row and column heading to make tables accessible.
- Avoid multiple levels of table headers
- Avoid using tables for visual layout when possible.

Images and Graphics

- Images should have alternate text or descriptions set for them to convey meaning
- Use images only to enhance the understandability of the content (e.g., illustrate procedures, concepts, and processes).
- Avoid using images that are purely decorative or distract from the main content.
- Limit the size and number of graphics used while maintaining visual integrity.

Multimedia and Captioning

All videos and live audio must have captions. A transcript is sufficient for archived audio.
Captions should be accurately reflecting the text in the video. The text should be equivalent.

- Videos that have audio would need captioning and text transcripts
- Audio files would need text transcripts

Program Specific Instructions for Accessible Documents

1. Using Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker to check my documents
2. Creating accessible Word documents
3. Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations
4. Creating accessible Excel spreadsheets
5. Creating accessible PDF files