Digital Accessibility for Faculty

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Agenda

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Key Steps for Faculty

1. Complete digital accessibility training in Workday Learning

2. Familiarize yourself with the primary tools for accessibility:
   - Built-in accessibility checker in Microsoft 365 Tools
   - Anthology Ally accessibility checkers and Course Accessibility Reports in Canvas
   - Siteimprove if you are a website owner

3. Put accessibility into practice as you create new "born-accessible" materials

Putting Accessibility into Practice

These practices are the foundation of digital accessibility at ISU for faculty creating instructional materials:

- Use built-in **headings and styles**

- Always use tools for **bulleted or numbered lists**

- Use **descriptive links** and avoid language like "click here"

- Ensure **high color contrast** between text and background

- Add **alternative text (alt text)** for images

- Use **external media** that includes accessible features

- Include **captions or transcripts** in all audio and visual materials

- Create **accessible tables** by assigning header rows

Campus Prioritization Hierarchy

1. Websites essential for university operations
   - e.g. Admissions, Tuition, Financial Aid, UHR

2. Primary learning tools and course materials for students
   - e.g. lecture captions, alternative text, structured documents

3. University communications
   - e.g. marketing, social media, email newsletters, videos

4. Discipline or project specific accessibility concerns
   - e.g. complex diagrams, mathematical equations

Overall Goal: Create a welcoming digital environment that supports all learners; not just compliance.

FAQs

Clarification of requirements and expectations

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Frequently asked questions - responsibilities

Question

Answer

Do students have a responsibility toward digital accessibility? Am I responsible for enforcing this?

Yes, students will be responsible for creating accessible materials when they are posted online, presented, shared, or otherwise accessed by other students. Faculty are not obligated to enforce compliance for student work.

What about external content? Am I responsible for making that accessible?

Faculty are responsible for ensuring that required course materials they assign, whether created by themselves or sourced externally, are accessible to all students. At the same time, we recognize practical constraints. We recommend faculty prioritize progress over perfection, take a risk-based approach to accessibility and make a good-faith effort to evaluate accessibility, determine the potential impact on students, and proactively provide alternatives when needed.

Frequently asked questions- diagrams

Question

What about complex diagrams and mathematical equations?

Answer

The Digital Accessibility Team is currently exploring tools and recommended workflows for complex diagrams and equations.

ITS also plans to support the creation of communities of practice across the ISU campus, so that departments may invest in deeper digital accessibility training and certification for staff. This will help them apply digital accessibility requirements within their subject areas, address complex course materials, and better support faculty as they develop their courses.

Frequently asked questions - courses

Question

Can AI help make my courses accessible?

Should I just go back to writing on the white board, and printing my syllabus?

Answer

Yes and no. Our tools have AI components, but simply uploading something into ChatGPT or Copilot will not yield reliable results.

No. Moving away from digital materials won't solve accessibility requirements, and in many cases it actually makes access *harder* for students who rely on assistive technology.

Frequently asked questions - audience

Question	Answer
Who's going to do this work?	Accessibility is part of course design, just like creating assignments, updating content, or adjusting a syllabus.
Who pays for captioning of lectures?	If captions need to be outsourced, the academic department is responsible for covering those costs.

Frequently asked questions – course materials

Question	Answer
Does making my course accessible change how I teach and my academic freedom?	No. Accessibility requirements do not dictate *what* you teach, *how* you teach it, or the academic choices you make. They only ensure that the materials and platforms you use are usable by all students.
What about handwritten notes, since my discipline is visually oriented?	Handwritten notes are absolutely fine as part of your teaching process, especially in visually intensive fields, but on their own, they are not accessible for many students.

Thank you!

Email: digitalaccess@iastate.edu
Website: digitalaccess.iastate.edu
Microsoft Teams: Digital Accessibility at ISU Teams

Additional Resources

Digital Accessibility Liaisons

- The **Digital Accessibility Liaison Network** is a campus-wide network of faculty and staff at Iowa State University dedicated to strengthening communication and compliance efforts for digital accessibility

- Units and departments may designate a Digital Accessibility Liaison(s) who serves as a point of contact between their unit and the central ITS Digital Accessibility Team.

Design Digital Accessibility Liaisons

- Nicole Hurlburt
- Aaron Yang
- Heather Sauer
- Lauryn Auderer
- Josh Obrecht
- Carly Groninga
- Melissa Barnes

To join as a Liaison, email digitalaccess@iastate.edu
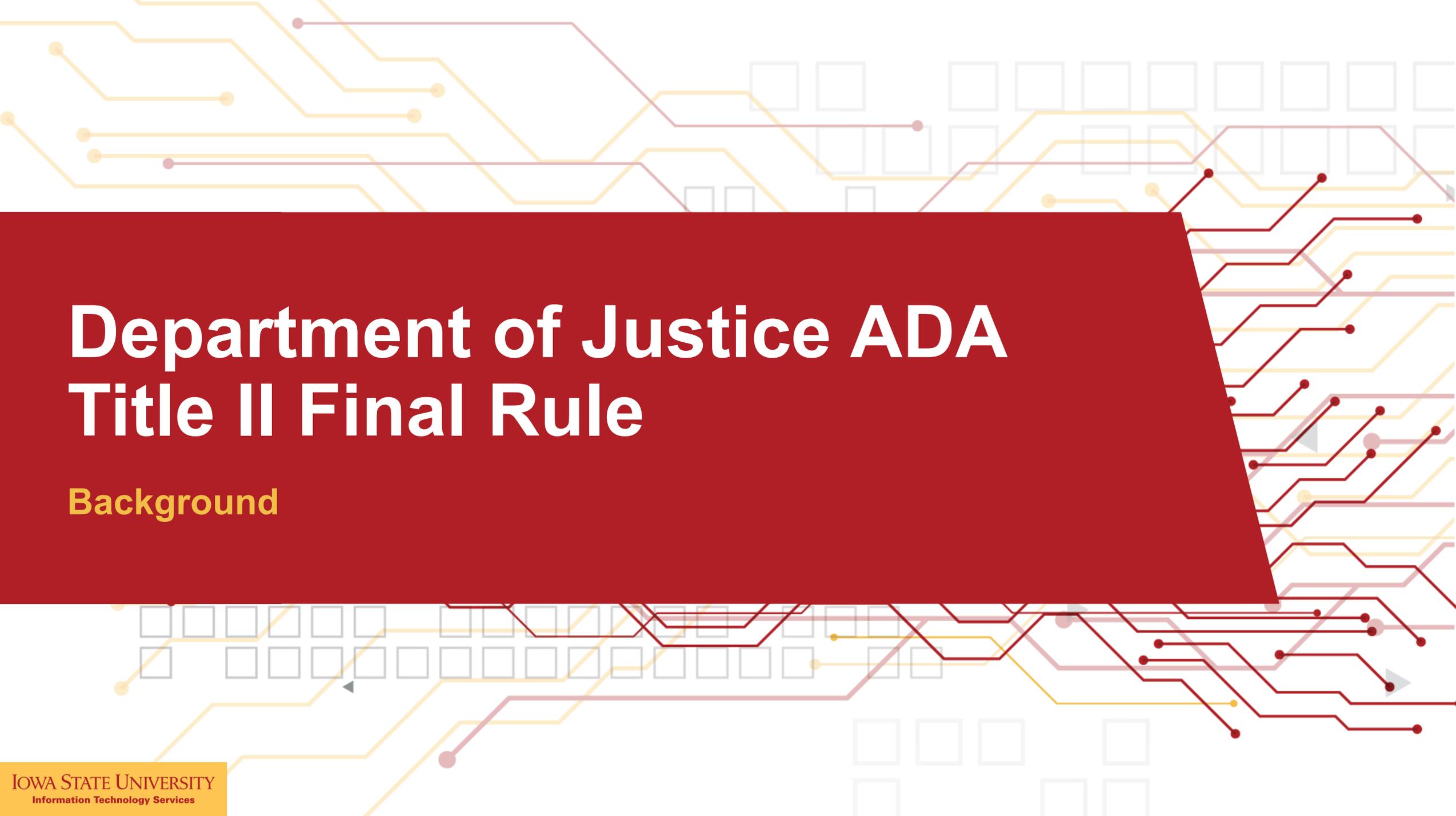
Department of Justice ADA Title II Final Rule

Background

DOJ Rule

- Digital content is legally protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act
  - Websites, course materials, mobile apps, documents, multimedia, and social media posts

- This rule requires all public institutions, including universities, to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards by April 24, 2026.

Why it Matters for ISU Faculty and Students

- Access for All Learners
- Learning Experience
- Teaching Excellence

Compliance

What it means

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What Compliance Looks Like

- **Shared Responsibility**: Complying with federal regulations is a university-wide obligation; faculty, staff, administrators, and partners all play a role.

- **Risk Management:** Compliance is not optional. Meeting these standards protects the university and faculty from complaints or litigation related to inaccessible course materials.

- **Not a One-Time Project**: Accessibility is an ongoing process requiring collaboration across colleges and departments.

What Happens After April 24, 2026?

- Legal and Reputational Risks
- Sustainment Plan

How Compliance Will be Managed

Scanning and Reviews

- Automated accessibility tools (e.g., Siteimprove, Anthology Ally in Canvas) will scan and provide a baseline, but catch only 25–40% of accessibility errors.

How Compliance Will be Managed — Tools

Tools in Use

- Siteimprove for web accessibility.

- Anthology Ally and UDOIT in Canvas for course materials.

- Captioning services (3Play Media for closed captioning, transcription, and LiveCART).

- PDF remediation services launching Spring 2026.