Digital Accessibility Clarifying Questions – January 27, 2026

"Mixed messages about the deadline — do Fall 2026 materials need to be fully compliant by April 25, 2026?"

The Department of Justice Rule goes into effect on April 25, 2026. Because this date falls toward the end of the Spring 2026 semester, it is expected that course materials for Summer 2026 and beyond will be made accessible. Faculty will be expected to focus on materials they are currently using in a course. For example, Fall 2026 materials will need to be as accessible as possible by the time they are delivered to students that semester. Faculty will not need to remediate all their past instructional materials, only those that they will continue to use in Summer 2026 and beyond.

"Faculty feel they don't have the knowledge or time to make all materials compliant."

This is a common concern for ISU faculty. Our guidance is to make a good faith effort to create born-accessible materials and to remediate legacy materials being reused in courses after the compliance deadline. We do not expect that all course materials will be 100% compliant at the deadline; instead, we encourage habit-building and continuous improvement over time. We emphasize progress over perfection as the entire institution works toward compliance. However, if or when an inaccessible material is reported, faculty will be expected to respond promptly.

There are also many discipline-specific accessibility concerns that will have clearer answers over time. The creation of communities of practice (discipline-specific networks with additional accessibility expertise and training/certification) will help support accessibility work within each college and address concerns requiring domain knowledge.

The intent is not to have faculty redesign their instructional approach but rather to provide tools to make instructional content accessible to all learners.

"Can academic leaders get information on how many faculty have completed training?"

Yes, the Digital Accessibility Team regularly collects training completion data for the Core Digital Accessibility training courses in Workday Learning. College-level training completion data, as of Monday, January 26, 2026, is listed below. More specific data may be made available upon request.

Chairs and supervisors may assign the training to their teams by following instructions in the Enroll My Team in Learning (Managers) article. Learning reports may also be accessed by Chairs and supervisors wishing to see their team's learning completion progress by following instructions in Workday Learning Reports for Managers.

Completion by College

"Who is responsible for external published materials that students are directed to reference?"

Faculty are responsible for ensuring that required course materials they assign, whether created by themselves or sourced externally, are accessible to all students. When instructors do not own or cannot modify external content, they generally have two options:

- Choose an accessible alternate resource, or

- Provide an accessible alternative that conveys the same instructional intent (e.g., a transcript, summary, or equivalent material) in addition to the selected required material

At the same time, we recognize practical constraints. Faculty select external materials for sound pedagogical reasons, and sometimes there are very few choices within specialized areas. Additionally, accessibility barriers are not always obvious, and usually cannot be remediated by the user. In these cases, a risk-based approach is appropriate: faculty should make a good-faith effort to evaluate accessibility, determine the potential impact on students, and proactively provide alternatives when needed. The goal is not to eliminate the use of all inaccessible content, but to ensure that all students have equivalent access to the instructional intent of those materials.

"Who is responsible for student presentations or shared work? How will students know what to do?"

Students themselves 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. Students will be made aware of this requirement, and a student-specific training program is in development and will be released to students by Fall 2026. Current student employees, such as graduate assistants and hourly workers, have access to the Core Digital Accessibility Training for ISU Faculty and Staff in Workday Learning, and their supervisors can assign it to them as appropriate.

"How can AI help accomplish this?"

AI can support accessibility work, but it cannot yet replace accessibility expertise or fully automate the process. Some of our campus tools include AI-assisted features (e.g. Anthology Ally, Microsoft Office 365), such as generating alt text suggestions or identifying structural issues in documents. These can save time, but they still require review and verification for accuracy, context, and instructional intent.
What AI cannot do is take a file you upload into ChatGPT, Copilot, or another general-purpose tool and automatically make it fully accessible. These models are not yet designed to apply WCAG standards, correctly tag PDFs, ensure meaningful reading order, write accurate alt text for complex diagrams, or make discipline-specific judgment calls. At best, they can offer drafts or starting points; at worst, they introduce errors that create new barriers for students.
AI is most effective when used as a helper, not a substitute — it can surface issues, generate ideas, or assist with small tasks, but accessibility still requires human review, intentional design, and the use of tools built for compliance.

"Can we share the Quick Start Guide?"

Yes, the Faculty Quick Start Guide is intended specifically to serve as a reference guide for faculty and instructors. It highlights the essential steps to incorporating digital accessibility best practices and provides some key resources available. It may be shared widely with Deans, Department Chairs, faculty, graduate instructors, and support staff.