



Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion | West Chester University | 114 W. Rosedale Avenue
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Accessibility Statement in Response to COVID-19 Impact on Class Instruction

Accessibility is essential to any inclusive environment. Just as in physical classroom settings, West Chester University is legally required to ensure that our virtual/online learning environments are accessible for individuals with disabilities. Creating accessible physical spaces, electronic content and learning environments requires additional thought and planning at the beginning stages. **It is much easier to plan for accessibility initially, than to attempt to retrofit inaccessible course content.** In addition, inaccessible content creates unnecessary barriers for students and negatively impacts student learning.

As faculty at West Chester employ other teaching modalities to provide remote instruction in response to the impact of COVID-19, we strongly encouraged you to ensure “Accessible Design” and when possible, to consider employing Universal Design. While Accessible Design aims to meet the minimum requirements to achieve usability, Universal Design improves access and outcomes for everyone in a variety of situations. It considers the wide spectrum of human abilities and exceeds minimum standards to meet the needs of the greatest number of people. Examples of Universal design include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use of captions or transcripts, as all students reap benefits from their use, including the benefits of language reinforcement, concept review and improved understanding when watching videos in a wide range of settings.
- Using or selecting websites that are designed with headings, well-organized content and keyboard navigation will benefit individuals using screen readers and those with learning disabilities. It will also be easier to follow and more visually-appealing for everyone.

A very helpful reading for faculty to review is [20 Tips for Teaching an Accessible Online Course](#)

Information Services and Technology (IS&T), in partnership with the Office for Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD) provides [resources to assist faculty in creating accessible online course content](#) independently or with support. **Given the increased need, the following additional personnel through the Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are available to consult with faculty as it relates to best practices in creating accessible content and resources for [ADA related accommodations](#) through online course content:**

- *Meg Hazel, Esq., M.A.- Assistant Director, Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; mhazel@wcupa.edu; 610.436.2838*
- *Dr. Tracey Robinson, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, trobinson@wcupa.edu or 610.436.2433*