

UWaterloo Course Accessibility Guide (UWCAG)



How to Use this Guide

Step 1: Download and save this fillable Guide

Notes: If you complete this Guide in your browser, your responses will not be saved. Make sure to work from the version on your computer.

Step 2: Use the Guide to review the accessibility of a course, and seek help when needed

- In the space provided at the beginning of page 2, enter the name of the course you are reviewing.
- Use the checkboxes to identify how a course already meets accessibility requirements and where accessibility gaps exist. The response options include:
 - **Yes:** This criterion is met
 - **No:** This criterion is not met
 - **Unsure:** I'm unsure if this criterion is met
 - **NA:** Not Applicable to this course
- If you need clarification on an accessibility criterion, follow the criterion's link the [Reference Manual](#) to learn more

CEL

For assistance with digital accessibility in your courses, contact the Centre for Extended Learning's [Agile Development Team](#).

Step 3: Save your responses

Funding

The UWaterloo Course Accessibility Guide is a customized version of the *Postsecondary Course Accessibility Guide (PCAG)* which is available under a [CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0](#) license. Authored by Christine Zaza, Ph.D. © University of Waterloo.

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UWaterloo Course Accessibility Guide for _____

Please Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that, on average, students rated the item as *Very Important* or *Extremely Important* for their learning, according to a 2024 research study (See [Brief Summary of the Student Survey on Course Accessibility, Zaza, 2025](#)).

Section 1: Course Outline

Section 1 criteria are for the individual(s) who create course outlines, learning plans, or syllabi. To learn more about the criteria, follow the links to the Reference Manual.

CTE

To improve accessibility and to provide a consistent experience for students, use Waterloo’s standardized course outline tool:
[Outline](#)

Instruction and Assessment Formats Used in the Course

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>1.1 Does the course outline identify the formats that will be used for instruction (e.g., in-person lectures, group discussions, etc.)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.1 Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>1.2 Does the course outline identify the formats of assessments and learning activities (e.g., in-person tests, group projects, presentations, etc.)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.2 Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>1.3 Does the course outline identify the technologies that will be used for instruction (e.g., LEARN, Mobius, Piazza)?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.3 • Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>1.4 Does the course outline identify the technologies that will be used for assessments and learning activities (e.g., quizzes, etc.)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.4 • Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>1.5 Is the course outline produced in an accessible format according to established guidelines?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.5 				

Processes and Policies

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>1.6 Does the course outline include the following links to Waterloo's processes that students need to follow in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to AccessAbility Services for the process for requesting accessible formats • Link to Student Academic Accommodation Guidelines for the process to resolve accommodation-related disputes. <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.6 				

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>1.7 Does the course outline link to Waterloo’s disability-related policies for students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 58 - Accessibility • Student Academic Accommodation Guidelines <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.7 				

Essential Requirements

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>1.8 Does the course outline link to the program’s essential academic requirements, if available?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.8-1.9 <p>Note: An Essential Requirements resource is coming soon.</p>				
<p>1.9 Does the course outline explicitly identify how each assessment is connected to the course’s essential academic requirements?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 1.8-1.9 <p>Note: An Essential Requirements resource is coming soon.</p>				

Section 2: Course Organization and Navigation

Section 2 accessibility criteria pertain to how students find and interact with course materials and tools in the course site in LEARN. To learn more about the criteria, follow the links to the Reference Manual.

CTE

For assistance with designing your course in LEARN, contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) [Faculty Liaison](#)

LEARN Setup of Modules

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>2.1 On the course site in LEARN, are course components clearly identified throughout all sections?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.1-2.6 Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>2.2 Do the titles of the course module pages in LEARN clearly and concisely describe their purpose?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.1-2.6 Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>2.3 Are the course components organized consistently throughout the course website in LEARN?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.1-2.6 Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>2.4 Are LEARN tools used for their intended purpose (e.g., content is housed in content modules not in announcements or discussion forums)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.1-2.6 • Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>2.5 Is the course organized in a way that aligns with how students progress through the course (e.g., weekly modules)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.1-2.6 • Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>2.6 Are course materials housed in LEARN (rather than sent to students via email or housed in a personal website)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.1-2.6 • Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				

LEARN Setup of Assessments

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>2.7 Are the assessment submission instructions and processes clear, and presented consistently throughout the course?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.7-2.9 • Contact your Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Faculty Liaison 				
<p>2.8 Are assessment settings in LEARN tools (e.g., dropboxes) selected to reduce errors?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.7-2.9 				
<p>2.9 Do students who make a submission error have the opportunity to reverse or fix their error?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 2.7-2.9 				

Section 3: Course Materials

Section 3 criteria pertain to course materials and technologies used in classrooms, labs, studios, off-campus learning environments, and virtual learning spaces (synchronous and asynchronous). To learn more about the criteria, follow the links to the Reference Manual.

CEL

For assistance with digital accessibility in your courses, contact the Centre for Extended Learning's [Agile Development Team](#).

Course Content Created by the Instructor (e.g., lecture slides)

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>3.1 Are idioms, jargon, abbreviations, and acronyms defined the first time they are used?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.1 				
<p>3.2 Are learning materials produced in an accessible format?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.2-3.4 For assistance, contact the Agile Development Team Accessibility Checklist for MS PowerPoint Accessibility Checklist for MS Word 				
<p>3.3 Are instructor-created multimedia materials available in more than one format (e.g., a video includes closed captions)?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.2-3.4 For assistance, contact the Agile Development Team 				
<p>3.4 Are PDFs accessible?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.2-3.4 				

Course Content That Is Sourced (e.g., Textbooks)

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>3.5 Are sourced course materials available in more than one format (e.g., hard copy, electronic copy, etc.)?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.5-3.7 				
<p>3.6 If sourced materials (including PDFs) are not accessible, can materials be converted to an accessible format, in compliance with the <i>Copyright Act of Canada</i> and other relevant legislation?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.5-3.7 For assistance, contact the Agile Development Team 				
<p>3.7 Can an alternate format be created (by the library or AccessAbility Services) within a reasonable timeframe?</p> <p>Note: Instructors do not need to request the alternate format. Students who require an alternate format will make their request through AccessAbility Services.</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.5-3.7 				

Assessments and Learning Activities

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>3.8 Are assessments (including multimedia assessments) created by the instructor/teaching team produced and available in an accessible format that can be converted to an alternate format if required?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.8-3.11 				
<p>3.9 Is feedback on assessments provided in an accessible format (e.g., typed rather than hand-written comments)?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.8-3.11 				
<p>3.10 Are alternatives available for course assessments that are not accessible?</p> <p>Note: Instructors do not need to request the alternate format. Students who require an alternate format will make their request through AccessAbility Services.</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.8-3.11 				
<p>3.11 Are alternatives available for sourced multimedia assessments that are not accessible?</p> <p>Note: Instructors do not need to request the alternate format. Students who require an alternate format will make their request through AccessAbility Services.</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.8-3.11 				

Educational Technologies

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>3.12 Are educational technologies (e.g., peer review tools, etc.) accessible?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.12 				
<p>3.13 Are all students given time to learn and practise educational technologies (e.g., online quiz, etc.) before having to use them in learning activities, assessments, including off-campus experiential learning activities?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.13 				
<p>3.14 Are students with disabilities given time to learn and practise the accessibility features (e.g., shortcut keys) of educational technologies before having to use them in learning activities or assessments?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 3.14 				

Section 4: Communication Barriers

Section 4 criteria pertain to barriers related to communication, disruptions, and academic accommodations. To learn more about the criteria, follow the links to the Reference Manual.

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>4.1 During the term, are students offered a variety of ways to communicate with the instructor and/or teaching team (e.g., in-person, telephone, virtual, email)?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 4.1 				
<p>4.2 If new technology is introduced after the start of term, is class input sought through a variety of options, including anonymous feedback?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 4.2 				
<p>4.3 Does the course outline or course homepage in LEARN link to Plant Operations – Service Interruptions Main page Current Service Interruption so that students can find out about temporary barriers and disruptions (e.g., building closure)?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 4.3 				
<p>4.4 If any course-related changes or disruptions occur during the term (e.g., cancelled office hours), is notice of the change given to all students as far in advance as possible?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 4.4 				

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>4.5 If refusing an accommodation request, do the reasons for refusal align with the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s Duty to Accommodate?</p> <p><i>* Students rated this item as highly important</i></p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 4.5 and Student Academic Accommodation Guidelines 				

Section 5: Physical Learning Space Barriers

Section 5 criteria pertain to barriers in physical learning spaces that instructors are likely to have some control over. To learn more about the criteria, follow the links to the Reference Manual.

Accessibility Criteria	Yes	No	Unsure	NA
<p>5.1 Is accessibility considered and prioritized in physical learning spaces where possible (e.g., instructor’s office)?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 5.1-5.2 				
<p>5.2 When selecting off-campus environments for course-related experiential learning, is accessibility considered and prioritized?</p> <p> For help with this accessibility practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Reference Manual: Criteria 5.1-5.2 				