

ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE LETTER

SUBJECT: ACCESSIBILITY OF UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES

All University programs and services must be accessible to and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities, as provided under University policy and Federal and State law. All areas of the University shall be designed and operated in a manner that enables students, employees, applicants, and members of the general public who have a disability to participate or benefit on an equal basis. The University's policy includes, but is not limited to, access to:

- academic programs, including traditional and distance education programs;
- employment, cultural, recreational, and residential programs;
- information and communication systems, including hardware and software, equipment, and facilities.

Managers and administrators are responsible for accessibility of their administrative areas. Each university has an Equal Opportunity Officer, Director of Facilities, ADA Coordinator, and Disabled Student Services Coordinator with specific responsibilities for and expertise related to accessibility.

New Programs, Services, and Facilities

Planning for accessibility by people with disabilities is necessary in the development of new programs, services, and facilities. Advance planning avoids significant costs and complications of retrofitting programs, services, and facilities. It is the responsibility of each manager and administrator who is responsible for designing or implementing a new program, service, or facility or for preparing a grant application to consult with the appropriate university resources to determine and meet accessibility requirements and the cost of accessibility and accommodations in the budget.

Construction of new facilities, building renovations, and facilities to be leased by the University must conform to national and state accessibility standards. Equipment, other products, and services purchased or leased by the University, new communication systems, and University publications shall be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.

Existing Programs, Services, and Facilities

Existing programs and services must be made accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities who request a reasonable accommodation. Building alterations may be required if a building or other facility is not accessible, the programs or services it houses cannot be relocated to an accessible location, and no other non-structural changes will provide access.

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The responsible administrator or manager shall consult with appropriate university resources for guidance in determining whether building alterations are required. All information provided by the University, including information technology, must be provided in a format that is accessible to individuals with disabilities, upon request. Equipment that is provided to or available for use by students, employees, and others must be adapted for use by individuals with disabilities. An accommodation request must not be denied prior to consultation with the university Equal Opportunity Officer and/or ADA Coordinator.

The University may request documentation to confirm a disability and the need for the requested accommodation. An accommodation that would fundamentally alter the nature or operation of a program or service or that would impose an undue hardship on the University is not a reasonable accommodation. The *University of Maine System Procedure for Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities* (on the web at <http://www.maine.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/procedure1.pdf>) establishes guidelines for responding to accommodation requests from employees, applicants, and the general public.

Each university has a separate procedure for responding to student requests.

Web Accessibility

The University of Maine System will use the standards set forth below to make information that is available to the public on the web accessible to people with disabilities.

Public Sites. Each University will ensure that its public Web sites comply with these standards for accessibility. Each campus should develop a plan for prioritizing implementation of Web accessibility standards. (e.g., establish a mandate that all new Web pages will comply with the standards, or create an order for redesigning Web pages starting with home page and then subsequent layers) If a complaint is received about a specific site not being accessible, it is the responsibility of the owning University and department to promptly correct the problem.

Course Sites. Those individuals developing course sites, which are not open or intended for the general public, are strongly advised to follow these University's accessibility standards whenever possible. Unlike public Web sites, students with accessibility needs can be identified prior to entry to the site. However, foresight in planning for accessible course sites can prevent the need for significant, last-minute adaptations at the start of the course or alternative accommodations for students with disabilities.

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Each University is responsible for informing and training Web page developers on the requirements for accessibility. To this end, each University will provide a Web site explaining the standards and giving examples. Universities may develop their own site or may link to the site managed by the University of Maine:

<http://www.maine.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/accessib.pdf>

Due attention should be paid to graphic images which convey textual message which may not be readable by screen readers. Additionally, Web developers should take advantage of a commercially available accessibility tool (such as "Bobby") that checks for accessibility conformity.

Making web pages accessible will seldom, if ever, create an undue hardship for the University. A department or program that believes that meeting accessibility standards would constitute an undue hardship must contact the appropriate office designated by the University (i.e. webmaster, or Equal Opportunity), which will make the determination in consultation with the owning department.

Web Accessibility Guidelines

- a. A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content).
- b. Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.
- c. Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.
- d. Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.
- e. Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.
- f. Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.
- g. Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables.
- h. Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.
- i. Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation.

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- j. Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.
- k. A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.
- l. When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assistive technology.
- m. When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with §1194.21(a) through (l).
- n. When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.
- o. A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links. When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Board Policy 401: *General Equal Opportunity*](#)

APPROVED

Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration

Note: Official copy on file in the Office of Finance and Administration at the University of Maine System.