

Digital Accessibility Framework

Outlines objectives, principles and standards to guide staff in ensuring the accessibility of digital resources produced or used at RMIT.

What is it?

The Digital Accessibility Framework helps RMIT create online information and services that reflect the diversity of its students, staff and visitors. It does that by:

- setting design standards for accessibility of all digital resources
- outlining roles and responsibilities for compliance.

Who is this for?

The Framework applies to 'digital resources', including:

- a) digital technologies provided or supported by the University, such as:
 - digital authoring tools including Adobe Experience Manager (AEM), Canvas and O365 applications
 - digital service platforms for users to interact with the University, such as ServiceNow, WorkDay, Salesforce and O365 applications
 - browsers used to access a service or view content
- b) digital content and output for which RMIT University is or may be legally responsible under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, including:
 - web pages, websites, web applications, mobile and other online applications including Rich Internet Applications and multimedia
 - university online communication channels including content published via social media and email
 - non-HTML resources published on the web or distributed electronically, such as PDF, Word documents, and images.

The Framework excludes:

- a) course-based multimedia resources created by non-digital specialists, which are covered by the Disability Standards for Education
- b) sites hosted by RMIT University but for which the University is not legally responsible
- c) digital authoring tools not provided or supported by the University
- d) student work (e.g. student galleries, reflective journals, blogs) except where:
 - other students are required to interact with the work as part of a learning or assessment activity
 - the work is commissioned on behalf of the University
 - the work is subsequently used as an official digital resource by the University.

1. Objective

1.1. In its Accessibility Action Plan, RMIT commits to:

- a) demonstrating visible leadership commitment to inclusion and diversity, and promoting awareness and appropriate behaviour among staff and students
- b) ensuring that our physical and digital environments are accessible, inclusive, and safe
- c) providing an equitable and inclusive experience for all students and staff with disability.

1.2. Consistent with its obligations in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education, RMIT aims to ensure that students, staff and visitors can access and use RMIT University's digital information and services.

2. Guiding principles

2.1. Accessible by design

RMIT affirms accessibility as a fundamental consideration in the design, development and implementation of its digital information, technologies and services. This will improve everyone's experience of RMIT, including people with disability, and will eliminate costly and inefficient remediation.

2.2. Progressive rather than immediate development

Digital accessibility will be progressively implemented to:

- a) raise awareness of accessibility and build commitment within Colleges, Schools and Portfolios
- b) achieve widespread integration of accessible design practices
- c) implement needed changes to policy, standards and processes
- d) update training and support tools and resources, and roll these out to all areas where they are needed
- e) evaluate existing digital resources for compliance, prioritise and make any needed changes
- f) adopt the Framework in all Colleges, Schools and Portfolios.

2.3. Prioritised development

RMIT will develop priorities for compliance with accessibility standards, particularly for key strategic platforms such as AEM, Canvas, Salesforce, Workday and O365.

2.4. Planned resourcing

Colleges, Schools and Portfolios will implement the Framework where possible within existing resources, with ongoing support provided by a 'pool' of subject-matter experts.

2.5. Use of vendor systems that may not comply

RMIT will not accept non-compliant resources on an ongoing basis and will advise vendors that improvements will need to be demonstrated clearly in a product roadmap or it will seek alternative solutions.

2.6. Ongoing review and development of the Framework

The Framework will respond to developments in new technology and address any existing online resources that may inadvertently have been excluded.

2.7. Defined governance and accountability

The RMIT Accessibility Working Group makes recommendations to the associated Policy Owner on any amendments to this Framework as external digital accessibility standards and technologies evolve.

3. Standards for digital content accessibility

Resource	Minimum standard
Design templates and components (including branding and common visual and navigational elements for the University's websites).	WCAG 2.1 Level AA, plus the following Level AAA criteria: 1.4.8-9 2.2.6 2.4.9-10 2.5.5 3.1.3-6
Resources produced by digital specialists (including work commissioned from external parties and, as far as possible, resources produced by consortia or partnerships where RMIT is a member).	WCAG 2.1 Level AA, plus the following Level AAA criteria: 1.4.8-9 2.2.6 2.4.9-10 2.5.5 3.1.3-6
Resources produced by non-digital specialists (including work commissioned from students). Non-digital specialists are encouraged to avoid using design elements such as image maps, dynamic content and scripts unless they are assisted by a digital specialist.	WCAG 2.1 Level A, plus the following Levels AA and AAA criteria: 2.4.6 (AA) 3.2.3-4 (AA) 3.1.3-6 (AAA)
Vendor-supplied or licensed resources (e.g. Canvas Learning Tools) and free online resources (e.g. blogs, wikis). Where templates within the resource are not compliant, the elements created by the non-digital specialist should still aim to meet the standard.	WCAG 2.1 Level A. When implementing these resources, any templates and customisations will aim to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA-plus standard.
Non-HTML resources: PDF documents	Noting that HTML is preferred and that PDF and other formats should be used only when HTML is not possible, PDF documents should comply with the recommended practices for creating PDF documents.
Microsoft Office suite templates and documents desktop and cloud (word processor, presentation slideshows, spreadsheets).	Microsoft Word formats (.doc and .docx) don't conform to WCAG 2.1. Follow best practice guidelines for creating accessible Word and other Office format files.

4. Standards for digital content authoring tools

4.1. Digital content authoring tools are software applications used for creating and publishing digital resources. These include:

- a) desktop publishing tools that enable conversion to digital format (e.g. Word, InDesign)
- b) multimedia authoring tools (e.g. Captivate)
- c) content and learning management systems (e.g. AEM and Canvas)
- d) online web authoring tools (e.g. blogging and social media platforms).

Resource	Minimum standard
Authoring tools developed or commissioned by RMIT	ATAG 2.0 Level AA
Third-party authoring tools purchased by RMIT	<p>All authoring tools that individuals must use to create digital content need to meet the ATAG 2.0 level AA standard where possible. But as a minimum, they need to fulfil at least these criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the production of accessible content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fully automatic processes should produce accessible content - authors should be supported in producing accessible content - authors should be supported in improving the accessibility of existing content - authoring tools should promote and integrate their accessibility features • Be accessible to creators with disabilities
Other tools and apps used for creating digital content	<p>Authoring tools that the individuals can choose to use must support the production of accessible content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fully automatic processes should produce accessible content • authors should be supported in producing accessible content • authors should be supported in improving the accessibility of existing content • authoring tools should promote and integrate their accessibility features

5. Supporting the framework

5.1. When recruiting digital specialist staff, including contractors, selection panels should review the candidates' knowledge of accessibility and accessible design techniques. An expectation of digital accessibility as a requirement should be clearly communicated to all applicants in the position description.

5.2. Accessibility must be:

- a) inherent within the RMIT Project Framework and the software development lifecycle design, development and testing processes and corresponding documentation and templates
- b) considered when purchasing or licensing digital software

- c) clearly articulated when commissioning or inviting tenders for the procurement or design of digital software
 - d) addressed where resources are commissioned from students or where student work is subsequently used as an official University digital resource.
- 5.3. Staff, students and visitors of RMIT use a range of assistive technologies. The following assistive technologies are supported at RMIT and should be referenced by vendors, developers and RMIT staff to ensure accessibility of digital products:
- a) Dragon Naturally Speaking
 - b) JAWS
 - c) NVDA
 - d) ZoomText
 - e) ClaroRead
 - f) Read and Write Gold.

6. Compliance

- 6.1. The standards apply to all new resources and authoring tools developed, commissioned or purchased after the date of operation of this Framework.
- 6.2. All reasonable attempts must be made to create, implement, customise, or source resources and authoring tools that comply with the standards.
- 6.3. Where compliance cannot be achieved for digital resources, RMIT will provide for accessible alternatives as needed. Where accessible alternatives are needed for students or prospective students, the requirements of the Disability Standards for Education must be met.
- 6.4. Where compliance cannot be achieved for authoring tools, the University will warn creators of digital resources about the limitations of the tools they may be using, and:
 - a) provide information about workarounds for various resource elements (e.g. data table mark-up) where these exist
 - b) provide access to alternative solutions, such as seeking assistance from a digital specialist.
- 6.5. Where workarounds or other solutions cannot be used to create a digital resource that meets the specified guidelines, the University will provide for accessible alternatives as needed.
- 6.6. Compliance with this Framework and the RMIT Digital Accessibility Standards is the responsibility of the Head of the School or service group that owns or has operational control of the digital resource.

7. Feedback and review

- 7.1. This document is due for review according to the schedule for the Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy. Feedback on the accessibility and inclusiveness of RMIT digital information and services is welcome at inclusion@rmit.edu.au.

Definitions

Digital accessibility	The practice of creating websites, applications and documents that can be accessed, navigated and understood by people from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities.
Digital resources	Digital technologies and content provided by RMIT enabling users to 'do something or know something'.
Digital specialists	User interface designers and developers, user experience professionals (including front end developers, mobile app developers, contractors and design firms). Digital content specialists (including content writers, marketing and communication professionals, learning/instructional designers, multimedia designers, contractors, web or multimedia design firms, etc. whose primary occupation or role is to create and publish digital resources).
Non-digital specialist authors or content creators	Professional and teaching staff engaged in creating or maintaining digital resources, but whose primary occupation is in some other field. Students commissioned to do work for the University.

More information

- RMIT Accessibility Action Plan
<https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/rmit-images/staff-site/my-employment/documents/diversity-and-inclusion/Accessibility%20action%20plan.pdf>
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A04426>
- Disability Standards for Education 2005
<https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1
<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>
- Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG) 2.0
<https://www.w3.org/TR/ATAG20/>

Document history

Version	Effective date	Authority	Author	Register reference
1.0	11 November 2019	Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity Policy	Chief People Officer	POL/2019/00079