

Accessibility FAQ

[Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Web and Mobile Application Accessibility Rule](#)
– Public institutions must comply with [WCAG 2.1 AA](#) requirements by [April 26, 2027](#).

The ADA suggests you start with an [Introduction to Web Accessibility](#) and a summary of [How People with Disabilities Use the Web](#).

Web accessibility means designing digital content so all people—regardless of abilities—can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with it. It also ensures everyone can participate and contribute without unnecessary barriers. The answers below are designed to help with the most common questions faculty have about accessibility, and clarify what Lumen provides vs. what instructors control.

1. What accessibility standard applies to my course?

Public institutions are required to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards by April 26, 2027. These standards focus on making content:

- Perceivable (students can see or hear it)
- Operable (students can navigate it)
- Understandable (students can make sense of it)
- Robust (it works with assistive technologies)

Your institution's local accessibility policies always apply first.
WCAG AA is the baseline standard we have used to design all Lumen courseware.

2. What does Lumen handle vs. what do instructors control?

This is a shared responsibility within our partnership.

Lumen is responsible for:

- Core course content meeting WCAG 2.1 AA standards
- Accessible page structure (headings, lists, reading order)
- Captioned and transcribed videos, text alternatives for images
- Navigable courseware and interactives with keyboard support

- Color contrast and semantic HTML in our platforms

Instructors are responsible for:

- Any content you upload, edit, or replace
- PowerPoints, PDFs, Word files, and Google Docs you add
- External links, websites, or third-party tools
- Scanned documents or images of text

If the content is found in Lumen One, Waymaker, or OHM and you did not create or upload it, then Lumen is responsible for it.

If you added or modified it, accessibility needs to be checked for that content.

3. Are Lumen slide decks accessible?

Yes. Lumen-provided Google Slides are created with accessibility in mind, though we are moving to an even higher level of accessibility compliance. Google Slides allows us to be more inclusive as far as delivery, whereas PowerPoint has stronger accessibility tools for both math and other complex elements. We are developing the best overlap for overall accessibility—not just for compliance, but for actual usability by users.

In general, slides need to have:

- Proper reading order
- Unique slide titles
- Sufficient color contrast
- Accessible layouts

Important note: Accessibility checkers may flag different issues depending on whether you use Google or Microsoft tools, or download a different file type than the original. A warning does not automatically mean the content fails WCAG, it often reflects tool-specific assumptions.

4. What is a “pure decoration” image?

A common misunderstanding is that “every image must have alt text.”

Not true. Only meaningful images require alt text. Decorative images do not.

If an image does not add or convey meaningful information, it is purely decorative. It is important not to introduce unnecessary alt text for a student to weed through as they navigate with a screen reader.

- Meaningful images need alt text that explains the purpose or takeaway
- Decorative images do not need alt text and should be marked as decorative

Alt text needs to clearly and concisely describe the meaning of a visual element on the page. It should focus on the context, not the appearance.

- Do not start with "Image of..." or "Graphic of..."
- Do not repeat information found in the surrounding text or caption.

If the image repeats content already discussed in the text, it is usually decorative. If an assessment question could be asked about the content in the image, it is usually not decorative.

5. Is the visual syllabus accessible?

Yes. Lumen's visual syllabus is designed to meet WCAG principles and includes:

- Proper heading structure
- Accessible images and icons
- Clear navigation and reading order

If you customize the syllabus:

- Use headings instead of bold text
 - Avoid conveying meaning through icons or color alone
 - When in doubt, remove visual elements and use text
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6. Does my LMS accessibility checker work with Lumen content?

Yes, but with limitations.

- Canvas, Blackboard Ultra, Brightspace, and Moodle check content you control
- Lumen content is delivered via LTI and already built to accessibility standards

Common question: "How do I know my Lumen course meets the guidelines?"
Our platforms are built to WCAG 2.1 AA standards. Use your LMS checker to review your own additions and rely on your institution's local accessibility guidance.

7. Are videos on textbook pages captioned?

Yes. All videos include captions; these are added as accurate captioning rather than auto-generated captioning. All videos also include a link to a .txt file transcript that can be read easily by a screen reader.

We encourage faculty to review any video—usually found on a Fresh Take page—to see captions and transcripts in action.

8. Are Lumen interactives accessible?

Yes. Lumen interactives are designed to be:

- Keyboard accessible
- Screen-reader compatible
- Supported by transcripts or text alternatives

We addressed interactive accessibility in 2020 well before current WCAG enforcement deadlines.

9. Are there time limits on Lumen quizzes?

No. Lumen quizzes do not include built-in time limits.

If your LMS allows you to add time limits, those settings are controlled by the instructor and should be reviewed for accessibility implications. We recommend connecting with your LMS Administrator if you have questions about using assessments in your LMS.

10. Are my PDF and Word documents accessible?

They can be; but not automatically.

Accessible documents require:

- Real text (not scanned images)
- Headings and structure (H1 > H2 > H3, no skipping)
- Tagged PDFs or properly styled Word/Google Docs

- “See image below” needs to be replaced with “See Figure 1.2” and that image needs to be captioned as “Figure 1.2”

Rule of thumb: If the file started as a tangible paper document, it is probably not accessible.

11. Do I need to worry about color, fonts, or visual design?

Yes. For any content you create:

- Color cannot be the only way meaning is conveyed
- Text must meet contrast requirements
- Decorative fonts can reduce readability

Stick with simple: black text, basic fonts like Arial and Helvetica, and minimal graphics and formatting are the best.

12. Are tables, charts, and graphs accessible?

Tables, charts, and graphs built in Lumen courseware are accessible.

If you have created tables, keep in mind the following

- Tables must be used for data, not layout
- Header rows or columns are required
- Charts and graphs need text explanations or summaries

Alt text alone is often not sufficient for data visuals.

13. What about math, equations, or STEM content?

Math content must be created using accessible tools, such as written in an accessible math language (e.g. MathML or LaTeX) or created using an equation editor that supports screen readers.

Images of equations are not accessible unless they have accurate and descriptive alt text attached.

14. Do accessibility rules apply to external tools and links I add?

Yes. This is likely most important in your labeling of hyperlinks. Hyperlink text must be descriptive enough to make sense out of context. “Click Here” and “Read More” are not accessible. The actual URL is also not accessible.

If students are required to use a tool or website, it must be accessible or have an accessible alternative.

If a tool is optional, accessibility requirements are reduced, but transparency about the accessibility of that content is still recommended.

15. How can I check my course for accessibility?

This process is about reducing risk, not achieving perfection. We recommend utilizing resources from your eLearning department in order to follow your institution's accessibility guidance.

16. What happens if accessibility standards change?

The April 2027 rule requires WCAG 2.1 AA. Lumen’s current benchmark is WCAG 2.2 AA, which expands on—not replaces—2.1 requirements. Lumen actively monitors updates and revises courseware as standards evolve. We were already building to this higher standard prior to the announcement of the new rule.

17. What is a VPAT and do I need to get one?

Lumen regularly assesses our progress toward inclusiveness using the voluntary product accessibility template (“VPAT”). The VPAT contains documentation on Section 508 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (Levels A, AA). Our latest

courseware introduction, Lumen One, has been evaluated with the most recent WCAG 2.2 criteria (Levels A, AA). We have a page that details our [accessibility approach with links to courseware VPATs](#).

18. Are the Lumen One Cheat Sheets accessible?

Yes, using the Cheat Sheet IN the course on the PAGE of the study guide is the original accessible place to get that information.

We provide the pdf alternative for those who would prefer to print, it is not there for screen reader purposes. If you have posted the PDF elsewhere in the course, your accessibility checker may flag it. We recommend using the Cheat Sheets in the courseware and sharing the PDF as needed. See Question 2 for more helpful information.

19. What if I'm unsure or need help?

If you have questions:

- Connect with your institution's accessibility support channels
- Reach out to your school librarian, teaching and learning center, or instructional design team to find the right resources
- Contact Lumen support [by submitting a ticket](#) if you locate a specific accessibility concern.