WGU Assessments

an accessible content case study
Western Governors University is a nonprofit online university.

- Founded by 19 U.S. governors
- Competency-based
- Affordable
- Flexible
- Student-focused
WGU Background and Context

Our Students
- More than 70,000 students
- All 50 states
- Minorities, first-generation college students
- Those with modest incomes, working adults
- Some live in rural locations where higher education is not readily accessible
- Average student age: 37

Our team
- Program Development department: 220
WGU Background and Context

Our content

Students demonstrate competency by passing assessments.

This means that assessment content is critical for students.

Assessment content presents some unique accessibility challenges.

Example: Alt text must allow a student to correctly answer a question, without giving away the answer or providing extra hints or clues.
Our Problem

We have lots of content.

Our content is not as accessible as it needs to be.

How do we make our existing content more accessible?
Our Solution Process

1. Conduct Initial Research
2. Begin Drafting
3. Enlist the Experts
4. Establish a Process
5. Create an Accessibility Style Guide
6. Expand Accessibility
7. Revise and Keep Learning
1. Conduct Initial Research

Look for resources

Learn more about accessibility requirements

Some top sources we found:

- WebAIM
- Penn State Accessibility
- National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) Math and Science Images
2. Begin Drafting

Start writing alternate text for a few projects

Test your alt text (What is working? What is not working?)

Consult with a subject matter expert (SME)

Consider your student or reader

Just get started.
How to approach this

What needs to be described in order to answer the question?

How can we describe this without giving away the answer to the question?

What is the construct?

Which point on the graph above represents the coordinate pair (2, −3)?
3. Enlist the Experts

Ask outside experts for

- Advice
- Best practices
- Training

Working with experts

- Adds authority to your project
- Helps increase buy-in from your organization
4. Establish a Process

Set up a process and begin training other editors to help.

We created spreadsheets to track our projects, created space to save our projects, and provided resources to refer to for our projects.

- Our expert provided good example resources that helped us expand our knowledge and define our process.
5. Create an Accessibility Style Guide
Accessibility Guide Example

Example 1: Vertical Bar Graph (no legend)

Title of Graph

A bar graph titled [Title of Graph] shows the [frequency] of [ten categories]. Data is presented as a list by [category] and [frequency].

Title of Graph:

- 1, 7
- 2, 10
- 3, 5
- 4, 4
- 5, 1
- 6, 7
- 7, 3
- 8, 8
- 9, 2
- 10, 7
6. Expand Accessibility

Additional Content and Solutions

- Captioning projects for course videos
- Color contrast
- HTML tables
- Accessible curriculum
7. Revise and Keep Learning

This step is ongoing.

- Webinars
- Research studies
- Conferences
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Current Status Report

Accessible Content at WGU
- Training additional editors and new hires
- Designing with accessibility in mind
- Requiring our vendors to make their content accessible
- Accessibility point-person in our department, working with our accessibility office
- Growing interest in accessible content across the university

Looking to the future . . .
Conclusion and Takeaways

- How to get the conversation started at your organization
- Where to begin
- Where to learn about this
- Small, practical steps any editor can take to increase accessibility

What are some additional resources?
Q&A

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