OU web standards: accessibility checklist for developers

This short checklist is intended for use by analysts, developers, testers and others involved in the creation and maintenance of OU websites.

It is an index to the full\(^1\) OU web standards accessibility guidelines, v3 June 2016:

http://www.open.ac.uk/about/web-standards/standards/accessibility-standards/accessibility

- Entries on this checklist are summaries only. For the authoritative version, please look up the relevant number in the guidelines.
- Examples and explanations in italic are very short summaries. See guidelines for more.
- Guidelines marked with [S] are ‘should’ (recommended). All others are ‘must’ (required).

**HTML structure and quality**

2.1 `<title>` tag must describe topic or purpose of page

2.4 CSS must be used for all styling

2.5 Correct HTML structure must be used – e.g. no layout tables, and no lists of just one item.

2.5.1 Structural heading tags (<h1>..<h5>, <th> for table row/column headings) must be used

2.5.2 Text in HTML must be in reading order – e.g. if text flows from column A to B, A must be first

3.26 HTML code must validate against appropriate W3C specification

**Site navigation**

1.1.1 Website navigation elements must be consistently located on each page

1.1.2 There must be more than one navigation method – e.g. breadcrumbs, menu, site map

1.1.3 Each page must show users where they are within the navigation structure

2.2 Pages must include skip link to main content, if there is repeated content before it;

**Text presentation**

2.7 Text zoom must work up to 200% without causing problems – e.g. overlapping

2.8 Text must not be ‘justified’ – left align and right align are OK

[S] 2.9 At default settings, text blocks should be ≤ 80 characters wide (40 for East Asian languages)

2.10 Line height must be at least 1.5 for main body text

3.1 The main body text must be in a sans serif font

**Links**

2.3a Link text must contain specific information about individual link – e.g. not ‘More’ or ‘View’

2.3b Link tags must not incorporate erroneous text from the surrounding context

3.3b. 4 If adjacent image and text links go to the same destination, this must use a single link tag (with empty alt text for the image)

**Images**

3.3a All images must have alt= tag; decorative images should have alt="", as may captioned images

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\(^1\) We have excluded guideline 4.1.3 from this checklist because we are not sure what it means for developers. This guideline may be more relevant for testers than developers.
3.3c **CSS background images** must not be used except for decorative images

3.15 If using **images with transparent backgrounds** these must be visible on any background colour

**Language**

2.11 **Page language** must be specified – `<html> tag lang= attribute`

2.12 Where page **language changes** within a page, this must be indicated – `lang= attribute`

**Colour**

2.6 Text **contrast ratio** must be 4.5:1, or 3:1 for text ≥ 24px normal / 19px bold

3.8 Colour must not be used on its own to convey information – e.g. to indicate a link or a section

3.15 Pages must work with browser colour overrides – e.g. high contrast yellow on black

**Wording**

2.8.2 **Symbols and punctuation** must be used for correct grammar but must not be used to convey meaning except for mathematical purposes – e.g. don’t use * to indicate a required field or / as a separator

3.6 Instructions to user must not rely on visual layout – e.g. not ‘click the link to the right’

3.7 Instructions must not rely on users hearing sounds – e.g. not ‘click when you hear the bell’

3.13 Images of text must not be used to convey information, except logos; these must have alt text

3.18 When opening a new window/tab/overlay, user must be warned – e.g. ‘Opens in new tab’ text

**Forms**

3.20a All form elements must have meaningful labels – `<label> tag`

[S] 3.20c **Instructions**, if provided, should be included in label tag – e.g. ‘must be 8 characters long’

[S] 3.20d **Placeholder** text (displays only when field is empty) should not be used for instructions

3.20b **Groups of radio buttons or checkboxes** must be indicated – `<fieldset>`, `<legend> tags`

3.21 When a form is submitted, detected errors must be described to the user in text

3.22 **Helpful guidance** must be provided when there is a form error – e.g. don’t just say it is invalid

3.23 When submitting financial or legal information, users must have chance to review and confirm

[S] 3.19 When a user’s session expires and they need to re-authenticate, no data should be lost

**Keyboard support**

4a All functionality must be available using the keyboard alone

4b Necessary keyboard usage must not require specific timings, or holding down more than one key at a time, or holding down a key for a long time

4.1 The **tab order** must be appropriate for the structure of the page

4c There must be **no keyboard traps**: if you can tab into an element you must be able to tab out

4d If an element is invisible and does not perform an action, users must not be able to focus it

4.1.2 Any element which can receive focus must be clearly highlighted when it is in focus

2.5.3 If **dropdown menus** are used, these must work correctly with keyboard

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2 Determined using [http://juicystudio.com/services/luminositycontrastratio.php](http://juicystudio.com/services/luminositycontrastratio.php) or similar tool.
When a **dynamic component** such as a pop-up or overlay opens, focus must be taken into it.

**Audio, video, animations, interactive activities**

3.2 There must be a **text alternative for all non-text content** that is editorially important
3.4, 3.5 You must provide **alternatives** for audio/video/animations/similar; [see full guidelines](http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/aria)
3.10 Audio/video must not start **playing automatically**
3.11 Audio/video content must have a **pause mechanism**
3.12 Audio content must have a **volume control**
3.14 Audio with speech should have **no, or quiet, background sound** – except songs etc.

[3.16.1] Activities should not have **time limits** unless functionally necessary – *e.g.* games, psychology experiments
3.16.2 Activities with time limits must have an **alternative**, or the option to turn off/extend limit
3.16.3 Animations longer than five seconds must have a **pause/hide option** – *e.g.* a carousel
3.17 No content may **flash more than 3 times** per second – unless there is a warning before start

**Dynamic pages**

3.24a **Keyboard focus must not be changed** except in response to intentional user action (exception: OK to focus the first field of a login form)
3.24b The system **must not go to a different page** except in response to intentional user action
3.24c If new content appears as a result of user action, screenreader users must be made aware of it – *can be achieved with ARIA live regions*[^1]
3.25 Whole web pages **must not automatically refresh** – OK to refresh smaller areas, with ARIA tags[^2]

[3.16.4] Should be a mechanism for users to **postpone/stop page updates**
3.27 Custom **user interface components** (if any) must use appropriate ARIA attributes
2.8.1 Hidden content **must be hidden from screen readers too** unless intended specifically for screen readers – *e.g.* quiz answers accidentally read
3.9a **Pop-ups within a page** (including overlays, lightboxes, etc.) must be usable by **keyboard** (as 4)
3.9b **Pop-ups** must work correctly with user **colour** and **font size** settings (as per 2.7, 3.15)

[end]