

Accessible Course Content: Instructor Checklist & Best Practices

UI Accessibility Compliance – April 2026 Deadline

The University of Iowa must ensure that **all digital instructional content and materials meet accessibility standards by April 24, 2026**, in alignment with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 Level AA and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

This requirement applies to all content that is visible to students in ICON and any other instructional platform. It includes documents, images, videos, and other course materials.

Accessibility at Iowa – Your Obligations & Scope

All *visible classroom content* in ICON must be accessible by **April 24, 2026**.

Even if content is not visible to students, instructors should **remove old or unused content** from ICON courses.

The University’s “3Rs” framework – **Remove, Revise, Right-First** – provides a clear approach to achieving compliance:

- **Remove** outdated or unnecessary content,
- **Revise** materials that need updates or fixes, and
- Create new content **Right-First** with accessibility built in.

If content is visible online, it must be remediated. **PDFs are allowed only if they meet full accessibility standards.**

Before Publishing Your ICON Course: Checklist

Step	Action	Why / Tip
1	Remove outdated or unused content	Reduces the amount of material requiring remediation.
2	Inventory all content to be published	Helps track what must be checked and fixed.
3	Check Word / PowerPoint files with built-in accessibility tools	Use <i>Review</i> → <i>Check Accessibility</i> before exporting.
4	Convert to accessible PDF or use native format	Export with tags; avoid image-only PDFs.
5	Use Adobe Acrobat Pro’s “Prepare for Accessibility” / Full Check	Acrobat Pro is available to all UI faculty for free.
6	Inspect ICON pages and embedded elements	Verify headings, alt text, link text, captions, and structure.
7	Caption / transcribe all video and audio	All published Ulowa videos must have captions.
8	Test in Student View or with a screen reader	Check reading order, navigation, and usability.
9	Request assistance when needed	Contact IT Accessibility or Evans Ochola for assistance

PDF Remediation – Best Practices

- Start with an **accessible source file** (Word or PowerPoint) rather than fixing scanned PDFs.
- In Acrobat Pro, use **Prepare for Accessibility / Full Check** to locate and fix issues.
- Ensure your PDF has:
 - Correct **tag structure** (headings, lists, tables)
 - **Alt text** for all images and charts
 - Accurate **reading order and bookmarks**
 - Defined **document language**
- Avoid scanned text unless converted through **OCR and properly tagged**.
- If a PDF cannot be made accessible, **replace it** with a more accessible file format (Word, HTML, etc.).

Instructor-Focused FAQs

Q. Is my classroom content in scope?

Yes – **all visible classroom content** in ICON (Canvas) must be in compliance by April 24, 2026. Unused or hidden files should still be removed from your course.

Q. How do I know if a file needs remediating?

If it's visible to someone other than yourself (i.e., students), then yes – it needs to be accessible.

Q. Should we be using PDFs going forward?

You **can** use PDFs, **but only if** they fully meet accessibility standards.

Q. Who is responsible for making sure my materials are accessible?

Every instructor, course developer, or anyone creating or authoring content is individually responsible.

Q. What types of course materials are most often non-compliant?

Common accessibility issues include:

- Scanned PDFs that are not OCR'd (text can't be read by screen readers)
- Images or charts without alt text
- Videos without captions
- PowerPoint slides without reading order or titles
- Tables created without proper header rows

Q. Are third-party tools or links in my ICON course covered by accessibility requirements?

Yes. If you assign content through a third-party tool, app, or external site, you are responsible for ensuring it meets accessibility standards or providing an accessible alternative. Before adding any external content, verify that the vendor provides a current **Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT)** showing WCAG 2.1 AA compliance.