ACCESSIBILITY IN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine is committed to guaranteeing equitable access to our academic programs and services and have adapted this checklist of best practices to help faculty think through and improve accessibility for courses. This checklist identifies the most prominent accessibility barriers, along with methods to ensure accessible content. These recommendations are based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, which promote student success by making learning more accessible for everyone, including students with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Designing courses from the start with accessibility in mind will enhance the learning experience of all students, not just students with disabilities.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

Develop an inclusive syllabus statement and highlight it verbally the first day of class. Avoid singling out students. If you need to talk with a student, for example, about assignments or alternate testing arrangements, do it in private.

Syllabus Statement – Faculty members can facilitate communication with students on disability-related matters by including a statement on their syllabus.

> It is the policy and practice of Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM) to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state laws. If you are a student with a documented disability and are interested in learning about accommodations, assistive technology and support for this course, please contact Student Accessibility Services at (973-542-6719) or by e-mail (accessibility@hmhn.org). All requests for services and disability information are confidential. Please note, students are not permitted to negotiate accommodations directly with faculty members.

How to Develop Effective Course Layouts and Visual Designs

1. **Captions**
   a. **Videos**: When making an instructional video, ensure captions accurately follow the speech expressed in the video and not changes such as sound effects, music, or changes in speaker.

   b. **Audios**: Transcribe audio content. Make content available to students ahead of time.

2. **Colors and Visuals** – People vary in how they perceive color. Use color combinations that provide sufficient contrast between foreground and background and can be distinguished by those who are color blind or to ensure students can see all text or imagery. Avoid using color as the sole means to convey information (e.g. All yellow items are required.), as some students may not be able to distinguish by use of color alone.

3. **Font** – Use clean, readable fonts such as Arial, Times New Roman. Avoid embellished and decorative fonts. Keep font styles, sizes, and orientations consistent throughout your online course pages. This is best accomplished by using preset styles.

4. **Slide Deck –** All slide sets must be sequentially numbered and dated. The first page of the slide deck must have the date of the lecture (e.g. month/day/year). Questions and explanation slides should not be omitted from the slide deck given to students with accommodations.

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     a.   **Materials in Advance**: Students must receive in-class slide sets 72 hours in advance.

Making Content Compatible with Screen Readers

The following topics describe practices that are necessary to help screen readers interpret content.

1. **Heading and Sequence** – Use a word processor's heading or paragraph styles to make section headings. This automatically creates a document outline used by screen-reading programs, and eases document navigation for all readers. Use these program features rather than manually bolding or enlarging fonts.

2. **Making Documents Accessible**: Run the "Check Accessibility Tool" to help identify potential barriers.

3. **Hyperlinks** – When hyperlinking texts, the texts should describe the content being linked rather than providing the whole link or text like "Click here."

4. **Image Description** – Assign alternative text (alt text) to all visual elements, whether in Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, in Leo. Alternative text helps to explain the meaning of an image when someone cannot view the image directly.

5. **PowerPoint and Google Slides** – Use pre-designed slides and large-point fonts, along with features used in documents.

6. **Microsoft Word/Excel/PowerPoint Documents** – Starting with the 2010 versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, Microsoft provides both accessibility guides and Accessibility Checkers to help you detect and correct issues. For more information on creating accessible Microsoft files, refer to Microsoft Help and search using keywords, "Creating Accessible Word" (or PowerPoint or Excel). WebAIM also provides a helpful guide for Word documents.

7. **Tables** – For tables to be properly interpreted or read with a screen reader, it is best to create columns by using the TAB key, spacebar, and built-in tools. For example, to create a table in Word, use Insert, Table. When data is displayed in a table format, include column, and row titles, and specify the header row. For complex tables, provide a brief overview of how data has been organized as alternative text under Table Properties.

8. **Text appearance** – Use standard, non-decorative fonts, such as Times New Roman, Calibri, and Arial. Use at least 12-point font. For spacing, using document features (tab stops, indents, page breaks) rather than manually entering multiple spaces or line breaks.