



**California Community Colleges
Chancellor's Office**

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 6/24/2019

Senior Administrators

1. What is Section 508?

This is a federal law that was adopted in California as California Government Code 11135 and further adopted by the California Community College System on January 1st, 2003. The law mandates that all information and communication technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by state supported, operated, funded, or administered programs and activities be accessible to people with disabilities. The law also establishes standards for what is considered accessible for information and communication technology.

2. How does accessibility impact students and community members?

Accessibility is relevant to many aspects of the student experience. The following three cases illustrate common issues students and community members face on campus:

- A. Maurice is doing well in his Introduction to Anthropology class. The material and the professor are engaging and he is learning about Indigenous cultures. As part of a recent take-home exam representing 20% of their grade, Maurice's professor assigned her students a web video to watch about the Yanomami in the Amazon. After starting the exam clock, Maurice visits the site and starts watching the video. To his dismay, there are no captions, and Maurice, who is deaf, cannot understand the narration, and cannot adequately answer the questions on the second half of the exam.
- B. Monique is a math major. She has loved math since she was eight, when her dad taught her multiplication across their kitchen table. She is also blind. While this has posed a challenge to her in the past, her mind is sharp and she is

confident that she can successfully earn her degree. However, she finds herself struggling in her classes, as her professors insist their students explore differential equations using online math labs that are inaccessible to individuals who cannot see. She does not know what to do.

- C. Sharon loves libraries - she adores reading and has a voracious appetite for knowledge. She loves combing through a library's catalog on the computer to see what new books and articles are available to her. However, she can't take advantage of this at her college because she cannot operate a mouse – she exclusively uses the keyboard, and the library catalog is not configured for exclusive keyboard use.

3. What's the interplay between accessibility and equity?

Accessibility is a core part of the fifth system-wide goal in the Chancellor's Vision for Success, reducing equity gaps. Maintaining inaccessible systems on campuses actively prevents individuals with disabilities from achieving the promise of the California Community College System: upward mobility through affordable and accessible education.

4. How does accessibility impact our liability or risk management? What is the consequence if we don't follow the standard?

Accessibility is a legal requirement. Colleges must ensure that they are not discriminating against students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. Following the standards defined by Section 508 can help a college meet its obligations and avoid legal liability.

5. Do I have to follow the law?

Yes, accessibility is a legal requirement. If you do not follow the standard, and accessibility concerns remain on your campus, students will be less likely to complete courses and enrollment will drop. This may have an adverse effect on funding for your institution. Additionally, you may be subject to a compliance review, through which your institution may incur significant costs due to the time, money, and resources required to remediate accessibility violations.

6. What do I need to do to follow the law?

Chancellor Oakley released an [Accessibility Standard](#) describing what accessibility looks like at an institutional level. The Chancellor's Office has since released more [specific guidance](#) about how institutions can meet their obligations under the law to ensure that individuals with disabilities are afforded the

opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as those without disabilities in an equally effective and equally integrated manner.

7. Whose job is Section 508 compliance? Isn't it DSPS's responsibility to handle everything related to accessibility, including Section 508?

As Chancellor Oakley indicated in his [letter](#) on June 19, 2018, DSPS does not have sole responsibility for complying with Section 508. Rather, addressing accessibility is a shared responsibility amongst all other involved parties, including but not limited to the Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges senior administrators, faculty, technology professionals, purchasers, human resource departments and creators of information and communication technology, including instructional materials. Each college district has the responsibility to comply with Section 508, using the [guidance](#) provided by the Chancellor's Office.

8. What is the difference between accessibility and accommodation, and how does it relate to what I am required to do?

Accessibility is defined as when people with disabilities “enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.”¹ Accessibility is about developing, using, maintaining, and procuring information and communication technology. It is the shared responsibility of all parties such as senior administrators, faculty, technology professionals, purchasers, human resources and creators of information and communication technology, including instructional materials. In the case of academic courses, for example, faculty are required to plan ahead and make their course content accessible to students with disabilities. This includes activities such as:

- Captioning videos;
- Selecting accessible websites when assigning online resources to students;
- Ensuring electronic documents can be read by assistive technologies; and
- Selecting accessible publisher materials (i.e. textbooks).

Accommodation refers to activities that specific students require in order to participate equally in the learning environment. Accommodation is about student service, not content creation, and is generally handled by Disabled Student

¹ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/11116002-b.pdf>

Programs and Services (DSPS). Example accommodations in an academic context might include:

- Providing sign language interpreters;
- Extended time for in-class assignments; and
- Note-taking assistance.

9. What happens if I have a piece of technology that cannot be made accessible and cannot be accommodated?

Some technologies cannot be accommodated, and therefore cannot be required as part of any course.

10. How do I support faculty in providing reasonable accommodations?

Direct faculty to your college's Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS), who can provide approved academic accommodations. Accommodations are developed through an interactive process initially between the student and disability services. Do not try to provide accommodations on your own.

The DSPS program provides support services, specialized instruction, and educational accommodations to students with disabilities so that they can participate as fully and benefit as equitably from the college experience as their peers that do not have disabilities. An Academic Accommodation Plan (AAP) is developed for each student which links the student's goals, curriculum program, and academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, services, and/or instruction to their disability related educational limitation(s).

11. What does a successful campus environment look like with respect to accessibility?

From a staffing perspective, the most effective method for ensuring an accessible campus is both to inform staff that accessibility is a shared responsibility across the institution, as well as to designate individuals to be ultimately responsible for particular domains of accessibility, such as:

- The campus website;
- Library systems;
- Financial aid platform;
- Course catalog;
- Computer labs; and
- Content Management Systems (CMS).

As an administrator, it is your responsibility to know who these individuals are and what they oversee.

Additionally, the Chancellor's Office has developed [guidance](#) that institutions may use to benchmark their current status and track their progress with respect to accessibility.

12. How can I ensure the various websites associated with my college are accessible?

For your current website, a simple starting point is to scan and evaluate your public-facing web presence to identify current web accessibility issues. [Site-wide evaluation tools](#) and [web browser evaluation tools](#) offer automated techniques for evaluating website accessibility. [Manual evaluation procedures](#) can augment automated testing to ensure a more comprehensive accessibility review and support greater usability for all site visitors. Colleges can get a quick, high level accessibility evaluation through the [Accessibility Center Help Desk](#).

For more specific questions, follow the links below to:

- Refer to a style guide to follow about web accessibility:
 - [Ohlone College Style Guide](#)
 - [Microsoft Style Guide](#)
 - [Channel Islands Web Style Guide](#)
- [See a handbook about web accessibility](#)
- [Evaluate webpage accessibility](#)
- [Search a database of information on accessible web content](#)
- [Learn about alternate text](#)
- [Structure accessible web documents](#)
- [Write accessible web documents](#)
- [Design for colorblindness](#)
- [Check Google Docs accessibility](#)
- [Write accessible math and science equations](#)

For future web design, a proactive first step is to ensure that the individuals your institution hires to build websites understand and are trained in accessibility standards.

The Chancellor's Office recognizes that additional accessibility issues arise when departments or other entities affiliated with your institution create their own websites. You may approach this issue in various ways including:

- Moving external sites within your institution's CMS to be under your direct supervision;
- Issuing warnings to affiliated sites about their accessibility issues; and

- Building in notifications for your site’s visitors when they are being directed to other websites that have accessibility concerns.

13. What is the role of the governing board?

The governing board should adopt the Board Policy 3725 and Administrative Procedure 3725 to institutionalize accessibility responsibilities across the college.

14. What resources are available to assist with these accessibility requirements and guidelines?

See the [Faculty FAQs](#) for resources and information regarding common accessibility concerns for faculty members, and the [Purchaser FAQs](#) for detailed resources and information regarding accessibility within the procurement process.

The [CCC Accessibility Center](#) has various recommendations for addressing institutional accessibility at a college. The Center has released [Institutional Guidance](#) that colleges can look to in supporting their implementation of the standard, and [@ONE](#) contains additional resources colleges may find useful.

15. How do I ensure technical assistance in implementing accessibility?

This is a collaborative effort between your college’s IT Department and DSPS.

16. What if my question isn’t answered through these FAQs?

Bring your question to the person identified on your campus accessibility resource page. If you cannot find that page or you are not getting an answer, please visit the [Accessibility Center Help Desk](#).