

GAP TOOLKIT

Accessible Online Learning



What is accessible online learning?

Accessible online learning is learning that is designed and delivered in such a way that students who have a sensory or learning disability can access the learning materials. Hearing impairment, blindness or dyslexia for example, no longer need to be barriers to education.

With the use of assistive technologies and inclusion of captions and transcripts students are able to access learning materials in a manner that suits their particular ability and needs. *(Further information on Assistive Technologies is available from the downloadable Assistive Technologies in the [GAP Toolkit](#).)*

Why is it important to ensure that online learning is accessible?

Accessible curriculum design is important for all delivery modes of education, it is however imperative with online learning.

With traditional classroom delivery, a student with a sensory or learning disability has the opportunity to ask for clarification or additional support from teaching staff, support staff and fellow students. With online learning however, a student does not have the same access to support infrastructure, nor will the teaching staff necessarily be aware that some of their students have access needs.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), with high numbers of student enrollments, can result in many thousands of students with a disability enrolled in any particular course. (The World Bank estimates that 20% of the world population has some kind of disability.)**

Furthermore there is a legal responsibility.

In Australia, Section 22 of the Disability Discrimination Act states:

“(2A) It is unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person’s disability:

- (a) by developing curricula or training courses having a content that will either exclude the person from participation, or subject the person to any other detriment; or
- (b) by accrediting curricula or training courses having such a content.”

What do I have to do to make online learning accessible?

Designing and delivering accessible online learning material can easily be achieved by following these 3 steps:

- 1) Ensure that all reading materials have responsive text. This can be checked using your text to voice applications available on your own technology or downloading a freeware text to speech program such as DVDA.
- 2) Ensure that all video is captioned and that all audio is transcribed. There is often concern over the expense of doing this, however with online delivery [GAP](#) has found that it has been cost effective for institutions to get their teaching staff to record an abridged online lecture rather than streaming lectures delivered in the classroom. By way of example [GAP](#) charges \$3.50 per audio minute for transcription. There is a big difference in cost therefore from transcribing a 20 minute abridged lecture to a 3 hour streamed lecture. It is important to remember that students online have the option to replay lectures and therefore do not require the same level of repetition and reinforcement as students in a live lecture.
- 3) Have your online courses audited for accessibility prior to delivery. This can be done by students and staff who use assistive technologies or by external groups such as [GAP](#).

[Global Access Project](#) is able to organise seminars and demonstrations of accessible online learning for your institution. They are also able to assist in providing curriculum development services and accessibility audits of online materials. .

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** <http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/>