

CULMINATING DOCUMENTS ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST



The following guide offers best practices for creating accessible culminating documents, such as dissertations, theses, capstones or other research projects.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Use built-in heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.), not just bold text; maintain a logical heading hierarchy (e.g., H2 should be followed by H3).

Include a clear table of contents auto generated by your word processor.

Ensure page numbers are correctly applied.

FONTS AND READABILITY

Use accessible fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman). Typically, body text is 12 pt. Line spacing is 1.5.

Avoid excessive italics, all caps or decorative fonts. If using italics, bold or all caps, do so using the style menu, not the toolbar.

Left-align text. Justified text creates uneven word spacing that disrupts readability.

COLOR AND CONTRAST

Maintain high contrast between text and background (e.g., black on white).

Avoid relying on color alone to convey meaning.

Ensure charts and graphs use distinguishable patterns or labels.

IMAGES, FIGURES AND TABLES

Provide meaningful alternative (alt) text descriptions for images and other visual content. Improve upon or approve AI-generated alt-text.

Use table headers, avoid merged cells and add captions to all figures/tables.

CHARTS, GRAPHS AND DATA VISUALIZATION

Label axes clearly and include legends with descriptive labels.

Use patterns or textures in addition to color.

Provide textual summaries of key findings.

Ensure data is understandable without solely relying on visuals.

HYPERLINKS

Use descriptive link text (avoid using "Click Here").

Ensure all links are functional and up to date.

Avoid long raw URLs in the main text.

PDF ACCESSIBILITY

Run Microsoft Word Accessibility Checker tool.

Export using "accessible PDF" or "tagged PDF" option.

Save as PDF/A.

» Select **File > Save As Adobe PDF**. In the Save As dialog box, select **Options**.

Check the box to create a **PDF/A** and click **Okay** and then click **Save**.

Run Adobe Accessibility Tool and fix errors.

FINAL REVIEW

Ensure consistency across all chapters and double check formatting.

Confirm all required elements (TOC, references, appendices) are accessible.

Verify submission guidelines using the Library Guide for Student Publishing.