Worcester Polytechnic Institute:
Digital Accessibility Policy

A. Scope and Purpose

The purpose of this Statement is to establish Worcester Polytechnic Institute's ("WPI") standards for providing equal, or equally effective, access to digital information to the extent practicable. The expectations set forth in this Policy apply to all employees – faculty, staff and administrators – in their roles and responsibilities at WPI.

B. Statement on Digital Accessibility

WPI is committed to ensuring that all individuals, with or without disabilities, have equal, or equally effective, access to web pages, web-based applications, and digital information and resources associated with academic requirements and administrative services. Accessibility in this context, and as used in this Statement, means that all faculty, staff and administrators should strive to provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services, as a person without a disability in an equal or equally effective and equally integrated matter, within the same timeframes and with substantially equivalent ease of use.[1]

C. Accessibility Best Practices

WPI strives to use the following technical standards for achieving accessibility: the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines ("WCAG") 2.1 Level AA; and the Web Accessibility Initiative Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite ("WAI-ARIA") 1.1 for web content. Both of these standards are developed by the World Wide Web Consortium ("W3C").   Though not required by law, these guidelines shall be referred to collectively as the "Accessibility Standards" in this Policy.

D. Procurement

Each department at WPI shall consider accessibility features when seeking approval(s) to purchase technology, software, and other web-based services for use by WPI students and employees. When evaluating the suitability and benefits of a particular product, the accessibility (or non-accessibility) of the product shall be evaluated and weighed by the appropriate manager *prior* to approving the purchase.

WPI should request bidders and vendors to demonstrate how the information technology provided to WPI conforms to or addresses each of the Accessibility Standards wherever demonstrating such performance is practicable. Ultimately, WPI maintains complete discretion with regard to procurement decisions.

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[1] This definition of accessibility is used by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

E.   Fundamental Alteration and Undue Burden

WPI expects that, when faculty are considering their pedagogical approach, they consider accessibility *prior* to implementing a specific teaching tool or technology. Occasionally, WPI faculty and staff may discover that meeting the Accessibility Standards is not technically feasible or may require extraordinary measures due to the nature of the information or the purpose of the technology being used. WPI will assess whether satisfying the Accessibility Standards will fundamentally alter the educational course or benefit at issue. Similarly, if cost is at issue, WPI will determine whether it potentially constitutes an undue burden for WPI to satisfy the Accessibility Standards. If there exists a technical challenge to satisfying the Accessibility Standards, WPI will strive to provide equally effective alternative access to the extent practicable.

F.   Reporting an Accessibility Issue

WPI has created a web form to report a potential barrier and/or seek assistance with potential accessibility issues of a particular Digital resource. To report a potential barrier, please fill out the web form located at https://fs28.formsite.com/webteamwpiedu/report-a-barrier/index.html and WPI will respond as promptly as possible to the submission.