Creating Inclusive Courses in Lamakū

This guide provides faculty at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo with best practices and step-by-step instructions for creating accessible digital learning materials within **Lamakū** (powered by D2L Brightspace). UH System policy and federal guidelines (ADA/Section 504 and 508) require digital content to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards.

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1. Structuring Course Content in Lamakū

Heading Structure

- **Use built-in heading styles** (Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3) in the HTML Editor rather than manually increasing font size or applying bold formatting. Screen readers rely on structural headings for page navigation.
- Maintain a logical hierarchy with headers without skipping levels.

Tables

- Use tables strictly for **data display**, not for visual page layout.
- Designate **header rows** and **header columns** using built-in table properties in the editor.
- Provide a table caption or summary to describe the dataset.

Meaningful Links

- Use descriptive hyperlink text that explains the destination (e.g., UH Hilo Distance Learning Support).
- Avoid generic, non-descriptive link labels such as "click here," "read more," or raw URL strings.

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2. Visual & Media Accessibility

Alternative Text (Alt Text) for Images

- Add concise **alt text** describing the function or informative content of every image, chart, or diagram uploaded to Lamakū.
- Mark decorative images as decorative so screen readers bypass them.

Color and Contrast

- Ensure text color contrast meets the **4.5:1 ratio** minimum against background colors.
- Do not rely solely on color to convey meaning, highlight essential instructions, or indicate status.

Audio and Video

- **Captions:** Ensure all recorded lectures or video content embedded in Lamakū features accurate closed captions.
- **Transcripts:** Provide written transcripts for purely audio materials (e.g., podcasts, recordings).
- **Third-Party Media:** Verify that external video links (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo) include synchronized closed captions.

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3. Documents & Attachments

Files uploaded to Lamakū (PDFs, Word documents, PowerPoint slides) must be accessible before upload:

- **Microsoft Word / PowerPoint:** Use the built-in **Accessibility Checker** (*File* > *Info* > *Check for Issues* > *Check Accessibility*) to resolve warnings before publishing.
- **PDFs:** Avoid uploading scanned image-only PDFs. Convert documents directly from source formats (e.g., Word) with tags enabled, or remediate using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC.
- **Google Docs:** Use tools like Grackle Docs to audit and correct accessibility issues prior to linking or exporting files.

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4. Syllabus Disability Access Statement

Include the official disability accommodation statement on every course syllabus:

> **Disability Access Statement:**
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> Any student with a documented disability who would like to request academic accommodations should contact the Disability and Access Services Office as early in the semester as possible:
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> - **Location:** Student Services Center (SSC), Room E-230
> - **Phone:** (808) 932-7623 (Voice) | (808) 932-7002 (TTY)
> - **Email:** uds@hawaii.edu
> - **Website:** UH Hilo Disability Services

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5. Resources & Training Opportunities

- **Kahua Kūpono Training:** Enroll in *Kahua Kūpono: A Foundation for Inclusive Digital Learning*, the self-paced professional development course offered by the UH System for creating accessible Lamakū content.
- **UH Hilo IT & Distance Learning Support:** Visit UH Hilo Distance Learning for instructional design and technical assistance.