WCAG 2.1 AA: Guide for College Faculty

Think of WCAG as a framework for **digital accessibility**. It ensures every student—whether they use screen readers, captions, keyboard navigation, or high-contrast displays—can access your Canvas pages, PDFs, and lectures.

1. Make Content Easy to See and Hear (Perceivable)

- **Add Descriptions to Images:** Include brief alternative text (alt text) for diagrams, charts, and photos so visually impaired students using screen readers don't miss key concepts.
- **Caption All Videos:** Ensure every video or audio clip posted to Canvas has accurate closed captions or a text transcript (great for Deaf students, non-native English speakers, and students studying in quiet spaces).
- **Use High Color Contrast:** Stick to dark text on light backgrounds (e.g., black text on white or light grey) so text is easy to read for students with low vision or color blindness.
- **Don't Rely Only on Color:** Avoid saying *"Look at the terms in red."* Instead, use bold text, asterisks, or labels so color isn't the only way information is conveyed.

2. Make Materials Easy to Navigate (Operable)

- **Organize with Headings:** Use built-in Heading styles (**Heading 1**, **Heading 2**) in Canvas and Word rather than just making text big and bold. Screen readers use these to jump through your page layout logically.
- **Make Links Descriptive:** Avoid generic phrases like *"Click Here"* or pasting long URLs. Use clear text that tells students where the link goes (e.g., *"Read the [Biology Lab Syllabus]"*).
- **Ensure Keyboard Usability:** Make sure all course tools, links, and embedded activities can be clicked or selected using only the keyboard (`Tab` and `Enter` keys).

3. Make Coursework Clear and Predictable (Understandable)

- **Keep Layouts Consistent:** Use a predictable structure across Canvas modules, assignment pages, and weekly schedules so students don't waste cognitive energy searching for materials.
- **Provide Clear Assignment Instructions:** Label required fields clearly, and if a student submits the wrong file type or misses a deadline, provide straightforward error messages explaining how to fix it.
- **Avoid Flashing Content:** Never use animations or video clips that flash rapidly, as these can trigger seizures or sensory overload.

4. Work Well Across Different Devices & Tools (Robust)

- **Use Accessible File Formats:** When uploading files to Canvas, prefer pages built directly in Canvas (HTML), structured Word documents, or properly formatted PDFs.
- **Test Your Materials:** Use built-in accessibility checkers (like the Canvas Accessibility Checker or Word's Check Accessibility tool) to quickly spot and fix hidden barriers before publishing your course.

The Bottom Line: Accessible course design isn't about re-inventing your curriculum. It's about ensuring the digital materials you already use are readable, navigable, and usable by every student in your classroom from day one.