

USF Canvas Accessibility Evaluation

The following is a summary of findings from evaluation sessions conducted by USF Student Disability Services (SDS) and Innovative Education (InEd) on December 3th (13), January 21st (14), and March 13th (14). Also participating as a consultant was the Tampa LightHouse for the Blind.

For each evaluation session, visually impaired students were asked to perform a series of common “tasks” via their screen reading software (JAWS). The tasks were performed within a course developed by InEd specifically for accessibility testing. Each of the tasks are outlined here along with the documented “observations/comments” and best practice “recommendations” for both faculty. All identified issues were escalated to Instructure as support tickets and internally tracked by USF IT, InEd, and SDS to ensure completion.

The overall goals of the evaluation are as follows:

- Identify anything that may hinder a visually impaired student or prevent a student from participating in and/or accessing elements of the course.
- Provide Instructure with the feedback so any necessary accessibility improvements can be made on the Canvas LMS.
- Serve as a basis for developing a USF online resource for faculty, providing them with accessibility best practices and building awareness.

Task: Go to the Modules section and access all information within a content (wiki) page

Observation / Comments

- When the student is in the “modules” section, the actual content pages were not detected in JAWS as “links”. Despite this, the student was able to successfully find and open the content page.
- Once inside content pages, JAWS was able to identify all elements with no issues. This included text, links, table layout, images, and the “next” page button. One participant indicated that as long as the pages are well organized, the information is usually easy to find.

Recommendation

- For Instructure – From the modules section, make the content page titles detected by JAWS as links
- For Instructors – Use the best practice guidelines when loading content into a content page (i.e. use of header styles, consistent page layout, etc.).

Task: Submit a document through the assignment tool

Observation / Comments

- The assignment title (Assignment 1) did show up as a link but the “Browse” button (for attaching papers) was not detected by JAWS. One student participant indicated that she will usually get sighted help or “copy and paste my paper into the comment field.”
- JAWS did get stuck within the “comment” field. Per Tampa Lighthouse, to fix this a student can turn off “virtual PC”.
- Instructure updated this and this issue is no longer present with JAWS v14 or later.

Recommendations

- For Instructure – The “browse” and “submit assignment” should be labeled/tagged as a “buttons” so it’s identifiable by JAWS.
- For Faculty - In the interim, instructors with students using JAWS should let their students know that they can submit their paper via email or copy and paste into the comments field.

Task: Take a Canvas quiz

Observation / Comments

- JAWS did not detect “take the quiz” as a button. Student was still able to access the quiz despite this.
- Once inside the quiz, JAWS recognized all radio buttons, links, question text, and the student was able to submit the test without any issues. Navigating to the “next” question (via next button) was also successful and not problematic.
- Student was able to successfully “retake the quiz” with no issues.

Recommendations

- For Instructure – Set “take the quiz” as a button so it is detectable by JAWS
- For Faculty – If you use images within your test you will need to provide labels or a brief description of each image. Create a practice test to detect and prevent any potential access.

Task: Post a response to discussion forum (reply to the instructor and peer student)

Observation / Comments

- JAWS successfully detected the reply fields for the instructor and peer student. The student was able to reply and post a new thread.
- One participant student indicated that discussion forums can be difficult to navigate and recall where her original response was posted. This will most likely be an issue with any discussion forum given their dynamic nature and is not necessary specific to the Canvas discussion forum.
- Lighthouse noted that the text editor feature, and its labeling for each tool, is extremely convenient for students using JAWS since they can use their keyboard for formatting actions.

Recommendations

- For Instructure
 - To assist with providing an orientation for the student, the “expand/collapse” buttons should be labeled as such.
 - It may also help the student if there is text to indicate if a certain posting is a “reply to a student” vs “reply to instructor”. The posting hierarchy is visually apparent but JAWS does not have a way to differentiate and detect this.
- For Instructors

- Be cognizant of the posting requirements if a student is required to respond to specific postings. They may have a difficult time navigating lengthy discussion forums. If a student has problems finding something within a forum, promote the use of the “search” field and using the “read” or “unread” radio buttons.
- One simple way of reducing the potential postings within one forum is to make sure you create separate discussion forums when possible.

Task: Access student group area

Observation / Comments

- A group was created for the student and she was able to access the group but needed guidance on how to get there.

Recommendation

- For Instructure – none
- For Faculty – Let your students know exactly how they can access their groups, (through the Courses & Groups menu or through People).
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Task: Using the message tool, send a message to the instructor and a peer student

Observation / Comments

- Student could send a message to the instructor but had trouble sending a message to a specific student since she could not select a specific student from the list.

Recommendation

- For Instructure – Improve the message tool so a student can more easily select a student.
- For Faculty – If student-to-student interaction is required, ensure that the communication mode is one that is easy for the student (i.e. email).