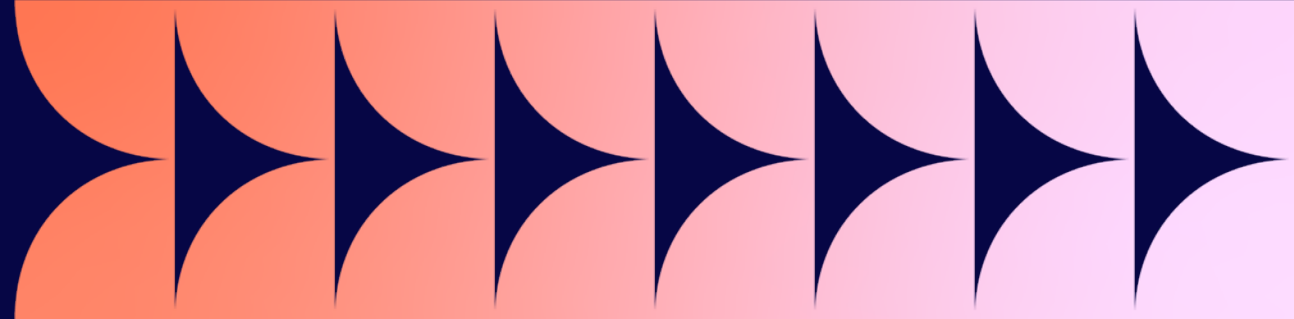


# What is digital accessibility, and what can academic libraries do to be compliant?

**Tobe Amadi and Lizzie McCauley**

The Open University Library

October 2024



# The Open University Library Services

Library Services is the Open University's (OU) multi-award-winning academic library based in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire.

Our vision is to connect the whole OU community with world-class information, technology, and award-winning expertise to facilitate knowledge creation.

As a public sector body that specialises in online and distance learning, digital accessibility is one of our priorities.



# Who are we?

**Tobe Amadi | Lizzie McCauley**

Digital Services Development Officer

Digital Services and Metadata

Library Services

Learner and Discovery Services (LDS)

[www.open.ac.uk/library](http://www.open.ac.uk/library)

[Library-projects@open.ac.uk](mailto:Library-projects@open.ac.uk)



# Agenda

1. What is digital accessibility?
2. Legislation and compliance
3. Accessibility auditing Primo VE
4. What happens if we do not comply?
5. Online free accessibility course



# What is digital accessibility?

Digital accessibility is making a website or mobile app accessible and making sure it can be used by as many people as possible. This includes those with:

Visual	Motor/Mobility	Auditory	Sensory	Cognitive and Intellectual
Visual impairments including: Blindness Low vision and poor eyesight Colour blindness	Difficulty or inability to use the hands Tremors Loss of fine motor control	Deafness Hearing impairments Partial hearing loss	Reactions (seizures) to a visual strobe or flashing effects Autism spectrum-related sensitivity (noise, light, touch)	Learning difficulties Cognitive disabilities

# Why is digital accessibility important?

**Accessibility compliance:** Accessibility testing identifies areas in your digital platforms that might create barriers for users with disabilities.

**User-friendly experience:** Accessibility principles often lead to cleaner interfaces, clearer information structures, and responsive designs.

**Institutional reputation and trust:** A commitment to accessibility demonstrates that your institution values diversity and cares about the experience of all users. This builds trust and loyalty, fostering a positive brand image.

**Legal compliance:** Non-compliance can lead to costly lawsuits and reputational damage, making testing a smart investment to avoid these risks.

**Future-proofing your digital assets:** As technology evolves and the population ages, the need for accessible tools will only grow.

# Legislation and compliance

# Legislation

As a public sector body, what legal obligations do we have?

## Laws

- European Accessibility Act
- Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (USA)
- The EU Web Accessibility Directive
- United Nations (UN) Convention on disability rights
- The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (UK)





# Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018

In 2018, the UK introduced the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (PSBAR 2018).

## Key requirements set out by PSBAR 2018:

- Digital platforms must meet specific accessibility standards, often referring to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.2).
- Public sector bodies must publish an accessibility statement on their website. This statement clearly explains the level of accessibility currently achieved, any known accessibility issues, how to report problems, and contact details for the person responsible for accessibility.
- Accessibility statements and websites must be regularly reviewed yearly to address any new issues or technological advancements.



[legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

# Compliance

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is the governing body that publishes the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). WCAG 2.2 was released in 2023.

## WCAG 2.2

- Four principles: **Perceivable, operable, understandable, robust**
- 86 success criteria
- There are three conformance levels in WCAG 2.2. Level A (the lowest level), Level AA (recommended level), and Level AAA (the highest level)



**WCAG**  
Compliance

# Accessibility auditing Primo VE

# Auditing a digital platform – Key areas to test

An example of accessibility areas to test

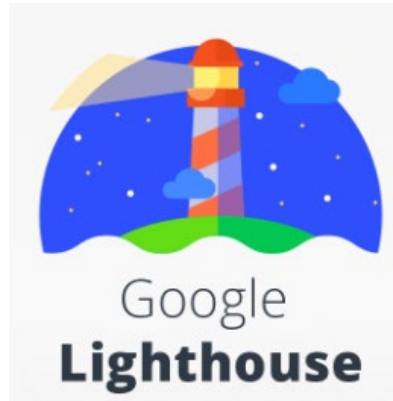
## Key areas:

- Colour contrast
- Keyboard navigation
- Images (alternative text)
- Structure
- Labelling
- Zoom 200%, 400%
- Increase font size
- Visible focus
- Sensible focus order
- Skip link
- Text Spacing
- Consistent help



# Accessibility auditing tools pt. 1

Automated accessibility testing tools:



**Positives:** Time-effectiveness, consistent results, reporting.

**Disadvantages:** False positives, false negatives, limited coverage, and fees are sometimes involved.

# Accessibility auditing tools pt. 2

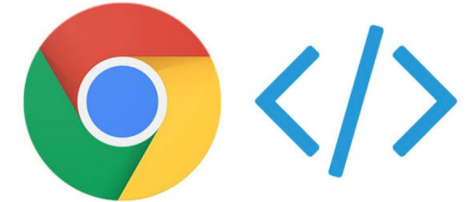
Manual accessibility testing tools:



Keyboard



Screen-Readers



Dev Tool

**Positives:** It can provide more detailed feedback. It can identify complex issues. Free to use.

**Disadvantages:** Can be time-consuming. It can be subjective.

# Accessibility audit checklist

Using the automated and manual accessibility testing tools, we audit Primo VE against our WCAG 2.2 level A and AA basic Primo VE checklist.

The OU's Library's WCAG 2.2 level A and AA basic Primo VE checklist contains:

- 23 key success criteria
- A description of each success criteria
- Who benefits from the success criteria
- A record showing if the platform is accessibility compliant

## WCAG 2.2 Level A and AA Basic Primo VE Checklist

This is a basic accessibility checklist to help you assess your Primo VE system.

**Important note:** This checklist is just a starting point and won't cover every aspect of accessibility.

Detail	Information
Author	
Website/app name	
Page name	
Page URL	
Device	
Browser version	
Date	

Item #	Success Criteria	Description	For Whom It's Meant	Pass (Y/N)
1.	<a href="#">1.1.1 Non-text content (Level A)</a>	Content images have descriptive alternative (alt) attributes. Decorative images have empty alt attributes so they are ignored by screen readers.	Screen reader users who cannot access the information visually, low vision users who will benefit from an additional textual description, users of handheld devices in brightly lit areas, users who turn off images on their browsers.	
2.	<a href="#">1.3.1 Info and Relationships (Level A)</a>	Use the correct HTML for all elements e.g., lists, headings, links, forms and use valid HTML everywhere.	Screen reader and keyboard or keyboard interface users who cannot otherwise interact	

# Accessibility statement

Created after auditing, an accessibility statement contains:

- How accessible this website is
- How users can report and give feedback
- Compliance status
- Non accessible content
- What we're doing to improve the website
- How the website was audited

## Library Services Accessibility Statement: Library Search (Ex Libris Primo VE)

This accessibility statement applies to Primo VE accessed via <https://library-search.open.ac.uk/>

The Open University's web presence consists of several million individual pages across numerous websites. We want as many people as possible to be able to use our websites, and accessibility is an essential part of our mission. To adapt the content to your needs or preferences in most cases you should be able to:

- Change colours, contrasts levels and fonts.
- Resize text up to 200% without impact on the functionality of the website.
- Navigate the website using just a keyboard.
  - tab to 'Skip to content' links at the top of the page to jump over repetitive information to the main content.
  - tab through the content; the current location will be indicated by a clear visual change.
- Use a screen reader (e.g. NVDA) to:
  - listen to the content of web pages and use any functionality on the page.
  - list the headings and subheadings in the page and then jump to their location on the page.
  - bring up a list of meaningful links on the page.
- If you have a print disability we provide [SensusAccess](#) to students, which is an automated service that converts files from one format to another, for example, PDF to text, audio, Word or Braille.

For additional accessibility for websites associated with teaching and learning, students should read the [Learning Accessibility Statement](#) (you will be required to sign in using an Open University student or staff account to read this statement). If any module-specific accessibility-related guidance is needed beyond the Learning Systems statement, you will find this in Accessibility Guide on your module website.

For additional accessibility information about Student Support sites (including StudentHome, the Help Centre, Student Policy and Regulations) and other sites designed to support students but excluding the websites covered within the Learning Systems statement, students should read the [Student Support Accessibility Statement](#).

### How accessible this website is

We strive to exceed current accessibility standards. However, we know some elements of Open University websites are not fully accessible:

- Older legacy and archived material.
- Some third-party content not created by The Open University.
- Sites linked from Open University pages but not run by the Open University.
- Older PDFs and Word documents may not be fully accessible to screen reader software.

We aim to provide accessible alternative content or activities where we can. For more information please visit [What Support is Available](#) and for more guidance please visit [Studying on Screen](#).

### Feedback and contact information

If you find that a certain section of our website is not accessible and you can't get access to the information that you need [please use this form to request support](#) and we will ensure that you are provided with the information you require. You will need to provide your contact details and PI if you are a student so we can get back to you. You should expect to hear back from us within 5 working days.

The OU is very experienced in meeting accessibility needs for our students. In many cases we are able to provide module and other study support materials in alternative formats for students who indicate a need for this when completing a [Disability Support Form](#)



What happens if we do not comply?

# Government Digital Services (GDS)

The Government Digital Services (GDS) are the UK regulators, who regularly check on how well the public sector is meeting accessibility requirements. If GDS identifies accessibility issues, there is a very tight timeframe of 12 weeks in which to respond, identify and fix accessibility issues, and publish an updated accessibility statement.

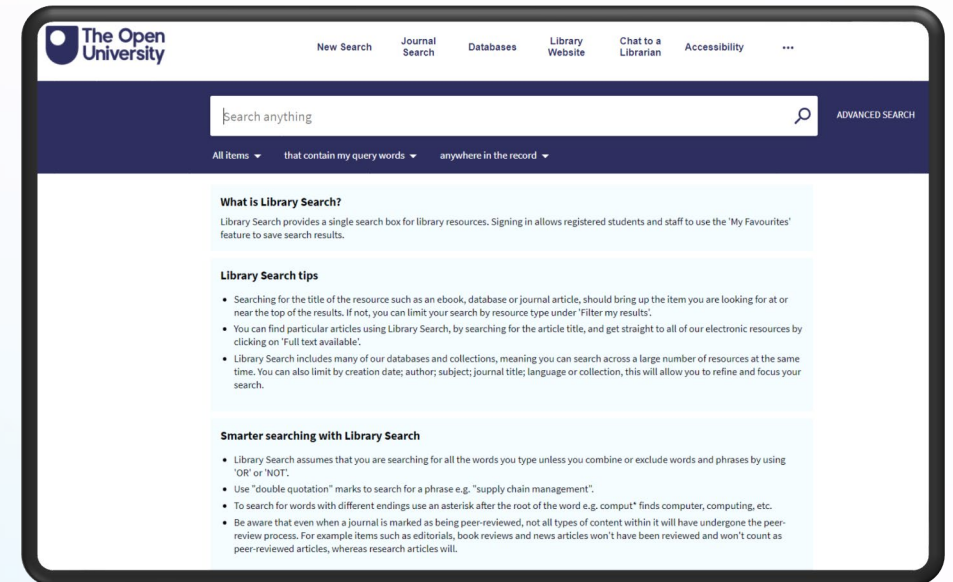
Failure to comply could lead to financial, reputational and legal damages. Steps to consider if you are contacted by GDS:

- Emails from GDS are often non-descript and can easily be missed. Please pay attention to emails that mention website accessibility auditing and that come from the following email address: [accessibility-monitoring@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk](mailto:accessibility-monitoring@digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk).
- Create a working group with colleagues with the expertise to ensure all identified issues are resolved.
- Other libraries may also be audited at the same time. You could share insights with one another, which might help apply pressure for fixes from Ex Libris.

# Free online accessibility course

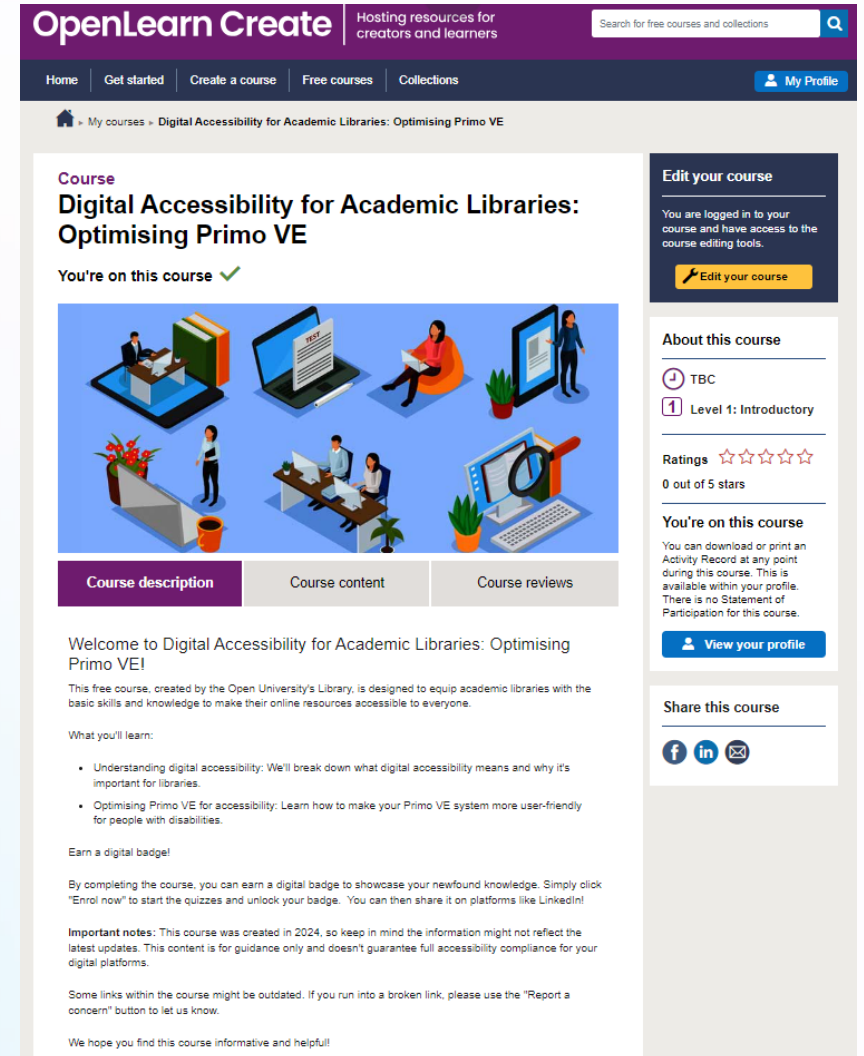
# Why we decided to share our knowledge

- ▶ Through the work that we do as business-as-usual, we have gained many skills which will help other institutions make their libraries more inclusive and compliant.
- ▶ After attending some international conferences, we were approached by other universities to give guidance and advice on accessibility testing and compliance.
- ▶ So, we're sharing what we know. We have created a free course for academic libraries, exploring the practicalities of centring digital accessibility in the services they provide.



# The format we have chosen

- ▶ We have chosen to create a free online course using our in-house digital education platform, OpenLearn Create.
- ▶ We are very privileged to have this option through our institution, and to have the knowledge within our team to build one of these courses.
- ▶ Although this approach took quite a lot of input from us to actually build the course, we can now share it with anyone who has an interest in digital accessibility.



The screenshot shows the OpenLearn Create interface. At the top, there's a purple header with the text 'OpenLearn Create' and 'Hosting resources for creators and learners'. Below this is a navigation bar with links for 'Home', 'Get started', 'Create a course', 'Free courses', and 'Collections'. A search bar is also present. The main content area displays the course title 'Digital Accessibility for Academic Libraries: Optimising Primo VE' and indicates that the user is on the course. There are three tabs: 'Course description', 'Course content', and 'Course reviews'. The 'Course description' tab is active, showing a welcome message and a list of learning objectives. On the right side, there are sections for 'Edit your course', 'About this course', 'Ratings', and 'Share this course'.

**OpenLearn Create** Hosting resources for creators and learners

Search for free courses and collections

Home Get started Create a course Free courses Collections My Profile

My courses > Digital Accessibility for Academic Libraries: Optimising Primo VE

**Course**  
**Digital Accessibility for Academic Libraries: Optimising Primo VE**

You're on this course ✓

**Edit your course**  
You are logged in to your course and have access to the course editing tools.  
[Edit your course](#)

**About this course**  
🕒 TBC  
📖 Level 1: Introductory

**Ratings** ☆☆☆☆☆  
0 out of 5 stars

**You're on this course**  
You can download or print an Activity Record at any point during this course. This is available within your profile. There is no Statement of Participation for this course.  
[View your profile](#)

**Share this course**  
f in ✉

**Course description** Course content Course reviews

Welcome to Digital Accessibility for Academic Libraries: Optimising Primo VE!

This free course, created by the Open University's Library, is designed to equip academic libraries with the basic skills and knowledge to make their online resources accessible to everyone.

What you'll learn:

- Understanding digital accessibility: We'll break down what digital accessibility means and why it's important for libraries.
- Optimising Primo VE for accessibility: Learn how to make your Primo VE system more user-friendly for people with disabilities.

Earn a digital badge

By completing the course, you can earn a digital badge to showcase your newfound knowledge. Simply click 'Enrol now' to start the quizzes and unlock your badge. You can then share it on platforms like LinkedIn!

**Important notes:** This course was created in 2024, so keep in mind the information might not reflect the latest updates. This content is for guidance only and doesn't guarantee full accessibility compliance for your digital platforms.

Some links within the course might be outdated. If you run into a broken link, please use the "Report a concern" button to let us know.

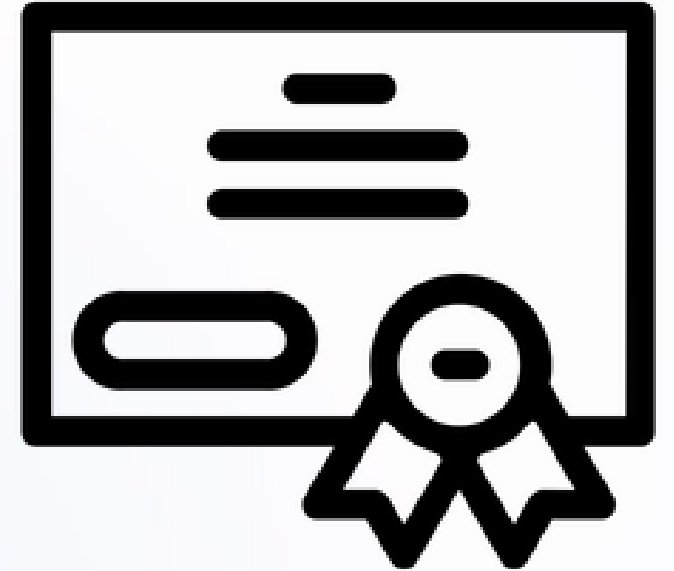
We hope you find this course informative and helpful!

# What we are sharing

The content we have created applies to Primo VE, our discovery tool

The [course](#) covers:

- ▶ What is digital accessibility?
- ▶ Understanding your users
- ▶ Legislation and compliance worldwide
- ▶ A downloadable accessibility WCAG checklist
- ▶ A video tutorial on auditing Primo VE
- ▶ Guidance on accessibility fixes
- ▶ Examples of meeting accessibility requirements in the UK
- ▶ A final quiz on everything you have learnt



Upon completion of the course, learners will get a [digital badge](#)!

# Digital Accessibility for Academic Libraries: Optimising Primo VE

Free online course  
Enrol now!



Library Services

# Enrol now!

The [course](#) is open for enrolment!

- ▶ It is completely free
- ▶ Only 2-3 hours to complete
- ▶ Upon completion you can download your digital badge

To enrol on the course, please scan the QR code.

If this is your first visit to OpenLearn Create, you need to register for a free account. Then you can login on the site and select "Enrol now" for this course. This will allow you to track your progress and earn your digital badge upon completion, all for free.





# Thank you

For more information or enquiries, email

**[Library-projects@open.ac.uk](mailto:Library-projects@open.ac.uk)**



**The Open  
University**