

**Steps for Making accessible documents for
UH Thesis/Dissertation Approval
FOR Spring/Summer 2026**
(procedures could change slightly in future semesters: please check)

1. Write your document and make it as accessible as possible in whatever word processing software you are using. This includes adding descriptive tags to all figures, charts, pictures, etc., and inserting formatted headers. *All or almost all of this can be done at the draft stage, prior to finalizing the document.* See resources in the “tips” section for more information on how and when to add tags and headers.
2. If you are using MS Word, run the built-in “Accessibility Checker” on your document. This identifies issues and shows them how to fix. This checker is located under the “Review” tab at the top of your Word document.



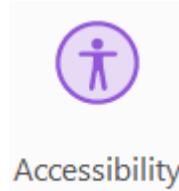
3. If you are using LaTeX (or Overleaf) you will need to install their recent accessibility patches. See “tips” section below for more details.
4. Once you have fixed all the accessibility issues that Word identifies, “save as” the Word document the “right” way to make it a PDF so that it preserves accessibility formatting. Instructions on how to do this can be found here: <https://esail.tamu.edu/faculty-tutorials/accessibility/accessibility-series/convert-word-document-into-accessible-pdf/> (thanks TAMU!) It’s essential but easy: you just have to click some extra boxes when you save.
[Note: LaTeX documents may differ at this step]
5. Open the document in **Adobe Acrobat Pro**. If you don’t already have the Pro version of Adobe Acrobat and if you are a UH employee (TA, RA) you can download this for free from UH IT. See the software download icon in Access UH. At this site you complete a survey explaining why you need the software. You will be sent a download link in about 48 hours.



Software Download

If you are not an RA or TA and are not eligible for a free download, you can access Adobe Acrobat Pro in the digital commons in the UH library.

- 6. Once you open the document in Adobe Acrobat Pro, run the Accessibility Checker, which you will find in the tools bar under “Protect and Standardize”. Look for this icon:



- 7. Run the accessibility checker, ticking these 10 checking options on 4 separate screens (categories) on the accessibility checker app:

Checking Options (10 of 32 in all categories)

Category: Document

- Accessibility permission flag is set
- Document is not image-only PDF
- Document is tagged PDF
- Document structure provides a logical reading order
- Text language is specified
- Document title is showing in title bar
- Bookmarks are present in large documents
- Document has appropriate color contrast

Select All Clear All

Checking Options (10 of 32 in all categories)

Category: Page content

- All page content is tagged
- All annotations are tagged
- Tab order is consistent with structure order
- Reliable character encoding is provided
- All multimedia objects are tagged
- Page will not cause screen flicker
- No inaccessible scripts
- Navigation links are not repetitive
- Page does not require timed responses

Select All Clear All

Checking Options (10 of 32 in all categories)

Category: Forms, Tables and Lists

- All form fields are tagged
- All form fields have description
- TR must be a child of Table, THead, TBody, or TFoot
- TH and TD must be children of TR
- Tables must have headers
- Tables must contain the same number of columns in each row and rows in each column
- Tables must have a summary
- LI must be a child of L
- Lbl and LBody must be children of LI

Select All Clear All

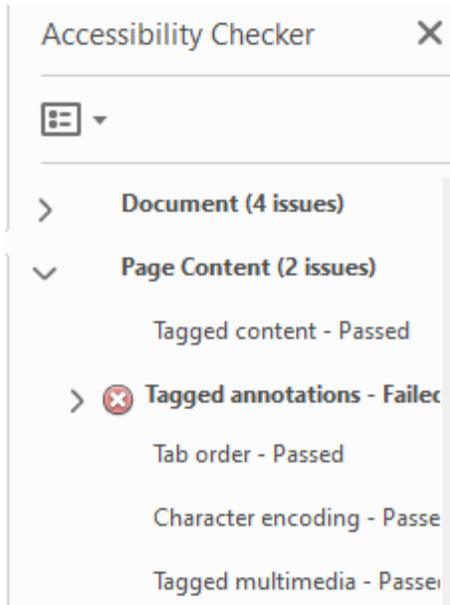
Checking Options (10 of 32 in all categories)

Category: Alternate Text and Headings

- Figures require alternate text
- Alternate text that will never be read
- Alternate text must be associated with some content
- Alternate text should not hide annotation
- Elements require alternate text
- Appropriate heading nesting

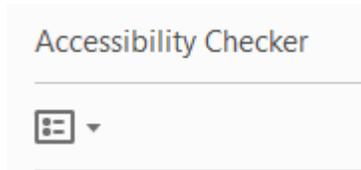
Select All Clear All

8. Running the accessibility check will generate a report to the left or right of your document. Take a look to see things that “fail”. You may need to go down a level in the report by clicking on the arrows next to each main topic; this will show you what the issues are. Some issues can be fixed by right clicking and there will be a “fix” option. You can ignore issues that earn a yellow triangle - these just reflect the boxes you didn’t check on the report.



Note: One common issue is the document title, which you can then enter manually by using the “fix button”

- 9. After you have made fixes, go to the top of the accessibility checker app, look for the menu icon (see below), and press the option “check again”.



- 10. After you think you have fixed the issues, re-run the Check then click on the Accessibility Report. Look at the summary at the top of the report (see below). **The summary at the top of the document needs to have no “fails” before you will be allowed to upload it in Vireo.** Does the document pass? If not, click on the topics in the left column of the detailed report to see what the issues are. Some of them may be fixable within the PDF environment, but you may want to fix most of them by going back to your original document (in MS Word, etc.) It can be easier that way, and also if you wind up having to make future changes, the fixes will already be baked-into your main working document.

Accessibility Report

Filename: Party decline revisited Revised clean version anonymous test.pdf

Report created by: [Enter personal and organization information through **Organization:** the Preferences > Identity dialog.]

Summary

The checker found problems which may prevent the document from being fully accessible.

- Needs manual check: 1
- Passed manually: 0
- Failed manually: 0
- Skipped: 23
- Passed: 7
- Failed: 1

Detailed Report

Document		
Rule Name	Status	Description
Accessibility permission flag	Passed	Accessibility permission flag must be set
Image-only PDF	Passed	Document is not image-only PDF
Tagged PDF	Passed	Document is tagged PDF
Logical Reading Order	Skipped	Document structure provides a logical reading order
Primary language	Skipped	Text language is specified
Title	Skipped	Document title is showing in title bar
Bookmarks	Passed	Bookmarks are present in large documents
Color contrast	Needs manual check	Document has appropriate color contrast

11. **Final steps (Note: these Instructions are provisional and may change slightly):** Submit your final materials to the College (at classgrad@central.uh.edu). You will submit 3 PDFs: 1) a passing Accessibility Report that corresponds to the dissertation/thesis filename; 2) dissertation/thesis; 3) thesis signature page. See the [CLASS website for details](#).

1. Be sure to use the most recent signature page: <https://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/thesis-dissertation/written-thesis-dissertation-approval-form-082019.pdf>
2. The College Thesis coordinator will review your documents, and will either request changes or will let you know that everything is in order and you can upload the dissertation/thesis.

3. **You also may need to submit the passing accessibility report when you upload the document to the library systems (Vireo).**

Please check your e-mail and/or the college website for updated instructions. This is a new policy, so these details are still in progress as of early February 2026. However, as long as you have a document that passes the accessibility check, the final steps will be easy whatever they are.

TIPS and RESOURCES

For LaTeX & Overleaf users:

LaTeX documents used to be very difficult to convert into PDFs that meet the accessibility requirements. Now that this accessibility is a federal law, the software designers have been working on fixing this by updating their packages and by writing better instructions. Here are some resources (as of January 2026), but this is quickly evolving so you may want to check for new updates:

*[LaTeX github instructions from their Tagging Project](#)

*[A guide to tagged PDFs](#)

*[Ohio State Engineering Guide to LaTeX and accessibility](#)

For MS Word users:

*[MS Word official advice](#)

*[Northeastern University](#)

There are also many YouTube tutorials on this topic.

Tip: For section headings, if you don't like Word's default word style, you can highlight your section heading in the style you like, open the "styles pane", and use the "update to match selection" from the dropdown menu for the main headings ("Heading 1") or subheadings ("Heading 2"). Then you can label all main and subheadings accordingly for Word to recognize.

General Advice on Creating Accessible PDFs

*[Rutgers advice guide](#)

Tip: Although it is possible to add alt-text for figures, tables etc. in Adobe, it is better to 'bake this in' to your original document (whatever the word processing program) because these will remain in the document even if you make any subsequent edits, whereas you would have to add the alt-text again every time you make a new PDF.