NIC PDF Accessibility Checklist

**Avoid using the PDF format if a web page (HTML) or Word document will suffice.** Higher education institutions are required to conform to the PDF/UA (ISO 14289) guideline (986 pages). Also, the Accessibility Checker in Adobe Acrobat Pro DC will give you a false-positive on a PDF’s accessibility, as it will only check against WCAG.

**To fully remediate a PDF for accessibility, CommonLook Office Suite and/or PDF (plugin) will need to be utilized.**

1. **Perform OCR on Scanned Documents**

* **Why**: Scanned documents are typically image-based, meaning they lack text content that assistive technologies can recognize or navigate. OCR (Optical Character Recognition) converts the images of text into selectable, readable, and searchable text.
* **How**:

1. **Open the scanned PDF in Adobe Acrobat Pro DC.**
2. **Use the "Enhance Scans" tool and select "Recognize Text."**
3. **Specify the language and page range for OCR.**
4. **After performing OCR, verify the accuracy of the recognized text and correct any errors using the Edit tool.**
5. **Apply tags using the "Autotag Document" feature or manually tag the text in the Tags panel for semantic structure.**

* **Important Note**: After OCR, confirm the reading order and logical structure since OCR may not perfectly preserve the intended layout or sequence.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.2 Text Representations

1. **Include Tags for Semantic Structure**

* **Why**: Tags define the document’s structure and provide assistive technologies with the necessary information to interpret and navigate content accurately.
* **How**:
  + **General Steps for Tagging:**
    - Generate tags during PDF creation (e.g., exporting from Word or InDesign).
    - Use the "Autotag Document" feature in Adobe Acrobat for untagged PDFs.
    - Manually review and correct tags in the Tags panel for accuracy.
  + **Correct Syntax for Lists:**
    - Use <L> (List), <LI> (List Item), <Lbl> (Label), and <LBody> (List Body) tags.
    - Ensure each list item is correctly nested under a parent <L> tag.
    - Example:  
      <L>  
       <LI>  
       <Lbl>•</Lbl>   
       <LBody>First list item.</LBody>  
       </LI>  
       <LI>  
       <Lbl>•</Lbl>  
       <LBody>Second list item.</LBody>  
       </LI>  
      </L>
  + **Correct Syntax for Tables:**
    - Use <Table> as the parent tag.
    - <TR> (Table Row), <TH> (Table Header), and <TD> (Table Data) should be properly nested.
    - Example:  
      <Table>  
       <TR>  
       <TH>Header 1</TH>  
       <TH>Header 2</TH>  
       </TR>  
       <TR>  
       <TD>Data 1</TD>  
       <TD>Data 2</TD>  
       </TR>  
      </Table>
    - Assign header cells with appropriate scope attributes (e.g., "Row" or "Column") using the Table Editor in Adobe Acrobat.
  + **Correct Syntax for ToC (Table of Contents)**:
  + Tag ToC items as <TOC> for the container and <TOCI> for each entry.
  + Example:  
    <TOC>  
     <TOCI>Chapter 1 - Page 1</TOCI>  
     <TOCI>Chapter 2 - Page 5</TOCI>  
    </TOC>

1. **Use Proper Heading Structure**

* **Why**: Headings provide a logical structure for navigation and understanding of content hierarchy.
* **How**: Use heading tags (H1, H2, etc.) in your source document before converting to PDF or apply heading tags in Adobe Acrobat using the Tags panel.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.7 Logical Structure

1. **Use High Contrast**

* **Why**: High contrast ensures text and graphics are distinguishable for users with low vision.
* **How**: Verify contrast using a contrast checker and make adjustments in your design software.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.11 Color and Contrast

1. **Add Alternative Text to Images**

* **Why**: Alternative text describes images for users who cannot see them.
* **How**: Add alt text to images in the source file or using the "Set Alternate Text" tool in Adobe Acrobat.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.8.2 Alternative Text

1. **Add Table Headers**

* **Why**: Table headers provide context for screen reader users to interpret data relationships.
* **How**: Define table headers in the source file or use the Table Editor in Adobe Acrobat.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.13 Tables

1. **Use Descriptive Links**

* **Why**: Descriptive links help users understand their purpose without needing surrounding text.
* **How**: Ensure links include meaningful text and verify using the Accessibility Checker in Adobe Acrobat.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.18 Annotations

1. **Provide a Logical Reading Order**

* **Why**: Ensures content is read in the correct sequence by assistive technologies.
* **How**: Use the Reading Order tool in Adobe Acrobat to adjust the flow of content.
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.9 Reading Order

1. **Add a Document Title**

* **Why**: The title ensures users, especially those using screen readers, can identify the document.
* **How**: Use your PDF creation tool (e.g., Adobe Acrobat) to set the title in the document properties (File > Properties > Description > Title).
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.1 Title

1. **Verify Accessibility**

* **Why**: Regular checks ensure all accessibility features are implemented correctly.
* **How**: Use tools like CommonLook Validation Tool (Adobe Acrobat Plugin).
* **PDF/UA Criterion**: 7.20 Validation