A Phased Path to Accessible Repository Submissions

A plain-language companion to the Accessible Submissions, One Phase at a Time slides

Georgia Tech Library · Title II & Digital Access

This guide explains how Georgia Tech will phase in Title II accessibility for documents deposited in the Georgia Tech Repository, including theses and dissertations. It follows the same order as the slides and can be read with them or on its own. It applies to everyone who submits documents to the Institutional Repository.

The short version

- **Nothing new is required of anyone before Spring 2027.** Until then, we put the templates, tools, and help in place.
- **Starting Spring 2027, authors run an accessibility checker and attach the report to their submission, whatever it shows.** No submission is held back because of the report.
- **Faculty advisors have no checking or enforcement role.**
- **Requirements increase only when the tools can support them,** with at least a semester's notice and review by the faculty working group.

1. What we heard, and how the plan responds

Faculty, students, and Graduate Education raised real concerns about the new Title II accessibility requirements. Each one shaped this plan.

"Accessibility requirements could delay graduation."

No one is held back. The checker report is attached whatever it shows, and submissions move forward as usual.

"Checkers can't yet handle equations, graphs, and molecules."

Requirements rise only as the tools improve. Math stays out of any pass requirement until checkers handle it reliably.

"Faculty don't have time to become accessibility checkers."

No new role for advisors. Faculty don't check or enforce anything. The Library provides clinics and one-on-one help.

"A change like this needs faculty governance oversight."

Faculty have a seat at the table. The faculty working group reviews each phase, and every new requirement is announced a semester ahead.

2. The plan at a glance

Phase	When	What's asked of authors	What it means
Phase 0: Get ready	Now through December 2026	Nothing new.	The Library and Graduate Education put templates, checklists, the request button, and help clinics in place.
Phase 1: Report	Spring 2027	Run PAC or veraPDF and attach the report, whatever it shows.	No submission is held back because of the report.
Phase 2: Targeted requirements	Fall 2027	Attach the report. A pass is required only on items checkers verify reliably.	Math stays exempt. Announced a semester ahead.
Phase 3: Full compliance when possible	2028 and beyond	Attach the report. A full pass is required once tools handle STEM content.	Requirements reviewed every year.

Each phase advances when set benchmarks are met, so the plan keeps moving without getting ahead of the tools (see Section 5).

3. The first two phases

Phase 0: Get ready (now through December 2026)

Nothing changes for depositors during this phase. It's all preparation, so Phase 1 starts with help already in place. The Library and Graduate Education are putting in place:

- **Templates and checklists.** Accessibility built into the GT thesis templates, plus a two-track checklist for Word and LaTeX/Overleaf users.
- **An accessible-version request button.** A request link on the Repository webpage, so anyone who needs an accessible version of a document can ask for one.
- **A free checker for every computer.** PAC for Windows, and veraPDF approval underway so Mac users have a native checker too.
- **Drop-in help clinics.** Walk-in help from trained Library student assistants, plus one-on-one appointments.

Phase 1: Conformance report (Spring 2027)

This is one extra step, much like the formatting requirements authors already meet.

What we ask of authors:

- Run your document through PAC or veraPDF.
- Attach the conformance report, whatever the result.

What doesn't happen:

- No submission is held back because of what the report shows.
- No graduation delays tied to the report.
- No checking or enforcement role for faculty advisors.

What the Library does:

- Spot-checks a sample of deposits for reading order, headings, and alt text, all for data-driven decision making purposes.
- Fulfills accessible-version requests from readers.
- Tracks pass rates, common errors, STEM and math results, request volume, and author feedback.
- Uses that evidence to shape Phase 2, together with faculty.

What depositing looks like in Spring 2027

Three steps.

1. **Run your source document through an accessibility checker.** Use one of two free accessibility checking tools: PAC or veraPDF.
2. **Attach the checker's conformance report.** Include the report with your submission, whatever the result.
3. **Follow the normal steps for submitting your document to the Institutional Repository.** Your submission moves forward as usual. Readers can request an accessible version.

The two accepted checkers

Only PAC and veraPDF produce a conformance report the Repository accepts to meet the Title II requirements. Both are free. Pick whichever fits your computer.

- **PAC** (PDF Accessibility Checker): Windows only. Shows you exactly where the errors are and has a screen-reader preview built in. Does not easily check STEM content.
- **veraPDF** (PDF/UA conformance checker): Mac and Windows. Checks STEM content quickly and easily. Produces results in code and needs Java to install.

Word, PowerPoint, and Excel have their own accessibility checkers. They're useful while you draft, but their reports are not accepted for Repository submission.

4. What it means for you

Graduate students

- Run PAC or veraPDF as you write.
- Attach a conformance report to your thesis or dissertation.
- If you experience problems, use the clinics and drop-in hours.

Researchers and other depositors

- Run PAC or veraPDF as you write.

- Attach a conformance report to your submission.
- Use the templates, clinics, and drop-in hours.

Faculty advisors and committees

- No new checking or enforcement role.
- Encourage students to start early with the GT templates.
- Share what's working, and what isn't, through the faculty working group.

Everyone

- Share this information with colleagues, students, and programs.
- Use the Digital Accessibility website to learn how to create accessible documents.
- Share information and updates about tools, software, and regulations.

5. How we'll decide when to move forward

Clear checkpoints keep the plan moving without getting ahead of the tools, or of the people using them.

- **Benchmarks, not calendar dates.** Each phase advances when set benchmarks are met, such as a target pass rate on core items.
- **A semester's notice.** Any new requirement is announced at least one semester before it takes effect.
- **Faculty governance review.** The faculty working group reviews each phase, the communication plan, and any catalog language.
- **A written record.** Each phase and its data are documented as evidence of good-faith progress.
- **Annual review.** Requirements are reviewed every year as tools and standards change.
- **Ready for rule changes.** If federal requirements or deadlines shift, we'll adjust the plan and let everyone know.

6. Common questions

Will the accessibility report delay a student's graduation?

No. The report is attached whatever it shows, and the submission moves forward as usual.

Does my advisor or committee need to review the report?

No. Faculty have no checking or enforcement role.

What if my report shows errors?

That's fine. Just attach the report and submit as usual.

My work is full of equations, graphs, or chemical structures. What happens?

Math stays exempt from any pass requirement until checkers can reliably verify it. Readers who need an accessible version can request one.

If a reader needs an accessible version, who makes it?

Readers request one through the button on the Repository webpage, and the Library fulfills the request.

Does this change the Catalog?

Any catalog language related to these requirements is reviewed by the faculty working group before it takes effect.

7. Where to get help

Georgia Tech resources for accessible content

Everything Georgia Tech offers for accessible digital content is collected at **digitalaccess.gatech.edu**, Georgia Tech's central hub for Title II guidance, training, and support:

- Title II requirements and exceptions
- Guidance by role: instructors and faculty, administrators and staff, technical staff, librarians, students
- Training: live and recorded workshops, online learning resources, and a web accessibility checklist
- Get Started: how to plan for existing content and meet WCAG 2.1 AA
- FAQs, a contact form, and a way to report a digital accessibility issue

Have questions? Need assistance?

- **Tiffany Roberts**, Title II & Digital Access Librarian: tiffany.roberts@library.gatech.edu
- **Drop-in hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00–3:00 PM. Walk in or send a Teams message; no appointment needed.
- **By appointment:** Monday–Friday, scheduled one-on-ones. Email to find a time that works for you.