

 										
<h2 style="text-align: center;">Accessibility and Usability Standards for producing accessible emails</h2>										
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<b>DQ Content Authority</b>	Tiffany Hall									
<b>Contact(s) for Help</b>	Claire Jennings (Head of Access Technology and Usability Strategy) Paul Bepey (Access Technology Manager) Terry Clarke									
<b>Description</b>	<p><b>Intended Audience:</b> All BBC Staff</p> <p><b>Use:</b> To provide information and support required in order to ensure that any internal email sent corporation-wide, department-wide or to a distribution list will be accessible to all potential recipients of that mail.</p>									
<b>DQ Reference</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Version</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Date</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Last Reviewed</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>div_06_08</td> <td>0.9</td> <td>03/12/2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>14/04/2011</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Version	Date	Last Reviewed	div_06_08	0.9	03/12/2010			14/04/2011
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# British Broadcasting Corporation

## Accessibility and Usability Standards Document Eight – Email Standards Guidance

# Contents

1	Scope .....	4
2	Policy Statements .....	4
3	Background.....	4
4	Guidance .....	5
4.1	Accessibility and Usability Standards for Email.....	5
4.1.1	General Guidelines .....	6
4.1.2	Email Structure .....	7
4.1.3	Sending attachments .....	7
5	History .....	8

# 1 Scope

This document provides policy, information and general guidance to ensure that emails sent to members of BBC staff, some of whom may be users of assistive technology, are accessible and usable.

The policy also applies to all internal emails sent:

- § Corporate-wide
- § Departmental-wide
- § To an email distribution list, except where the sender is aware of all likely recipients and is therefore confident that none will have difficulty accessing the content.

# 2 Policy Statements

- § All internal email sent corporation-wide, department-wide or to distribution lists will be accessible to all recipients of that email.
- § Any graphic that conveys information must have appropriate alternate text tagging.
- § All multimedia content (e.g. audio and video) must incorporate Subtitles (or some other text equivalent) or Audio Description.
- § Attachments must be accessible, those conveying information must not be sent as images unless accompanied by a textual description of that information.
- § References to text identified by font attributes (e.g. colour, bold, italic, font style) can be used, but must have an accessible alternative.

# 3 Background

This document is the eighth in a series of eight which cover Accessibility and Usability Standards. Other documents which cover Accessibility and Usability Standards that should be consulted are:

- § Document One – Procurement
- § Document Two – Procurement and Checklists
- § Document Three - Integration Summary
- § Document Four - Integration Checklist
- § Document Five - Training Inclusively for Disabled People
- § Document Six - Training Inclusively for Disabled People Checklist
- § Document Seven – Technical Standards Guidance

In June 2004, the BBC Governors announced their intention to increase the proportion of disabled staff at the BBC from 2.8% to 4% by 2007. This target was exceeded: as of May 2009 the figure is 4.4%. There is now a new target in place – 5.5% before the end 2012.

This has inevitably increased the percentage of access technology users needing to access our desktop applications and broadcast technology. Technology Distribution and Archive intend the BBC to be a world class leader for accessibility of technology, implementing corporate ownership of access, rather than the outdated model of associating patch up fixes with the disabled individual. In this way, the BBC will be technologically accessible wherever a disabled person happens to log in and will enable them to move from work-station to work-station or studio to studio.

The Governors' targets are prompted by changes in the law since 1995 (further updated in 2010 and again in 2011) and research which clearly demonstrates a strong business case for employing more disabled members of staff. Providing a fully accessible technological environment will help the BBC to employ the most talented individuals. The aim therefore is to

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provide an accessible environment that disabled members of staff can work in or move into, not to address 'problems' at an individual level.

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was replaced in 2010 with the Equalities Act (EA) and places a duty on the BBC, as it does other UK organisations, 'to make reasonable adjustments' so as not to place a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled and to ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably than non-disabled colleagues. What constitutes a 'reasonable adjustment' is an important consideration as well as the process that facilitates the decision. This is because a failure to make reasonable adjustments could have considerable financial consequences for the BBC's reputation and brand, as well as having cost implications if a case is brought before a tribunal. The law was further updated in April 2011 to reflect the Public Sector Equality Duty. This new single Duty strengthens UK equalities legislation and covers up to nine groups of people who share certain 'protected characteristics'. The Duty will have significant implications for many BBC activities and functions.

The PSED requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The BBC also recognises the importance of ensuring its technologies and applications are usable to all members of staff. By following a user centred design approach, based on ISO 9241 Part 210, the BBC can ensure that systems allow staff to work more efficiently, effectively and comfortably. In fact, making a product technically accessible is not enough as accessibility does not always imply usability. For instance, coding a form field so that its label is associated with the data entry field will make the field accessible to JAWS or VoiceOver users. However, if the content of the label is not meaningful, then the data entry field becomes meaningless to all users. To ensure all staff can work optimally, accessible products must also be usable, appealing and pleasurable to use.

Investing in accessible and usable products provides a number of significant business benefits:

- Increased effectiveness and efficiency of your workforce
- Decreased training time and learning time
- Reduced maintenance costs
- Better user satisfaction, leading to a happier more confident workforce

## 4 Guidance

### 4.1 Accessibility and Usability Standards for Email

This document provides information and guidance to ensure that any Email sent to members of BBC staff, some of whom may be users of assistive technology, is accessible and usable. Note that although these standards and guidelines refer to internal emails sent corporation-wide, department-wide or to a distribution list, realistically the same standards should be considered for emails to individuals or sent externally.

Email is one of the simplest forms of communication and usually causes no accessibility issues at all. However, some practices have developed in recent times which are putting the full

accessibility of the information we send to each other at risk. The following are a series of guidelines/standards that must be considered/adhered to.

#### 4.1.1 General Guidelines

- Emails must be sent in HTML, plain text or rich text. Plain Text and Rich Text are accessible by their nature (subject to the guidelines below). Full guidelines relating to HTML content can be found in Document 7 of this series and at

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/quickref/>

- Any picture/graphic that conveys information contained within an email must have appropriate Alternate (ALT) text tagging to fully describe that picture or explain its context within the email. To add ALT text, right-click the image, select 'properties' then complete the 'Alternate Text' field.
- Specifically, if Auto Signatures are images they must have ALT text assigned. One common issue found by users of assistive technology involves Auto Signature images containing Fax/Phone numbers, which are then not accessible.
- Often screen dumps are a useful way of conveying information in a message but if included they must either be tagged with fully descriptive ALT text or have a full textual description included as part of the message.
- Text must be well spaced out into separate paragraphs to improve ease of reading.
- The language used must be simple without being patronizing.
- Consider the length of the mail you are sending. Specifically ask yourself the following question:
  - Do the recipients need to know everything?
  - Is there somewhere else this information resides that I can be linked to.
  - Can a long email be better structured? See below for suggestions.
- If emphasising (**bold**, underline, ALL CAPS) more than 3 or 4 words in a paragraph, the emphasis loses all effectiveness.
- Multiple colours, fonts, sizes and styles can be effective for sighted recipients but information conveyed by changes in font attributes are not accessible to visually impaired users. For example 'refer to text in red' would be fine for many readers, but would not be accessible for visually impaired recipients so alternative sign-posting is required. For example - 'refer to text in red or go to section entitled Accessible Text at the end of this message'.
- All multimedia content (e.g. audio and video) must incorporate Subtitles (or some other text equivalent) or Audio Description.

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### 4.1.2 Email Structure

- A long email can often be better structured to be more readable by using: bulleted lists, correct emphasis, breaking up long paragraphs.
- In long email threads consider deleting unnecessary threads.
- When designing a structured email, for example a newsletter with various headings, it is important to follow a logical structure, similar to that used on accessible websites: only include one H1 heading at the top and include headings at other levels in a hierarchical fashion.
- If the mail contains hyperlinks then link text must make sense out of context, for example avoid 'Click here' or "More" as links.

### 4.1.3 Sending attachments

- The preferred format of documents sent as attachments is Microsoft Office: Word, Excel etc. (though note that if sent externally there is no guarantee that the recipient will have a copy of the Microsoft Office suite). Guidelines on the Accessibility and Usability of Office documents can be found in Document 7 of this series. Plain text documents are also perfectly acceptable.
- Where possible users should avoid sending PDF documents as attachments. PDF documents can present severe difficulties to a user of assistive technology even to the extent of being completely unreadable.
- Attachments conveying information should not be sent as images, for example .BMP or .JPG as these formats are completely inaccessible to users of screen readers. If the image contains important information then it can be attached but a textual description of that information must be included either as part of the message or as an attachment in textual form.
- Any multimedia content sent as an attachment must incorporate Subtitles (or some other text equivalent) or Audio Description.

## 5 History

Version	Date	Author	Description
0.1	29/03/2010	Claire Jennings	Created draft strategy
0.2	29/03/2010	Paul Bepey	Added/Amended wording
0.3	09/04/2010	Terry Clarke	Addition of usability guidelines and reformatting
0.4	09/06/2010	Russ Brattan	Added short Scope and Policy sections
0.5	23/06/2010	Paul Bepey	Amended wording
0.6	22/10/2010	Terry Clarke	Update to contact details.
0.7	3/12/2010	Terry Clarke	Include specific details about subtitles and audio description.
0.8	12/01/11	Rizwan Nazir	Minor amendments.
0.9	14/04/2011	Erin Flynn	Updated to include new percentage target set by BBC Governance to increase the proportion of disabled staff at the BBC.

Any comments, queries or change control requests about this document  
Should be addressed to: Claire Jennings (Head of Access Technology & Usability Strategy) or Paul Bepey (Access Technology Manager)

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