

Web Content Accessibility of University Websites to Student with Visual Impairment: The Case of University of Haifa

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The Internet plays an important role within higher education institutions in Israel. However, for students with disabilities, particularly blind and visually impaired students, it is an immense challenge to use the online resources fully and equally. The W3C has issued the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0), which provide a set of principles aimed to assist in designing accessible websites that work effectively with assistive technologies. In Israel, the applicable standard is "SI 5568 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines". Studies around the world have consistently shown that despite technical standards and legal requirements, Web content accessibility remains a worrying issue prominent in higher education institutions. The aims of this explorative study are: (a) to examine the legal framework of Web content accessibility in Israel, particularly among higher education institutions; (b) to examine the current implementation of Web accessibility, based on a case study of Haifa University's website. To that end, a mixed methodology is used: (i) Legal Analysis of the Web content accessibility requirements in the global and Israeli legal framework with a focus on the Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Regulations (accessibility Adjustments to Service), 2013 and the accessibility regulations addressing institutions of higher education, which are in the midst of enactment; (ii) Accessibility evaluation, based on automated tool, of selected webpages from the Haifa University's website, as a case study, to measure its adherence to the technical Israeli and global standards. Additionally, a few in-depth interviews with key stakeholders shall be conducted, in order to explore the main challenges they encounter in the development and implementation of Web accessibility policy in higher education environment.