Accessibility and images in ETF resources

ETF has both a desire, and an obligation in law, to make its online courses meet (or exceed) standards for accessibilty. The FutureLearn platform provides for many of the text-related accessibility adjustments required in law.

Images, diagrams and other graphics (collectively referred to as images here), however, are more complicated and their use requires careful consideration by course authors, in particular with respect to their accessibility to visually impaired users. Principally, course authors are asked to consider whether images are *screen-readable* by software which supports visually impaired people to read and navigate websites.

These considerations will inform the decisions you take about how to convey information in the articles that you produce. In general:

1. **JPG and PNG Files**
Images such as .jpg and .png are *not* screen-readable and should:
- as a minimum have description alternative text (Alt Text) provided by the course author to describe it
    - where the image is purely decorative this should read 'An image of ____ included for decorative purposes only' including a brief description of the contents of the image;
- where the image conveys information that is not otherwise provided in the article:
    - Alt Text should but used to convey that content *if that is possible in fewer than 100 characters* which is the maximum length for Alt Text; **or**
    - a script for a short audio file describing the information conveyed in the image should be provided (ETF will record a short voiceover): remember that the script should note only describe the image but should also *convey the information*; **or**
    - a Word document or screen-readable PDF should be provided to convey more complex, verbose, information including tables containing large amounts of text.

2. **PDF Files**
PDFs are only screen-readable if they are specifically saved as such: most PDF writers will have a 'Make Accessible' option within the filemaker of print/save function (such as this one for Adobe Acrobat Pro).

Note that screen readers will read the filename of the document provided, which should be descriptive. For example, a file name could be 'Accessibility and image guidelines for ETF courses' and not something like 'Accguide.v3'.

3. **Word Files**
Word files are screen-readable: the 'filename' condition above applies.

4. Links to external documents/websites

Websites are, in most cases, screen-readable. External document (e.g., web-based PDFs etc) may not be, but generally will be when held on an a government domain, for example: please give this some thought in your external references.

Use of images: checklist

Course authors are asked to consider the below 'checklist' when considering imagery within their courses:

1. Is the image purely decorative? If so, provide simple Alt Text as per the instruction in '1' above.
2. Does the image convey information? If so:
    a. Can that information be more easily conveyed in plain text? (For example, simple lists should not be communicated in images.)
    b. If not, what additional information will you provide to convey the information to visually impaired course participants (e.g., script for audio file, Word document or screen-readable PDF).

If in doubt, please consult ETF and remember that submissions will not be regarded as complete without provision of the information above.