

Official FSU Standards & Guidelines for Web Page Design and Maintenance

These standards and guidelines were developed by the Web Advisory Group. They are designed to facilitate information distribution and enhance the appeal and usefulness of FSU web sites. They apply to all pages on official organizational web sites of University units.

Web Site Review

All new or significantly redesigned or restructured web sites are reviewed by the Web Advisory Group prior to publication. This review applies to all pages of official organizational web sites of University units (colleges, departments, offices, programs, etc.). Contact the Web Services Manager to request a review.

Site Maintenance

- Designate a faculty or staff web page manager who is responsible for the web page/site. Web page managers must register with the FSU Web Services Manager.
- Review the site at least quarterly. If information changes based on the academic calendar or another cycle, review and update the site in that context.
- Use care when replacing a web page with a new page at a new address. Changing page addresses can cause broken links.

Site Content

- Include standard contact information for the unit.
- Include a listing of faculty and/or staff.
- Academic Departments: Link to requirements for department-affiliated programs.
- Academic Departments: Include or link to department-affiliated course descriptions.
- Administrative Offices: Include information about the mission of the office.
- Link to information that you do not “own” in its source location instead of duplicating it on your site.
- Spell check and proof read your pages and documents.

Site Design

All web pages of FSU divisions, colleges, departments, libraries, administrative and service offices, and other official units and programs of the University (collectively known as “official FSU sites” or “official FSU web sites”) are required to use the University web template.

Basics of Accessible Web Pages

FSU is committed to making information on its web site available to as many people as possible. This includes visitors with special needs (the visually impaired, for example) as well as users with slow modem connections, and older Web browsers and computers.

A checklist developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) (<http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/full-checklist.html>) describes common accessibility issues and assigns each issue a priority number. The FSU Web Advisory Group requires university Web sites comply with, at minimum, priority one issues. The following guidelines were developed to simplify the compliance process. In most cases, adherence to the guidelines below will ensure FSU compliance of your site.

- Use ALT tags to provide alternate text descriptions for images, image maps, sound files, and Java applet tags. The LONGDESC tag is available for more detailed descriptions.
- Do not use color as sole means to convey information. Make sure pages and graphics are understandable when viewed without color.
- If you use style sheets in your web site, organize your web page so it may be read without when style sheets are absence.
- If you use image maps, provide an HTML version of the links at the same level.
- Include row and column headers for data tables.
- Ensure that pages are usable when scripts, applets, or other programmatic objects are turned off or not supported. When encoding Javascript, you can do this by using a <NOSCRIPT> tag to provide the same information to users whose browser does not support JavaScript. In other situations, this may involve duplicating the same information or functionality in a redundant, accessible format.
- When using video and sound files, provide a text transcript if the information is important to the content of the page.
- For sites with graphic-intensive or technology-rich pages, create a text-only version to make it easier for those with less capable browsers to access the information.

Basics of Usable Web Pages

- Include a privacy notification (clear statement of the purpose for which the information is being collected) on pages where personal information is collected (pages with web forms, for example).
- Use colors that contrast with each other - preferably light backgrounds with dark colored text - to differentiate text and background. The greater the contrast, the more readable the page. If you use background patterns or watermarks, make sure they are transparent to facilitate reading and printing.
- Use WIDTH and HEIGHT tags for images to speed loading and to eliminate confusion for screen readers and text browsers.
- Use GIF or JPG file format for graphics. Avoid PNG file format for graphics as PNGs are not widely used and not supported by older browsers.

- Use the <TITLE> tag with a meaningful title on each page. The information contained in the <TITLE> tag labels your browser window and identifies the page in a bookmark list.
- If you use file formats that require plug-ins for links to key information, provide an HTML version of the information at the same.
- Alert users when you link to anything unusual and tell them what to expect, such as large files, or video or sound files.
- For pages that require plug-ins, applets, or other applications for correct interpretation, provide a link to a plug-in or applet.
- Avoid screen flickering.
- For hypertext links, use text that makes sense when read out of context. Avoid using "click here."
- When using graphs and charts on your pages, summarize or use the longdesc tag.
- Check your work. Validate. Use tools, checklist, and guidelines at <http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG>

Copyright

All departments, offices, and web publishers and developers are responsible for keeping their web pages in compliance with copyright rules and with FSU guidelines and policies. See the Copyright Information & Resources web page for more information.