

WEB STYLE GUIDELINES

For the FSU Division of Student Affairs



Updated 4/3/2023

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In the case of major website redevelopment or new website creation, a request should be submitted [here](#), and requires the approval of your Assistant/Associate VP. Redevelopment will only be considered after one calendar year.

1. Initial Consultation

Kickoff phase to discuss project concept, purpose and audience with ITS and project stakeholders to establish:

- Costs
- Resource requirements including hardware and software
- Access and permissions

2. Project Specifications

Establish preliminary functionality and formalize the scope of work including:

- Wireframes
- Timeline and costs
- Establish key performance indicators
- Project plan and responsibilities for stakeholders

3. Design and Content Creation

Content development and collection phase:

- Develop site design and navigation
- Responsibilities and process for creation reviewed and approved
- ITS begins coding and database development (if needed)
- Establish metadata, SEO strategy, event tracking and analytics
- Write and finalize technical specs ensuring accessibility/508 compliance standards
- User testing (if needed)

4. Testing and Quality Assurance

Website development is completed and UAT testing begins:

- Submit and correct bugs
- ITS performs regression, load, stress, UAT/QA testing
- Create metatags
- Submit site to DSA Marketing for final approval

5. Site Launch

Coordination of website launch through the DSA Marketing Office including:

- Marketing strategy for website launch
- Post publishing testing

6. Ongoing

Maintenance of website and minor updates:

- Assign responsibilities for updating content
- Review schedule

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Assistant/Associate VP

- Approves major changes to website
- Assigns committee members for major website changes

DSA Web Manager

- Ensures consistent design and navigation
- Oversees content owners/designee(s)
- Oversees cross-departmental changes to the website
- Maintains website traffic analytics and SiteImprove link checker once a month

Content Owner

- Works with content designee(s) within their areas of responsibility
- Approves content from their designee(s)
- Adds content for their department
- Enforces guidelines and procedures

Content Designee

- Ensures information is accurate and regularly reviews content
- Maintains content on department pages
- Consults with the content owner or web manager with technical issues or questions
- Adheres to guidelines and procedures

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

For official FSU web style guidelines, visit University Communication's [website](#).

Links

Department Web Managers can add links to their respective department websites.

- Use title case for global and department links. For example:
[Garnet and Gold Scholar Society](#)
- An accessible link is one that makes sense without any surrounding text. Screen readers provide dialogs that list all the links in a page without context. For example:
[View available class list](#)
- Use sentence case for lists of links. For example:
[View available class list](#)
- Link lists should appear in alphabetical order unless the list follows a chronological order or leads the user through a logical sequence
- You may link to a commercial for-profit web page or website if it is clear that the primary purpose is to provide free information or services. Links should not promote for-profit products or services unless approved by the Business Office or DSA Foundation.

Website Maintenance

FSU holds a university-wide contract for SiteImprove, a website accessibility tool used to quickly scan your website for on-page and technical accessibility issues and errors. To have your website added to SiteImprove, [contact FSU ITS](#).

The DSA Marketing office suggests maintaining updated monthly analytic information about page traffic through Google Analytics. For access to Google Analytics, [contact FSU ITS](#).

Blank Targets

Blank targets (*linked information that opens in a separate window*) should be used when a web viewer leaves an FSU website through external links, launches a pdf document, web form, or other material which would otherwise close out a session if maneuvering away from the page.

Browser Compatibility

Web-based applications must support recent versions of all popular web browsers, including Mozilla Firefox 17 or higher, Microsoft Edge Windows 10 version or later, and Safari 5 or higher. Adhering to [World Wide Web Consortium \(W3C\) web standards](#) is the best way to ensure this compatibility.

Page Header

Page headers or titles should quickly communicate the subject of the page and are coded to automatically appear as H1 tags. The header also serves as the text for the page link.

Page header tips:

- Headers should be 3-5 words and fit on one line
- Use words the audience will understand
- H1 tags help search engines understand the structure of a page and should be a few descriptive keywords of the page's contents to help with improved Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

DSA Page Pre Footer

Page pre footers will remain consistent across all DSA pages and should contain:

- Official DSA logo
- Service area logo
- Location and Contact Information
- Social icons
- Legal forms specific to service area if applicable
- Website Questions link

Anchor Tags or Jump To Command

Using anchor tags or the jump to command is recommended if a web page is dense with text. However, please use anchor tags or the jump to command sparingly, if at all. Instead, separate the text on a text-heavy page into multiple web pages.

Moving Pages

When moving an existing webpage to a new address, create a redirect page. As a safeguard, leave a copy in its current location and replace the code with a forward script to redirect the user to the new address. Delete redirect pages after six months.

Navigation

Use navigation mechanisms consistently across your department's website. Web page titles should always be in title case. Major website navigation changes should be approved by your department head in consultation with DSA Marketing before implementation.

SECTION 508 ACCESSIBILITY

In accordance with the provisions of Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, FSU provides students, faculty, staff and community members with reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to the programs and activities of FSU.

Alt Text and Text Equivalentents

For every non-text element, provide a text equivalent. This is achieved through alt text, longdesc, or in-element content:

- Alt text is important for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) because search engines are unable to understand image files unless an alt tag has been included
- Describe the image using 125 characters or less, providing context to the image including SEO keywords if possible
- Use longdesc="" for complex images that require a longer description
- Don't use "image/picture of" - it is assumed alt text is describing an image
- Ensure foreground and background color combinations provide sufficient contrast for readability. Ensure that all information conveyed with color is also available without color; for example, from context or markup.
- When an appropriate markup language exists, use markup rather than images to convey information. Add descriptions in the website's code that is not visible to the website's end users.
- Refer to [WW3 Alt Text Decision Tree](#) for appropriate uses of alt text.

Non-text elements include:

- Animations
- Applets and programmatic objects
- Ascii art
- Audio tracks of videos
- Frames
- Graphical buttons
- Graphical representations of text
- Images
- Image map regions
- Images used as list bullets
- Scripts
- Sounds
- Spacers
- Stand-alone audio files
- Videos

WEB CONTENT

Intellectual Property and Copyright

Intellectual property and copyrighted material are prohibited on FSU websites without approval of the originator or copyright holder. When using or duplicating information from the private sector under “fair use” provisions as part of an information resource, product, or service, FSU must ensure that the property rights of the private sector source are adequately protected. These protections apply to any material posted to public websites, such as stories, documents, graphics or audio files. Department managers are responsible for reviewing content to determine if material is subject to copyright laws.

Page Length

Home department and top-level pages should be concise so all content can be viewed with minimal scrolling. Document level pages may be longer but should avoid excessive or unnecessary information.

Review

Web content must be reviewed at least quarterly to ensure that it is current and accurate. Files like pdf and doc that are obsolete should be evaluated to determine if they should be removed from the server. As a rule, you should maintain a copy of the file after deleting it from the online server.

Text

- Use H2/H3 headers and section dividers to help users quickly get to the sections of the website they want and find information via search engines as well as website navigation.
- Put the most important information at the top of your page.
- Include additional information in order of increased specificity.
- Divide large blocks of information into more manageable groups where natural and appropriate.
- For grammar and language use in web content writing, refer to the [Editorial Style Guidelines for the FSU Division of Student Affairs](#) for clear and consistent communications.
- H1, H2, and H3 headers improve Search Engine Optimization (SEO) by helping search engines understand the content of the page with a recognized hierarchical information structure. This information structure should also mirror how content is already ordered on your page.
- Do not use italics for headers, sub-headers, links or captions. In rare cases, italics may be used to add emphasis to a word within a narrative.
- Where acronyms are necessary, spell out the full term on first reference, followed by the acronym in parentheses, and use the acronym thereafter.

Florida State University (FSU) is a...

Files

FILE TYPES

File type specified for the internet or supported by standard desktop software are acceptable. To use file types not listed below, contact the DSA Web Manager for approval.

Acceptable file types include:

- jpg
- pdf
- txt
- gif
- png
- svg

POWERPOINT FILES

PowerPoint files should not be used because they are problematic for accessibility and use proprietary software. Convert PowerPoint files to a PDF before posting.

UPDATING/REPLACING FILES

When updating a document or image file, archive or delete the original.

FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

Forms and documents must include the department's logo and date to indicate when it was last updated.

PDF files posted for users to print should be no larger than 1MB.

FILE/FOLDER NAMES:

- Do not use all caps
- Web page files should have short, meaningful names
- Long titles should be abbreviated
- Acronyms can be utilized in the name
- When selecting a name, consider how the name may be perceived. People do look at URLs and may misinterpret the meaning or intent of a file name
- All file and folder names should be alphanumeric
- Do not include spaces or underscores
- Names should be in lower case
- Use clear and concise names to label the folders in which the web page files are stored.

Photos, Video and Audio Files

IMAGE AND GRAPHIC TYPES

Most common file types used are: jpg, gif, and png. To use a file type not specified here contact the DSA Web Manager for approval.

Images should be optimized for web with a resolution of 72 dpi in RGB format. Print quality images should be saved at 300dpi.

TEXT LABELS

Every image or graphic must have a text box or text label (the <alt> tag). This text label describes the picture or graphic to people using a text-based browser and people with disabilities using a text reader.

FERPA

Please adhere to FERPA and directory information guidelines if your photos, audio or video file includes students in a class where the students are visible or identifiable. [Refer to the FSU FERPA guidelines page for more information.](#)

CAPTIONING

All multimedia files must be captioned. When captioning, clearly identify changes in the natural language of a document's text and any text equivalents. Media files should be streamed from dedicated media servers like YouTube, not downloaded from the internet or housed on FSU web servers themselves.



Division of Student Affairs

For questions, comments or suggestions:

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