University of Rhode Island

Website Policies and Standards

1. Overview

The University's website is the single most utilized and important mechanism for conveying all aspects of the University's mission, community, impact, values, and priorities to our internal and external audiences. It is essential that our website be consistent, contemporary, accurate, and of the highest quality with regard to visual, editorial, and navigational standards.

To ensure such standards are monitored and maintained, the University has established the Web Policy Council. The Council is responsible for establishing the website policies and standards in this document, and for approving any additions or modifications. Any questions related to this Policy or the Council can be directed to External Relations and Communications.

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2. General/Legal

2.1 Use of Copyrighted or Licensed Material

All website content must comply with laws governing copyright, trademark and intellectual property. Specifically:

A. Individuals and units creating web pages must secure rights to all material copyrighted by others before using such material in their web pages. This includes text, photographs, graphics, audio, video, compiled statistics, and graphs. Authors are responsible for keeping written documentation of releases and permissions.

B. This requirement does not apply to copyrighted images that the University has purchased or obtained permission to use on the web. URI maintains a central database of usable images - please contact the office of Publications and Creative Services with image questions or requests.

C. Materials in the public domain may be used without restriction.

2.2 University Policies and Standards

Content must adhere to the University's [Web Content Guide](#) and [Brand Visual Standards](#).

All website content must comply with University policies regarding copyright, academic integrity, and code of conduct; students must additionally comply with the standards set in the [Student Handbook](#). For example:

A. [ITS Acceptable Use Policy](#): The University prohibits using, copying, or distributing copyrighted materials on University information technology resources unless such use is covered by federal fair use guidelines or permission has been granted by the copyright owner.
B. [University Manual 8.27.10](#): Cheating and Plagiarism… Cheating is the claiming of credit for work not done independently without giving credit for aid received…

2.3 Accessibility

All website content must follow Section 508 Standards of the ADA accessibility guidelines (see [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines [WCAG] 2 checklist](#)). At a minimum, content publishers are responsible for:

A. Including descriptive alternative text for all images;
B. Avoiding images containing text as content;
C. Ensuring that all videos are closed-captioned;
D. Using link text that is descriptive (i.e., never use "click here" or "here").

Additional guidelines are outlined in the Web Content Guide's [section on accessibility](#).

2.4 Sponsorship Acknowledgement

An organization that has sponsored an activity at the University may be acknowledged on the website. However, images used for acknowledgement must not imply that the University is endorsing a product or company.

2.5 Prohibited Content

Certain laws and University policy prohibit the publication of certain types of material. The following must not be included in official University web pages:

A. Copyrighted or licensed materials for which the necessary permissions for use have not been obtained (see the Fair Use in libguides);
B. Advertising or promotion of commercial or political interests unrelated to the University;
C. Material or speech that is unlawful unless with disclaimer for illustrative academic purposes only;
D. Material that is intended to damage, to interfere with, or place an excessive load on a computer system or network.

2.6 Enforcement

The University reserves the right to remove from its servers or disconnect from its network any material or web pages that the University is either made aware of or becomes aware of being in violation of University policies or of applicable laws. The University will make reasonable effort to contact authors and stakeholders in advance of any content removal. Questions about whether material on a web page violates applicable policies or laws will be referred to the Web Policy Council or the University's General Counsel.

2.7 Appellant Process

Any student, staff, or faculty member may contest decisions made by the Web Policy Council by filing an appeal. Written requests to appear before the Council must contain the following information and be sent to the Executive Director of External Relations and Communications:

- Name, Title, Department

- Phone number and email address
- URL of identified web page(s)
- Reason for appeal
- Signature

A hearing with the Council will be scheduled within one month after the written request is submitted, and the Council will render a final decision within one month after the hearing.

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3. Official University Websites

3.1 Official Sites

Official sites are defined as:

A. Academic colleges, departments, programs, centers and labs;
B. Administrative departments;
C. Officially recognized student organizations;
D. Officially recognized committees and councils;
E. Grant-funded and research projects and institutes;
F. Existing sites on URI domain, web.uri.edu

3.2 Faculty Content

Individual faculty web content is included as part of their affiliated department website, to include contact information, bio, research interests, education, publications, curriculum vitae, or any other information that is related to the individual's work at the University.

A. Links to stand-alone individual/personal websites are permitted, but sites outside of an individual's department that contain content unrelated to University business are not hosted on the University's server.
B. Note: Chapter 6: Regulations of the University, which covers academic freedom and faculty conduct:

a. ***6.11.15*** *…As a person of learning and an educational officer, he [a teacher] should remember that the public may judge his profession and his institution by his utterances. Hence he should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that he is not an institutional spokesman…*

C. Faculty course content, and student work, will be hosted on the University's learning management system whenever possible.

D. Faculty publications may be hosted on the URI Library's [Digital Commons](#) site, provided the necessary rights and permissions have been granted.

E. If a faculty or staff member has additional web hosting needs that are not met by the resources offered above, those cases will be handled individually; ERC and ITS will work with them to find an appropriate solution.

3.3 Responsibilities

Content of official sites is the responsibility of External Relations and Communications (ERC).

A. Content is maintained by departments, in collaboration with ERC

B. Content must adhere to the University's [Web Content Guide](#) and [Brand Visual Standards](#).

3.4 Security and Access

A. Official sites should be hosted by the University's contracted managed web host ("the platform"), using the official URI web template(s)

   a. Access to official sites hosted on the platform is managed by ERC, in partnership with Information Technology Services (ITS) to ensure necessary security practices, including for SSO authentication.

B. Regardless of where a site is hosted, the unit must provide server access to University web personnel in ITS and ERC

4. URI Homepage and Global Navigation Menu

4.1 Homepage Content

Content for the URI homepage is created and managed by ERC, based on established content criteria.

4.2 Global Navigation

Approval for changes to the permanent home page structure or global navigation will go through ERC.