



Web Policy
and Guidelines

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-KANSAS CITY

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UMKC Web Guidelines

The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) website is a major vehicle for presenting our campus to the world. It is part marketing tool, part information source, and it is available to anyone in the world, anytime, anyplace. As such, official university websites should present professional, accessible, consistently-designed content that is easily navigable.

Following the guidelines presented here will:

- Build a strong, unified image for the University
- Ensure that the content found on university websites is relevant and appropriate
- Make the user experience positive
- Help campus websites communicate more effectively with their audiences, especially prospective students

The UMKC Web Policy ([link to policy](#)) applies to all UMKC websites/pages. The policy works with these guidelines to ensure accuracy and usability for all website audiences.

Required Elements for Official UMKC Websites

All official UMKC websites must include the following elements:

Header

All websites must have an official UMKC Header provided by MCOM. This will be the Global Header or the Legacy Header depending on what content management system (CMS) a site uses.

The only exceptions to this requirement are dynamic (database driven) pages that are part of a web application's interface and are behind a login.

Site Banner/Site Title

All websites must have a site banner and site title as provided by MCOM.

Navigation

All websites must have top-level navigation. No more than seven items are allowed in the top-level navigation. Some exclusions may include landing pages for marketing purposes. MCOM must review and approve pages without navigation before publishing.

Footer

All websites are required to have an official UMKC Footer provided by MCOM. This will be the Global Footer or the Legacy Footer depending on what content management system a site uses.

Contact Information

All websites must include contact information in the site footer. Contact information must include at least two of the following elements:

- Address – Must be the physical location, not the official UMKC mailing address
- Email – Must be a responsive, active email
- Phone Number – Must be an active phone number at which callers can reach someone

Accessibility

All websites must be accessible as outlined in guidelines for web accessibility.

Documents

When creating a link to a document that is a Word document, Excel file or PowerPoint presentation from a website, that document must be in PDF format, and the document must be accessible. It is recommended that files are made accessible before converting to PDF. Accessible files have headings and other text labeled, as well as alternative text on any graphics or images. The [UMKC Online site](#) has information on making different types of documents accessible.

Links

Please refer to the Links and Navigation section of the guidelines for web accessibility.

Maintenance

Websites can easily become out-of-date, and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the content and information presented is accurate and up-to-date. In order to ensure quality control, sites must be reviewed and updated at least once per semester. Sites that aren't maintained or up-to-date may be subject to editing or removal by MCOM per the UMKC Web Policy (link to policy here).

File Archive

Many offices like to keep an archive of various types of files (policies, newsletters, meeting minutes, etc.) available on their website. It is recommended that anything older than the past year be stored in [UMKC Box](#) with a link from the website. This helps UMKC websites up-to-date and allows search results to be less diluted over time.

CAPTCHA

All forms on websites that are not behind a login must have CAPTCHA in order to thwart spam and any extraction of data.

Restrictions

Logos

Department, school or program logos are not permitted on UMKC websites. Exceptions may include any required accreditation logos, but review and approval must be given by MCOM. Any other logos or marks wanted for websites must also be reviewed and approved by MCOM.

Flash/Pop-ups

All UMKC websites are not permitted to use Adobe Flash or pop-ups. If there are marketing needs, please discuss these with MCOM to discuss alternative solutions.

Required elements for UMKC Academic Websites

All websites for UMKC schools, colleges and academic units – i.e., Academic Websites – **must** include everything outlined under Required Elements for Official UMKC Websites, as well as the following elements:

Academic Programs/Degrees

All information must be formatted according to the template approved and provided by MCOM. This template includes information that is required by accrediting bodies, as well as material to help prospective students make informed decisions about attending UMKC.

No information that is in the UMKC Catalog should be duplicated. Academic programs/degrees pages should link to the relevant section of the Catalog for more information. The UMKC Catalog is the official listing of all academic programs/degrees.

Information about academic programs/degrees must also be submitted for use in the Academic Program Finder. This information should be brief and focused on marketing programs to prospective students.

Special Application Processes

Any special application process for programs/degrees/certificates must be included on the website.

Restrictions

Duplicate Information

Websites must avoid duplicate information across all UMKC sites. Examples include:

- Scholarship information: Any information on scholarships must be on the Financial Aid site and not duplicated on academic sites.
- UMKC Catalog: Any information from the official UMKC Catalog must not be duplicated.
- Giving and donations: Any information on giving or donating should direct users to the UMKC Foundation site.
- Special application processes: Any information about special application processes must live on academic sites, **not** the Admissions and/or Apply sites.

Definitions

It is important to have shared terminology when discussing the web. There are a number of terms used to describe websites and web presence at UMKC.

Audience page

An audience page is for a specific audience. UMKC has four top-level audience pages:

- Current students
- Faculty
- Staff
- Families

Other websites may have audience pages as needed to better organize content for multiple audiences

Cascade

Cascade is the name of the content management system UMKC is currently moving official supported sites to using. It is supported by Hannon Hill.

Content Management System (CMS)

A content management system is a tool for websites that helps web editors organize, create and edit content without knowledge of web development and coding skills. UMKC currently maintains Cascade and WordPress as the primary content management systems on campus.

Favicon

The icon associated with a website that is displayed in the browser address bar. All official websites/web pages must display the University of Missouri-Kansas City favicon. No other favicons are permitted.

Global Footer

The global footer is required on all official websites/web pages and includes the following elements:

- UMKC logo, linked to UMKC home page
- Strategic links, as determined by Strategic Marketing and Communications
- Tools links: Webmail, Pathway, Canvas, UMKC Connect
- Links to copyright, DMCA and equal opportunity statements
- Link to disability resources
- Link to webmaster@umkc.edu email

Global Header

The global header includes the institution title and search field. The institution title links back to the UMKC home page.

Home Suite

The Home Suite is used to describe the set of pages that exist at the root of the UMKC website along with the home page. These pages include:

- About Us (and secondary pages)
- Academics
- Admissions intro page
- Affordability
- Alumni and Giving intro page
- Athletics intro page
- Our Home in KC
- Research intro page
- Student Life intro page
- Audience pages:
 - Current students
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - Families
- A-Z Index
- Error pages
- Search results page

Legacy Footer

The legacy footer appears on websites built outside of the Cascade CMS and includes links to the University of Missouri Equal Opportunity Statement, Disability Services, Help Central, Consumer Information and webmaster@umkc.edu.

Legacy Header

The legacy header appears on websites built outside of the Cascade CMS and includes the institution title, search field and navigation to various UMKC sites.

Navigation

Navigation includes the primary menu, breadcrumbs and secondary menu.

Primary menu

The primary menu is the navigation that should appear first when someone is viewing a website, whether on desktop, tablet or mobile device. The items in the primary menu should reflect the overall structure – or information architecture – of the site. Primary menus should not use dropdown menus, as these can often cause user and accessibility issues. Primary menus should consist of no more than seven items, and they should remain the same no matter where a user is in that specific site.

Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs provide users with a trail to identify where they are in any given website by showing them the path from where they are to the site homepage.

Example:

A user is on Our History page of the UMKC website.

Breadcrumbs are:

Home / About / **Our History**

All websites that contain more than one page must use breadcrumbs.

NOTE: Some websites built previous to these guidelines may be missing breadcrumbs. If it is possible to add them easily, users should do so. If it is more difficult, breadcrumbs will be added as sites are added to the Cascade CMS.

Secondary menu

The secondary menu is navigation in addition to the primary menu on a website. Secondary menu links are often pages that fall under the primary menu sections. The parent page for all secondary menu items should be the same.

Example:

About is a primary menu link and parent page

Secondary menu for About includes:

- Mission, Vision and Values
- History
- Quick Facts
- Etc.

The secondary menu typically only displays on inside pages of a website, not on the homepage. If a secondary menu item has child pages, a different secondary menu will display within that section of the site.

Example:

The Strategic Plan page is a child page of the About page, but there are additional Strategic Plan pages. When in the About section, the About secondary menu displays. EXCEPT when you enter the Strategic Plan page – a new secondary menu displays with Strategic Plan and child pages to navigate through that section. Breadcrumbs go back to home page to allow users to know where they are within the site.

Official and Unofficial Websites/Web Pages

Official Websites/Web Pages

Official websites are those that represent university departments, schools, colleges, academic units or programs. All official pages must adhere to web policy, as well as all content and technical requirements.

There are three main types of official websites/web pages:

- Primary websites – Websites that MCOM has helped to develop, maintains or is otherwise involved in the production. All primary websites are either already in or will be moved into the university content management system.
- Landing pages – Individual pages that have been identified as needed by MCOM for events or programs that need a web presence. They follow web guidelines but may have different requirements for page elements as identified in the requirements guidelines.
- Supplementary websites – Websites for labs, grant-funded programs or other purposes that have been identified as representing the university but that are not supported by MCOM. These sites should be built on the WordPress server, info.umkc.edu, and must follow the web guidelines.

In addition, some primary websites are also identified as academic websites. Academic websites are the primary website for any school, college or academic unit at UMKC. Academic websites must meet the Requirements for Academic Websites in addition to the broader requirements.

Unofficial Websites/Web Pages

Any websites/web pages belonging to one of the following groups is identified as unofficial:

- Faculty and staff personal pages
- Student organizations
- Affiliate organizations
- Constituent organizations
- Government funded programs

All unofficial pages must still adhere to the web guidelines.

Responsive/Mobile-Friendly

All UMKC sites must be responsive, or mobile-friendly. This means that the website displays pertinent information in an easy-to-access format on all screen sizes, from desktop to phone.

NOTE: We recognize that some sites may have been built before responsive design was required, and may need larger development to become responsive. These sites will be updated to be responsive as they are added to the CMS.

Secure Information

When building forms on websites, it is important that the proper medium be used depending on the type of information being gathered. Secure information is information that can be used to defraud or steal someone's identity. This can include, but is not limited to birthdate, social security number and student identification number. When collecting secure information, [Information Services](#) must be involved in the development of forms or applications.

Secure Websites

A user may occasionally see a notice in their browser window or receive an error message when trying to navigate to a site that indicates that sites is not "secure." What this typically means is that the site is not using an SSL certificate or that some assets that are referenced by the site contain http in their url instead of https. All UMKC sites must use an SSL certificate and should maintain security by only referencing files through https.

Site Banner

The site banner for all official websites/web pages includes the UMKC logo and the name of the site. The site title must link to the home page of that specific site. The UMKC logo will link to the UMKC home page.

Site-Specific Footer

The site-specific footer is recommended for all websites/web pages and should contain the following information:

- Site name
- Contact information including address, phone number and email
- Social icons with links to relevant social profiles, if applicable
- Related links, if applicable

Website Accessibility

Website accessibility refers to the ability of a website to be used by people with various levels of ability and using different types of technology (such as screen readers). This can include but is not limited to: people with vision or hearing impairments, mobility impairments, color blindness, epilepsy and other types of disabilities.

In a broader sense, website accessibility can also mean making a site more usable through easy-to-read content, headings to divide content into smaller sections and making the site simpler to scan.

WordPress

WordPress is one of the two primary content management systems used at UMKC. Unofficial sites and official supplementary sites should be built in WordPress. Most WordPress sites are housed on the info.umkc.edu server.

Accessibility

The University of Missouri-Kansas City strives to provide accessible resources for all users to meet legal guidelines and to be in line with our statement of values. The information provided is to help web editors and developers comply with federal and university standards.

There can be a lot of work to keeping your site accessible, so one of the best things you can do to maintain accessibility is reduce the amount of content you put on your website. Thinking carefully about all the other ways you can share content and minimizing the amount of information you put on your website can make it easier for everyone to use.

Web Editors

Web editors are those who provide content updates on websites for their department, division, academic unit, school or college. Some web developers may also be web editors and should make themselves familiar with all of the requirements for both web editors and developers.

Visual Elements

Alternative Text

All non-text content (images, video, audio files, etc.) must include alternative text, unless they are background images or for decoration only. In these cases, you may still want to provide alternative text that indicates it is a decorative element or a background picture.

Alternative text may look different depending on the type of file. Examples include:

- **Alternative text on images:** Sites built in WordPress or Cascade CMS include fields for alternative text on images, but web editors may need to add this in the code on other sites.
 - Code example:
``
- **Captions on videos:** All videos must be captioned when there is speaking. YouTube provides a first pass on captions, but these should be edited for grammar, spelling, and transcription mistakes.
- **Transcripts on videos and audio files:** All videos and audio files must have a transcript posted with them. A transcript provides additional information not included in captions, such as scenery changes, music, laughter or other types of audio and visual cues that inform what is happening in the video or audio track.

Text on Images

Important text should never be built into images. If text is important to the user, web editors should use live type to display it. The only time text on images is allowed is if it is non-essential. In these cases, it should also be included in the alternative text.

Using GIFS, Videos or Animations

GIFS, videos and other types of animations can add interactivity and interest to websites, but they can also be problematic for individuals with different disabilities. Rapidly flashing content can cause seizures and must be avoided. Do not include anything that flashes more than three times per second. Any videos must have controls on them that allow users to pause the motion.

Headings

One of the best ways a website editor can make their site more accessible is to use headings. Headings make it easier for those using screen readers or other assistive technology to quickly scan a page and determine what content is relevant. Headings are also a great way to make content more easily scannable for everyone using your website.

- **Heading order:** It is important that headings be in the correct order to make the site more accessible. Site titles and page titles should both be Heading 1 (H1). Remaining content should start with Heading 2 (H2). New sections on the page can start with H2.

Example:

Heading 1 - Page Title	
Intro text Heading 2 Content Heading 3 Content Heading 4 Content	Heading 2 - Sidebar Content Heading 3 Content
Heading 2 - Additional content module Content	

Text Content

Descriptive Text

When using text to refer to additional elements on the page, it is important to avoid sensory cues. Use label sections of your web page and identify them appropriately.

Examples:

Problem text: "To select an option, review the menu items on the left."

Solution: "To select an option, review the menu items in the sidebar." (Make sure sidebar is labeled as such).

Problem text: "Please see resources below."

Solution: "Please see resources section for more information." (Use "Resources" as heading for this section).

Readability

It can be difficult for even the most advanced readers to read on a screen or website, so it is important to make text content as easy to read as possible. We recommend writing content at the ninth grade level or below for greater accessibility. Web editors can use [Hemingway App](#) to make text more readable.

Color Contrast

When using color on websites, it is important that the contrast is high enough that users with color-blindness can still view the content appropriately. While many elements containing color are developed prior to web editors updating content, some web editors may choose to use color for text or background, which is why they must follow the appropriate standards.

In order to test for contrast, we recommend the [Accessible Colors tool](#). We recommend aiming for AAA compliance, but only AA is required.

Navigation and Links

Consistent Navigation

When navigations are repeated, they must be listed in the same order to avoid confusion. For example, if navigation is repeated across the primary menu and the secondary menu, items must display in the same order in both.

In addition, navigation should perform consistently within a website. For example, primary and secondary menu links should always open pages within that website when possible. Exceptions to this may include a landing page that is using secondary navigation to highlight other websites or pages throughout the UMKC site.

Link Display

Links are often indicated by different color text. As noted above, this can be problematic for someone with color-blindness, so links should also be underlined. Text that is not a link should *never* be underlined to avoid confusion. If links are displayed in buttons, they do not have to be underlined.

Link Content

The text used to indicate a link should be as descriptive as possible so that users can determine whether they should follow that link. For example, labeling links “Click here” doesn’t tell the user anything about what to expect, whereas, “Register now,” “View application” or “Learn more about the School of Graduate Studies” all indicate what the user can expect if they follow those links.

Link Targets

Most websites and pages have links that go to additional pages — both within that site and to external sites. There are several possible actions — or targets — for links:

- Open in the same window
- Open in a new tab
- Open in a new window

Web editors adding new links should follow these rules for link targets:

- **Links that are within the same site:** Open in same window (you do not typically have to set a target for these as this is the default for most websites)
- **Links within any UMKC site:** Open in same window
- **Links in sites that are external to UMKC:** Open in new tab or window
- **PDFs or other types of documents:** Open in new tab or window

Whenever possible, it is recommended to indicate that a link is going to open in a new tab or window. When it is a PDF, web editors should indicate this with “(PDF)” after the link title.

Adding Document Files to Websites

When creating a link to a document that is a Word document, Excel file, or PowerPoint presentation from a website, that document must be in PDF format, and the document must be accessible. It is recommended that files are made accessible before converting to PDF. Accessible files have headings and other text labeled, as well as alternative text on any graphics or images.

Adding Forms to Websites

Many web editors may work with a web developer or Information Services (IS) to develop forms for their site. All forms on UMKC websites must be accessible. Web editors should include clear instructions for filling out forms as well as directions for any fields requiring additional information to whoever is helping them develop their form.

Web Developers

We understand that web developers at the university are developing in a variety of languages and tools, and we want to help them make UMKC web as accessible as possible for everyone. While we recommend reviewing the [W3C Accessibility Standards](#) when developing, we have included a few important guidelines and resources for developing at UMKC.

Defining Language

Web developers must define the content language at the beginning of every web page. For example, html markup for English is `<html lang="en">`.

Using ARIA Markup

Accessible Rich Internet Applications, or ARIA, markup allows users with assistive technology such as screen readers to better interact with websites. When developing sites, using ARIA markup can help users quickly and easily navigate a page. ARIA markup can also be used to make forms more accessible by labeling fields and adding instructions within the markup.

[Learn more about ARIA and its use for web accessibility.](#)

Breadcrumbs

All websites larger than one page must have breadcrumbs to allow for ease of navigation.

Color Contrast

Color contrast can be important for users who experience color blindness. When developing sites, it is important to use color in ways that contrast is high enough for all users to access content. Some areas where developers may need to consider color contrast include but are not limited to:

- Background colors
- Heading colors (along with font size)
- Textured backgrounds
- Link colors

In order to test for contrast, we recommend the [Accessible Colors tool](#). We recommend aiming for AAA compliance, but only AA is required.

Headings

Headings are an essential element for making websites accessible. Therefore, it is important to communicate with web editors about headings when developing a site. Many times, web editors and designers use headings based on how they look instead of the order they should be used. Having conversations with web editors about their expectations for heading stylings can help ensure that headings used in the appropriate order are styled correctly.

Pop-Ups

All UMKC websites must avoid using pop-ups. If there are marketing needs, please discuss these with MCOM to explore other alternatives to pop-ups.

Keyboard Navigation

Users should be able to navigate every UMKC website via keyboard if necessary. Web developers must ensure that users can navigate via keyboard and that focus elements are highlighted when appropriate. For example, if a user is focused on a link, that link should change color, underline (if not already), or perform some other action to indicate that it is currently the focus.

Skip to Main Content

All websites must include a link to “Skip to main content” before repetitive content for users trying to navigate sites with assistive technology.