# Wilkes University Digital Governance Guide

# Digital Governance Overview

## What is Digital Governance?

*"Digital governance is a framework for establishing accountability, roles, and decision-making authority for an organization's digital presence—which means its websites, mobile sites, social channels, and any other Internet and Web-enabled products and services."*

> From Lisa Welchman, "The Basics of Digital Governance" in *Managing Chaos: Digital Governance by Design* (New York: Rosenfield Media, 2015), 11-18

## What Does Digital Governance Entail?

Digital governance outlines processes, standards and decision-making authority for these areas:

- **Digital strategy:** the organization's approach to leveraging the capabilities of the internet and other emerging technologies

- **Digital policy***:* guidance put into place to manage risk and ensure the organization's core interests are served as it operates online

- **Digital standards:** the exact nature of an organization's digital portfolio, including websites, social media profiles, branding, and content and its related distribution channels

## Why Does Digital Governance Matter?

**Digital governance:**

- Enables organizations to grow and mature digitally by having consistent and clear guidance
- Reduces uncertainty around the development, maintenance and implementation of digital strategies
- Minimizes tactical debates around the nature and management of an organization's digital presence
- Makes clear who has decision-making authority in relation to digital properties
- Establishes accountability for all matters digital
- Is flexible to the changing needs of the organization

**Without governance:**

- Content editors can't contribute effectively
- Content and design is off brand
- Investments into new web designs or technology can be wasted
- Content and experiences are "cobbled together" and inconsistent
- Bottlenecks exist for getting things done
- Poor content quality is likely (e.g., inaccessibly, poorly rendered photos, typos)

## Best Practices in Digital Governance

Modern Campus, the creator of OU Campus, our content management system, provides an excellent resource that discusses website governance best practices. In general, organizations that implement web governance have found that it's critical to:

**Distribute contributor responsibilities**: Developing and maintaining a website of great size and scope is quite an undertaking. To be successful, it's helpful to have multiple contributors with appropriate training and clear brand policies everyone can follow. At Wilkes, we've established a hierarchy that includes multiple contributors to ensure Wilkes.edu is accurate, engaging and current.

**Designate publishers:** When assembling teams to work on web properties, it's critical to decide who can publish new or revised pages. At Wilkes, we've determined that content editors are able to make edits to existing pages. But ultimately, Web Services must approve and publish any new or revised pages to ensure compliance with best practices. And of course, any content editor is able to provide feedback or draft copy to Web Services to assist.

**Document guidelines:** Editorial style, image standards, accessibility practices and brand guidelines should be documented and easily accessible. At Wilkes, we've developed this policy, as well as an editorial style guide and brand guidelines, that can assist any collaborator. Marketing Communications updates and maintains all guidelines and can answer questions regarding how we handle content, images or the University's identity.

**Determine a final decision-maker:** Occasional disagreements will happen regarding content: whether it meets guidelines, where it should be placed, etc. With this in mind, an authority should be designated to make final decisions.

At Wilkes, Marketing Communications owns and is responsible for all web properties to ensure they align with the University's strategic goals. Ultimately, final approval will rest with this team in the event of a disagreement. However, Marketing Communications is open to feedback and will work toward mutual understanding with all stakeholders.

**Leverage tools to manage governance:** When building a University website on a content management system, it's important to review the tools and features available to see how they may support governance. At Wilkes, we leverage user and group permissions as well as review and quality assurance tools within our content management system, OU Campus.

**Develop editorial calendars:** Content calendars with regular intervals for updates can keep websites current. These calendars should include any occasions or moments when major site features (e.g., homepage hero image) might be updated, the review process for existing content, and who's responsible for new content development or routine reviews. At Wilkes, Marketing Communications has content calendars in place for key University events, student story features, recruitment deadlines, and other milestones, as well as general website maintenance.

According to VisionPoint Marketing, a solid policy rests on developing the five Rs:

1. **Roles** - Who is involved and what roles do they play?
2. **Responsibilities** - Each role should have defined responsibilities so everyone is clear on who is in charge of what.
3. **Relationships** - How do these roles interact with each other and what is the hierarchy?
4. **Rules** - Are there written instructions and procedures for content, branding or other functions?
5. **Review** - Who is accountable and in control of final changes?

We have developed our digital governance policy with these best practices in mind.

# Governance Structure

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The website Wilkes.edu and its related subdomains and web properties are the sole property of Wilkes University. While certain faculty and staff will have access to edit portions of the site, create new content, or make website changes, the site and all related web properties remain the property of Wilkes University.

Marketing Communications oversees the content, design and functionality of Wilkes University's core digital properties. These properties include:
- Wilkes.edu
- Related subdomains and webpages
- News@Wilkes
- Today@Wilkes
- Wilkes University social media accounts

It should be noted that GoWilkesU.com is managed by Wilkes University Athletics and is separate from Wilkes.edu. Alumni Relations and Advancement manages Community.Wilkes.edu and related alumni web properties. It should also be noted that departments and colleges, such as the Nesbitt School of Pharmacy and Admissions, manage individual social media accounts - with guidance and support from Marketing Communications - for their respective organizations.

Marketing Communications develops marketing and communications strategies in cooperation with appropriate university departments to increase enrollment, fundraising and brand awareness among targeted audiences. The mission and vision of the department is to support the University's mission, and enrollment and fundraising goals detailed in the University's Strategic Plan.

Creative Services is part of Marketing Communications and manages the visual assets for the University, including the selection and implementation of all fonts, colors, graphics, imagery, and styles. The goal of Creative Services is to govern the identity of the University and to ensure compliance with visual brand guidelines across all properties, both virtual and in print.

Web Services is part of Marketing Communications and implements the overall strategic vision for Wilkes.edu and its related subdomains and webpages. The goal of Web Services is to maintain a high standard in all aspects of web design, navigation, usability, and content.

Web Services partners with other members of our University community to maintain webpages, manage social media accounts, and create content. These partners are known as content editors.

All members of our community that create, edit, or maintain webpages must adhere to our Web Governance Policy.

## Roles and Responsibilities

**Marketing Communications:**
- Includes Creative Services and Web Services
- Oversees and sets the strategic direction for Wilkes.edu and all other related digital properties, including but not limited to social media accounts, blogs, and podcasts
- Establishes policies and procedures to govern current and future digital standards
- Determines website navigation and content structure, hierarchy and placement
- Creates and implements style guides, graphic standards, and brand guidelines
- Collaborates with Information Technology Services and the Office of Risk & Compliance Management to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory standards, including accessibility, security, and protection of privacy

**Creative Services (part of Marketing Communications):**
- Manages and maintains all University visual assets in alignment with strategic objectives set by Marketing Communications
- Ensures Wilkes.edu and all associated properties are in compliance with visual brand guidelines
- Creates visual assets in support of the strategic direction for Wilkes.edu and all other related digital properties
- Assists Web Services in the sourcing of visual assets, including graphics, photography, and video
- Implements style guides, graphic standards, and brand guidelines across web properties in collaboration with Web Services

**Web Services (part of Marketing Communications):**
- Manages and maintains Wilkes.edu and related web properties in alignment with strategic objectives set by Marketing Communications

- Implements and maintains all web technologies and tools, including but not limited to OU Campus (CMS system), WordPress (News at Wilkes), Hotjar (user experience testing), and Google Analytics
- Regularly audits the website to ensure it is functional and accurate
- Audits webpages to ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory standards
- Ensures all webpages and related creative assets (e.g. photography, video, downloadable files) are appropriately functional, accessible, and organized
- Provides quality assurance testing and oversight of all edits made to webpages by content editors
- Copy edits and proofreads all content for compliance with Wilkes style guidelines
- Leads training in OU Campus, web governance, accessibility, and standards
- Analyzes website performance and user behavior
- Optimizes the user experience for speed, usability, or conversion optimization

**Content Editors:**
- Designated by Web Services
- Must complete mandatory training in OU Campus, accessibility standards, and web governance
- Limited to one (1) content editor per department/program/group EXCEPT for the graduate and undergraduate bulletins
- Responsible for keeping their designated webpages updated and accurate
- Submit changes to webpages to Web Services for review and quality assurance
- Review web text and other website components to ensure compliance with any external guidelines (e.g., accreditation standards) and collaborate with Web Services to implement any required changes
- Comply with all brand guidelines, style guides and web governance policies
- Provide feedback to Web Services on the web experience

**Website Redesign Committee:**
In the event of a website redesign, a committee will be formed consisting of various members of our campus community. Their charge will be to help guide the redesign process through:
- Assisting in vendor selection
- Communicating the process across campus and within their organizational units
- Building internal support for the redesign process
- Reviewing design proposals
- Sharing knowledge about the website redesign
- Confirming infrastructure/site architecture
- Assisting in the migration and testing of a new website

# Process

### Policy Implementation

Marketing Communications will create and administer all digital governance policies for Wilkes University, and reserves the right to make periodic updates as process, technology changes, industry best practice, or compliance requires.

Content editors and other affected departments will be notified of any relevant changes that will affect them.

### Content Editor Support & Training

Web Services maintains all user accounts within our governance structure in OU Campus. Each user, or content editor, is assigned to a group corresponding with a University department or office.  Each group will receive one (1) user account for a content editor to support website updates, except for the bulletin, which requires multiple editors from across our campus community.

All content editors must complete approved training on OU Campus as well as web governance and accessibility standards before being granted access to our content management system.

It is the content editor's responsibility to remain up to date on changes to our governance policy or any of our processes. Should additional training be required, Web Services will notify content editors and facilitate training sessions.

Web Services is responsible for leading all training sessions along with providing support documents and training resources. Content editors should take notes on the material, practice what is discussed, and use the training and guidelines provided.

Each year, Web Services will establish a training schedule and materials for content editors. All content editors will be notified of training opportunities as well as support documentation that may be helpful.

Should support be required by content editors, they may contact Web Services for assistance.

## Web Requests

While content editors are able to make some changes to existing webpages, Web Services is responsible for managing all website change requests on Wilkes.edu, including editing of existing pages, the creation of new pages, or the removal of pages. Requests to make changes to web content or webpages can be directed to Web Services by submitting a request online via request form or via email at webservices@wilkes.edu.

## Archiving

Maintaining an up-to-date website is critical to our strategic goals; however, it is also important to preserve relevant information. It is our standard practice to archive materials after approximately two (2) years if:
- The content is no longer in use
- The content is no longer accurate or relevant
- The content is no longer needed

Archiving a webpage or a file on our web properties may involve:
- Removing or taking down a webpage and redirecting the webpage to an alternative
- Moving content to another storage location, such as within Google Drive, the Portal, or another resource
- Unpublishing a webpage so that it may be edited and republished at a later date

To discuss archival procedures as they pertain to your department or section of the website, please contact Web Services.

# Policies and Standards

## Web Governance Policy

### Our Goals

All web properties that fall under the Wilkes.edu domain strive to meet the following goals:

- Offer intuitive user experience by presenting information in a clear, concise and accurate way.
- Provide content that is informative, high quality and easy to navigate.
- Achieve a consistent look and feel that is aligned with the Wilkes University brand.
- Meet and maintain web accessibility and security standards and requirements.
- Follow all Wilkes University brand standards and style guidelines.
- Improve the visibility of Wilkes University in the media, in our target audiences, and in search engines.

### Guiding Principles

1. **Our visitors come first**. All of the work that we do — including the design, imagery, text and allocation of resources — is created with the needs of our audiences in mind.

2. **Be consistent with the brand.** The Wilkes University brand is our greatest asset and needs to be protected. As it reflects our reputation and visibility, we ensure that all of our web assets — from fonts and colors to imagery and messaging — reflect the Wilkes brand and meet its standards.

3. **Our web structure is inclusive.** Our navigation structure and content is based on the needs of our visitors. We ensure that our properties include user-friendly American with Disabilities (ADA) compliant content, information architecture and navigation.

4. **Our properties are designed to serve.** We use responsive design as a future-proof approach to ensure that our webpages function well across multiple devices, including computers, tablets and smartphones. We also prioritize page load speeds and information hierarchy to make our content easily accessible.

Wilkes.edu serves a variety of audiences. We design our digital presence to help all of these audiences find the content they are searching for quickly and easily. We create web experiences that are accessible, convenient and valuable.

| Prospective Students & Their Families | Current Students, Faculty and Staff | Alumni | Community |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inclusive of prospective students, parents and families, or current students looking for new opportunities | Inclusive of all current students, faculty, staff, and the broader University community | Inclusive of those who have been part of the Wilkes community as students, faculty or staff | Inclusive of prospective faculty and staff, industry leaders, researchers, external partners, the media, and members of the public at large |

While Wilkes.edu serves different types of users, it is first and foremost a marketing and recruitment tool to attract and engage prospective students and their families. We prioritize prospective students and their families as the primary audience we serve.

**What We Know About Our Audiences**

- **They expect experiences that look good on all devices.** This is why it's critical that our webpages are responsive and built with a mobile-first approach.

- **They want information — fast**. That means creating pages that load quickly. It also means organizing information so that it's easily accessible and being mindful of how content is created and organized.

- **They want their questions answered.** Content should always serve the needs of our primary audiences. Wilkes prioritizes providing informative and valuable web experiences that help users find what they're looking for.

Web Standards

Design and Content

**Design Ownership and Workflow**
Marketing Communications will oversee the design of Wilkes.edu and all related properties. This includes functions such as:

- Ensuring all webpages meet brand guidelines for use of color, imagery, fonts, logos and styles
- Determining the layout of webpages and how information is displayed
- Selecting and implementing features within our content management system to organize and display information
- Reviewing webpage experiences to ensure the design is optimized for conversion (i.e., for users to take action)
- Resizing and optimizing images to improve page load speeds
- Implementing features that allow users to interact with our webpages, such as forms, embedded media or personalized content serving

In general, the following process will be followed for managing the design of our web assets:

- Marketing Communications will determine brand guidelines, brand strategy, key messages and desired outcomes for all design assets.
- Creative Services, as part of Marketing Communications, will implement brand standards through the selection and creation of fonts, colors, imagery, graphics, logos, and styles.
- Web Services will review all web properties to ensure compliance with design standards set within brand guidelines and collaborate with Creative Services to source and implement design elements.
- Web Services will build, manage and maintain all interactive features and content management systems that facilitate the design.
- Web Services will be responsible for all design changes within the content management system, including page layouts, styling, and multimedia (i.e., graphics, photography and video assets used on webpages).
- IT will assist Web Services in the troubleshooting and resolution of technical challenges regarding the server-side delivery of design assets.

Typically, Web Services will be able to manage most day-to-day design changes. However, with the passage of time and the development of new best practices in design, Wilkes.edu and its related properties will require periodic redesigns where the entire style, layout and function is reviewed and updated. When a website redesign is desired, the following process will be followed:

- An audit and state-of-the-union review will be conducted by Marketing Communications.
- A budget and specifications document will be created to charge a partner/agency with redeveloping the site.
- Marketing Communications will create a request for proposals (RFP) for developers to submit bids.
- Proposals will be submitted and reviewed.
- Marketing Communications will assemble a Website Redesign Committee consisting of representatives from throughout the organization.
- The Website Redesign Committee will assist in selection of the developer.
- Once selected, the developer will undergo a discovery and onboarding process with Wilkes.
- The developer will present design concepts and wireframes.
- The Website Redesign Committee and Marketing Communications will review wireframes and design concepts and provide feedback.
- The approved wireframes and design concepts will be coded.
- The existing website will be migrated to the new design on our chosen CMS system.
- The new website will be tested by IT, Web Services, and volunteers from the Website Redesign Committee.
- Once the new website has been tested and reviewed for quality, it will launch.
- Post-launch, Web Services and IT will review the performance of the new website to check for bugs, errors or other technical issues.
- Training will then be provided to content editors by Web Services to familiarize them with the new design and any new functionality.
- We will then adopt the new design and build support/understanding for the new design throughout our campus and community.

Should a change in content management system (CMS) be desired when exploring a website redesign, the following process will be followed:

- An audit and state-of-the-union review will be conducted by Marketing Communications and IT.
- A budget and specifications document will be created to provide an outline of desired needs for a CMS system.
- Marketing Communications will create a request for proposals (RFP) for CMS systems to submit bids.
- Proposals will be submitted and reviewed by Marketing Communications and IT.
- The CMS will be selected.

**Content Ownership and Workflow**

Content on Wilkes.edu will be:
- Strategically guided by Marketing Communications
- Implemented by Web Services
- Supported by content editors

This means that content editors may make changes or updates to webpages they are responsible for. However, those changes or updates will be submitted to Web Services for review prior to going live. Marketing Communications will provide strategic direction to Web Services on what content should be prioritized, key messaging and compliance standards to be met.

Should content editors need assistance in gathering assets or writing website content, please contact Marketing Communications.

***In general, if you are creating content yourself, the following workflow applies:***

1. Hypothesis: Begin your content creation process by asking what story you wish to tell or what information you wish to convey.
2. Research: Collect research to support your content, such as student testimonials, statistics, or other key content elements.
3. Outline: Craft an outline of your web content and key points.
4. Write: Draft your web copy based on your outline.
5. Review: Review your web copy with stakeholders within your department or program. Proofread and verify accuracy. Review content to ensure it meets accessibility standards.

6. Visuals: Research and source visuals that can engage audiences. Provide these images to Web Services for implementation on your page.
7. Format: Input your content into our content management system, OU Campus, and preview changes. Be sure to include any relevant links, double check headings and subheadings, and give everything one last proofread.
8. Submit for Approval: Submit your changes in OU Campus for Web Services to review.
9. Review: Web Services will review your content to ensure it meets all quality, compliance and accessibility standards.
10. Publish: Once approved by Web Services, your page will be published.


**Visuals and Multimedia**

The Web Services team will make any requested image or video changes to webpages. Content editors are not permitted to upload, change or modify any media or design assets on webpages.

Multimedia assets and visuals, such as videos and photography, are designed to enhance a web user's experience.
- Images should be properly cropped, focused (not blurry), and in alignment with our brand guidelines.
- Submit only images that you have permission to use. If you have questions about using an image or need an image for your webpage, please contact Creative Services.
- Media assets should load quickly; therefore it's important that assets are appropriately sized. Creative Services and Web Services will make any adjustments to assets to ensure they load quickly.
- Remember to include alternative text on all images and use captioning or transcripts on videos.

When requesting images, graphics or videos be added to a webpage:
- Images should be in a jpg or jpeg file format
- Attach high-resolution photos of good quality (at least 72 dpi)

Should any images, videos or graphics be determined unusable by Creative Services and Web Services, these departments will work with content editors to locate suitable alternatives.

## Copyright

Copyright violation is a serious offense that comes with strict penalties. It is the responsibility of content editors to ensure that all of the content, including text, images, video and music, complies with all copyright laws. Any content on Wilkes.edu that infringes on copyright will immediately be removed by Web Services and the content owner will be notified.

## Faculty & Staff Directory

The Faculty & Staff Directory on Wilkes.edu is a customized feature within our content management system that directly feeds in data from Human Resources (Banner) to populate directory listings and pages. The Faculty & Staff Directory must align with Human Resources and all corresponding files in Banner.

Department directory pages or categories are created automatically using Banner and cannot be modified. Department directory pages will be present only if there is an official University department or office on file with Human Resources.

If a contact (i.e., a faculty or staff member) needs to be added to a specific department directory page, a request can be made to Web Services.

Manually inputted or custom-built directory pages are not permitted.

**For example:**

Marketing Communications is an official University department. Creative Services and Web Services are part of Marketing Communications.

Marketing Communications will have a department directory page, as it is an official University department and is in alignment with Banner files in Human Resources.

Creative Services and Web Services **DO NOT** have department directory pages as they are not official University departments and are not segmented separately in Banner files in Human Resources. Pages for these groups cannot be created manually. Instead, these contacts will reside in the Marketing Communications department directory listing.

The Web Services team will govern the architecture of Wilkes.edu in accordance with site accessibility and user experience best practices.

However, should an information architecture change request be made (i.e., a page requested to be moved from one section of the site to another), consider the following:
- Can a link to the desired page accomplish the same outcome as moving it?
- Does the requested new page destination make sense to a user visiting Wilkes.edu for the first time?
- Is this change related to a structural or organization change within the university?

Web Services will periodically review the architecture of Wilkes.edu to ensure that users are able to effectively access pages and that user journeys align with the overall goals and objectives of the website.

Should changes be required, Web Services will facilitate archiving, removal or redirection of pages as appropriate.

## Web Tools and Applications

On occasion, Web Services may augment our content management system with web tools and applications such as:
- Personalization software, to deliver personalized messaging to users
- Custom forms, to collect inquiries or facilitate event registration
- RSS feeds, to integrate content from other sources with our webpages
- UX testing tools, to monitor user activities and journeys
- Analytics tools, to monitor website traffic and performances

In addition to supplemental web tools and applications, Web Services also leverages our CRM system, Slate. Web Services will collaborate with Admissions and Enrollment Management to implement Slate integrations with our webpages.

Web Services is responsible for the selection, maintenance and implementation of any related web tools and applications. Content editors are not permitted to add any third-party web tools or applications to their webpages.

## Network and Server Infrastructure

Information Technology Services governs the network and server infrastructure required to support Wilkes.edu. If you have any questions about our network and server infrastructure, please contact:

Gerald Korea
Director of Administrative/Enterprise Services
Information Technology Services
gerald.korea@wilkes.edu
(570) 408-7220

## Analytics and Outcomes

Website analytics are an important tool for measuring activities that occur on the website. Wilkes uses analytics tools, like Google Analytics, to not only see visitor behavior but to evaluate the site, determine better user pathways, and to update content so that it can offer a better user experience.

When reviewing analytics data, we're looking to see:
- What actions visitors take on the website
- How visitors browse webpages and what they tend to click on
- If pages are taking too long to load
- If the site is being slowed down by excess content or graphics
- If all the pages are necessary
- If pages can be combined or simplified to help users navigate
- If visitors engage with the content we want them to
- If there are any broken pages, broken links, or other technical errors

# Accessibility

Everyone with access to Wilkes University digital properties, including Wilkes.edu and related subdomains, must be familiar with and must follow web accessibility standards to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disability Act and other regulations.

**Policy Statement:** Wilkes University is committed to making its websites accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of technology or ability. Our efforts are ongoing as we incorporate the relevant improvements to meet WCAG 2.0 AA guidelines.

**References:**
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview](#)
- [How to Meet WCAG 2 (Quick Reference)](#)

If you have specific questions or concerns about the accessibility of the site or content on Wilkes.edu, please contact us at webmaster@wilkes.edu. If you do encounter an accessibility issue, please be sure to specify the webpage where it occurred and we will make all reasonable efforts to make that page accessible.

It is the responsibility of all users to familiarize and train themselves on the standards outlined in the policy. Any content that is created or uploaded that does not meet WCAG 2.0 standards is subject to removal until it meets those standards.

Web Services will facilitate regular web accessibility training to give users opportunities to better understand and improve their skills in these areas.

## Accessibility Best Practices

### Page Titles

Page titles are the titles displayed at the top of each webpage that tell users what page they are on. They should be used to help users quickly understand a webpage's content. They should be unique, concise and in alignment with the content present on the page.

### Headings

Headings are used to create outlines on pages that allow for users to navigate content easily.

It's best practice to use headings to provide page structure or to signal different sections of information throughout a webpage. When using headings, nest appropriately (i.e., follow the hierarchy):

1. H1 tags are the page title and are already populated within our CMS.
2. H2 tags are major headings
3. H3 and H4 tags are subheadings

You may not skip levels (e.g. use H1 and H3 tags but no H2 tags).

## Links

Links are an important way for users to navigate through a website. When adding links to your webpages, it's important to make sure that they make sense out of context.

Avoid using phrases like "click here" or "read more" as they are not helpful to users who may be using a screen reader to navigate the webpage. Instead, use descriptive anchor text or naming conventions as they can give the user an indication of where the link is pointing to.

For example, when writing about the Center of Career Development and Internships and linking to that department's page, it is best to use the department's name as the anchor text in the link.

> **YES:** At Wilkes, [The Center for Career Development and Internships](#) can help you search for prospective employers in the Wilkes-Barre area.

> **NO:** At Wilkes, The Center for Career Development and Internships can help you search for prospective employers in the Wilkes-Barre area. [Click here](#) to learn more.

## Images

Images make page content engaging and dynamic. They can also be effective tools for sharing information quickly and in a meaningful way. However, for readers who may not be able to see the image, it's important to include alternative text (i.e., alt text) on images to describe what's in the image textually.
Alt text will be displayed in place of an image if an image file cannot be loaded or will be read out loud to users who are using screen readers.

Screen readers or other assistive technology will read this alternative text to users to describe its contents. Alt text should meet the following requirements:
- Gives context of the image and what meaning it adds to the page
- Describes what is contained in the image
- Is clear and concise (125 characters or less)
- Avoids redundant statements like "Image of" or "This is a picture of"

Alt text should be added to all images (except for decorative images, which will be noted separately in our CMS).

### Multimedia

When using videos or other multimedia content on webpages, it's important to make sure that it's accessible to assistive technology. Audio files should have an accompanying transcript, and videos should be captioned.

It's recommended to use YouTube for hosting and sharing videos as it features built-in captioning and transcript tools.

### PDFs, Documents, and Files

When possible, information should be made accessible via webpages instead of downloadable documents. However, when using forms, documents or files on webpages, it's important to make sure that they are accessible.

Document file types are not always natively accessible and often need formatting to ensure that they can be understood or edited using assistive technology. To be accessible:
- Create documents that are accessible by taking advantage of accessibility features built into Adobe Acrobat DC or Microsoft Office.
- When creating or converting documents to another format, ensure that the file is appropriately tagged for accessibility.
- Avoid using the Print to PDF function when generating a PDF as this does not meet accessibility standards.
- Test and review all documents prior to adding them to webpages.

Maintaining documents and files can be a challenge, but it is critical to keep these items up to date to offer the best possible user experience. Files that are out of date after two (2) years should be archived, removed or replaced.

Should you have any questions about accessibility or making experiences for those using assistive technology, please contact Web Services or the Office of Disability Support Services in University College:

Katy Betnar
Director, University College Learning Center
570-408-4233
katy.betnar@wilkes.edu

**References:**
- [Writing for Web Accessibility](#)
- [Page Titles](#)
- [Headings (H1, H2, H3…)](#)
- [Alt Text](#)
- [Accessibility: Audio and Video](#)
- [PDF Accessibility](#)
- [How to Test and Remediate PDFs for Accessibility Using Adobe Acrobat DC](#)
- [How to Make an Accessible Document in Microsoft Word](#)
- [How to Author and Test Microsoft PowerPoint Presentations for Accessibility](#)
- [How to Make An Accessible Spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel](#)
- [WebAIM Accessibility Article Library](#)

# Resources

## Branding & Style Guidelines

Wilkes has created brand guidelines to maintain consistency in our voice and presentation. They can be accessed and downloaded here:

- [Brand Guidelines](#)

Wilkes also uses the [AP Stylebook](#). Review the brand guidelines prior to making any website changes or edits to ensure compliance.

## Webpage Checklist

Prior to submitting any page edits or changes for review, consider the following:

- ❏ Does the content serve the needs of our audiences?

- ❏ Is the information presented on the page accurate?

- ❏ Is the text free of grammatical errors and misspellings?

- ❏ Is the text friendly for a web audience (i.e. does it use headings/subheadings, lists, shorter paragraphs, etc.)?

- ❏ Do all links point to the correct pages/work correctly?

- ❏ Are links using descriptive anchor text?

- ❏ Are all images or multimedia present on the page of the appropriate size and quality?

- ❏ Does the page meet WCAG 2.0 AA Accessibility Standards?

- ❏ Will this page need to be updated again in the near future (if so, make a note of when and what updates will be required)?

# Content Strategy for the Web

**Write for Your Readers**
Visitors to your webpages have limited time, so it's important to get information to them quickly and easily. When writing and editing your webpage content, consider:

- Who is the intended audience?
- What information is most important for them to know?
- What should they do next/what action should they take?
- Is there a shorter or more direct way to say this?
- Does the content follow Wilkes style and brand guidelines?

**Use Formatting**
Web readers have short attention spans. Make it easier for users to read your webpages by keeping paragraphs short, using subheadings to break your content into easy to navigate sections, or including lists or bullet points.

Avoid using all uppercase letters, and be mindful of highly stylized text (e.g., excessive underlines, italics, bolding).

**Include Calls to Action**
It's important to tell visitors to your webpage what you'd like for them to do next. Include calls to action

Don't use the phrase "click here" - instead, link phrases within the text that can signal to the user what they'll find when they click.

**Tips for Success**
- Use concise headlines and subheadings.
- Organize webpage content so that visitors can easily get to what they need.
- Be specific and offer useful information.
- Avoid institutional language, acronyms, and jargon.
- Be mindful of timeliness. Know what information will become dated and need revising.
- Use the inverted pyramid style of writing (i.e., most important information first).

# Search Engine Optimization Standards

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results.

Where a site ranks in organic search results varies based on a myriad of factors. However, what all webmasters and search engines agree on is that Expertise, Authority, and Trust (E-A-T) are core elements to focus on. This means that your webpages and content must be:
- Accurate, up to date, and of high quality
- Resourceful and informative, helping to answer questions
- Valuable and worth sharing
- Easily visible, readable and mobile-friendly
- Educational, entertaining or inspiring
- Easy to find and navigate

According to Google, the world's most-used search engine, a site that is friendly for search engines:
- Gives visitors the high-quality information they're looking for.
- Makes the site easily accessible through a logical structure.
- Avoids deceptive practices like duplicating content or keyword stuffing.
- Ensures other sites naturally link to it.

Search engine optimization is a long-term effort that takes consistent improvements over time to see results. Marketing Communications is committed to improving our ability to rank in search engines by making ongoing optimizations to Wilkes.edu and other web properties.

When supporting your department's webpages as a content editor, keep the following SEO Do's and Don'ts in mind:

**SEO Do's:**
- Focus on the audience and what they need to know.
- Try to answer important questions in your content (hint: not sure what people are looking for? Try doing some Google Searches and looking at the related questions that come up!)
- Use words and phrases that are commonly used by your audience.
- Supplement text with visually appealing images or engaging videos.
- Maintain your pages regularly.

**SEO Don'ts:**
- Avoid large blocks of text that aren't easy to skim.
- Do not use shocking or exaggerated language in page titles
- Do not publish low-quality content (e.g., has spelling errors, spammy, not well-written, etc.)
- Avoid creating pages that are shallow, in that they have little useful information or no purpose.
- Avoid "keyword stuffing" (i.e., the ineffective practice of using keywords and phrases repeatedly in an effort to boost the SEO value of a page).

References:
- [The Beginner's Guide to SEO](#)
- [Three Tenets of SEO for Higher Ed](#)
- [SEO for Education Websites](#)
- [SEO Checklist for Higher Education](#)
- [SEO Tips: Understanding How Google Ranks Pages](#)

## Additional Resources

**Modern Campus Omni CMS/OU Campus:** OU Campus is the content management system that Wilkes. [Support documentation](#) and [training videos](#) are available to learn more about OU Campus features and functionality.

**WAVE - Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool:** WAVE is both a [web-based tool](#) and a [browser extension for Chrome](#) to look for potential accessibility issues on a webpage. This tool should be run on each page before it is published.

**Mozilla's MDN Web Docs:** If you'd like to learn more about [How the Web Works](#), how to [Get started with the Web](#), or the technical strategy behind web development, Mozilla has created [MDN Web Docs](#) (formerly Mozilla Developer Network) to assist users in understanding the fundamentals of creating for the web.

**Google Webmaster Guidelines:** [Google's Webmaster Guidelines](#) are general best practices to help your website appear in Google Search, as well as quality guidelines that, if not followed, can cause your webpages or site to be omitted from search results. From a technical standpoint, this gives users a great overview of making your website valuable and accessible to both users and search engines.

Contact Web Services:

Have questions about our governance policies? Need help with your department's webpage? For assistance, contact our Web Services team:

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Marketing Communications
Weckesser Hall, Third Floor
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Requests to make changes to web content or webpages can be also directed to Web Services at [webservices@wilkes.edu](mailto:webservices@wilkes.edu).