



Web Policies and Standards

Official University Webpages: Policy

1. General

The University's presence on the Web is an essential tool for fulfilling its mission of teaching, research, and service. Administrative and academic units, faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to take full advantage of web technology as a medium for providing access to official information and fostering the free exchange of ideas. Due to the diverse purposes and constituencies served by University websites, as much freedom as possible should be granted to those creating and maintaining websites. However, the contents of official University webpages on University servers, or on other servers funded by University budgets, must comply with local, state, and federal laws and with University policies. As the reputation and image of the University is determined, in part, by the quality of the information published on its websites, the information should be accurate, accessible, current and consistent.

Though "websites" are a collection of "webpages," for the purpose of this policy these two distinct terms are used interchangeably. Pages 1-4 of this policy refer to official University web policy, followed by detailed web standards on pages 5-16.

2. Applicability

2.1. Official University Webpages

The requirements of this policy apply to all of the University's official webpages, which are public-facing pages written in hypertext markup language (HTML). Official webpages generally reside on the University's servers, but in some instances may reside on non-University servers.

Staff, faculty, students, and contractors authorized to develop official webpages for any administrative or academic unit of the University must comply with the requirements of this policy.

2.2. Unofficial University Webpages

Unofficial webpages residing on the University's servers are outside the scope of this policy. Examples of unofficial webpages include:

- personal webpages of staff, faculty, and students
- webpages for consortia, professional journals, or internal University use
- instructional webpages and Web applications
- webpages of student organizations

3. Web Content Management System

In order to help administrative and academic units comply with this policy, the University has obtained a site license for a Web Content Management System (WCMS **To Be Determined*), a tool for use by the University community. Use of the WCMS simplifies the creation, maintenance, and control of Web content. It allows administrative and academic units to create their own webpages without reliance on outside consultants for assistance, and without acquiring programming skills or dedicated software. Use of the WCMS is not required.

4. Requirements of Web Standards

To help promote accurate content and an accessible and consistent experience, the University has developed a set of Web Standards for official University websites. Though the Web Standards are primarily guidelines, the Standards do contain several required elements. Administrative and academic units are expected to come into compliance with the requirements within one (1) year of the effective date of this policy, or at the time that they are developing a new website or refreshing an existing one. The required elements of the Web Standards are described below in Sections 4.1 through 4.3, as well as in greater detail in the Official University Webpages: Standards' beginning on Page 5.

4.1. Logo, References, and Contact Information

An approved New Mexico Tech logo must appear at the top of every official University webpage. The words "New Mexico Tech" must appear in the HTML title tag and on the website's homepage. A link back to the New Mexico Tech homepage must be included on the pages of the site. A link to contact information for the department must appear on the home page, including an email address, phone number, and mailing address.

4.2. Accessibility

All websites are required to make reasonable efforts to comply with the standards for accessibility in Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Information about these standards can be found at: http://webmaster.nmt.edu/web-policy/web_standards/accessibility.html.

4.3. Domain Names

All administrative and academic websites on the University's servers should use nmt.edu domain names in the form of XXXX.nmt.edu or XXXX.yyyy.nmt.edu. Domain names should accurately reflect the department, program, or activities to which they refer.

4.3.1. Exceptions

Administrative and academic units wishing to use a non-nmt.edu domain name should seek permission from the Communications Office Web Developer through the exception process discussed in Section 7.

5. Web Governance

5.1. University Communications Web Developer (CWD)

The University Communications Web Developer (and Communications/ITC team) works to improve communication and cooperation among the various University entities charged with Web-related responsibilities. The University Communication Web Developer is charged with:

- maintaining the integrity of the University's websites
- creating and recommending policies pertaining to the University's presence on the Web
- overseeing compliance with and reviewing requests for exceptions to the required elements of the Web Standards
- providing guidance and support for policy and standard implementation
- assisting campus entities in interpreting and adhering to standards
- serving as the primary point of contact with the any web-specific University contractors

5.2. Office of University Communications Director

The Director of the University Communication Office or designee:

- establishes identity standards for the University's websites
- advises the University Communications Web Developer on marketing issues related to the University's websites

6. Compliance with New Mexico Tech Web Standards

Consistent with Section 4 of this policy, the Communications Web Developer is

authorized to require that administrative and academic units bring websites under their control into compliance with the required elements of the Web Standards. Continued failure to comply with the required elements of the Web Standards shall be reported to the cognizant Vice President or Dean. Serious breaches involving security and legal issues may result in an immediate shutdown of a noncompliant site.

Administrative and academic units may have Web policies and standards specific to their websites that are more restrictive than the University's Web Standards.

7. Exceptions

The University understands that in some cases a technical or business need may arise that does not fit into the defined policies and standards. With this in mind a process exists for cases where an administrative or academic unit wishes to request an exception. The WAC considers all requests for exceptions, which should be submitted on a Web Policy Standard Exception Request Form.

Exception requests can be submitted via email to (webmaster@nmt.edu or webdev@nmt.edu). Requests received by the first Friday of the month will be placed on the agenda for that month's meeting. A representative of the unit may attend the meeting to discuss the exception.

Exception requests must include the following:

- the specific section of the Web Standards for which an exception is requested
- a business or technical reason for needing the exception
- approval by the appropriate Vice President or Director

Official University Webpages: Standards

Section 4 of New Mexico Tech's Official Web Policy references a series of web standards that have been compiled and approved by the University Web Developer. The following topics are covered under the standard:

1. Introduction

The New Mexico Tech Web Standards have been created to help provide a consistent set of standards that New Mexico Tech websites can follow. The standards include visual elements, accessibility, and other items to ensure that New Mexico Tech website is accessible by the widest possible audience and allow for a consistent user experience.

2. Browser Support

New Mexico Tech web pages should be developed to support New Mexico Tech's recommended browsers. Efforts should be made to check that the pages of your website appear correctly in all recommended versions of the listed browsers.

- Chrome
- Internet Explorer
- Safari
- Firefox

3. Site Structure

Here are some best practices for organizing the files and directories of your website.

File names or anchor names should never have any spaces. Use dashes instead of spaces. File names should be short yet descriptive. Avoid using abbreviations they can have an impact on Search Engine Optimization.

HTML files should have an .html extension. .htm is acceptable, (.cfm, .php, .asp etc are appropriate for servers using those languages.) provided that all files in the site are named consistently. File and directory names should be lowercase.

The main page or default page in a directory should always be named index.html, or something appropriately similar depending on the configuration of the server (default.htm, index.php, index.cfm, index.asp, etc.). A default page should be created in every directory to avoid 404 pages or directory indexes from appearing to the user.

If you move frequently accessed files to a new location, provide a redirect from the old location. As a general rule, please keep your site organized and use a common images folder.

5. Site Design

Required elements:

- An approved New Mexico Tech logo must appear at the top of the page.
- The words "New Mexico Tech" must appear in the HTML Title tag.
- The words "New Mexico Tech" must appear on the home page.
- The official New Mexico Tech logo must appear on all pages of your website.
- A link back to the New Mexico Tech homepage must be included on the pages of the site.
- A link to contact information for the department must appear on the home page. Include an email address, phone number, and mailing address.

To make the site easy for users please consider the following:

- Do not use tables for the website layout; instead use CSS. Tables should be used for tabular data.

- Do not use tools like Microsoft Word to create the page and then save as HTML or avoid tools that generate proprietary HTML markup such as Microsoft Word.
- Always include a way for visitors to contact someone. This is important so that broken links, misspellings, etc. can be reported.
- Keep the primary navigation consistent across all pages of the site.
- Keep the general appearance of the webpages consistent across all pages of the site.

6.HTML

New Mexico Tech's current WCMS system uses XHTML as its standard. To promote consistency XHTML is the recommended flavor of HTML. All HTML should be well formed and validate against the specified doctype.

XHTML coding rules and syntax

XHTML has a set of rules associated with it that ensure properly formatted and standard compliant code. These rules are easy to follow once learned but may require some minor changes to your coding practice. While these rules apply to XHTML, it is recommended they are also followed for HTML.

- There must be a DOCTYPE declaration
- All tags and attributes must be in lower case
- All elements must be closed
- The value assigned to an attribute must be enclosed in quotes
- No attribute may be minimized
- All elements must be properly nested
- XHTML documents must be well-formed

For more information:

- <http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/>
- <http://www.htmlquick.com/tutorials/xhtml.html>

7. Metadata

For the purposes of this document, the term metadata refers to information in web pages contained in HTML <meta> tags.

Meta tags are used in web pages for three purposes:

1. To emulate HTTP response headers.
2. To supply information (metadata) about the page itself.
3. To include instructions to search engines which are indexing the page.

Meta tags used to emulate HTTP response headers

Use of <meta http-equiv> is discouraged. If precise control over headers is required the

actual http headers should be manipulated on the server.

Using meta tags to provide information about the page

This is the most common use of meta tags, and is supported by the WCMS. It is used to provide information about a webpage such as the content's author, keywords used for searching and relevant dates. The basic format of such a <meta> tag is:

```
<meta name="some-name" content="content" scheme="optional-scheme" />
```

Note that the name and content attributes are required; the scheme attribute is not.

While there are some widely used values for the name attribute, the <meta>tag standard is not tightly defined and provides a great deal of latitude to page authors. In addition, meta tags may or may not be recognized by search engines and other indexing services, and so a strict standard regarding their use isn't in the scope of this document. Because of the loose W3C standard and the shifting role that meta tags have with search engines, this standard is general in nature.

This standard suggests some <meta> tags that should be included in all documents, based on the metadata that the WCMS provides to content managers. Users who are not using the WCMS are encouraged to use meta tags as a basic guide for the meta tags to include in their own content. Users who are using the WCMS are encouraged to use the WCMS' abilities by ensuring that the proper fields at the page level are filled in.

- description - a brief description of the page's content; The description should be no longer than 25 - 30 words. Note that Google may use this in the 'snippet' portion of its search results, so this should be a clear, concise, factual, and engaging description of the page.
- keywords - a list of words describing the content of the document. The list of keywords should be short and directly related to the page's content and subject matter, preferably containing words that the document itself contains. While there is no limit on the length of the content field, it should be succinct.
- author - if used this should contain the page author's name. In many cases, this will be a business unit's name (such as a department).
- date - the WCMS will include the date that the page was published as a meta tag.

Using meta tags to provide information to search engines

Some search engines understand specific meta tags, and content editors can use meta tags to create more effective search results. In particular, Google's search engine recognizes some meta tags. Other search engines may or may not follow suite; however, the University uses Google Search Appliances for it's search functions, and the popularity of Google.com for searching for web pages make it the primary target for search engine optimization.

Empty <meta> tags

Avoid including empty meta tags in web pages. An empty meta tag is one that has nothing in its content attribute. For example:

```
<meta content="" name="author"/>
```

In this case, the tag should be removed altogether since it may have unexpected results in search results.

Restrictions on <meta> tags

There is no restriction on the use of tags and tags may be used as page authors and designers see fit. For example, tags that implement Dublin Core standards may be used freely. However, content editors should know and understand the implications of including tags on their pages before using them. The WCMS provides a rich set of tools for creating customized content, including tags. Please see the WCMS documentation for more information about how to use these tools for your WCMS-managed content.

8. Images, Graphics, and Multimedia

Images & Graphics

The images/graphics on your New Mexico Tech web site(s) should:

- Be relevant, professional, optimized for the web, and legal.
- Adhere to New Mexico Tech Identity/Branding standards.
- Refrain from using clip art or animated GIFs.
- Make sure you own or have the permission to use any photos for your site. If you are not sure who owns the image or do not have permission to use the image, do not use it.
- Specify your image size and use the "alt" attribute (the text equivalent) to describe your image in your HTML. Resize your images using image editing software before you upload them. Do not resize images by setting the height and width in your HTML.
- Do not distort(squish or stretch) your image. All images should maintain their original aspect ratio or be cropped to the desired size.

If you require assistance please refer to the New Mexico Tech Identity Standards Guide or contact the University Communications Office.

Please make efforts to use the appropriate image types for media:

JPEG - Use JPEG images for photographs and other images that have millions of colors. The JPEG format is not suited to images with text, large blocks of solid color, and simple shapes with crisp edges.

GIF - Use GIF files for images that have a small number of colors. The GIF format is not

suitable for photographic images or images with gradient colors.

PNG - PNGs are an alternative to GIFs. They have the added benefit of creating smaller file sizes in most cases. They offer better transparency options, including alpha channel transparency. They can support high color depth. Older browsers may have issues with PNG files. However, most modern and recommended browsers can support them.

Multimedia

If you include Flash, video, audio or other media on your site, please provide text alternatives. (i.e. closed captioning)

Flash and Multimedia elements should be used appropriately and not as a means of delivering your website content. Websites created entirely in Flash are discouraged. Websites created in Flash must have text alternatives to ensure the content is available to the widest possible audience. The use of Flash to create navigation is also discouraged; if used, a text alternative is also required.

9. Scripting

Use client-side JavaScript for enhancement purposes - navigation and functionality of the pages should not be dependent upon JavaScript.

Use the <noscript> tag to provide alternative content or a message indicating JavaScript may be required to view some features of the webpage.

Web Applications may make use of JavaScript for features and functionality.

10. Documents for the Web

PDF vs Docx

The file format chosen should be based upon intended use and intended audience. PDF, Doc, and Doc(x) formats each have specific advantages and in many cases either format is acceptable.

When to use Adobe PDF

PDF should be used when high print quality is required. PDF can display high resolution images and illustrations better than doc or docx.

Documents scanned into a PDF format negate most of the advantages of PDF and should only be used when other methods are not available. In addition, documents scanned as PDF are not indexable by Google, have large file sizes, and text cannot be selected from the document without Adobe Acrobat.

When to use Microsoft Docx or Doc formats

Microsoft doc or docx formats are best suited to documents that need to be edited and

for general Word processing tasks.

Docx vs Doc

It is recommended that the docx format be used instead of doc format. Docx is the latest file format from Microsoft and has considerable advantages over the older doc format. Compatibility packs are available for older versions of Microsoft Office and there are a multitude of free tools that can read the docx format.

**Editable Forms: Adobe requires Adobe Acrobat to create editable forms.*

**Legal Documents: Legal documents in doc or docx format must be protected to prevent changes. Documents authored in Adobe Acrobat may be malleable if not secured.*

**Secured Document: Securing the document, protecting the document with a password and encryption, is inadvisable in some case. There are better methods for securing information.*

**Small File Size: PDFs must be optimized for the web to achieve a small file size. Word documents saved as PDF may be much larger than the original Word format.*

Document Filenames

Document file names should match the title of the document. For example: A PDF document titled New Mexico Tech Web Standards should have the filename nmt-web-standards.pdf.

The use of dates and version numbers within the filename are discouraged. In most cases, there should be only one published version of any document at a given time. Having only one published version of a document will improve data integrity, help prevent old documents from reappearing, and prevent broken links. An archiving process may prove helpful when handling outdated documents.

If a date is used, it should be placed at the end of the filename when possible. For example: A PDF document titled 2016 New Mexico Tech Web Standards should be retitled to New Mexico Tech Web Standards 2016 and have a matching filename of nmt-web-standards-2016.pdf.

Dates should be used in the title and filename if the subject of the document is date specific. For example: A PDF document titled New Mexico Tech Department May 2016 Calendar and named nmt department-may-2016-calendar.pdf would be an acceptable use of the date in the title and filename.

Document Properties/Metadata

Document properties/metadata, should be accurate when publishing a document to the web. Document metadata can be accessed using the Document Panel in Microsoft Word or by viewing the file properties with Windows Explorer. For PDF documents, the file properties can be accessed from File Menu --> Properties in Adobe Reader.

Metadata Fields

Author: Should be the Department, Program, or Faculty Member who created the document.

Title: Should match the title of the document.

Subject: Should be relevant to the document content.

Keywords: Content specific words that could be used when searching for the document. The words included should appear in the document text.

*Category: Should be relevant to the document content.

* Comments: Any other relevant information.

*Category and comments only exist in Microsoft Office documents.

11. Accessibility

Requirement

All New Mexico Tech Websites are required to make reasonable effort to comply with the standards for accessibility as set forth by Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

SECTION 508 - Web Accessibility 1194.22 Web-based intranet and Internet information and applications.

1. A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content).
2. Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.
3. Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.
4. Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.
5. Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.
6. Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.
7. Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables.
8. Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.
9. Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation.
10. Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.
11. A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to

make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.

12. When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assistive technology.
13. When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with §1194.21(a) through (l).
14. When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.
15. A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.
16. When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.

Detailed information about the latest version of Section 508 requirements can be found at:

www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/1194.22.htm

12. Search Engine Optimization

Some basic Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques can help increase the visibility of your website, as well as making it easier for users to find your content as the result of searches. New Mexico Tech's internal search engine is a Google Search Appliance, and uses the same techniques as the google.com search engine.

- Use keywords in your page title. Ensure these keywords also appear in your content. Every page title should be unique.
- Use alt attributes for images.
- Use descriptive anchor text. Avoid "click here", "read more", etc. Keep the anchor text under 55 characters.
- Use the title attribute in links. The title or a description of the page you are linking to is an appropriate value for the title attribute.
- Use header tag properly. Only one <h1>, and properly nested <h2>, <h3> etc.
- Ensure your first paragraph and meta description are representative of the content of your page.
- Use search engine friendly URLs. The URL should be descriptive. Avoid using URLs like site.nmt.edu/p=232323. Instead consider site.nmt.edu/topic/help.html

Please review Google's Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide for more information.

13. Quality Assurance Testing

Best practices in web development include Quality Assurance Testing (QAT).

Operating systems to test include Linux, Macintosh, and Windows. Depending on the particular web presence, mobile systems are iOS, Android and BlackBerry.

The extent of testing, considering the combinations of operating systems and browsers, will depend on website complexity and resources available to a particular department or group.

Testing Checklist

- Browser Support: The recommended browsers should display your website properly.
- XHTML Coding and Syntax: XHTML markup should pass the W3C Validator.
- Site Structure: Website files and folders should follow best practices with emphasis on organization and naming convention.
- Site Design: Website has all of the required design elements with emphasis on the New Mexico Tech logo and "New Mexico Tech" title and text.
- Images, Graphics, and Multimedia: Webpage(s) should meet all the required elements with emphasis on copyright and New Mexico Tech branding requirements.
- Accessibility: Webpage(s) should make a reasonable effort to comply with Section 508 Accessibility requirements.
- Metadata: Webpage(s) must have required meta tags.
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Pages and documents should be prepared with SEO in mind.
- Documents for the Web: Documents uploaded to the web for the purpose of downloading should follow best practices.
- Domain Name(s): Should reflect relationship with New Mexico Tech and if non-NMT.edu domains have appropriate approval.
- Copyright Policy: Website and all elements within or accessed by the website or its element should abide by New Mexico Tech's copyright policy.
- Privacy Policy: Should be used if the Website collects data or requires a user to submit data.
- Prohibited Content: Website should not host or link to prohibited content.
- FERPA: Website should follow all applicable FERPA guidelines.

Code Validators

CSS, Mobile, Feed

<http://validator.w3.org/unicorn/>

CSS and XHTML

<http://iigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/>

Link Checker

<http://validator.w3.org/checklink/>

Markup Validation

<http://validator.w3.org/>

W3C Quality Assurance Tools - see this page for additional specific needs

<http://www.w3.org/QA/Tools/>

Testing Tools

- browsershots.org, enter URL and check multiple browsers on multiple operating systems. Browsershots is a good resource for testing Linux browsers.
- Web Developer tools bars are available for most popular browsers as a downloadable plug-in, if not already "built-in." Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Internet Explorer (debugger).
- Utilu IE Collection (v1.7.0.9) available at several sites for download, provides stand-alone versions of Internet Explorer so multiple versions may be used at the same time. Only necessary to install 6.0 and above for New Mexico Tech testing.
- There is also a Utilu Mozilla Firefox Collection (v1.0.3.1) available.
- Virtual Machines or a computer running multiple Operating Systems and browsers are convenient for conducting tests.
- Google Analytics - Set up an account at google for your site and the number Google provides can be added to the New Mexico Tech template for site analytics.
- crazyegg.com 30-day trial or purchase for website analytics with a few lines of code. Heatmaps help visualize where visitors are clicking on your page/site.

14. Outside Tools

The use of outside tools on your webpage is allowed. Examples of commonly used external tools are:

- Google Analytics
- Embedded YouTube videos

However, it is important to consider the following:

- What happens to your webpage if the service is temporarily unavailable?
- Does the external tool cause increased load times for the page?

It is recommended that you not use an external tool if a viable alternative is available from New Mexico Tech.

15. Domain Names

Internet addresses, including domain names, are an important part of the New Mexico Tech web presence. Domain names used for institutional and academic websites should reflect their relationship with the University.

Purpose

New Mexico Tech has a legal and marketing interest in the use of its name and associated branding, including the proper use of website domain names. This standard

is intended to ensure that domain names used in New Mexico Tech websites promote New Mexico Tech, its programs and services.

Requirements

- New Mexico Tech institutional, academic and personal websites should use NMT.EDU domain names in the form xxxx.nmt.edu or xxxx.yyyy.nmt.edu.
- Domain names should accurately reflect the department, program or activities to which they refer.
- Any the New Mexico Tech entity or individual wishing to use a non-NMT.EDU domain name will need to present the business case for the exception to the Communications Office Web Developer. The Communications Office Web Developer is responsible for reviewing and recommending approval or disapproval and relay their decision to the entity or individual who made the request and to ITC.

Procedures

Requesting a new NMT.EDU Domain Name - Main Campus, Branches, etc.

Requested URL for your site or application:

- Should be descriptive and not too long, for example department.nmt.edu
- Subject to availability and approval. Please have alternatives in case the requested URL is already in use.
- Cannot be of the form www.department.nmt.edu unless your department already has a DNS zone.
- ITC/Web Developer reserves the right to assign a URL if necessary.

1. Administrative Contact Information (must be the same as Department Banner ID owner)

- Name
- New Mexico Tech Banner ID
- New Mexico Tech Email
- New Mexico Tech Phone

2. Technical Contact Information (may be different than Department Banner ID owner)

- Name
- New Mexico Tech Banner ID
- New Mexico Tech Email
- New Mexico Tech Phone

Requesting a non-NMT.EDU Domain Name

- The person making the request should contact the Communication Office Web Developer.
- The person making the request should also prepare a written statement that

outlines the specific business case that they believe necessitates a non-NMT.EDU domain name. The request should include the desired domain name.

- This written statement should be provided to the Communication Office Web Developer.
- If a non-NMT.EDU domain name is approved, the domain name should be purchased and registered with the approved New Mexico Tech vendor. This allows for better management of the domain names.