

# UQ web content guide

For inclusion on the [Web Publishing](#) website

# How to use this guide

This is our web content guide. It helps us to create a clear and consistent user experience across many different UQ websites.

We have created this style guide for UQ's web editing community who work within different schools, faculties, institutes, centres, and organisational units.

It is written with Drupal in mind, but we hope it will be useful for content that is still hosted on the old CMS.

This guide is for web content, which means it's about creating content to meet user needs.

Web content meets user needs if it is easy to read, easy to find, tells a user what they need to know, or helps them to understand or accomplish something quickly and simply.

This guide doesn't encompass every type of content published to the UQ website, such as OMC marketing content, news stories, or blogs. These may have their own in-house conventions.

Before publishing anything to the UQ website, however, it is important to understand the principles of web content, so you can better plan, present, and design your work.

We welcome any feedback or suggestions: [dc.ads@its.uq.edu.au](mailto:dc.ads@its.uq.edu.au).

# Brand blueprint

The Office of Marketing and Communications produces and manages the UQ brand.

- See the [Create Change Guidelines](#) for information about the UQ brand.
- Email [marketing@uq.edu.au](mailto:marketing@uq.edu.au) with any questions about the guidelines.

# Content design

Good content design allows people to find what they need quickly and easily. It is not simply a matter of writing words or creating content, and then placing them online.

In web publishing, there's sometimes a tendency to create content because someone has something to say – rather than something a user needs to know.

This can result in negative experiences for users, who can't always find what they need.

The number of individual UQ web pages (more than 500,000) also means that content is sometimes inconsistent, duplicated, out of date, or wrong. This not only affects users but also UQ's reputation.

It is not best practice to have so many web pages and we are working to reduce this number. In doing so, we want to ensure that content is clear, accessible, trustworthy, consistent and easy to use.

## User needs

Good content design begins by thinking about users: students, staff, alumni and others.

If someone visits a UQ website, they must want something from UQ: these are user needs.

User needs might include:

- finding out the name of a lecturer
- locating laboratory equipment
- learning more about what we teach and research
- checking exam results
- applying for a scholarship
- learning how to apply to UQ
- finding out more about our campuses
- lodging a job application
- contacting communications staff.

The design of our web content should help people find what they are looking for.

Before publishing anything to a UQ website, consider how (or if) it serves user needs. In order to determine user needs, follow this template:

- **As a ...** [who is the user?]
- **I need to ...** [what is the user trying to do?]
- **So that ...** [why does the user want to do this?]

To use an example from above:

- **As an ...** undergraduate student
- **I need to ...** find out my lecturer's name
- **So that ...** I can email them and ask for an extension on my assignment

This is a good example of a user need, because it doesn't assume the user knows anything about how to solve their problem.

A bad example of the same user need might be:

- **As an ...** undergraduate student
- **I need to ...** use the UQ Researchers portal
- **So that ...** I can find out my lecturer's name and email them and ask for an extension on my assignment

This is a bad example of a user need, because it creates a "need" that justifies existing content and doesn't reflect how a user might think.

We should consider user needs every time we want to publish to a UQ website. Content should be designed around these needs. If there isn't a need – don't publish.

You can find out more about user needs by using web analytics and search logs, or by talking to our lecturers, researchers, and tutors, as well as our professional staff and student-facing staff. These will give you insight into what our users want and need to know.

## Planning content

Good web content is the result of careful planning and hard work. There are very few people who can write exactly the right words or design the perfect website on their first attempt.

Before you publish content to a UQ website, consider what you are doing.

- **Should this be on a UQ website?**

Content should be published to a UQ website if it is about something that is only offered (or created) by UQ. Content that explains what people need to know before they can do something at UQ should also be published. Don't publish general advice or information that is more reliably found elsewhere.

- **Who are your users and what do they need?**

Think about who the content is for (your user), why they might need the content and what they hope to do with it (their need). You should consider the user every time you create content. Never publish information for the sake of it. User needs are covered in detail in the [Content Design](#) section of this guide.

- **What form should the content take?**

Writing for the web is not like writing for print. People read more slowly, less accurately and less carefully on screens. Research also shows that people use less mental effort on screens – they will not re-read information they don't understand. Our web content should reflect how people pay attention to screens. This is covered in detail in the [Writing for the Web](#) section of this guide.

- **Is it accessible?**

We want UQ's web content to be accessible and usable to as many people as possible. We also have a legal obligation to ensure people can access our web content. This includes people with visual, hearing, cognitive or motor impairments, as well as people with learning difficulties. Accessibility is covered in detail in the [Web Accessibility](#) section of this guide.

- **Who will take care of the content after it is published?**

Don't publish information if you haven't developed a clear plan about who will manage, maintain and eventually archive it. Someone within your unit or section must be responsible for web content. This will ensure its ongoing accuracy and relevance, and will provide a clear way to communicate about content issues across the University.

- **Does this content already exist?**

Make sure you [do a search](#) before you create or publish content. There are more than 500,000 pages across all UQ websites, so there is a strong chance your content already exists. If the content is on a UQ website: link to it. If the content is on the website but it is incomplete, old or not to your liking: find out who owns it and negotiate an outcome. Never duplicate content. Duplicated content produces poor search results, confuses the user and damages the credibility of all information.

- **Where should the content go?**

Content needs to be organised, labelled and grouped in a way that allows users to easily find what they're looking for. This often means you'll have to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. Think about the best UQ website for your content. It's tempting to think if you work in a school, then your content belongs on your school site (or if you work in a faculty, it belongs on your faculty site, and so on). This may not always be the case. Develop a model for how your content should be structured and presented. This is called an information architecture. A strong information architecture reduces duplication and leads to increased information sharing across websites and an improved web presence for UQ.

Do not race to publish information if you have not thought about, or can't answer these questions.

# Writing for the web

Web writing needs a different approach to writing for print, because people read more slowly, less accurately and less carefully on screens.

Research also shows people use less mental effort on screens – if they don't understand something, they won't try to re-read it.

Our web content should reflect how people read on and pay attention to screens.

Research shows that people only read about 20 per cent of a web page, regardless of their age or education level.

This means everyone is impatient. Users from professors to high school students don't want to waste time, so they skim and skip content until they find what they need.

For this reason, the first rule of good web writing is: keep it simple.

People are more likely to skip content when it is made up of longer sentences or longer words (nine letters or more). If you can swap a longer word for a shorter one, you should.

If only a longer word will do – that's OK. Good web writing isn't simplistic or dumbed-down. Good web writing is clear and precise.

Keep sentences to about 25 words or less. People skip content when it contains big blocks of text, or long sentences.

For example, look at this sentence (51 words, 301 characters) from an old UQ website for students:

“When providing documentary evidence in support of their CFR application, students are expected to demonstrate how their situation made it impracticable for them to take advantage of the provisions of the relevant rules, such as withdrawal without academic penalty during semester or applying for extensions for assessment items or deferred examinations.”

This can be updated and rewritten in plain English (26 words, 135 characters) to reflect how people read on screens:



“In your letter, explain how your situation made it impossible for you to withdraw earlier in the semester, or apply for assessment extensions or deferred exams.”

By using shorter sentences and simpler words, we help people to speed up their reading and understand information faster.

## Writing goals

The same goals and principles should guide everything we write:

- **Help.** Help people understand UQ and what we do by using language that is clear, direct, informative, and useful.
- **Respect.** Treat users with respect. Put yourself in their shoes and don't patronise or confuse them. Be considerate and inclusive. Don't market at people – communicate with them.
- **Educate.** Tell users what they need to know or ought to know, not just what we want to say. Give them the information they need, along with opportunities to learn more.
- **Truth.** Avoid melodramatic writing, sales pitches, and grandiose claims. Focus on our real strengths and be truthful, humble and fair.

In order to achieve these goals, we need to make sure our content is:

- **Clear.** Understand what you're writing about. Use simple words and sentences. Be direct.
- **Useful.** Before you start writing, think about user needs. These are covered in detail in the [Content Design](#) section of this guide.
- **Human.** Write clearly, simply and directly, but don't write like a robot.
- **Appropriate.** Adapt your tone. Write in a way that suits your audience and what you're writing about.

## Know your audience

Creating content means understanding who your content is for.

Think about your subject from your reader's point of view. What is their need? Mindset?  
Level of understanding?

Whether you're writing for a Nobel Prize-winning scientist or a first-year student, you need to put yourself in your reader's shoes. Ask yourself:

- **How much time does my user have?** Remember, most audiences will be time poor.
- **What is the purpose of my content?** You must clearly understand what you want to achieve – and why – before you create content.
- **Will my user understand what I am saying?** Use words your audience will understand. Write clearly. If you are writing for an external audience, remember they will often have no understanding of UQ processes, acronyms, references or anything UQ specific.
- **Have I chosen the right content type?** Web content isn't always about words and writing. Would your content be better suited to video? Do you need a tool, infographic or illustration to support what you are saying? If you've already included these things – are you sure they are necessary?
- **Have I imagined myself speaking to the reader?** Write directly and clearly, as though you are speaking to someone face to face. If you imagine yourself speaking to your audience, your writing will sound much more natural.

## Structure

There is no such thing as a minimum or maximum page length, but remember that on average [users only read about 28 per cent of a web page](#).

The overwhelming majority of users (80 per cent) will also only [scan content](#) – they will read a small amount, scroll, read a small amount again, and scroll until they find what they need.

Users will not read every word.

There are several steps we can take to structure content to ensure it is read.

- **Write for how users read on websites.** Use clear and meaningful headings. Make your layout scannable.
- **Be concise.** Avoid big blocks of uninterrupted text. Use a word count that is half the size of print or conventional writing.
- **Be direct.** Get to the point. Communicate what is most important at the top of the page. Users will only scroll through a page if they are interested in what is at the top of a page.
- **Write clearly.** If you burden a user with having to make sense of your prose, or if you pepper your writing with acronyms, jargon, or marketing speak, then you will slow

down a user's reading and frustrate them (or they'll stop reading and leave the page).

- **Be fair.** Research has shown that [promotional language is a cognitive burden on users](#). This is because users are distracted by promotional language: they have to decode it, or they spend brain energy mentally replying to it (e.g. Claim: "Our pizzas are world famous!" User reply: "I'm not sure if that's true.") Be fair, measured and balanced.
- **Use bulleted lists.** These help to speed up reading. More information about bulleted lists is in the OMC's A to Z guide.

## Address your reader

Address the reader as "you" where appropriate. Pronouns help people to imagine themselves in relation to what you are writing and in relation to what they need to do.

They also help you to assign responsibility more clearly.

When you use "you", a reader will better understand their role in what you are saying.

- **Yes:** You must provide a medical certificate.
- **No:** A medical certificate must be provided.

If you need to define who "you" is, do so at the beginning of a sentence:

- This page will help you, the student, to better understand the University and what our teaching and research involves.

You can also define "you" in context:

- **Yes:** How do I apply for a program at UQ? If you're interested in undergraduate study, you... If you're interested in postgraduate study, you...

When using a question-and-answer format, assume it is the user who is asking the question and use "I".

- **Yes:** How can I get to St Lucia campus? There are a number of options...
- **No:** How can students get to St Lucia campus? There are a number of options...

Using "we" or "our" in relation to UQ makes us seem more approachable.

- **Yes:** We'll review your application and notify you of the outcome by email.

- **No:** Applications will be reviewed and outcomes will be sent by email.

## Tone

Tone is where we express our attitude towards our users and towards our subject matter.

Our tone for web content is informal without being sloppy, overly casual or inappropriate. When you're writing for the web, don't be afraid to use:

- contractions (e.g. don't, won't, can't),
- personal pronouns (e.g. you, your, we, our), and
- simple and direct words.

Where possible, our tone should be positive – we should tell people what they can do, rather than what they can't.

- **Positive:** Collect your student ID from the Prentice Centre.
- **Negative:** Do not go to the Student Centre for student ID cards. Go to the Prentice Centre.

Remain positive and empathetic even if you are dealing with challenging or negative subjects:

- **Positive:** Entry to this program is competitive. Unfortunately, achieving the minimum entry requirements doesn't guarantee admission.
- **Negative:** Do not apply for this program unless you can meet the minimum entry requirements. Even if you achieve minimum entry requirements, this does not guarantee admission.

It is important to still write plainly and directly even when dealing with subjects that are in some way negative. Do not make excuses. Do not be vague, bury the point, or try to distract the reader with spin. Be transparent and speak directly and plainly:

- **Yes:** Finding a park is difficult during semester hours. If you're travelling to St Lucia campus on a weekday, we strongly encourage you to use public transport between 8am and 4pm.
- **No:** UQ St Lucia campus has thousands of parking spaces that can be used by staff, students and visitors. We have taken measures to increase and improve the number of parks available, including building 500 new car parks in 2016. That being said, parking is extremely limited during semester hours. If you're travelling to St Lucia

campus on a weekday, we strongly suggest you use public transport between 8am and 4pm.

## Page headings

Headings and subheadings organise content and help users to speed up their reading.

Aim to write headings that are 65 characters or less – the shorter the better. Remember, headings have to fit on mobile screens as well.

Headings should always be organised in a hierarchy, with the heading first (H1) followed by subheadings in order (H2, H3, H4 and so on).

Never skip a heading for styling reasons – never jump from H1 to H5, or from H2 to H4, or similar.

When choosing the words for your heading, remember that research has shown that [only 14.5 per cent of people](#) place a high level of trust in university advertising.

People were most likely to trust information if it was seen as fair, measured and balanced.

For this reason, write page headings that are descriptive, helpful and precise, and not clickbaity, vague, or sales focused.

Avoid puns. Try to use the language of your reader to help them to find what they are looking for.

Use [Google Trends](#) to monitor what search terms people are using.

## Writing about people

We should aim to be inclusive and respectful and we write about people.

The University has developed a [Guide to Using Inclusive Language](#) to help you understand the best way to approach writing about people.

# Web accessibility

UQ websites should be accessible to as many people as possible. A website is accessible when people can navigate, understand and use it successfully and easily.

We have both a legal and a moral obligation to ensure that people can access our web content. This includes:

- people with visual, hearing, cognitive or motor impairments
- people with learning difficulties
- people with unreliable internet connections
- people who live in rural or remote areas
- people with older browsers or devices.

To figure out whether content is accessible, think about how it would work:

- without sound
- without images
- without colour
- with high-contrast mode switched on
- with a [screen magnifier](#)
- with a [screen reader](#)
- with keyboard only
- with a combination of the above.

You need to take some simple steps to make sure content is accessible.

## Video, media and sound

- **Turn autoplay off.**  
Autoplay can be intrusive and interrupt browsing or reading. It also causes interference for people listening to screen readers.
- **Provide accessible ways to adjust volume, pause/stop, and start.**

If possible, include controls outside of the media content itself (e.g. keyboard shortcuts). These are useful for everyone.

- **Provide alternatives such as a written description or transcript.**

Make sure these alternatives are clearly associated with the media. For a live-streamed event, make a transcript available after the event is over.

- **Make captions available.**

Where possible, make captions or subtitles available to open up your content to a larger audience, including deaf or hearing-impaired people, or people who speak languages besides the one spoken in your video.

## Images and visual elements

- **Use alternative text (alt text).**

Alt text should provide a succinct and vivid summary of the image (e.g. “Students running around the Great Court on a sunny day”). Do not begin alt text with “Image of...” or “Picture of...” Screen readers are programmed to identify images and automatically say “image” before reading alt text. If your image also has a caption, use the alt text “Caption below”.

- **Use the title of a graph or diagram as alt text (e.g. “Student enrolment numbers 2007 to 2017”).**

Include a more detailed written summary of the graph or diagram somewhere close to it, or on a separate but clearly linked page. Read more about [Adding captions to an image](#) in UQ Drupal.

- **Specify a background colour as well as a background image.**

This ensures text is still readable if images aren’t displayed.

- **Use images when they add meaning.**

Images can be very helpful for users who are experiencing cognitive or attention problems (e.g. depression and anxiety can cause cognitive problems). A combination of text (e.g. “Contact us”) and images (e.g. a picture of a phone) can help these users to better understand information.

- **Use more than just images to communicate.**

Remember, some people will have images turned off to save on data and some people won’t easily recognise what an image means. Ensure important information is always available in writing (e.g. don’t create a button with just a rubbish bin icon on it. Write “Delete”).

- **Use more than just colours to communicate.**

Remember, some people [can't distinguish between certain colours](#) (e.g. they will have trouble identifying a red line on a green campus map). Instead of avoiding specific colours altogether – which would be impossible – simply ensure information is always available in writing, or in an alternative form.

- **Before uploading an image, give it a meaningful file name.**

This helps it to show up in search results. For example,

“peter-hoj-vice-chancellor.jpg” is a good file name for a picture of Peter Høj.

“IMG00031.jpg” is not a good file name for a picture of Peter Høj.

## Readability

- **Avoid ALL CAPS.**

People sometimes use ALL CAPS because they want to emphasise something, but all caps makes content harder to read and less accessible. Some screen readers will read out ALL CAPS letter by letter (e.g. A-L-L C-A-P-S). Research has also shown that most people have difficulty reading all caps, because it changes the familiar shape of words.

- **Use sentence case for headings and sub-headings.**

Overuse Of Capitals Makes Reading Difficult.

- **Always align body copy text to the left with a ragged right edge.**

Lots of users find justified text hard to read because it creates uneven spacing between words.

- **Use a single space after a full stop.**

This also keeps spacing even. Some users (e.g. users with dyslexia) experience the “river effect” when they read on screens. This is when white space swirls through, or seems to distort text. Even spacing helps to minimise the risk of this happening.

- **Stick to defined contrast ratios.**

A “contrast ratio” is the difference in appearance between two colours that are seen simultaneously on a screen. For example, the contrast ratio between pure black (#000000) and pure white (#ffffff) is 21:1. Use a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 between text and background colour. For larger text (e.g. text at least 18 point or 14 point bold) use a contrast ratio of 3:1. These ratios will make content more accessible for everyone. There are [online tools for calculating contrast ratios](#).



- **Use sans serif fonts.**

The reason we use sans serif fonts is because they clearly show the shape of letters and symbols. Research suggests everyone reads sans serif fonts more easily on screens.

## General

- **Use positional or directional words carefully (e.g. “choose an option from below” or “select a program from the right sidebar”).**

This is for a number of reasons, including layout changes on mobile.

- **Use headings correctly.**

Never skip a heading level for styling reasons. Make sure the page title is H1, top-level sections are H2s, next-level headings are H3, then H4, and so on. Correct and consistent headers allow assistive technologies (as well as web crawlers) to scan and understand web content. More information about headings is in the [Web Style Considerations](#) section of this guide.

- **Avoid generic linking instructions like “click here” or “learn more”.**

Be descriptive and specific when you link to content:

- Here is a good example: “[Visit Courses and Programs](#) if you want to know more about our arts degree.”
- This is a bad example: “If you want to know more about our arts degree, [click here](#)”.

- **Forms.**

The shorter the form, the better. Write clearly and use appropriate terms. Think carefully about what fields are necessary, and especially which ones you mark as required. People don't like giving out personal information unnecessarily. Labels should either be top aligned or infield top aligned, so users don't feel discouraged or overwhelmed when they first see your form.

More information about readability and writing is covered in the [Writing for the Web](#) and [Links](#) section of this guide.

For a more detailed explanation of accessibility standards, see the [Web Accessibility Standards](#) guide.

# Links

Link text should be descriptive, specific, and integrate seamlessly with the text around it.

Aside from proper nouns, link text should always be lower-case and should accurately describe the page or resource it is linking to. Don't use italics in link text.

If a link is accurate, descriptive and specific, it will help users, including vision-impaired people, to better understand our content.

Using meaningful links also helps our rankings in Google and other search engines.

If crawlers can understand our content, then we can be confident about our rankings in search results.

## General advice

- **Avoid “click here”.**
  - Yes: We've written a list of [common academic writing errors](#), so you know what to avoid.
  - No: [Click here](#) for a list of common academic writing errors, so you know what to avoid.
- **Use the language of your users – avoid jargon, branding, or marketing-speak.**
  - Yes: [Find a student advisor](#) to help you with your program planning.
  - No: Access the [UQ Connect2Advise initiative](#) for help with program planning.
- **For calls to action, make sure the verb or “action word” is part of the link.**
  - Yes: [Subscribe to our newsletter](#).
  - No: Subscribe to [our newsletter](#).
- **Don't use a URL, or a .com address as a link, unless the URL or .com address forms part of the company's official name.**
  - Yes: Catering at this event was organised by [St Leo's Catering](#).
  - No: Catering at this event was organised by [stleoscatering.com.au](#).
  - Yes: This event was sponsored by [realestate.com.au](#).
  - No: This event was sponsored by [Real Estate](#).
- **Link and display email addresses in their entirety.**
  - Yes: Email [admissions@uq.edu.au](mailto:admissions@uq.edu.au) for more information.

- No: Email Student Admissions for more information.

## Link placement

Where possible, place links at the start of a sentence or paragraph.

Users generally scan the first few words of a sentence or paragraph, and then either continue reading or move on. We want users to see links – especially on small screens.

Links can become buried if they are placed at the end of a paragraph.

- **Yes:** Check the eligibility criteria before you apply for UQ Abroad.
- **No:** Before you apply for UQ Abroad, check the eligibility criteria.

## Linking to documents

When you link to a non-HTML resource (e.g. a PDF or Word document), include the file size and document type in the link.

This ensures a user is kept in control and knows what to expect when they click on a link.

Some users prefer to download documents rather than open them within their browser.

- **Yes:** Read the BEL Faculty guide (PDF, 2.4MB) for more information.
- **No:** Read the BEL Faculty guide for more information.

## External linking

Link to an external or third-party website when there is a clear user need.

There are a number of risks associated with third-party websites. Consider the following before you link:

- **Why have you chosen one third-party website over another? Are there other websites that provide similar information? Are you being fair and impartial?**
  - Be prepared to explain why you have chosen a certain link.
  - Take care to ensure we are not seen to be “endorsing” a site or service.
  - Link to a helpful and specific page, not to a homepage.
  - Make sure it is clear who owns the third-party website.
  - Never link to a third-party site in exchange for a reciprocal link, or for a payment.

- **Is the third-party website free to access?**
  - We should not normally link to websites whose main purpose is commercial (i.e. selling things). Some exceptions may apply.
  - Do not link to a website that requires payment or a paid subscription.
- **Does the third-party website work on mobile?**
  - Test on multiple models.
- **Does the third-party website have a strong privacy and cookie policy? Does it meet accessibility requirements?**
  - Make sure any third-party site uses cookies responsibly. Ensure they have a clear privacy and data policy.
  - There are a number of free web accessibility checkers available online. Make sure you run any third-party website through one of these.

You should also consider that third-party websites can change without notice.

If we don't monitor our third-party linking, we might provide incorrect information, or link to an irrelevant page.

This can cause frustration for our users. It also reflects badly on UQ.

If you are going to [link to a third-party website](#), make sure the user knows they are leaving the UQ website. Use the external link icon and make the link open in a new window.

You should also make sure that someone is responsible for regularly checking third-party links to ensure they meet user needs.

For a more detailed explanation about linking in Drupal, see the [Links and buttons](#) guide.

# Images – web publishing

Your first stop for images should be the [UQ Images](#) database. UQ Images has more than 80,000 unique photographs of UQ places and people.

The images you select should support your content and provide additional information. An image that directly relates to your content is the best type of image to use.

For example, if you are writing about a plant scientist, use a picture of the scientist (or their work, or whatever image is most closely related to what you are writing about).

Avoid obvious stock photography from generic providers. Some stock photos look cheesy, insincere, and fake.

## General advice

- If you're using stock images, choose images that look like they were taken in Australia (i.e. images that reflect Australian geography and the ethnic and racial diversity found in Australia).
- Do not use photos that are obviously from different universities, different states or different countries.
- Do not place text over a person's face.
- Select images with the correct orientation (portrait or landscape). Try to avoid resizing portrait images for a landscape orientation and vice versa.
- Do not stretch, squeeze or flip an image. If it doesn't fit, choose a better image.
- Always save images for web – around 70 per cent quality gives the best balance of file size to visual quality.
  - If you need to shrink an image, use a file minimiser. File minimisers can create smaller file sizes than Photoshop without losing quality.
- Use alt text. Guidelines for using alt text are provided in the [Web Accessibility](#) section of this guide.
- Use captions to describe what is happening in an image, not to summarise the story. If you don't need a caption, don't include one. For example, it is not necessary to caption a photograph of a researcher on their researcher profile page.

## Size and format

The standard resolution for web images is 72 DPI (dots per inch). Aim for a file size between 100 and 300KB.

Photos should be saved as .jpg format but non-photo images (e.g. logos or diagrams) can be saved as .png format.

More image guidelines can be found on the [Web Publishing website](#).

## Copyright

If you can't find a suitable image in the [UQ Images database](#), try searching public domain image libraries (there are thousands online) as a quick and easy way to find images.

You must have the right to publish images on UQ websites.

If the image is not owned by UQ then you need to get approval from the owner of the image and give credit. There may also be a license fee and requirements about how and where you can use the image.

Broadly speaking, images fall into one of three categories:

- **Stock photo services**, which usually require a licence fee, although there are a number of free stock photo providers. In 2014, [Getty Images](#) released an open-embed program, which lets users embed images for free (in exchange, Getty includes a small footer and link on the photo). Getty images cannot be used for commercial purposes.
- **Creative commons licences**, which give you the right to use an image under certain circumstances. You can search for Creative Commons materials online.
- **Public domain images**, which are images where the copyright has expired or never existed in the first place.

Further information:

- [Australian Copyright Council](#)
- [UQ Images database](#)
- [Creative Commons licence](#)
- [Flickr Creative Commons](#)
- [Getty Images](#)

# Web style considerations

This section explains our style when it comes to web elements, and explains our approach to SEO. More information is available on the [Web Publishing website](#).

## **Alt text**

Alt text is a way to label images, and it's especially important for people who can't see the images on our website.

Alt text is described in detail in the [Web Accessibility](#) section of this guide.

## **Buttons**

Buttons should always contain actions. Use descriptive language that is clear and concise.

Don't use generic instructions like "click here" or "read more". Be specific about what clicking the button will achieve (e.g. "Purchase book", "Order transcript", "Enrol in course" etc.)

Use sentence case. It's OK to use an ampersand in button copy.

## **Checkboxes**

Use sentence case for checkboxes.

## **Drop-down menus**

Use sentence case for top-level menus and for menu items.

## **Forms**

Form titles should clearly and quickly explain the purpose of the form. Use sentence case for both form titles and form fields.

Keep forms as short as possible and to a single column design.

Include a privacy statement that explains what will happen to a user's information after it is submitted.

Only ask users to provide information that we need and that we intend to use. Where possible, don't ask for information that could be considered private or personal – including someone's gender.

For personal information, provide an additional field a user can fill in themselves, if they need to.

Consider the interested audience and provide alternate actions (e.g. Submit or Cancel), when designing a form.

### **Headings and subheadings**

Headings and subheadings organise content and help users to speed up their reading.

Aim to write headings that are 65 characters or less – the shorter the better. Remember, headings have to fit on mobile screens as well.

Headings should always be organised in a hierarchy, with the heading first (H1) followed by subheadings in order (H2, H3, H4 and so on).

Never skip a heading for styling reasons – never jump from H1 to H5, or from H2 to H4, or similar.

Using headings properly is basic best practice for SEO and accessibility. It also improves accessibility and makes content more easily understood by screen readers and crawlers.

Correct use of headings also ensures for greater consistency across all UQ websites.

**H1 heading – use for first-level page headings.**

**H2 heading – use for second-level page headings.**

**H3 heading – use for third-level page headings.**

**H4 heading – use for fourth-level page headings.**

**H5 heading – use for fifth-level page headings.**

The H1 heading is typically the title of page.

Subheadings (H2, H3, and so on) break pages into smaller, more specific sections. They help users to scan content and read it more quickly.

Include relevant keywords in your headings and subheadings. Make sure headings cover the main purpose of the content.

Use sentence case for both headings and subheadings.



## **Lists**

Give context to a list with a brief introduction. Use numbers in lists when the order is important, like when you're describing steps of a process. Don't use numbers when order doesn't matter. □

## **Navigation**

Use sentence case for global menus and for sub-menus.

## **Related articles**

Sometimes a detailed piece of writing might require a list of related links at the end. Don't go overboard – four links is usually plenty.

## **SEO**

We write for people, not for machines. We don't use manipulative SEO techniques like keyword stuffing to bump search results.

A large number of people will search for our content via Google and not via a UQ site or the UQ homepage.

For this reason, we want to make it easy for people and search engines to find our content. Here are some good ways to achieve this:

- Organise your page around a single topic. Use clear, descriptive and relevant terms in titles and headings that relate to your topic.
- Use subheadings to structure your page and highlight important information.
- Give every image suitable alt text, except when they are purely decorative.
- Use popular keywords in titles, introductory sentences, headings, titles, or meta descriptions. Don't use them everywhere, or stuff your page full of keywords.
- Think about how a user might search for information and include these as keywords. For example, a student might search for "stats" instead of "statistics". In this case it would be best to include "stats" as a meta description.