

Web content styles for UQ Drupal

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1. Create structure using page titles, headings and links

Put your users first and let their needs decide the purpose of your writing and the level of detail required. Structure your content to make it easy for users to find what they need and to make the site low-maintenance for you.

1.1 Title and heading styles

People, search engines and screen readers use page titles and headings in the page to determine the relevancy of web content. For this reason, make your headings:

- **user-centred** so they describe and differentiate content in a way that is meaningful to the audience. Do not use generic terms like 'Welcome', 'Important information' or 'Introduction'.
- **frequent** – every 3 paragraphs on the page as a minimum
- **concise** - under around 60 characters. If you need to use more, introduce a sub-heading.
- **active** - avoid '-ing' or '-ion' words, e.g. 'Apply for entry' not 'Applying for entry' or 'Making an application'.
- **in plain English** wherever possible
- marked up using **heading levels** (h2 through h4) sequenced in levels for sub-headings. Do not use bold for headings as screen readers and search engines will not recognise this as a heading
- **easy to scan** – front load your headings with keywords. Avoid using questions as headings as they will tend to push your keywords to the end.

For brevity's sake, avoid repeating heading text in the body text underneath. Also, do not end headings with colons or full stops as this is unnecessary.

Use **sentence-style** capitalisation as this is the UQ style and easier to read, e.g. 'Talk to us', 'Research progression', 'What our students say', 'Financial assistance'. Use capitals for proper names (Bachelor of Arts) but not general classes of things (undergraduate programs).

1.2 Default page title format

In UQ Drupal, your first level heading (H1) is entered in the 'title' field. Page titles are important because they will not only appear on the page, but also in search engine results pages, browser bars, bookmarks and history screens. Do not repeat the information provided by default in UQ Drupal. Page titles in UQ Drupal take this format by default:

The title you enter - School or Organisational Unit - University of Queensland, Australia

2. Minimise content duplication using links

Minimising duplication is essential to creating an efficient and trustworthy site. If the same information is relevant in more than one context, then create it once and link to it from different pages. For example, if undergraduate and postgraduate students need to follow the same set of instructions then create the instructions once, and link to them from different pages for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

If the content is:

- owned and maintained elsewhere on the UQ site, then link to it there
- sitting in a database that offers a relevant search, link to a canned search there - execute the search and copy the web address that results as your link
- available via a filter on your own site, then link to that, e.g. if you need to provide contact information for a team of people in your organisation, create a staff group or team and link to the group.

3. Minimise in-text date references using links

To ensure your site looks credible and current, avoid in-text references to dates whenever you can. Instead, link to landing pages for ephemeral information using general terms.

Examples

- See our latest newsletter [link to newsletter index page] for current scholarships
- Visit the events calendar for details of upcoming courses
- Find out more about short-term research opportunities with us [link to summer/winter projects list].

4. Link styles

Aim to link content smoothly together to create a coherent user experience. People, search engines and screen readers will scan web content for linked text, so try to make your link text informative. Avoid using generic phrases in your in-text links such as 'click here' or 'more information'.

4.1 In-text links

Link text does not need to use the target page or site's exact heading. It should just indicate to the user where they are going and the sentence should explain why.

Example link text

- View our latest short courses in the events calendar
- Visit the example conference website
- Learn more about the example program
- Read the Example Annual Report
- Discover more about our research
- Study with us and enjoy world-class facilities ...
- The example seminar series will focus on ...
- Find the advice you need at the example guide

4.2 Buttons

If you are asking the user to take decisive action, consider turning the link into a button and minimise other links on the page.

The call to action should begin with a punchy verb and make sense on its own. Use call to action buttons sparingly.

Avoid using buttons for links which simply navigate to another page and do not require any special commitment by the user – try using in-text links instead.

Example button text:

- Give to UQ Vets
- Visit the Example Centre website
- Download the Example Handbook (PDF, 3.1MB)

4.3 Related links

If you want to include lots of links without interrupting the flow of the reader, cite them as a list at the bottom of the page under a heading such as 'Related links'.

4.4 External links

Forewarn the user if your link will take them off the uq.edu.au domain by adding class="external" in the anchor link. This will generate a small icon next to the link.

Try to name the source you are linking to in your link text.

Do link out to the sites with which you have a relationship, such as research partners, and seek inbound links from them. Reciprocal links help define the relevancy, status and search rank of your content and theirs.

4.5 New tab or window link

Avoid opening links in new tabs or windows as this will disorientate and annoy users. Exceptions are where context-sensitive help is required or the user may lose access to a session that requires a login.

4.6 PDF or Doc links

For a link to a pdf or doc, include the file extension and size within the link, e.g. Download our [prospectus \(PDF, 20MB\)](#).

4.7 Web addresses as links

Generally speaking, do not spell out web addresses when you link. A screen reader will read each letter which will be a waste of time for the user.

If a user prints a UQ Drupal page, the web address will be printed beside the linked term automatically.

So use [Example](#) not <http://www.example.com> or www.example.com

4.8 Email links

Forewarn the user if a link will open their email program. Use the link dialog box to input the email address and, if desired, the default subject and body text.

So express this link as 'Email Jane Doe' (clear) not 'Contact Jane Doe' (unclear).

5. Form of address

Generally speaking, engage your audience in a personal way:

- address the user directly as 'you', e.g. 'You must have a blue card ...'
- refer to your own organisation as 'we' or 'our' rather than by name, e.g. 'Our dedicated staff ...' rather than 'The dedicated staff at XYZ School ...'

However:

- use a specific term for the user if the audience needs to be exclusive, e.g. 'Research Higher Degree students are eligible for ...'
- where several organisations are mentioned, refer to them all by name.

6. Bold

Use bold to highlight keywords if this will help the user find relevant information on the page. This occurs in longer blocks of text or where content is about similar things and you need to emphasise the difference.

Do not use underline for emphasis as it will look like a link. Avoid using italics for emphasis as it will not necessarily have the effect of making the text stand out. Instead it may look like a quote or a title.

7. Dashes

Dashes are useful for creating a conversational tone online and can be used instead of the more formal commas, parentheses (brackets) or colons. A hyphen – next to the number 0 on your QWERTY keyboard – will suffice to represent a dash. If you have a print background and would like to use an em dash, the code for this in Drupal is Alt-0151 (an en dash is Alt-0150).

8. Feature content

In UQ Drupal, you can promote any content so that it appears on your front page, top of your news (for an article) and elsewhere.

Regular updates to featured content will make your site look current and credible while the rest can be designed to be as static and low maintenance as possible.

9. Images

Optimise images to limit file sizes and reduce download times.

- Avoid using images for decoration or to convey text.
- For every image, enter alternate text ('alt text') which describes the image for the benefit of screen readers. If you are providing a caption, alt text can be shortened with the phrase 'caption below'.
- Images which display complex data, such as graphs and charts, should be explained in the text. Alt text can be shortened with a reference to the in-text explanation, e.g 'Graph showing participation by age group. Refer to text for description'.
- Use images which have a copyright notification which permit you to do so and in a way which complies with the conditions of use.
- If an image is subject to copyright restrictions which prevent it from being modified, then don't use it in fields which automatically apply an image style, such as the 'teaser' or 'hero' image field. This will result in the image being cropped.

10. Lists

Use lists to make long text easy to scan, highlight blocks of text or enumerate sequential items. A list must have more than one item – do not use the list format to indent.

Construct your list using parallel phrasing (matching tense and grammar) and the least punctuation and joining words you can without losing meaning. With the right lead clause, most lists do not need:

- commas
- semi-colons
- 'and' or 'or'
- repeated terms at the beginning of each item.

If your list is comprised of complete sentences, then follow these guidelines:

- Start each list item with a capital letter and finish with a full stop.
- Make sure each item in the list reads as a complete sentence without the lead clause.
- You may have more than one sentence per list item. Additional sentences should also read as complete without the lead clause.
- Avoid indented list items as they are difficult to read.
- As for all lists, introduce your list with a lead clause followed by a colon.

11. Non-html formats

11.1 PDFs and docs

PDFs, forms and docs need special treatment to be accessible, findable and easy to maintain online. The following tips ensure that when you update non-html file:

- you only have to maintain one instance of a link to keep your site up to date
- your users can search for files using keywords.

If you have a **big document with a table of contents**, e.g. a prospectus, handbook or manual, then:

- create a landing page which summarises the content of the file (this can be derived from the table of contents)
- give this page a stable address (e.g. .../handbook, no year of publication)
- always link to the landing page, not directly to the file.

Similarly, if you have a **collection of forms or fliers** that are used in your administration, then:

- create a landing page which provides an index to your files with their official name (and a plain English description if the official name is not clear)
- give this landing page a stable url (web address)
- always link to the landing page rather than deep-linking to individual files.

11.2 Email newsletters

For **newsletters** in formats such as pdf or Vision6, create an article which provides:

- an explanation of the purpose and audience for the newsletter
- how the user can subscribe. Make this a call-to-action button for online subscription if it is available.
- a stable url (e.g. .../newsletter, no date)
- a list of links that is added to as a new newsletter is published, or just a single link to the latest issue, update the date of the article when you add a new newsletter.

Always link to the newsletter landing page rather than deep linking to individual issues.

12. Quotes

Consider styling important quotes such as testimonials or the views of eminent people using a blockquote tag.

13. Reduce the word count

Ruthlessly delete unnecessary words. Get rid of content that has no audience or purpose. Eliminate or recast content that has an internal focus such as:

- statements of intention, e.g. instead of saying your practice is learner-centred or patient-centred, tell the user how you will assess their needs
- organisational complexities that are of no interest to the end-user
- waffly claims to excellence in teaching and research. See if you can replace these with numerical data about grants, ranking, survey results, or photos of equipment and facilities.

Reducing words will improve your site's usability and performance. It enables you to simplify navigation, reduce the cognitive load on your audience and retain their attention.

14. Tables

Use tables for display of data that requires a column and row header.

15. Video

Introduce or caption video with the platform and length of time it will take to view.

Introductory text example

Watch [John Doe \(YouTube, 2m:26s\)](#) share his study and career highlights.

Caption example

Students doing field work at Heron Island Research Station (Vimeo, 3m:10s)

Ideally, provide a transcript of words spoken on video. This ensures the content is available to search engines and users who cannot or do not want to watch the video.