

Model guidelines for producers of web pages

Validation and accessibility

Web pages available through the University should be validated to ensure they are correctly written and should strive to achieve accessibility by passing the WAI level 1 and 2 checks (see <http://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/>). The templates provided here are valid xhtml. Any additions should be validated as correct xhtml.

To check validity and accessibility your pages must have a DTD - the HTML checker at W3 is available mirrored at <http://www.mirror.ac.uk/services/validator/>. An accessibility checker that is easier to use than Bobby is called WAVE and may be found at http://www.temple.edu/inst_disabilities/piat/wave/.

These are the additional guidelines set for designs resident on our server:

- **Web information should be system and browser independent.** Pages should be checked for compatibility on a range of browsers, screen resolutions, colour depths and operating systems, and with text-only browsers (such as lynx).
- **Use of an external CSS is expected** but only in accordance with the accessibility guidelines above, especially in relation to cross-browser compatibility. Do not include style sheet information in file heads. CSS2 styles or @inludes can be used to supply CSS solutions for newer browsers where they will cause no difficulties to users with older browsers.
- **Do not use absolute font faces and font sizes on web pages.** Use a range of type faces for any given style, always ending with the generic font type (serif or sans serif). We have about 70-75% users of Windows systems, others are split between various Unix-based and Macintosh systems, so bear this in mind when selecting any named fonts and choosing scalable sizes. Users with special requirements (and many others with incompatible set-ups) must be able to adjust pages so they can see them. Use scaling sizes for fonts in style sheets (percentages) in whole tens only as some systems cannot accommodate say 75% as a size. Scaling below 80% may not be legible by users.
- **Where graphics are used, they should be optimised and compressed so the download time is as short as possible.**
- **Appropriate 'alt' text must be supplied for all images** (including use of empty alt text for purely decorative images, should there be any).
- **Page colour should be neutral and text colour should give a good contrast against it.** Use standard link colours and the web-safe palette. Ensure colour combinations are accessible to people with red/green colour blindness. (See <http://www.visibone.com/>).
- Pages should be dynamic, not fixed width.
- **If using tables for layout purposes, bear in mind that they are read row-by-row when rendered by a speaking or line mode browser** (or when indexed by a search engine). Ensure the layout makes sense when read in this way (analysis with WAVE numbers the elements of the page in the order a line-mode or speaking browser will display it). Using table summaries to describe the use of each table.
- **Information should not be in a format that renders it inaccessible to some users, such as Flash.** Java applets should not be used. Some JavaScript may be permissible, but only if the pages will run in a fully comprehensible way without JavaScript.
- **Valid HTML entities should be used for all non-(7-bit) ASCII characters.**
- Use of frames is discouraged.

In addition, you will want to draw up guidelines on:

Filenaming conventions

- HTML files should have filenames ending '.html'; similarly '.jpeg' for JPEG files and '.gif' for GIFs (and these formats should be used appropriately). Check with the webmasters before using any other file formats.
- Filenames (excluding the extension) should be up to about 12 characters long, as appropriate to identify their content. Only lowercase letters, numerals, and hyphens should be used. The web server is case-sensitive, so links within the files must also be lowercase.
- Every directory should contain a file index.html, which is the page sent in response to directory requests. (In situations where this would be inappropriate, a redirection to the next higher level index can be arranged.)

Hyperlinking

- All internal links within a project should be relative.
- Confirm with the webmasters the form for links to other pages on the same server.
- Links to other servers, specifically outside the University, must be approved by the webmasters.
- Please contact the webmasters before making use of any existing artwork from the University web sites (or indeed from other University publications). (e.g. University crest)
- Using any material (e.g. artwork or independently authored text) originated outside the University should not be necessary. Before doing so, confirm with the webmasters and the Press and Publications Office, providing proof of permission for this use from the copyright holder.

Handover, general issues

- Completed projects should be made available online by the company, in the form of a single object combining all the necessary files. Suggested formats are ZIP and tar (optionally gzipped); check before using others.
- University staff will retrieve this object, disassemble it and publish it.
- HTML files should be manually maintainable by University staff, and not obfuscated in any way.
- Lines in the HTML files should ideally be no more than 80 characters long.