

Wilkes University Digital Governance Guide

 Wilkes University Digital C

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)

Be

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

Governance Structure

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

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

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.

Our Audiences

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.

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

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,

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

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

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. tM!M/

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 Resour ³/₄

Contact Web Services:

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

Brittany Terpstra
Associate Director, Web Services
Marketing Communications