



Policy Name:	Mercy University Web Policy		
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Responsible Office(s):	Information Technology	Contact(s):	Chief Information Officer

I. Introduction

Mercy University's web presence is a key communications medium to promote and enhance Mercy University's image by providing relevant and up-to-date information about our programs, research, services, personnel and accomplishments.

II. Scope

This Policy governs the use of the Mercy University website, www.mercy.edu. Mercy University's website is distinctive for its user experience, widely distributed publishing responsibility, and flexibility to allow customized content. With such distributed publishing responsibility comes shared responsibility for quality assurance, usability, performance, and security. The actions of one individual or department can affect the entire system. Therefore, expectations are set to ensure quality, manage risk, and present Mercy University's web content to users in the most effective ways.

III. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to establish basic requirements for use of Mercy University web resources in a manner that maintains quality and appropriately reduces risk to the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of Mercy University data, as well as the system. The requirements of this policy deal with Mercy University's standards for web content, including visual identity, design and editorial quality, accessibility, management applications and databases, security and advertising.

IV. Definitions

Web Content Management System (CMS): This is a software application that is used to store, edit and publish web pages, including html, text, photos, video, and other media via a series of managed templates. Mercy University has adopted Drupal as its web CMS solution.

Domain: A domain name locates an organization or an entity on the Internet. In the case of Mercy University, our domain name is www.mercy.edu. The domain name represents the labeling used to identify multiple computer addresses under a single umbrella, allowing nearly unlimited sub domains. Websites that use a name that includes [mercy.edu](http://www.mercy.edu) are considered part of the domain.

Mercy University Website: These are websites that represent administrative and academic units of the Mercy University. These websites are Mercy University assets and should follow Mercy University policies and procedures.

Mercy University Web Content: Any content or data created by a Mercy University employee and published on the Mercy University website to represent the work of the Mercy University, school, department or unit. Such content is owned by Mercy University (with the exception of intellectual property of the employee, which is for use by Mercy University with permission of the relevant parties). Web content is primarily hosted by Mercy University on the domain www.mercy.edu. In addition, some Mercy University web content is externally hosted by outside firms. Such hosting relationships are managed and guided by Mercy University contracts.

Mercy University Data (Refer to Mercy's *Data Policy*)

Externally Hosted Web Content: Mercy University web content hosted by external service providers, managed through Mercy University owned contracts. Mercy University web content that is externally hosted is also governed by this policy.

Quality Assurance

- A. Timeliness and Accuracy: Content owners and content publishers are responsible for maintaining web content that is accurate and timely. Publishers should ensure proper maintenance and follow all published Mercy University standards of form and content. The Web Steering Group (WSG) (defined in section V below) will notify content publishers and owners of any sites that have not been updated for a period of one year or more, so that the content can be reviewed, updated, or deleted.
- B. Web Security and Performance: Web servers are regularly monitored for security vulnerabilities and performance. Web pages that are identified as vulnerable or causing server performance issues may be deactivated until the areas of concern are addressed. Software upgrades, new application features, and major site releases are to be tested on the quality assurance server environment to prevent the introduction of poor performing or vulnerable web resources.

V. Policy

All Mercy University web content presented on the internet will be governed by this policy. Web content will be supported on the domain www.mercy.edu, which is the primary domain to which this policy pertains. Exemptions will be made by the WSG.

Faculty, staff, and students using Mercy University resources to develop and present Mercy University web content will abide by standards designed to assure quality, performance, usability, and security. Standards are developed and maintained by the WSG. An integrated user experience is assured through the use of a content management system and a series of design templates that provide reasonable publishing flexibility. Editorial and design standards ensure consistency of the

Mercy University brand experience for users across the site. Standards for timeliness and accuracy assure quality as well. Content publishers will be provided training and on-going support to effectively use these tools and standards. Content publishers and owners will be notified in the event that standards are not being met.

Performance and security standards assure that the site functions properly and Mercy University's data, including personal student data, is protected, as well as Mercy University's reputation and good name. Performance problems, security risks, or poorly presented content on one part of the site can affect the entire domain. Mercy University's web content will be reviewed for quality assurance, including loading times, presentation, and security risks, prior to publishing content. On-going security and performance review, as well as periodic content and design review, will monitor live content and problems. Issues of concern will be raised with the content publisher and owner so they may be promptly addressed.

Replication and repurposing of original content should be avoided; rather links to the original source in the content management system should be used. Policies regarding Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Trademarks should be followed.

Special web applications and databases presented on the site will adhere to Mercy University's standards referenced in this policy. Applications that rely on Mercy University data, including confidential, official use only, and unrestricted data (see Mercy's *Data Policy*) will follow appropriate requirements.

Applications that, in the judgment of the WSG pose a security risk, hinder performance or confuse the user will not be hosted on the site.

External hosted Mercy University Web content should be explicitly reviewed and approved by the WSG, following review of unique requirements that would warrant such hosting. Content that is linked from Mercy University's website to another entity or organization's site should clearly identify a departure from Mercy University pages. Non-Mercy University web content should not use or replicate Mercy University's templates in a manner that confuses content ownership.

Mercy University is a non-profit organization and is strictly limited in terms of accepting advertising revenue that would compromise its non-profit status for tax purposes. As such, advertising is not appropriate for any part of the Mercy University site. In addition, messages that imply Mercy University endorsement should be avoided. Links to partners and affiliates should be provided as resources and should avoid advertisement or official endorsement.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

Web Steering Group (WSG): The WSG is responsible for creating, recommending, and implementing policies and procedures to guide: use of the content management system; content migration; editorial, design, branding and sub branding considerations; security and risk management; training and leadership of content publishers; quality assurance; performance; measurement, tracking and evaluation. The WSG is led by the Web Content Specialist, Mercy University Communications and Marketing, and includes representatives from the Provost Office, Academic Affairs, Advancement, Student Life, and the Office of the President.

Mercy University Marketing and Communications is responsible for executing and coordinating external communications for Mercy University. As part of these duties, this office is charged with:

- Coordinating with departments and units to move sites into and maintain sites within the CMS.
- Creating a web identity that captures the unique brand characteristics of Mercy University.
- Ensuring that the website reinforces and effectively supports Mercy University’s marketing messages and goals outlined in the Brand Guide and Mercy University strategic plan.

Branding Guidelines: The Mercy University website is one of the key places audiences can learn about Mercy University and form an impression of the institution. Our web pages must adhere to the Mercy University graphic identity standards manual.

Editorial Style: Editors preparing text for web pages must follow the Mercy University Editorial Style Guide.

Web Content Management System (CMS) Procedures

To assist editors in managing Mercy University website content, as well as provide consistency in organization and appearance of the Mercy University website, the University uses a web content management system (CMS).

Pages within the CMS are designed to be compatible with most web browsers and devices, accessible for persons with disabilities, and adherent to industry web design standards and best practices. Editors using the CMS are then free to concentrate on developing content and features for their audiences, rather than get bogged down with the technical aspects of website construction.

Mercy University Marketing / IT has identified five phases of the website development process. After an initial client intake meeting, Marketing/ IT will provide varying levels of support (depending on available resources) to units for the development of sites.

Website Development Process

Below are the five key steps for all new sites, those sites being migrated to Mercy University's CMS, and sites within the CMS needing a major overhaul.

Phase 1: Discovery

Project sponsors/ stakeholders will meet with an assigned team from Marketing to discuss goals and objectives for the website, review existing content, look at competitors, and other important aspects impacting the development and maintenance of the site.

Phase 2: Planning

IT/ Marketing will work with the sponsors/ stakeholders to develop an information architecture, web strategy, and production schedule.

Phase 3: Creating

Content and design will be created for the site.

Phase 4: Building and Launching

This step involves building the site, training website managers, testing, and review.

Phase 5: Maintaining

While individual units are responsible for keeping their sites up-to-date, Marketing will continue to review websites and offer ongoing information and advice to assist website managers.

Mercy University IT is responsible for guiding, assessing, planning, developing, and executing web strategies that align with the Mercy University brand and mission. IT is also responsible for supporting current technology, while at the same time planning and implementing the continued evolution in technology.

Mercy University ACCESSibility Office and Human Resources Office are responsible for ensuring ADA compliance. Mercy University is required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act to be fully accessible to everyone. Mercy University is committed to Section 504 and WCAG 2.1 compliance. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requires federally funded agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. All web implementations are required to adhere to Mercy University's Accessibility Policy.

- For a thorough explanation of accessibility design guidelines, visit the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative Website at www.w3.org/WAI.

- Website administrators using the CMS have the advantage of knowing that pages and functionality within the CMS are tested for accessibility using [Siteimprove](#). However, special care should still be taken for audio, video, and multimedia content. Mercy University recommends that text transcripts of all web videos be posted along with video or audio files.

VII. Roles and Responsibilities of CMS Users

Content Owner: The academic or administrative unit head with primary responsibility for the department or unit. This person is responsible for overseeing web maintenance and development of the site and interfacing with the Mercy University Marketing and web team.

Content Publisher: A Mercy University representative with authorized access to the content management system who enters data (text, photos, video) into approved modules or templates so that the information is displayed on the Mercy University website.

Web Assistants: Content Owners can assign assistants to help with the maintenance and development. Editors can be students or Mercy University employees.

Review of Web Sites

Before a site within the CMS can go live, it must be approved by the Content Owner to make sure it adheres to policies and guidelines outlined in this document.

After the launch of a unit's website, Mercy University's Marketing and Communication team will review content posted to the site to ensure its editorial and informational accuracy and adherence to Mercy University's Brand Guide. This review will take place after content is live on the Mercy University website so as not to slow down the dissemination of timely and accurate information.

Review of Web Forms

To ensure that all web forms collecting information are compliant with the Mercy University's Web Privacy Policies and to make sure information collected is coordinated with Mercy University's databases when needed (e.g., if a form is collecting current addresses from current students or alumni), Mercy University's IT/ Web Team will review the forms created in the Drupal CMS before editors can place these on their websites.

VIII. Types of Web Pages

- **Type 1: Institutional and/or Marketing Pages** – These are public web pages that address the interests and needs of key Mercy University audiences, such as prospective students, parents, alumni, donors, current students, faculty, staff, and other important constituents.

These include websites for academic departments, Mercy University offices, centers, institutes, and other official Mercy University units. These pages are managed through the Mercy University’s web content management system (CMS) and are reviewed by the Mercy University Marketing and Communications Team prior to or shortly after posting.

- **Type 2: Specialty Websites** – These sites, also sometimes referred to as “microsites,” provide supplementary highlights to Type 1 pages to demonstrate student or faculty work, or other distinctive aspects of a Mercy University program or service. Rather than explain core information about Mercy University and its various programs and units, these specialty sites usually showcase some unique aspect of the Mercy University experience. Examples of a specialty website might be a blog related to an academic project, a field study site, or a virtual gallery of student work. These pages may or may not reside in the CMS but should comply with Mercy University Web identity guidelines and policies.
- **Type 3: Web Application Sites or Pages** – These are pages or sites that require special programming by Mercy University IT and/or a third-party vendor. Examples of web application sites or pages include blackbaud.com, online admissions applications, Blackboard, and Webmail. These pages may or may not reside in the Mercy University CMS but should comply with Mercy University Web policies.
- **Type 4: Privileged Information** – These pages provide mostly confidential information and services, such as student records, registration or advising services, and employee data. These require passwords and are not accessible to the general public or to all Mercy University students and employees. Examples include Mercy Connect, or the Employee Self-Service site. These pages may or may not be in the Mercy University’s CMS.
- **Type 5: Personal or Group Web Pages** – Examples of these kinds of pages are faculty/staff pages, student organization pages, and students’ personal pages. These pages are reviewed only reactively (e.g., if someone makes a complaint about them). These pages are not supported within the Mercy University’s CMS.
- **Type 6: Degrees and Programs Pages** – Examples of these kinds of pages are pages that are listed on our academic sub-sites that highlights the 90+ degrees and certificates in dozens of major disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate levels offered at the five schools (School of Business, School of Education, School of Health & Natural Sciences, School of Liberal Arts, School of Social & Behavioral Sciences).
- These pages are updated based on the workflow below.

- Academic Unit Heads and Department Managers are given editing access to their pages only.
- Edits are then reviewed and approved by the Associate Dean or VP/Director of each department.
- Once approved, those edits are sent to the Provost Office for one final check and are approved to “go live”.

IX. Consequences of Non-Compliance

Termination of Link

Mercy University reserves the right to refuse to provide a link on an official Mercy University web page and to remove a link without notice. Content and/or links to areas found to be in violation of Mercy University’s policies or local, state, or federal laws will be immediately terminated. The following reasons are also grounds for termination:

- Content on official Mercy University websites does not adhere to Mercy University's mission or policies.
- Content violates United States copyright laws. To use copyrighted material including text, graphics, photographs, sound and video clips, and software on a site within the Mercy University domain, the site developer must obtain and retain on file written permission for each use from the originating author.
- Content is obscene, offensive, or threatening.
- Content is designed for private financial gain or compensation not relevant to the mission of Mercy University or in violation of official Mercy University policy, the Computers Users Policy, and restrictions for nonprofit organizations.
- Content is used to intimidate or single out an individual or group for degradation or harassment in violation of federal or state law and official Mercy University policy.
- Content is used to engage in or solicit any illegal activity in violation of federal or state law or official Mercy University policy.
- WSG upon correction of the infraction(s) may reactivate a terminated link upon review.

Privacy and Collection of Personal or Confidential Information: Individuals responsible for web pages within their area should become familiar with Mercy University’s Web Privacy Policy to make sure all pages are in compliance.

Copyright: Content (including graphics, sound, and video) should not be reproduced on Mercy University's website from other sources without written permission from the author(s). The Copyright and Intellectual Property Office provides guidance in selecting the appropriate and legal means for reproducing material in accordance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. For additional copyright information, contact the Copyright and Intellectual Property Office.

Advertising: Advertising on the website within the Mercy.edu domain is prohibited. Special consideration can be given to sponsors.

URLs: Official Mercy University sites should have a URL that is intuitive and reflective of an academic or administrative unit's affiliation with Mercy University. WSG recommends that all units adopt a domain name that is brief and marketable.

- Not preferred: <http://www.mercy.edu/arch>
- Preferred: <http://www.mercy.edu/architecture>
- Preferred: <http://architecture.mercy.edu>

Websites of official Mercy University units must reside in the Mercy.edu domain unless approval is granted from Mercy University Marketing and Communications.