Content Requirements & Recommendations
For College of Arts & Sciences Academic Departments | updated 10/19/2015

The College of Arts and Sciences Office of Educational Technology (eTech) requires that websites residing on its servers meet current standards for accessibility, responsiveness, content, and appearance.

To meet those standards, we require that the websites we host provide specific information on pages/posts within those sites, rather than via links to external sources. For other types of information, we leave up to you whether to provide the information directly or link out to it.

Direct questions about this information to Lisa Yessick, Director of Digital Content, lisa.yessick@ua.edu, 8-0942

BASIC (REQUIRED) INFORMATION
Following is the required bare-bones information that belongs on every A&S department website. This information must be provided on pages/posts within the department’s website.

1. Welcome statement for the home page (up to 40 words).
2. General information about the department (overview)
3. A mission statement (or similar statement of the department’s purpose and goals).
4. Contact information for the department’s main office.
5. Clear identification of the chair and, if relevant, area or advising directors.
6. Profiles of everyone (faculty and staff) who interacts with students; each profile must include at least full name, job title, email, office location (room and building), and phone number; for faculty, this must also include area of research/teaching specialty.
7. Descriptions of academic programs offered; this page should at least state which degree programs the department offers and list all applicable majors, minors, concentrations, and the like. (You’d be doing students a favor if you included types of jobs for which the department’s programs prepare students, double major combinations, prelaw/prehealth applicability, and the like. Anything you can do to help students understand your discipline and how it fits into the working world adds value to your site.)
8. A giving page that includes a link to UA’s online donation site.

NOTE: Sites external to the department’s A&S-hosted website may not be used as the sole means of providing any of this information. Faculty and staff members who wish to link to their personal websites (e.g., blogs, people.ua sites, research group websites) may do so within their department profiles; the “Website” field in the profile form was created specifically for this purpose. Do not redirect users to a personal site through any link to a faculty/staff profile.
RECOMMENDED INFORMATION

We recommend that department websites offer the following information (where applicable).

If any of this information exists on other websites, you may choose to link out to those sites instead of duplicating the info. Sometimes this is the best way to ensure that the information remains up-to-date. (One example: academic program requirements in the catalog.)

Bear in mind, however, that making users click through to a non-department site takes them away from the department’s site and may be off-putting to users whose Internet use is complicated by device, connection, or disability.

- Recent photos of all faculty and staff who interact with students (we ask that you include these whenever possible)
- Faculty office hours
- Education and short biographical information about faculty members
- Faculty CVs (as accessible PDF or Word-compatible files)
- Links to (or handles for) your department’s (and subdivisions’) social media accounts
- A calendar of events and deadlines
- Descriptive information about lecture series and similar recurring events
- A general description of research activities; if your discipline breaks down into subdisciplines, descriptions of faculty interests/research/activities in each subdiscipline
- Descriptions of research and service programs, centers, and institutes (interdisciplinary ones are OK to include, but try to limit your description to your department’s involvement instead of describing the full scope of the center’s activities; when such centers have their own websites, link to them)
- A general statement about service/outreach projects
- A description of facilities and equipment (might include buildings, labs, software, classrooms, study/practice space, UA facilities such as libraries)
- Information about student organizations advised by department faculty
- Information about scholarships, assistantships, and fellowships, including application details
- A linked list of online resources students may find useful (an annotated list is even better!)
- Information about any other special programs, features, activities, or requirements of your department

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IF YOU WANT TO AND CAN SUSTAIN/UPDATE IT

Web content does not create itself. If you already produce this kind of information on a regular, consistent basis, great — include it! If you don’t, or you aren’t sure whether you can continually refresh this info on your site, proceed with caution.
Don’t let your enthusiasm obligate you and your staff to years of extra work (or saddle you with a perpetually outdated site).

- News about faculty, student, and staff accomplishments
- News about research projects
- The department’s newsletter or other publications (PDFs OK here, but make them accessible if at all possible)
- Video or audio of your department’s activities (NOTE: Nearly all videos posted to College websites must include captions, and transcripts must be provided. We’ll be happy to discuss your options for creating captions.)

INFORMATION TO LEAVE OUT IF YOU CAN PART WITH IT
- Course descriptions, core requirements, other information provided in UA catalogs. (Link to the relevant pages of the undergraduate/graduate catalog.)
- College or University policies or procedures. (Link to them instead.)
- Forms originating at the College or University level. (Again, link to them.)
- Deadlines, schedules, and timetables that are not department-specific and are subject to frequent change. Putting these mid-paragraph on static pages dates your site very quickly, plus you have to try to remember where you put these dates so you can change those pages. (Better: link to relevant portions of registrar.ua.edu, for example, or express deadlines in terms not specific to a particular year, e.g., “the application deadline is in early April of each year.” Use your site’s calendar to communicate deadlines.)
- PDFs, Word documents, and other files users must download to view. (These are lousy for users on mobile devices and users with disabilities.)
- Graphics, photo illustrations, or other complex visual elements that are time-sensitive or require the expertise of a third party to produce or update.
- Anything that contains FERPA information about students or that for any other reason must be protected (This information belongs in your department’s share drive or a UA Box account.)

A FINAL WORD ABOUT FORMS
Build your forms in Qualtrics, please. Gravity Forms, the plugin A&S has long used to build the various forms departments put on their websites, lags well behind commonly accepted standards for accessibility. Qualtrics, on the other hand, is fully accessible and mobile friendly, plus it’s available for free through the University’s license.

Qualtrics forms won’t be embedded in your site’s pages like Gravity’s forms, but you can create a simple landing page for each form, adding only a single click to your users’ experience.

Qualtrics takes some getting used to, but it’s as user-friendly as Gravity once you get to know it. eTech offers Qualtrics workshops from time to time; watch our website (etech.as.ua.edu) for upcoming sessions.