



Responsible Use of USG Website & Content Management System

USG Policy Dept. 2a (7.00) | Approved by Web Governance Committee and Executive Director
December 2025

Subject: Requirements and standards for use of USG web resources

Responsible Office: Office of Strategic Communications (OSC)

Review Cycle: Annual

Related USG Policies: OSC: **Social Media Policy** OIT: **Acceptable Use Policy, Data Classification Policy**

I. Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent, high-quality, accessible, mobile-first, brand-aligned web presence for user experience, and to reduce risk to the confidentiality, integrity, accessibility, and availability of USG data and the overall web ecosystem.

The actions of one individual or department on the USG website can affect the entire system. As the reputation and image of USG depend heavily on the quality of information published online, its website must be accurate, consistent, accessible, secure, and compliant with the policy below.

This policy governs all public-facing components, web pages and files of USG's digital ecosystem, including content published on the primary domain, subdomains, microsites, and official content hosted on trusted third-party platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo.

II. Definitions

Web Governance Committee (WGC): A cross-functional group led by the Office of Strategic Communications (OSC) and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) that sets web policy and standards, reviews escalations and exceptions, and oversees top entry organizational pages (excluding academic partner program pages). The WGC provides oversight, OSC implements policy for content, branding, and compliance, and OIT manages the infrastructure and hosting.

Content Publishing Committee: All Content Publishers, Content Editors, and web leads from OSC and OIT meet as a collaborative group to ensure alignment on web standards, share best practices, coordinate publishing efforts, and promote consistency across the website.

Content Publisher: A trained staff member with publishing rights who creates web content (or works with others to create) or makes updates to web content and ensures policy and standards are met at the point of publication.

Content Editor: A trained staff member who reviews and prepares content for publication, ensuring editorial quality, accessibility, and compliance. Content Editors may also publish where authorized (for example, event notifications).

Domain: A unique internet address (e.g., <https://shadygrove.usmd.edu>) that can include subdomains and points to the official website.

Content Management System (CMS): Software application used to store, edit, and publish web pages, including text, photos, video, and other media via a set of defined templates.

Publishing Standards: Standards for content, design, and publishing that are developed and maintained to provide an integrated user experience, flexibility, consistent messaging, branding, and ensure the accuracy, timeliness, security, and accessibility of content.

USG Website: All content delivered from the USG domain and any externally hosted content that represents USG (including academic partner pages) are considered part of the USG website and must adhere to USG policies and procedures.

Web Content: Any information created by student employees, academic partners, staff, or representatives and published on the USG domain to represent the work of USG.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1AA): A set of internationally recognized standards that ensure digital content is accessible to people with disabilities, meeting specific criteria for usability, readability, and navigability.

III. Policy Statement

The policy establishes basic requirements for the use of web resources by academic partners, staff, student employees, and contractors. The requirements deal with standards for web content, including visual identity, design, editorial quality, accessibility, management applications and databases, security, and advertising.

IV. Policy Section

Section 1: Publishing Model. USG operates a decentralized publishing model with oversight of top-level pages from the Office of Strategic Communications (for example, the homepage). USG departments and academic partners (i.e. designated Content Publishers and Content Editors) manage their website pages while following the standards and processes set out in this policy. All sites and pages must abide by standards designed to assure quality, performance, usability, accessibility, and security.

Section 2: Accessibility. USG is committed to ensuring equal access to information, programs, and activities through its websites for students, academic partners, the community, and staff. To that end, all content published on its websites or subdomains will strive to maintain accessibility standards as defined by WCAG 2.1AA, and adhere to University of Maryland, College Park’s [accessibility policy](#). Third-party platforms and plugins used for public content must demonstrate conformance; inaccessible tools may not be used. Captioning and transcripts are required for audiovisual content, meaningful images must have alt text, and color and contrast must meet accessibility requirements.

Section 3: Content Quality and Life Cycle. Published pages must not contain broken links or misspellings and must satisfy accessibility checks. Use web-native pages where feasible in preference to downloadable documents; when documents are necessary, they must be accessible and version-controlled. The content published on USG websites must be up-to-date, accurate, and compliant with federal, state, and local laws; and USG policies. The frequency of web content updates will depend on the type of content featured, but all content must be reviewed at least annually to include removal or archiving. Out-of-date content, including documents, links, or other content that is no longer relevant, must be removed. Abandoned web pages must be identified and archived or deleted. URL redirects can be implemented when necessary.

Section 4: Security and Performance. For any new site or major redesign (for example: change of template, navigation, audience, etc.), a Content Publisher must contact OSC first. Before launch or major change, sites and features must undergo checks for security, privacy, accessibility, and performance; high-risk issues must be remediated before go-live. OSC and OIT monitor uptime and critical issues and may temporarily disable content or integrations that present material risk until remediation is complete.

Section 5. Training and Access. Training is required before a person receives publish or edit rights, with periodic refreshers as directed by OSC and OIT. Publishing rights may be suspended for repeated or serious violations—such as unresolved security, privacy, or accessibility issues—until corrected.

Section 6. Exceptions and Appeals. Temporary exceptions with a remediation plan and target date may be granted. The WGC reviews and may approve, modify, or deny the request. Decisions can be appealed in consultation with OSC and OIT leadership.

Section 7. Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Trademarks. All digital assets should comply with all applicable laws and policies regarding Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Trademarks. Relevant USG, USMD, and UMD policies are applicable. Links to original sources should be provided where possible.

Section 8. Data. For all data included in web content, USG’s OIT Data Classification Policy shall apply. (Refer to the above linked OIT Data Classification Policy.)

V. Roles and Responsibilities

Web Governance Committee provides strategic direction for the web ecosystem, interprets this policy, and resolves issues. It prioritizes enterprise-level web initiatives, confirms readiness for major releases

affecting top-level pages, and adjudicates exceptions with clear remediation timelines. Chaired by OSC and OIT and with USG department and academic partner participation and representation, the committee meets regularly and can act between meetings when urgent risks arise.

Content Publishing Committee includes Content Publishers, Content Editors, and the web leads from OSC and OIT who meet as a collaborative group to ensure alignment on web standards, share best practices, coordinate publishing efforts, and promote consistency across websites.

Office of Strategic Communications owns the homepage and other top-level pages, curates the organization's editorial voice, and maintains design and editorial standards. OSC supports units with coaching, plain-language guidance, and content reviews, and partners with OIT to assess usability, accessibility, and performance ahead of significant launches. OSC and OIT jointly operate the training program for Content Publishers and Content Editors and can recommend temporary suspension of publishing rights when serious issues persist.

Office of Information Technology provides hosting and core infrastructure, monitors security, availability, and performance, and coordinates vulnerability remediation. OIT publishes technical baselines (for example, encryption, patching, and backup expectations), evaluates third-party integrations with OSC for risk and accessibility, and may temporarily disable content or services that pose a material security or privacy risk until remediation is complete.

VI. Standards

Design. Design must support readability, responsiveness, and accessibility. Pages should work well on mobile and desktop, provide sufficient color contrast and visible focus, and avoid patterns that block keyboard navigation or screen-reader access. Standards are available to content publishers through OSC's website and content publisher tools in CMS.

Publishing. Standards for content, design and publishing with input from the Web Governance Committee are provided for the purposes of achieving an integrated user experience, reasonable publishing flexibility, and consistent messaging, branding, and experience across the digital ecosystem and assets. Content should be written in plain language with meaningful headings and descriptive link text. Pages must present accurate, current information and avoid unnecessary jargon; when specialized terms are required, they should be explained in context. Titles, summaries, and metadata should clearly communicate purpose and audience.

Digital media. Images that convey meaning must include alternative text; decorative images that don't require alternative text must be marked as such so that assistive technologies skip them. Video must be captioned and audio must have transcripts, with audio descriptions added when visuals convey essential information. Documents may only be used when absolutely necessary. If used, they must be fully accessible and clearly identified with their version and date so users can verify they have the correct and most current file.

Accessibility. The USG web team will ensure that all legacy and newly developed web pages include the required “Web Accessibility” link in a visible location within the footer. This link will direct users to a common institutional web accessibility page (<https://www.umd.edu/web-accessibility>).

Quality assurance — Content. Before publishing, pages must undergo checks to ensure links are operational, and that spelling, grammar, accessibility (WCAG 2.1 AA), and clarity standards are met. After publication, reviews help detect issues that require prompt correction. Each department must complete an annual content review to remove or archive outdated or abandoned material and ensure that ownership and points of contact remain current.

Quality assurance — Security and Performance. Sites and major features must be tested for security and performance before launch; high-risk issues must be remediated before release. Third-party scripts and data collection are minimized and evaluated for necessity and compliance. Regular data-retention audits ensure that public repositories hold only what is needed and only for as long as needed; this audit must also include any web-based data. OIT and OSC may temporarily disable pages or integrations that create material risk until remediation is complete.

VII. Revision History

Initial Policy Creation	December 2025	Rebecca Basu
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