![New Mexico Tech logo](NEW MEXICO TECH — SCIENCE • ENGINEERING • RESEARCH UNIVERSITY)

# Web Policies and Standards

**Office of the President**
Policy Document Number: OP-05.1-2024

Adopted by the Office of the President: 01/31/2025
Policy Updates:

**Policy Purpose:** This policy creates standards for NMT's websites.

# POLICY STATEMENT

The University's presence on the Web is an essential tool for fulfilling its mission of teaching, research, and service. Administrative and academic units, faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to take full advantage of web technology as a medium for providing access to official information and fostering the free exchange of ideas.

Due to the diverse purposes and constituencies provided by NMT websites, as much freedom as possible should be granted to those creating and maintaining websites. However, the contents of official campus webpages on University servers or other servers funded by the University must comply with local, state, and federal laws and University policies.

As the reputation and image of the University is determined, in part, by the quality of the information published on its websites, the information should be accurate, accessible, current, and consistent; it should also reflect New Mexico Tech's mission, vision, values, and strategic plan, when applicable.

# GENERAL POLICY

## Official University Webpages

The requirements of this policy apply to all of the University's official webpages, which are public-facing pages written in hypertext markup language (HTML). Official webpages generally reside on the University's servers, but in some instances may reside on non-University servers. Staff, faculty, students, and contractors authorized to develop official webpages for any administrative or academic unit of the University must comply with the requirements of this policy.

## Unofficial University Webpages

Unofficial webpages are generally outside the scope of this policy. However, if such pages are hosted on the University's servers or imply an affiliation with the University, they must comply with all applicable laws and University policies. Examples of unofficial webpages include:
- Personal webpages of staff, faculty, and students
- Webpages for consortia, professional journals, or internal University use

## Requirements of Web Standards

To help promote accurate content and an accessible and consistent experience, the University has developed a set of Web Standards for official University websites. The standards include visual elements, accessibility, and other items to ensure that New Mexico Tech websites are available to the broadest possible audience and provide a consistent user experience.

Though the Web Standards are primarily guidelines, the Standards contain required elements. Administrative and academic units are expected to comply with the requirements within one (1) year of the effective date of this policy, or at the time that they are developing a new website or

refreshing an existing one.

The Web Standards are available on the Marketing and Communications webpage.

## Compliance with New Mexico Tech Web Standards and Web Governance

The Office of Marketing and Communications in general, and the New Mexico Tech web designer(s) and developer(s) especially, are authorized to require that administrative and academic units bring websites under their control into compliance with the required elements of the Web Standards. Continued failure to comply with the required elements of the Web Standards shall be reported to the cognizant head. Serious breaches involving security and legal issues may result in an immediate shutdown of a noncompliant site.

Administrative and academic units may have Web policies and standards specific to their websites. These must be approved by the Office of Marketing and Communications.

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DEFINITIONS

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## Web Content Management System
New Mexico Tech uses a web content management system to simplify the creation, maintenance, and control of Web content. It allows administrative and academic units to create their own webpages without reliance on outside consultants for assistance, and without acquiring programming skills or dedicated software.

## Domain Names

Internet addresses, including domain names, are an important part of the New Mexico Tech web presence. Domain names used for institutional and academic websites should reflect their relationship with the University. New Mexico Tech has a legal and marketing interest in the use of its name and associated branding, including the proper use of website domain names. This standard is intended to ensure that domain names used in New Mexico Tech websites promote New Mexico Tech, its programs, and services.

All administrative and academic websites on the University's servers should use nmt.edu domain names in the form of XXXX.nmt.edu or XXXX.yyyy.nmt.edu. Domain names should accurately reflect the department, program, or activities to which they refer.

## Site Structure

Here are some best practices for organizing the files and directories of your website.
- File names or anchor names should never have any spaces. Use dashes instead of spaces. File names should be short yet descriptive. Avoid using abbreviations; they can have an impact on Search Engine Optimization. HTML files should have an .html extension. .htm is acceptable, (.cfm, .php, .asp etc are appropriate for servers using those languages.) provided that all files in the site are named consistently.

- File and directory names should be lowercase.
- The main page or default page in a directory should always be named index.html, or something appropriately similar depending on the configuration of the server (default.htm, index.php, index.cfm, index.asp, etc.*).*
- A default page should be created in every directory to avoid 404 pages or directory indexes from appearing to the user. If you move frequently accessed files to a new location, provide a redirect from the old location. As a general rule, keep your site organized and use a common images folder.

## Site Design (Logo, References, and Contact Information)

Required elements:
- An approved New Mexico Tech logo must appear at the top of the page.
- The words "New Mexico Tech" must appear in the HTML title tag.
- The words "New Mexico Tech" must appear on the homepage.
- The official New Mexico Tech logo must appear on all pages of every website.
- A link back to the New Mexico Tech homepage must be included on the pages of the site.
- A link to contact information for the department must appear on the home page. Include an email address, phone number, and mailing address.

## Images, Graphics, and Multimedia Images and Graphics

The images/graphics on New Mexico Tech websites should:
- Be relevant, professional, optimized for the web, and legal.
- Adhere to New Mexico Tech identity/branding standards.
- Refrain from using clip art or animated GIFs.
- Make sure you own or have permission to use any photos.
- Specify image size and use the "alt" attribute (the text equivalent) to describe your image in your HTML. Resize your images using image-editing software before uploading them. Do not resize images by setting the height and width in your HTML.
- Do not distort (squish or stretch) images. All images should maintain their original aspect ratio or be cropped to the desired size.

## Multimedia

If you include Flash, video, audio or other media on your site, provide text alternatives (i.e.: closed captioning).

Flash and Multimedia elements should be used appropriately and not as a means of delivering website content. Websites created entirely in Flash are discouraged. The use of Flash to create navigation is also discouraged; if used, a text alternative is also required.

## Scripting

Use client-side JavaScript for enhancement purposes; navigation and functionality of pages should not be dependent upon JavaScript. Use the <noscript> tag to provide alternative content or a message indicating JavaScript may be required to view some features of the webpage. Use

the <noscript> tag to provide alternative content or a message indicating JavaScript may be required to view some features of the webpage. Web Applications may make use of JavaScript for features and functionality.

**Documents for the Web**

- Use Adobe PDF when high print quality is desired. PDFs can display high resolution images and illustrations better than doc or docx. Documents scanned into a PDF format negate most of the advantages of PDF and should only be used when other methods are not available. In addition, documents scanned as PDF are not indexable by Google, have large file sizes, and text cannot be selected from the document without Adobe Acrobat. PDFs should be made ADA accessible as a rule.
- Use Microsoft Docx or Doc formats for documents that need to be edited and for general Word processing tasks.

It is recommended that the docx format be used instead of doc format. Docx is the latest file format from Microsoft and has considerable advantages over the older doc format.
- Editable forms: Adobe requires Adobe Acrobat to create editable forms.
- Legal documents: Legal documents in doc or docx format must be protected to prevent changes. Documents authored in Adobe Acrobat may be malleable if not secured.
- Secured document: Securing the document, protecting it with a password and encryption, is inadvisable in some cases. There are better methods for securing information.
- Small file size: PDFs must be optimized for the Web to achieve a small file size. Word documents saved as PDF may be much larger than the original Word format.

**Document Filenames**

Document file names should match the title of the document. For example: A PDF document titled New Mexico Tech Web Standards should have the filename nmt-web-standards.pdf.

The use of dates and version numbers within the filename is discouraged. In most cases, there should be only one published version of any document at a given time; this improves data integrity, helps prevent old documents from reappearing, and prevents broken links. An archiving process may prove helpful when handling outdated documents.

If a date is used, it should be placed at the end of the filename when possible. For example: A PDF document titled 2016 New Mexico Tech Web Standards should be retitled to New Mexico Tech Web Standards 2024 and have a matching filename of nmt-web-standards-2024.pdf.

Dates should be used in the title and filename if the subject of the document is date-specific. For example, a PDF document titled New Mexico Tech Department May 2016 Calendar and named nmt department-may-2016-calendar.pdf would be an acceptable use of the date in the title and filename.

## Document Properties/Metadata

Document properties/metadata should be accurate when publishing a document to the Web. Document metadata can be accessed using the Document Panel in Microsoft Word or by viewing the file properties with Windows Explorer. For PDF documents, file properties can be accessed from File Menu --> Properties in Adobe Reader.

Metadata Fields:
- Author: Should be the department, program, or faculty member who created the document.
- Title: Should match the title of the document.
- Subject: Should be relevant to the document content.
- Keywords: Content-specific words that could be used when searching for the document. The worlds included should appear in the document text.
- Category: Should be relevant to the document content.
- Comments: Any other relevant information.
- Note: Category and comments only exist in Microsoft Office documents.

## Accessibility

All websites are required to make reasonable efforts to comply with the standards for accessibility in Section 508, an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
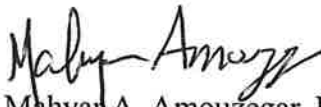
## Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques can help increase the visibility of websites, as well as make it easier for users to find content as the result of searches. New Mexico Tech's internal search engine is a Google Search Appliance and uses the same techniques as the google.com search engine.
- Use keywords in the page title. Ensure these keywords also appear in the content. Every page title should be unique.
- Use alt attributes for images.
- Use descriptive anchor text. Avoid "click here," "read more," etc. Keep the anchor text under 55 characters.
- Use the title attribute in links. The title or a description of the page being linked to is an appropriate value for the title attribute.
- Use header tag properly. Only one <h1>, and properly nested <h2>, <h3> etc.
- Ensure the first paragraph and meta description are representative of the content of the page.
- Use search engine-friendly URLs. The URL should be descriptive. Avoid using URLs such as site.nmt.edu/p=232323. Instead, consider using site.nmt.edu/topic/help.html

## Quality Assurance Testing

Best practices in Web development include Quality Assurance Testing (QAT). Operating systems to test include Linux, Macintosh, and Windows. Depending on the particular web presence, mobile systems are iOS, Android, and BlackBerry. The extent of testing, considering the

combinations of operating systems and browsers, will depend on website complexity and resources available to a particular department or group.

Mahyar A. Amouzegar, President
New Mexico Tech