



## Organizational Websites, Management and Hosting

**Policy Type:** Administrative

**Responsible Office:** Office of Technology Services (Web Services), Office of the Vice President of Administration

**Initial Policy Approved:** NEW

**Current Revision Approved:** 03/17/2017

### Policy Statement and Purpose

---

This policy and the supplemental VCU Web Standards and Guidelines establish the general responsibilities for the development, management, and hosting of Organizational websites and ensures consistency with standard visual elements in support of the VCU brand and university mission.

This policy supports the following objectives:

1. Create a strong and unified identity for VCU
2. Provide a welcoming experience for all visitors by providing consistent, secure, accessible, and mobile-friendly Websites
3. Maintain a Web presence fully compliant with relevant federal and state guidelines and requirements
4. Create an efficient environment that promotes central coordination, cost savings and alignment with strategic priorities
5. Foster a commitment to harmonize individual department and school cultures and perspectives within the Web publishing environment

Noncompliance with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

### Table of Contents

---

Who Should Know This Policy.....	2
Definitions.....	2
Contacts.....	3
Policy Specifics and Procedures.....	3

Exceptions.....	3
Forms.....	3
Related Documents.....	4
Revision History.....	4
FAQ.....	4

## Who Should Know This Policy

---

This policy applies to all university schools, programs and units including all university members and authorized affiliates responsible for the development, management and hosting of Organizational websites.

## Definitions

---

**A to Z Index:** The A to Z index is located on the VCU Website homepage. It is an alphabetically ordered and searchable master list of public VCU websites.

**Mobile-Friendly:** A mobile-friendly site is a website which content is rendered in a manner that is easily readable for mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablet devices. It includes similar features found on a standard website, such as navigation, search options, and share functions.

**Sexually explicit content:** Sexually explicit content as defined in Va. Code 2.2-2827 is any description of or any picture, photograph, drawing, motion picture film, digital image or similar visual representation depicting sexual bestiality; a lewd exhibition of nudity, as nudity is defined in Section 18.2-390 of the Code of Virginia; sexual excitement; sexual conduct or sadomasochistic abuse, as also defined in Section 18.2-390; coprophilia; urophilia; or fetishism.

**VCU Organizational Websites:** Public websites that provide institutional information about the university in general (e.g., VCU homepage) or about an individual unit within the university (e.g., Office of Research and Innovation). A VCU organizational website tends to be mainly about VCU products or services.

**Web Content Management System (WCMS):** A software system that provides website authoring, collaboration, and administration tools designed to allow users with varying knowledge of Web programming languages or markup languages to create and manage website content with relative ease.

**Websites:** A Website is a collection of Web pages, including multimedia content typically identified with a common domain name, such as www.vcu.edu.

**Website Redesign:** Altering or adjusting a website's content, appearance, information architecture or overall presence in an amount exceeding 50% of the current website. This does not include dynamic or date-centered content such as blogs, news, or event type content.

**Website Sponsor:** The person who is responsible for the unit or the application on behalf of VCU. The sponsor is the executive officer in charge or their designee.

**Website Technical Contact:** The person or group of people who are responsible for the operation and content of a VCU website.

## Contacts

---

VCU Technology Services in consultation with University Relations officially interprets this policy. Technology Services is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy *Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures* through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to the Department of Web Services within Technology Services.

## Policy Specifics and Procedures

---

1. Unless granted an exception as discussed below, all Organizational Websites must meet the university's Web Standards and Guidelines, including but not limited to:
  - a. VCU branding
  - b. Web accessibility in compliance with federal and state laws
  - c. Mobile-friendly
  - d. Content appropriateness - being free from commercial activity or promotion and having no sexually explicit content
  - e. Security and privacy including but not limited to FERPA, HIPAA and Clery compliance
2. All VCU Organizational Websites will be included in the A to Z Index and therefore must go through an initial and periodic review. These Websites must have an active Website technical contact and Website sponsor. Contact information will be kept current in the A to Z manager.
3. All VCU Organizational Websites must be managed by an approved Web Content Management System (WCMS) or another VCU approved application and hosted on VCU approved servers or sites in accordance with the VCU Web Standards and Guidelines.
4. Prior to planning a new or redesigning an existing organizational website, units must submit an official request including an initial prototype for review and approval by University Relations.

## Exceptions

---

Units can request an exception to this policy by submitting the Exception Request Form to Web Services. Units granted an exception to this policy assume all responsibility if a technical issue arises. Units granted an exception are required to submit a written plan to Web Services addressing how they will keep the website content current, in compliance with VCU Web Standards and Guidelines and ensure continuity in the case of employee turnover or technical failure.

## Forms

---

1. Request new website or website redesign: <http://go.vcu.edu/webrequest>
2. Request an exception to this policy (Exception Request Form): <http://go.vcu.edu/webexception>

## Related Documents

---

1. VCU Web Standards and Guidelines: <http://www.webstandards.vcu.edu/>
2. VCU Brand Standards Guide: <http://www.identity.vcu.edu/>
3. VCU Policy: *Information Security*: <http://go.vcu.edu/infosecurity>
4. Record Management: <http://go.vcu.edu/records-management>
5. Privacy Statement: <http://go.vcu.edu/privacy-statement>

## Revision History

---

None – New Policy

## FAQ

---

1. Question: Can my Organizational website be granted an exception entirely from this policy?

Answer: No. Organizational websites cannot be granted blank exemption from this policy. Instead exemptions must be requested separately from each of the policy's specific requirements, such as Accessibility, Branding, Content, Hosting, Mobile-friendly, Security/Privacy, and Web Content Management System.

2. Question: What is the substantive difference between a website, a blog, and online course content?

Answer:

Website - The content is usually static, formal, and professional. Interactivity does not exist and there is only one-way communication. A Website tends to be transactional and mainly about products or services.

Blog - The content is regularly updated, informal, and collective. Blogs are interactive, informative, and usually focus on department or customer issues.

Online Course Content - Online Course Content is designed as a “built” environment for learning. It's constructed as an experience that can be followed sequentially and can be accessed throughout the designated time period.

3. Question: Does this policy cover all VCU websites?

Answer: Only VCU organizational websites are covered by the policy. Web pages intended primarily for restricted, internal audiences are excluded from this policy. Other web pages not covered by this policy include:

- Personal web pages: Web pages created by an individual and containing content related to the activities of that individual.
- Blogs: Web pages created with content that is regularly updated, interactive (two-way communication), and usually focus on department or customer discussion. A blog can reside within a VCU organization website.
- Online course materials: Any online material that describes or supports the operation of a course.
- Research/lab web pages: Web pages that describe the research efforts of an individual member of the VCU community or group of such members, distinct from an entire department or permanent administrative unit.