

Web Governance Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Web Governance Policy (hereafter referred to as the policy) is to set out a campus-wide approach to the management of University of Limerick (UL) and UL-affiliated websites and web content. The document outlines the contexts in which the policy applies and the principles to which UL will adhere when creating and maintaining its websites. Implementation of this policy and related procedures will ensure that the institutional websites and web activities align with UL's strategic objectives and priorities.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 To whom does the policy apply?

This policy applies to all UL staff and students, contractors, third-party agents and other affiliate associates and users who carry out work on UL or UL-affiliated websites.

1.2.2 In what situations does the policy apply?

Along with relevant Marketing and Communications supporting policies and procedures, this policy relates to the creation and maintenance of UL and UL-affiliated websites and web content. The policy focuses mainly on the websites hosted on the University's Drupal Content Management System (CMS) and the CMS editors who publish content to www.ul.ie (the main UL website).

All sites hosted on the CMS and those with subdomains within the ul.ie domain are strategic assets owned wholly by UL. In addition, some strategic UL and affiliated websites are housed on unique non-ul.ie domain names and on alternative hosting platforms. Therefore, the terms of this policy could be applied to other systems and platforms that provide functionalities to publish content to the World Wide Web via other UL-owned domains.

1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?

The Marketing and Communications Division's Head of Web is responsible for enforcing this policy and its related procedures. Ultimate responsibility for enforcing the policy rests with the Director of Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs.

The UL Executive Committee approves the policy and, where necessary, supports the Director to enforce the policy.

Faculty deans and directors of administrative areas are required to familiarise themselves with the policy. Where a breach of the policy is highlighted, faculty deans and directors of administrative areas must cooperate in ensuring that appropriate action is taken.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 Main Website

The main UL website is on the URL https://www.ul.ie.

1.3.2 Affiliated Website

An affiliated website is any website that is affiliated with UL and for which UL may be seen to be responsible. An affiliated website may be on a UL subdomain or a completely independent bespoke domain, such as https://www.ulsport.ie.

1.3.3 Subdomain

Some websites and services exist as subdomains of the ul.ie domain. This means that their address is something.ul.ie, e.g. https://learn.ul.ie. Subdomain URLs are reserved for system use only. Please refer to the Subdomain procedure for further information.

1.3.4 Content Editor

A content editor is someone who has been granted authority to add content to a UL website. See section 2.2.3 for details.

1.3.5 Website Coordinator

Each UL website or website section is assigned a website coordinator, who acts as the main point of contact for the Marketing and Communications Division's Web team. See section 2.2.3 for details.

2 Context

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

This policy is based on the fundamental principles of freedom of expression, a plurality of diverse views, academic freedom, critical thinking, transparency and ethical conduct as well as a rejection of any form of advocacy or discrimination based on race, age, religion, gender, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or other grounds of discrimination prohibited under Irish or EU law.

2.1.1 Data Protection Laws and Legislation in the Jurisdiction

UL is committed to complying with all applicable data protection, privacy and information security laws and regulations in the locations in which it operates. Where the University processes personal data, it is subject to the obligations set out in the Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulation, 2016/679 (GDPR) as well as related guidance issued by supervisory authorities, including the Data Protection Commission (Data Protection Legislation).

2.1.2 ePrivacy Laws and Legislation in the Jurisdiction

UL is committed to complying with the EU Electronic Privacy (ePrivacy) Directive. In Ireland, the ePrivacy Directive is transposed into the law of the State by Statutory Instrument No. 336 of 2011, the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Privacy and Electronic Communications) Regulations 2011 (the ePrivacy Regulations).

2.1.3 Accessibility Laws and Legislation in the Jurisdiction

UL is committed to complying with the Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102), which provides people with disabilities with better access to the websites and mobile apps of public services. In Ireland, the Web Accessibility Directive is transposed into the law of the State by Statutory Instrument No. 358/2020 – European Union (Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies) Regulations 2020.

2.1.4 Irish Language Laws and Legislation in the Jurisdiction

UL is committed to complying with all applicable Irish language standards, laws and regulations as laid out in the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021.

2.1.5 Copyright

UL is committed to complying with all copyright laws and ensuring that any content used on its websites is either original or, if applicable, appropriately licensed for use.

2.2 Other Context

2.2.1 User Focus, Content Quality and Reputational Management

UL's digital presence is the public face of the University. It provides a platform on which to display the University's best qualities and project a positive image. It is a strategic asset that carries enormous influence and provides global access to all aspects of UL.

All of UL's online visitors should have a digital experience consistent with the University's mission and values. UL websites must be designed in a way that intuitively presents information to users to facilitate a positive online experience and quickly provide them with the information they need.

UL's digital audience includes prospective and current students, researchers, alumni, funders, industry partners, staff, the local community and the online audience as a whole. All of UL's website work, from content to design to allocation of resources, is created with the needs of its digital audience in mind.

Policies, procedures and guidelines that encourage clarity, accuracy and consistency are essential to protecting UL's online brand.

2.2.2 Brand Compliance

UL is committed to ensuring that all web content conforms to the guidelines laid out in the UL Brand Guidelines.

2.2.3 Marketing and Communications Strategy

This policy is implemented in alignment with the strategy specified in the Marketing and Communications Division 3x3 Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023–2026.

2.2.4 UL Risk Management Framework

As is the case for all UL policies, this policy must operate within the parameters of UL's Risk Management Framework.

2.2.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Web Governance Group

The Web Governance Group is a standing committee that reports to the Digital Governance Steering Committee. The Web Governance Group governs the ongoing, strategic development of UL's public-facing web presence. It provides leadership and authority to ensure that the web presence supports the delivery of the University's strategy and vision.

The Web Governance Group reviews web-related policies and associated procedures. The purpose of the Web Governance Group is to

- oversee policies, standards, guidelines and associated procedures that ensure the institutional website and web activities are aligned with and focused on the strategic objectives and priorities of UL

- ensure that the needs and goals of users are prioritised, addressed and kept central to all web activities

Web Team

The Web team is responsible for developing and maintaining policies, standards, guidelines and associated procedures.

As the owner and custodian of the website, the Web team directs the design, structure and content of UL's public-facing websites and is responsible for the visual identity of the University's web presence.

The Web team directs web requests and has the authority to decide what actions to take with content that does not conform to legal requirements or best practice, address the University's business goals or support user needs. The Web team provides leadership, advice, guidance and training to website coordinators and content editors.

The Web team implements and ensures adherence to corporate policies and aligns the web priorities to the University's strategy.

The Web team has the authority to amend or remove any content that it believes does not meet required standards or legal requirements.

Website Coordinator

A website coordinator must be assigned to each UL website or website section. This person acts as the main point of contact for the Web team. The Website Coordinator is

- the key decision-maker on the website
- the primary contact for matters relating to the site
- responsible for the overall strategic direction of the site and ultimately accountable for all content published on the site
- responsible for ensuring all relevant guidelines, policies and procedures are followed

The Website Coordinator nominates and authorises a cohort of content editors to carry out day-to-day edits on the site. The Website Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that

- content editors are trained to the required standards as set out by the Web team
- content created by content editors is compliant with all relevant regulations and with content quality standards and best practices as laid out by the Web team.

Content Editor

The Content Editor is responsible for editing and maintaining content on a collection of websites, a specific website or a section of a website. The Content Editor must ensure that the site is up to date and easy to use and that it provides users with a positive impression of UL.

The Content Editor must

- attend all training provided by the Web team

- adhere to all guidelines and procedures around regulatory compliance
- implement content quality standards and best practices as laid out by the Web team

3 Policy Statements: Web Principles

3.1 UL is committed to ensuring that all website content served under the www.ul.ie domain is housed on the central web platform.

3.2 UL is committed to ensuring that any web development on sites associated with UL are first approved by the Web team.

3.3 UL is committed to ensuring that its websites are fully compliant with Irish and European legislation and regulations around GDPR, ePrivacy, accessibility, Irish language and copyright law.

3.4 UL is committed to ensuring that its websites are user-centric, effective, efficient and satisfying for a user to use. Every effort will be made to understand user needs when developing websites and using online channels.

3.5 UL is committed to ensuring that the quality of content on its websites is of the highest standard and adheres to best practice.

3.6 UL is committed to ensuring that its websites display a consistent appearance through the application of standard processes and practices.

3.7 UL is committed to ensuring that its websites are data driven and that decisions on the use of websites and online channels are made based on audience intelligence and insights.

3.8 UL is committed to ensuring that all core content, including course information, admissions, and other centrally managed information associated with UL is housed on the central web platform under the www.ul.ie domain. Core content should be linked to rather than duplicated, to ensure a central source of truth and maintain consistency across the website.

3.9 UL is committed to ensuring that all website content associated with UL should be housed on the central web platform under the www.ul.ie domain unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. Sites that wish to exist under a different domain name must present a clear rationale for utilising an alternative approach to the Web Team. Approval for sites existing on alternative domains must be granted by the Web Governance Group and the Digital Governance Steering Committee. All responsibility for hosting, security, maintenance, regulatory compliance, and accuracy for sites existing outside of the central platform will reside with the requestor. Such sites will still be subject to all the existing web policies and the central Web Team must be granted administrative access to the site on request.

3.10 UL recognises that the Web team is the custodian of its websites and, as such, retains the right to amend or remove websites, sections of a website, web components or web content to ensure compliance with regulations and best practice.

3.11 UL recognises that the Web team is a finite resource and that any project work undertaken by the team must align with the University's strategic goals. The team reserves the right to prioritise support and level of engagement with projects.

3.12 UL is committed to ensuring that its web activities are conducted in a highly ethical, transparent, compliant and collaborative manner in line with its values of integrity, credibility, openness and success. As such, UL has no appetite for breaches of statutes, regulations, professional standards or research ethics or for any form of bribery or fraud.

3.13 UL recognises that in the event of an outage or disruption of the website, the central Web Team will coordinate with the web infrastructure support agency and the downstream hosting provider to ensure a timely resolution and minimal disruption to UL's digital presence. Where appropriate the central Web Team will activate a communications protocol to inform staff of the issues. This communications protocol also includes an agreed procedure with ITD to facilitate distribute communications to students and the wider UL community.

4 Related Procedures for Web Governance

- Web projects operating procedure [All staff]
- Subdomains operating procedure [All staff]
- Web roles operating procedure [All staff]
- Web content operating procedure [All staff]
- Research profiles operating procedure [All staff]

5 Related Documents

UL Documents

- Current UL strategic plan
- Social and Online Media Use Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Risk Management Framework

Marketing and Communications Division Documents

- Marketing and Communications Division 3x3 Strategy and Implementation Plan 2023–2026
- UL Brand Guidelines
- Brand Governance Policy
- External Communications Governance Policy

6 Document Control

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