

# CMS/Web editing guidelines

# Writing for the web

Writing for the web is different to writing for printed matter. There are therefore certain guidelines you should follow.

## **Promotional blurb and keywords**

Google searches and indexes your pages by your first sentence/paragraph, so to make the most of your introductions keep them simple, clear, concise and have as many useful keywords in your first paragraph as possible. Avoid marketing-speak (eg boastful subjective claims) as most users find this a turn-off; it doesn't help your Google search listing and takes up limited content space. Make sure any claims or statements can be substantiated.

## **Make sure your text is easy to read**

### **Keep it concise**

Content space on web pages is limited. Users don't read whole articles online, they either print 'final destination' text or scan each page to find their quickest route to the information they require. Reading time online is 30% slower on average. Because of this, you should aim to write less than you would in a printed document.

## **Make your pages scannable**

Avoid long blocks of text; break up your text into smaller paragraphs than you normally would, focusing on one idea per paragraph; use meaningful headings and sub-headings for structuring information; use bullet points to get points across succinctly; embolden key words. All of this helps readers to scan the page quickly for any information they might find useful.

## **Structure your text properly**

'Front-load' text by putting the important information at the top of the page, and use further paragraphs to elaborate. This enables readers to determine immediately whether they should read on.

## **Include the context of each page**

Remember that any web page can be accessed out of context (eg via a search engine rather than from the home page of a site), so never assume that a user has seen any of the other pages on a site.

## **Writing style**

The web is an informal medium, so users tend to appreciate a more informal writing style than used in print. Use clear and simple language to improve accessibility (slang and jargon may confuse visitors for whom English is a second language, for example).

Avoid using the passive tense where possible: active tense is much more engaging and dynamic (eg 'We won the award' rather than 'The award was won by us').

Always check spelling and grammar before publishing your updates.

## **Scrolling**

'Final destination' pages can use scrolling but keep this to a limit. Excessive scrolling is bad practice and tiresome for users. Determine logical points on your page where you can add links to supplementary pages.

## **Front page priorities**

Ensure you have all the key elements of what you're trying to convey about your department/project on your home page.

Academic departments should always have their programmes listed on their front page. Details about news and events is a good way to 'show, not tell' what you're about, and research listings are also key.



# Branding dos and don'ts

# The CMS templates

## The balance of links and content

### Links

Having too few links on a page may mean that you are forcing your audience to read too much to find out where they go next. Think about how you use websites (scanning for links and headings). However, having too many links on a page is overwhelming and confusing. Take time to ensure you have links to the key areas but try to not overload the page. Side navigation could be used instead. Make the most important links stand out if you have a lot of links on one page (use bold).

### Content (text and images)

Having too much to look at on one page is also overwhelming and off-putting. If you have a lot of content you need to list on one page perhaps just have headers or headlines to flag the information, then link to sub pages to explain more. Keep it simple and clear. Images are normally supplementary, so don't let them take over.

### Link names and URLs

Make it easy for the user and search engines to find your links. Don't add 'click here' to your page. This is meaningless to a search engine. Don't add very long URLs (web addresses) that take up a whole line or two lines of a page. Aside from looking ugly they are also meaningless when scanning the page. Instead add logical and helpful links names, eg 'Download the project plan', or 'see further information on this programme'. It should be obvious from the link name what you are linking to. Don't make the user guess. They are likely to get fed up and go elsewhere.

## File names

It's best practice to keep file names short, logical and lower case with no spaces, eg 'goldsmiths-strategy.pdf'. This keeps files consistent but more importantly ensures all computers and web browsers are able to open and read your file (spaces in filenames in particular can cause problems). Please also use hyphens to link words in the file name rather than underscore. This makes typing a filename quicker for the user.

## Images

Don't add images unless you are using image editing software. Images must be a sensible size (not larger than the text unless on a homepage). Do not try to enlarge a smaller image. This will make it appear 'blurry'. If you are not familiar with image editing please contact Web Services.

## Flashing/moving imagery/text

It is bad practice and against accessibility legislation to have moving text of any kind unless a static text alternative can be offered. Moving images/animated features are acceptable in certain circumstances. Please always get approval from Web Services before adding anything that may cause a breach in accessibility standards.

## Copyright

Images in particular need copyright approval. It is imperative that you always have permission to use an image on a public site. The College will be liable for charges/damages. Photography organisations now employ expert software to find their images on the web. They will find you if you do not have permission to use their images.

## Updating

The web is a fluid medium, and you should therefore update pages as time goes by to reflect any changes. For example, before a conference, a page about the event could direct visitors to a registration form, and after the event could link to the PowerPoint presentations that were used.

Please ensure you follow the guidelines below to ensure that references across the Goldsmiths website remain consistent.

**References to 'Goldsmiths'** Unless you are working on official documents (Council papers, contracts, etc) do not refer to the college as 'Goldsmiths College' or 'Goldsmiths' (with an apostrophe). We are no longer called 'Goldsmiths College'. 'Goldsmiths' or 'Goldsmiths, University of London' is correct.

**The official web address** Always use the full website address, [www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/xxxx](http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/xxxx).

**Department** Use 'Department of XXX', not 'XXX Department'.

**Programmes** Ensure you use the correct abbreviations for programmes. MA instead of M.A., Master's instead of Masters, or PhD instead of PHD, etc.

Please note that we refer to degrees as 'programmes', meaning the overall package that's studied; a 'course' is one of the individual units that makes up a programme.

**Date format** '30 June 2009' is the correct format, not 'June 30th'.

**E-mail addresses** The correct format is [@gold.ac.uk](mailto:t.mccrindle) with the e-mail link on the 't.mccrindle' part only. The reason we divide the e-mail address (have the '@gold.ac.uk' in parenthesis) is to help stop the amount of spam (junk e-mail) we receive.

**Tone of voice** Avoid the use of the third person: 'You should...' rather than 'Students are required to...'.  
**Headings** Don't use CAPITAL LETTERS! And only capitalise proper names eg 'Our programmes', not 'Our Programmes'.

## Colours and fonts

Do not add your own colours and fonts to the web pages. These are preset in the templates for you. We want to keep the web pages consistent.

## Copying from Word documents

Avoid copying and pasting from Word into the CMS. MS Word adds in its own (incorrect) code behind to web pages which can break your page and upset the formatting. Where possible, type directly into the CMS.

## Online prospectus entries

Try and fill out all sections of the form, including 'Skills' and 'Careers' information. Many prospective students are using the web as their prime information source, so we want to ensure there is a good level of information on all programmes.

## Further information

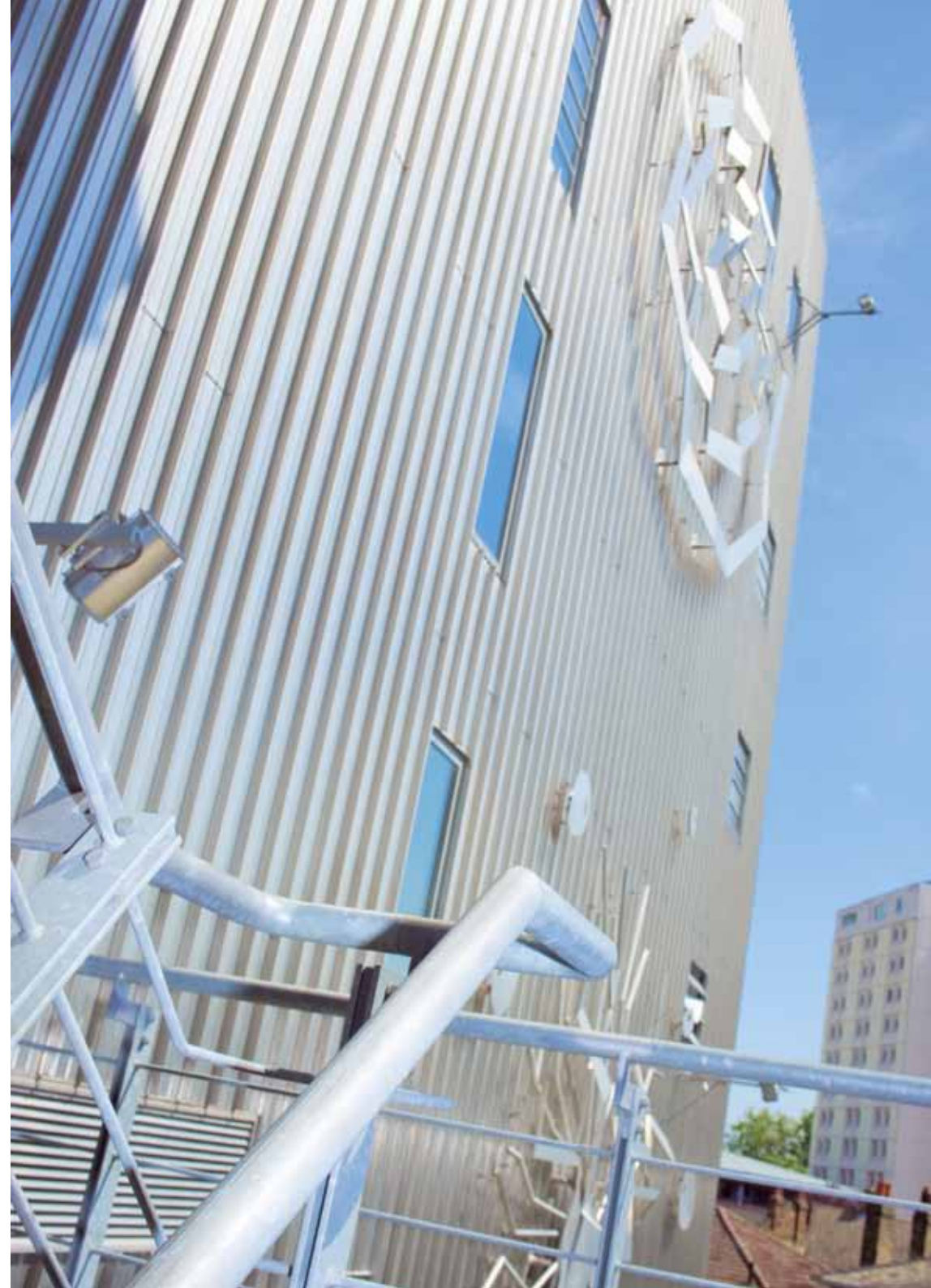
### Web Services

Web Services is part of IT Services and is responsible for the management, design, development and maintenance of Goldsmiths' websites. The Web Team maintains close links with academic and administrative departments through departmental Web Co-ordinators and Editors in the development and maintenance of their web pages. We also work closely with the Communications and Publicity Office to ensure consistency and quality of information made available on both Goldsmiths' external and internal websites.

For general enquiries, questions or to give feedback on Goldsmiths' website, please e-mail [webteam@gold.ac.uk](mailto:webteam@gold.ac.uk), or call +44 (0)20 7919 7057 or +44 (0)20 7717 2294.

### Goldsmiths' brand

The brand toolkit at [www.gold.ac.uk/brand/toolkit](http://www.gold.ac.uk/brand/toolkit) includes information about house style and use of the logo.



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