

Content

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# Web Content Guide

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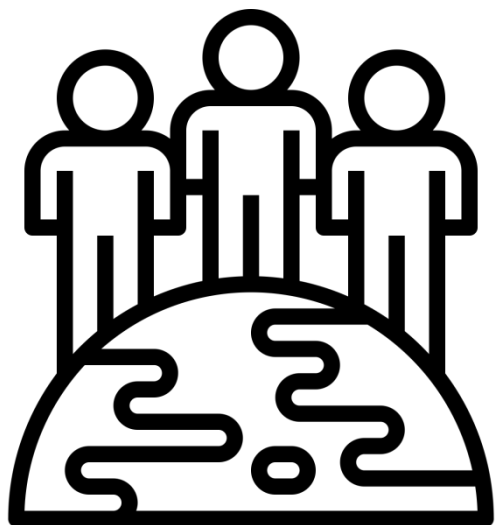
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Our guiding principles

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# Our guiding principles

At ACU, our public website is guided by the following principles:



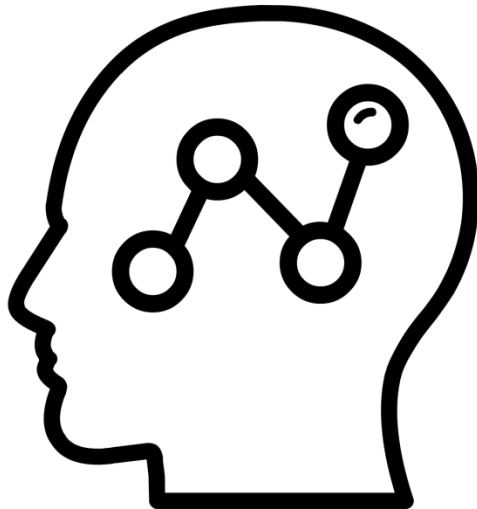
**1. Our users come first.** Our digital audiences are both internal and external; however, the users of the public website are our priority external audiences: prospective undergraduate, postgraduate and research students – domestic as well as international – and our Catholic partners. Existing portals service the needs of our internal audiences, so the scope of the public website is limited to our priority external audiences. All public website decisions, from word selection to visual design to functionality, are based on insights into these users.

*Relates to Design Principle 1: User first*

**2. The purpose of our website is to be a communications and marketing tool** for recruiting undergraduate, postgraduate and research students, enhancing the university's reputation through increasing awareness of the quality and breadth of its research, and effectively communicating our Catholic identity, mission and values. All content is developed with this purpose in mind.

*Relates to Design Principle 2: Solid foundations*

# Our guiding principles



- 3. We consistently adhere to our brand voice.** We are educating a new generation who see beyond a world of selfishness and antagonism and choose to succeed via authentic engagement and positive impact. As a brand, we aim to create impact through empathy and it is critical that our public website reflects that positioning.

Three intentions underlie all website content:

- **Disruption.** We're here to change perceptions and thwart assumptions; to offer something different and introduce something greater. To do that, our content – notably our headlines – grabs the reader's attention by saying the unexpected.
- **Insight.** We look deeply and thoughtfully into the viewpoints of our audience so that we can understand their needs in detail. We frame our content around how it may benefit the user.
- **Humanity.** We reflect our humanity in the language we use by always speaking like a real person. Our content is written for humans and aims to engage on a genuine, personal level. As well as provide information, we share authentic and inspiring stories.

*Relates to Design Principles 1 & 4: User first; Always connected*

# Our guiding principles



**4. We are aligned with our strategic plan.** Our digital presence must support the continued efforts of ACU to become an established, world-leading university that is aligned with its identity and mission and committed to quality and excellence in: research; learning and teaching; student satisfaction and graduate outcomes; community engagement; and performance and service.

*Relates to Design Principles 1 & 2: User first; Solid foundations*

**5. Our content authorship is widely distributed – but centrally governed.** We empower content owners within each department to write accurate, up-to-date content that follows digital best-practice guidelines; however, ultimate oversight and approval rests with the Digital Experience team. This will ensure a consistent, high-quality user experience.

*Relates to Design Principle 3: Confidence through clarity*

**6. We continually improve and innovate.** To best serve its users, the public website needs to evolve. We achieve this through an ongoing cycle of planning, implementation, review and improvement.

*Relates to Design Principles 1 & 2: User first; Solid foundations*

Writing for the web

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# Writing for the web

Writing for the web is different from writing for print. Online, we need to apply different skills and techniques to get our message across effectively and retain the reader's attention.

Why is writing for the web different?

- Reading from screens is about 25 per cent slower than reading from paper.
- More users are accessing web pages on their mobile where the real estate is much smaller.
- Screen-reading is based on scanning. Users tend to view a web page in an “F” shape, paying attention to things like keywords in headings, keywords in the first 1–2 sentences of a paragraph, subheadings, bulleted and numbered lists, links, tables and images.
- Users are often multitasking, so there can be a lot of distractions.

# Planning your content

## 1. Identify the purpose of each page.

- Think about the purpose and objectives of your content before you start to write. Each page should have a clear goal and help users solve a problem.
- Know what you want to convey and understand why it's important for your audience, then find the most straightforward way to say it.

## 2. Be strategic.

- It pays to plan ahead and be strategic about how you create new content, what you want to say, and when someone should read it.
- Think about your content from a user journey perspective, rather than just an individual page. That way, the information will be read in the right context at the right time – and have more impact as a result.
- Remember, a user can arrive at the site from any page and may not have followed a set journey, so create content that makes sense as a standalone page and doesn't depend on other sections.
- Rather than repeating content, use links to guide the reader to further background or explanatory information.

## 3. Don't be afraid to create less content.

When planning your content, consider the smallest screen it will be read on and picture your content in terms of how it would display on mobile.

Users want information quickly. If they can't find what they're looking for, they'll feel frustrated and they'll leave. Too much content means information is harder to find, and that makes it harder for users to complete their task.

Consider:

- Who is my audience?
- Why am I creating this page?
- What do I want to say?
- Does the user need it?
- Will they want to read it?
- What do I want the user to do after reading it?



# Formatting your content

## 1. Make information scannable.

- Simplify content and shorten sentences to make it easier for skimming.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs to improve readability; remember, more users are reading on mobile phones.
- Break text into bite-sized chunks. Cover only one topic per paragraph.
- Choose bulleted lists and tables over paragraphs where possible.
- Use subheading to break up text and draw the reader's eye down.

## 2. Use descriptive, frequent and optimised headings.

So users can easily find what they're searching for on search engines, each page of content should have an accurate title.

Readers use headings to scan content and see what's important to read. Use descriptive, appropriate headings frequently to increase readability and comprehension.

## 3. Give readers a clear action.

- Include calls-to-action (CTAs) on each page to help the user take the next, intuitive step.
- Use descriptive link text. Instead of 'click here', give an idea where the link will take users to.

# Writing your content

## 1. Know your audience.

Your audience should shape what you write and how you write it. Frame all information around a detailed understanding of the user need – and, ideally, the solution to it. Any content beyond essential ‘need to know’ content really belongs in the student/staff portal.

## 2. Write for the reader.

Speak like a real person, using the language you would use if the reader was sitting across from you. Avoid jargon, acronyms and technical terms. Content should be easy to read so write in a friendly, conversational yet professional style.

In general, when you have two competing terms that have similar meaning, pick the term that is most familiar to your audience – the word more likely to be used by them.

Search is mainly based on keyword matching so it's essential to write in the same vocabulary that people use in their search queries.

## 3. Write short sentences and paragraphs in active voice.

As a rule of thumb, aim to use fewer than 50 per cent of the words you would use in a printed publication when writing for the web.

Write in an active voice instead of passive voice. Active voice is less bureaucratic and more human. Remember that we're an organisation of human beings.

# Quick tips for writing

## 4. Aim for a 10–12th grade reading level.

When writing for general audiences, aim to write at the 6–8th grade reading level. However, when writing for experts and scholars, writing at the 10–12th grade reading level is appropriate. Text beyond the 12th grade reading level requires too much mental effort (especially combined with mobile reading comprehension), even for highly educated users.

## 5. Follow web-formatting rules for readability.

Well-formatted content helps people of all reading levels, including highly educated professionals. The most common and effective web-formatting conventions are:

- Include informative headlines and sub-headlines.
- Use bulleted lists and tables to simplify complex content.
- Make judicious use of white space so that content doesn't appear crowded.
- Highlight keywords and phrases.
- Write in the inverted pyramid style: put your most important content in the first paragraph, so readers scanning the page will understand the main idea. Put your next most important content in the second paragraph, and so on.
- For longer articles, feature an explicit overview or summary.

# Web content elements

Web content elements, such as title tags, headings, links and metadata, play equally important roles in ensuring that our web content is easy to find, digestible and accessible to all of our users, as well as search engines.

In the following pages, we have included brief recommendations and pointers that may help you plan your content and apply certain techniques to the following elements:

- title tags
- headings
- meta descriptions
- links
- URLs
- images
- multimedia
- downloads
- forms.

# Title tags

Titles appear at the top bar (or tab) of a web browser as well as in search result pages as linked headlines. Titles give users a quick glimpse into the content of a search result and why it's relevant to their query. For this reason, it's important that title tags concisely and accurately describe your web page and contain the keyword you want that page to rank for – ideally near the start of the tag.

- Keep the length of the title tag to 60 characters or less.
- Research indicates that “boilerplate” title tags – long titles that vary by a single piece of information and are repeated across a number of pages – neither encourage readers to click through nor improve page search rankings. These contain a lot of text that is unhelpful for the user and lowers readability. Examples include the following:
  - Applying | Australian Catholic University
  - About Us | Australian Catholic University
  - Courses | Australian Catholic University

Note that half of these titles is exactly the same. Google typically displays only the first 50–60 characters of a title tag, so this is valuable real estate that you could use to concisely describe the actual content on each page.

Instead of the above title tags, try:

- Apply to ACU – How to apply
  - About ACU – Explore our campuses
  - Courses at ACU
- When using a dash as part of your title tag, use an en dash (–) rather than a hyphen (-) or em dash (—).

# Headings

Headings help the user navigate through the page to understand the overarching topic and find key information on that page. Headings should appear in hierarchical order, ie H1, H2, H3, so that an H1 doesn't appear after an H2. The correct use of headings is a critical element in optimising pages for search and ensuring pages rank highly in search results.

## H1

- Each page should have only one H1 tag. It is usually the main title or heading of the page.
- There should only be one H1 heading per page and it should include the keyword you are trying to rank for.
- Heading length will be dictated by the module style – but keep it concise, clear and comprehensible to the general public.

## H2

- A page can have multiple H2s. These are subheadings which provide direction down the page to help the user find more specific information.
- You may use as many H2 elements as required to denote sections on the page. You should only need up to three subheadings if you are keeping your page concise.

## H3, H4

- An H3 is usually used for subheadings of the H2. You can use H2 after you've used H3.
- If your text is longer than a 1000 words, you can use an H4 to add more page structure. H4 could be used for footer headings that don't include that keyword you want to rank for.

# Meta descriptions

Meta descriptions help search engines and searchers understand what topics are covered in the page. Google uses the meta description on your page as a snippet when people search for keywords that are relevant to your page.

- To appear correctly in search results, the meta description should be no more than 155 characters in length, including spaces.
- Your meta description should provide a short summary of what the page is about and, if appropriate, include a call-to-action to entice users to click through.
- Include the keyword that you are trying to rank for.
- Ensure meta descriptions are unique across all pages.

A meta description is not a direct factor in how well your page will rank in search results; however, it affects the click-through rate, which influences ranking factor. Consider the meta description as a free Google Adwords ad and write to maximise conversions while minimising bounces.

# Meta descriptions

*Example:*

## Bachelor of Creative Arts | ACU

<https://www.acu.edu.au> › ... › [Arts](#) › [Literature, Creative and Visual Arts](#) ▼

Oct 25, 2017 - Gain real industry experience and be work ready. An exciting range of employment opportunities are available to you, specialise in communications, digital journalism, drama, graphic design, literature, media, music and or visual **arts**.

The meta description above contains more than 200 characters; this means that, on mobile, the last few words might not be shown. It can also be improved by targeting specific keywords and including these in the description. Plus, rather than adding a generic opening sentence, choose to write a unique description that's tailored to describe the content within that page and entices users to click through.

*Recommendation:*

Instead of the above example, try:

The Bachelor of Creative Arts at ACU will prepare you to take on creative roles in the performing arts and media industries. Enrol as a full-time or part-time student today.



# Links

- Use meaningful anchor text when directing people to further information. Anchor text is the visible, clickable text users see in a hyperlink. Write a sentence and insert the hyperlink on the words that best describe the content you're linking to. Don't create links that say "click here", "more", "check it out" etc. Actions should start with a verb – it gives users better direction and the page title, or close to the page title following.
  - *Example:* If you need help with your application, [consult an authorised education agent](#) or [contact ACU International](#).
- Always place your links at the end of the sentence, as in the example above, and include the actual name of the destination page in the link text where possible. (Also note that, if a link is part of a larger sentence, close your sentence with a full stop; if an entire sentence is a link, do not use a full stop.)
  - *Example:* Are you ready to step into your future? [Discover how to apply](#)
- The best links start with the most important words. Frontloading the link name helps users scan the page more easily (eye-tracking research shows that users mostly look at the first two words of a link).
- Descriptive links are more user-friendly in general but are particularly important for people using a screen reader, who hear links read aloud instead of scanning the content visually).
- Remember, good anchor text will make it easier for users to navigate the site and find your site in the first place. This is because it makes it easier for search engines to understand what the page you're linking to is about, which in turn improves how a page is ranked. Good anchor text is, therefore, an important component of SEO).

# Links or buttons?

- While many modules include a button as the call-to-action (CTA), others do not. It's important to understand the difference between in-text links and buttons and their usage.
- Buttons are always used for an action such as filling in a form.
- When it comes to navigating to another page, buttons emphasise the action but links place less emphasis. It is the visual difference between, “Click on this if you really want to but we’d like you to read on,” and, “We really want you to go to this page.”
- A button is also used at the end of a section of information. It is a visual full stop. A link is more commonly used when there is more information to read about the topic.
- For more information on the structure of buttons, please [see CTAs](#).

# URLs

A well-crafted URL provides both humans *and* search engines with an easy-to-understand indication of what the destination page will be about.

- URLs should be definitive but concise. By seeing only the URL, a user (and search engine!) should have a good idea of what to expect on the page (even if the title tag were hidden).
- Always use lowercase letters. Uppercase letters in a URL can cause issues with duplicate pages, and may direct users to an error page instead of the intended page.
- When necessary for readability, use hyphens to separate words. URLs should not use underscores, spaces, commas or any other characters to separate words.
- URLs are a minor ranking factor that search engines use when determining a particular page or resource's relevance to a search query. Using a URL that includes keywords can improve your site's search visibility; however, don't create unnecessary URLs simply to include keywords in them.
- URLs should reflect the content hierarchy of the website.

# Images

## Guidelines

All photography on the public website must be on-brand, so use ACU images where possible. If you do need to use stock or commissioned images, ensure they comply with ACU's photography guidelines, including:

- No 3D renders.
- No illustrations (computer generated or traditional).
- Refrain (if possible) from using easily identifiable faces. Use side profiles, partially obscured faces, 'above head' or 'over the shoulder' angles, or any other interesting angles.
- Keep clear of clichés and old-fashioned 'stock' images (business men shaking hands, scientist in white coats with multi-coloured vials, etc).
- Choose images that haven't been heavily colour processed or retouched. We are looking for images that use natural lighting and natural colours, that are true to life to increase plausibility.

## Copyright

Images must also meet copyright requirements. When you supply images for use on the public website, it's your responsibility to also supply proof of copyright to the Creative Services team.

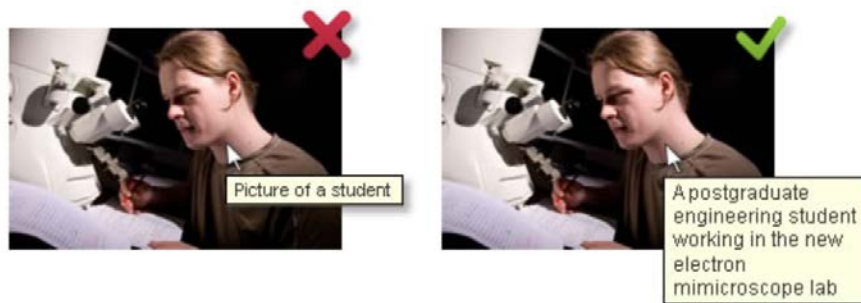
For more guidance images and copyright, review the ACU Website Governance document.

# Images

- Use images that relate to your content and represent genuine stories.
- Compress your images to reduce load time. You should aim to use original images that are between 1MB and 5MB in size, then compress them to <1MB. If you need to optimise large images, you can use tools such as [TinyJPG](#) to reduce the size of the image without compromising on quality.
- Name images appropriately for search. Include at least one primary keyword in the image's file name as well as 'ACU', eg acy-postgraduate-engineering-course.jpg. Optimising file names will help search engines find images and direct users to the correct page.

## Using alt text

- Alternative text (alt text) provides better image context/descriptions to search engine crawlers, helping them to index an image properly. It also helps with web accessibility: visually impaired users using screen readers will be able to read alt text to better understand an on-page image.
- If you have images in your content, ensure alt text is always included with the images to explain what appears on screen.
- If appropriate, include the keyword once in the alt text.
- The best format for alt text is sufficiently descriptive – without being stuffed with keywords.



# Multimedia

- For ease of distribution and access, you can use external video and audio streaming platforms such as YouTube to host multimedia content. Both platforms provide ready-to-use embed links that can be easily added to your CMS module.
- Don't overly rely on video or audio streaming to convey information. Ensure all essential information contained in the video is also presented as text on the app/site. A video should enhance your copy – not replace it.
- Videos demand more of the users' time than an equivalent piece of text, because users can't rapidly scan video content for information. Thus, make sure you keep the video as short as possible.
- Give a descriptive title to multimedia content so users can determine the content before they watch or listen to it. Also include a line of introductory text that explains what the content is and why a user should access it.
- A good title for video or audio content should consider keywords for search.
- It's also best to give users control of playing the video. If there's an auto-play option, disable this so users can freely choose when they watch the video or listen to the audio.
- For accessibility, video and audio content must ideally be accompanied by a text transcript, which must contain: dialogues; sounds; setting and background; actions and expressions.

# Downloads

All files uploaded to the public website should represent ACU in the best possible light. To this end, the following rules apply:

- All documents must be in the new ACU branding.
- PowerPoint presentations will not be published on the website. Please convert these to accessible PDFs.
- PDFs and Word documents are required to be accessible. For more on this, view [web accessibility](#).

# SEO

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is important because search is the main way that users search the web to find content they need. On-site SEO (also known as on-page SEO) is the practice of optimising elements *on a website* in order to rank higher and earn more relevant traffic from search engines.

That said, our users come first, which is why online content should be optimised for people first and search engines second. You can still, however, provide a better search experience on search engines like Google by following these tips:

- Be relevant to a specific topic. Google determines the relevance of your page by analysing its content.
- Include the key subject/keyword in the title tag. Avoid using too many keywords, also known as “keyword stuffing” or “over-optimisation”. Ideally, include the keyword in your headline, but make sure that it reads smoothly for your readers. Well optimised content is written for the user – not for search engines – so consider the keyword as the topic and make sure all of content is “on topic”.
- Have a well-crafted URL. It should reflect the content hierarchy of the website and give both readers and search engines an easy-to-understand indication of what the destination page will be about.
- Be accessible. Additional component such as alt text on images can help search engines better understand the content on the page.
- Provide unique content about a given subject. Content that is duplicated across two or more pages can impact search engine rankings.
- Speak the user’s language in page titles, headlines and body text. Search is mainly based on keyword matching and it’s essential to write in the same vocabulary that people use in their search queries.



# SEO and keywords

Where to include keywords:

- URL (if possible)
  - In the title tag
  - If possible, in the H1 (headings)
  - In an enticing 155 character meta description
  - Page content – preferably in the first sentence of a paragraph
  - Image alt text, as long as the keyword is descriptive of the image content, and image file name.
- Choose quality over quantity. Using semantic search, Google is able to determine keyword synonyms in your content. If a choice has to be made between well-written copy or a higher keyword density, choose quality.
  - Write enough to inform the user – but not bore them. Google has confirmed there is no minimum or maximum keyword density and word count. Note: this does not strictly mean short word counts. If a more comprehensive page offers a better answer to a query, Google is likely to rank it higher. Hit a word count that makes a page valuable and informative – but stop before it appears forced.
  - Only link to external sites which are relevant and useful to users. Links from an “.edu” site are highly valuable and many SEO companies may try to buy them or trick staff into supplying them.
  - If a keyword doesn't fit well into the content on the page, reconsider the keyword. A target keyword should always describe the page it is assigned to.

# SEO and keywords

How to include keywords in your body copy:

- Page content should meet ACU tone of voice guidelines. It should be written in simple, conversational English and avoid jargon. The keywords should be used naturally throughout the copy and appear a couple of times. Aim for a keyword density of no more than 2–3 times per 100 words. Anything more looks a lot like stuffing.
- Don't be afraid to use related or similar words if the keyword doesn't naturally fit. For example, if the keyword is "Melbourne Campus", then you could incorporate search terms such as "campus in Melbourne" or "Melbourne university campus".
- Remember, our users come first, so the most important thing is to make the content relevant and flow naturally for the reader.
- The amount of copy you write will depend on the module used but remember that, online, less is easier to digest than more.

For further reading about SEO, visit the [Moz SEO Learning Centre](#) or the [Google Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide](#).

# Web accessibility

As websites and online resources become more and more important for people across all aspects of life, it is essential that they are accessible to everyone in order to provide equal access and equal opportunity.

When designing and building websites, accessibility is a key principle; it's all about ensuring inclusive participation and access to information for everyone, regardless of their abilities or circumstances. Accessibility also overlaps with other online best practices such as usability, SEO and device compatibility.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is a global community that develops guidelines and resources to help make the web accessible to people with auditory, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech and visual disabilities. This accessibility framework is called Web Content Accessibility Standard (WCAG).

The WCAG is a stable, referenceable technical international standard developed with a goal of providing a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organisations and governments.

The WCAG documents explain how to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. Web “content” generally refers to the information in a web page or web application, from design to code structure to text and images.

All Australian organisations are required to take appropriate measures to ensure their websites are accessible. **ACU follows WCAG 2.0 AA Standard, which means our content should be created to meet the criteria that meet this standard.**

Learn more by reading W3C's guide, [How to Meet WCAG 2.0](#).

# Quick tips | Web accessibility

The four guidelines of WCAG are for content to be:

## 1. Perceivable

- Provide text alternatives for non-text content.
- Provide captions and other alternatives for multimedia.
- Create content that can be presented in different ways, including by assistive technologies, without losing meaning.
- Make it easier for users to see and hear content.

## 2. Operable

- Make all functionality available from a keyboard.
- Give users enough time to read and use content.
- Do not use content that causes seizures.
- Help users navigate and find content.

## 3. Understandable

- Make text readable and understandable.
- Make content appear and operate in predictable ways.
- Help users avoid and correct mistakes.

## 4. Robust

- Maximise compatibility with current and future user tools.

# Quick tips | Web accessibility

While the web administrator will mostly be responsible for ensuring the functional requirements of web accessibility is met on the ACU website, it is also our responsibility, as content contributors, to create content that adheres to WCAG standards.

## Links

- Don't underline any text that's not a link, even if your links aren't underlined. Reserve underlining for links.
- Ensure that links include information-bearing words (use anchor text that reflects the link's destination, instead of generic "go", "click here" or "more"). This technique improves accessibility for users who hear links read aloud instead of scanning the content visually.

*Example:* If you need help with your application, [consult an authorised education agent](#) or [contact ACU International](#).

- The best links start with the most important words. Frontloading the link name helps users scan the page more easily (eye-tracking research shows that users mostly look at the first two words of a link)

## Images

- Wherever possible, use alt text on your images. Alt text's original and main purpose is to describe images to visitors who are unable to see them (due to disability or technical fault eg the image doesn't load). Using alt text on your images can make for a better user experience; it may also help earn you both explicit and implicit SEO benefits.

# Quick tips | Web accessibility

## Calls-to-action (CTAs)

- A call-to-action is your final instruction to your reader, so your CTAs should be action-oriented. It's best to use action words such as "register", "subscribe", "download" and "sign up" to quickly and clearly reinforce the action to be taken.
- If directing the visitor to another page, we want to give them context for what they'll find on that page and the desired action we want them to take. To do this, use the combination of a verb + page title eg "Live in Rome", "Explore our courses", "Find a scholarship".
- CTA website modules include a button. Text for this button should be a maximum of 3 – preferably short – words. We want to avoid the button wrapping onto two lines when viewed on a mobile device.
- Do not include words that are more than three syllables long. The button text needs to be easily read eg "Live in Sydney" rather than "Find Sydney accommodation".
- If there are multiple CTAs on a page (eg on a landing page), avoid repetition through use of creative verbs such as "Browse your options", "Discover how".
- For accessibility purposes, avoid using "see", "view" and "watch" in CTA text.

## Downloadable files

- Always let users know what they will be downloading by labelling your link clearly and including the file type and size. Some users might not realise that they will be redirected to a document in another format, so it's courteous to indicate that they're going to open a PDF, for example.

*Example:* [Download the student enrolment form \(PDF, 14KB\)](#)

- If you're creating a PDF for users to read online, you should make it a small file; it should be no more than 30-40KB in size.

# Policies

Policies from the student handbook sit within [ACU's online policy library](#). If you are linking to a policy within this library, please follow these guidelines:

- Use the short URL to link to policies (eg, <https://policies.acu.edu.au/807669>) rather than the full URL. You can find this link in the bottom left corner of the page you wish to link to. This will mean that, if the name of a policy is changed, the link won't break.
- When using the short URL, test your link. If it returns a "page not found" message, send the URL through to [CIM.section@acu.edu.au](mailto:CIM.section@acu.edu.au).
- Link to the main, top-level page if it exists. This page gives context for the policy, and provides related policies and procedures. That way, if a policy or procedure is updated, the link won't break. If you are unsure whether this top-level page exists, search for the policy within the policy library. It will give you a list of parent pages to choose from.

*Example:*

To provide more detail on the EAPP Policy, add a hyperlink to <https://policies.acu.edu.au/173373> rather than [https://handbook.acu.edu.au/handbooks/handbook\\_2019/general\\_information/elite\\_athlete\\_and\\_performer\\_program\\_policy](https://handbook.acu.edu.au/handbooks/handbook_2019/general_information/elite_athlete_and_performer_program_policy)

- If you are linking to a policy that doesn't exist within the handbook, you will need to add it as a PDF download. To avoid duplication, ensure that an up-to-date policy PDF appears only once on the public website – at the most logical point in the user journey.

How to apply the ACU  
brand voice

3



# ACU brand voice principles



## Disruption

As a brand, we're all about seeing different perspectives, to create impact through empathy. We're not here to be overly nice or friendly – we're here to change perceptions and thwart assumptions; to offer something different, and introduce something greater.

Disruption is our first voice principle.

Without it, we simply aren't going to make an impact, no matter how empathetic we are.



## Insight

We must be a brand that looks deeply and thoughtfully into the point of view of our audience, so that whoever we're talking to – from undergraduates, to corporate partners, to research fellows – we can reflect how important their needs are to us.

This is why insight is our second voice principle.

It requires that we approach topics with the benefit to that specific reader in our minds, and frame all our communication around our detailed understanding of that need – and, ideally, the solution to it.



## Humanity

We can't afford to drift into distancing, cold or corporate language. We must always remember that we're an organisation of human beings.

That's why humanity is our third voice principle.

It ensures that we reflect our humanity in the language we use – from grammar, to punctuation, to vocabulary – because acknowledging our own humanity is the first step to offering empathy to others.

# The frame

## Two-way headline

If there were one element of our voice that could be called the “hero”, this would be it.

Our two-way headline structure is the most iconic element of our voice, and the one that will most quickly become synonymous with our brand.

More than any other element, this headline structure embodies our creative idea of “A different perspective = A different world”. That’s because it powerfully reflects those different perspectives – in its very form.

### Application

- Use the two-way headline sparingly online (see the next slide).
- Content subheadings (H2) *may* be two-way headlines but will likely be a one-liner.
- A two-way headline is more appropriate in long-form news/marketing content rather than informational pages.
- It may be incorporated into a page intro module.

## The one-liner, the mirror and the switcheroo

Create a disruptive perspective challenge by cleverly manipulating language within the one sentence.

*Example:*

A place where people go places.

### Application

- On the website, H2 will most likely be a one-liner.
- A form of the one-liner can be used in your content subheadings (H2), where appropriate.
- H1 should always be descriptive rather than clever.

# Tone of voice

## Be cool not cold

- Use active voice rather than passive.
- Use first and second person rather than third.
- Talk about “what it can do” rather than “what it is”. Focus on the benefit to the user rather than what we offer.
- Speak in “you” language. But don’t write from the reader’s perspective – write from our perspective and use empathetic language.

## Be a friend rather than just friendly

- Rather than leaning on exclamation marks, say something worth getting excited about.
- Be genuine, not cheesy.
- Pull, don’t push.
- Be earnest, not eager.
- Be personal rather than generic.
- Use conversational language and talk to the user as a real person.

# Applying brand voice to web content

On the ACU website, we're more restricted in incorporating our disruption voice principle through a two-way headline due to technical considerations, such as SEO and page format. When writing for the website, our focus should be on making all of our content relevant and helpful to users, and adopting the three principles – disruption, insight, humanity – as intentions.

## 1. Insights.

We're here to change perceptions and thwart assumptions; to offer something different and introduce something greater. To do that, our content – notably our H2 subheadings and intro modules – grabs the reader's attention by saying the unexpected. Offer a different perspective on subjects that may be familiar to the user, particularly when writing for marketing/advertising purposes.

## 2. Humanity.

Seek first to understand the users' needs and then show how important those needs are to you. Ask yourself, how might your content benefit its specific readers? Talk about what its topic can do for those users, not just its features. Don't talk about things that the users may already know. Sometimes this might mean being more specific by adding labels or links. Guide users to understand the process or find the solution they are after.

## 3. Disruption.

Write for "real" people and aim to engage with the user on a genuine, personal level. Be consistent with your tone of voice and choose to be a friend rather than too impersonal or overly nice or friendly. Talk to your readers, not at them. And be supportive, not pushy. Don't tell readers what to do tell them how something may help them and invite them to learn more.

# Key tools for applying brand voice

Below are some practical tools for incorporating our brand voice into web content:

- Prefer simple, efficient writing – and avoid repetition.
- Vary your openers (first sentences) in your body copy.
- Play with rhythm in your sentences.
- Avoid using clichés by being specific.
- Make H1 headings (page headings) clear and descriptive rather than clever.
- Avoid using questions as headings; instead, give the user something to reach for. Try to ask a question – then use your answer as the header.
- Use simple, clear language when writing more technical pages or for students whose first language isn't English.
- Focus your creativity where it has most impact:
  - Inject brand voice into level 2 pages, focusing on:
    - Page intro modules
    - H2 subheadings
    - An insightful first sentence below the subheading.
  - Reduce brand voice on level 3 pages and below. It's important to retain a consistent tone, but spend less time on clever headers and more time on clear, empathetic language. Focus on:
    - Page intro modules
    - H2 subheadings higher up the page

# Examples of how to apply brand voice

## H2 subheadings

- Use a thought – and focus on benefits for the user. Treat them as mini two-way headlines.
- Lead into a paragraph with an insightful, educated opinion – then offer a solution.

*Example:*

### **Our accommodation, your home**

Leaving home for Australia can be an exciting but stressful time. To help, we offer...

## H3 subheadings

- Open with a verb – direct the reader.
- Write straight, concise body copy.

*Example:*

### **Apply for a visa**

To study in Australia, you will need to arrange a student visa. We help you understand...

# Examples of how to apply brand voice

## “You might also like” modules

- Use label headers.
- Use directives in the body copy.
- Make your copy short, sharp and efficient.

*Example:*

### **Find a course**

Access our course finder to search specific courses, view study areas and see what courses are available on each campus.

ACU style guide

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# Australian Catholic University

The acronym of the University is ACU. In any content where there are multiple references to the University, use “Australian Catholic University” in the first instance, then “ACU” and then “the University”. “ACU” and “the University” can be used interchangeably thereafter. Do not use “the” before “Australian Catholic University” or “ACU”.

(But remember, our brand voice is inclusive, so use first person rather than third in your content where possible. For example, choose “we” and “our” rather than “the University” or “ACU”. Example: “At ACU, we actively nurture our staff members.”)

## ACU campuses

The correct titles of the University’s campuses – and preferred order – are as follows:

- Ballarat Campus (Aquinas)
- Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo)
- Canberra Campus (Signadou)
- Melbourne Campus (St Patrick’s)
- North Sydney Campus (MacKillop)
- Strathfield Campus (Mount Saint Mary)
- Adelaide Campus (St Francis of Assisi)
- Rome Campus

When referring to a campus in material/publications which will be distributed externally, it is preferable to refer to the campus by geographical location only (eg Brisbane Campus).

Always capitalise “campus” when it appears with the location or patron name (eg the Brisbane Campus, our Brisbane Campus, Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo), McAuley Campus). When referring to a campus in general terms, use lower case (eg the campus, our campuses).

# Australian Catholic University

When writing title tags and meta descriptions, please use the following approach:

- Use “ACU” in the title tag, eg:
  - Domestic student fees at ACU
  - Student accommodation – Live near ACU
- Always include one of the below variants in your meta description:
  - Preferred choice (this ensures that the University’s full title appears in search results): “Australian Catholic University (ACU)”
  - Second choice: “Australian Catholic University”
  - Third choice (if it’s best to include more searchable terms): “ACU”
- Remember, your meta description needs to be fewer than 155 characters in length. Choose the best of these three options to suit your needs while still explaining to your user what the page you’re encouraging them to visit is about.

# Admissions terminology

The Australian Government has set out specifications for common admissions terminology. This terminology is for adoption by the end of May 2018 to support applications to study in 2019 and beyond. Listed below are the new common terms.

## Admission pathway

Any option available to prospective higher education students that will enable them to meet the entry requirements of their chosen courses.

## Adjustment factors

Often referred to previously as “bonus points”, these are additional points that may be used in combination with an applicant’s Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) to derive a person’s course Selection Rank. Adjustments do not change applicants’ ATARs, but change their Selection Rank for a particular course or courses. Common types of adjustment factors are:

- **Elite Athlete and Performer adjustments:** Adjustments available on the basis of the applicant’s sporting or artistic prowess.
- **Equity adjustment:** Adjustment available on the basis of characteristics associated with disadvantage.
- **Location adjustment:** Adjustment available on the basis of the applicant’s proximity to the institution offering the course.
- **Subject adjustment:** Adjustment available on the basis of the particular relevance to the academic requirements of a higher education course of a secondary subject that the applicant undertook.
- **Maximum adjustment:** The maximum total adjustments possible to an applicant’s Selection Rank from the combination of all adjustments they are eligible for.

# Admissions terminology

## Advanced standing

A form of credit for any previous learning (Australian Qualifications Framework definition) – see also the definitions for “credit transfer” and “recognition of prior learning”.

## Applicant and prospective student

The term applicant and prospective students are used by tertiary admission centres and higher education institutions to describe people at different stages of their application processes. An applicant is generally taken to be a person who has already lodged an application to study a specific course. A prospective student is generally taken to be a person who is thinking about lodging an application to study a particular course but has not yet done so.

## Bridging course

A course which assists students to gain knowledge in specialist areas that are a core component of the course. If a course requires a prerequisite in an area that students have not studied or worked with before, a bridging course will help students to bridge the gap in that knowledge and gain admission.

## Credit transfer

A process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes for components of a qualification based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications (Australian Qualifications Framework definition).

## Direct application

Application made to a higher education provider rather than through a tertiary admission centre.

## Early offer

Where an offer of enrolment is made to a recent secondary school student prior to release of ATARs or equivalent (eg OP in Queensland, IB). Such offers are generally conditional on other requirements being met, such as successful completion of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education or achievement of a specified minimum ATAR.

# Admissions terminology

## **Enabling course**

A course designed to provide students with skills needed for success in further study, to assist in the transition to tertiary education – for example study techniques or English language skills. Successful completion helps prepare a person to be admitted to a course that leads to a higher education award.

## **Experience based entry scheme**

A selection method used by higher education providers to assess and select students who may not have educational qualifications sufficient for an offer of admission to a course but who have other relevant work and life skills and experience that make them a suitable candidate.

## **Offer round/s**

Refers to the series of dates on which offers of higher education places are issued to applicants throughout the year, whether through a tertiary admission centre or directly by a higher education provider.

## **Recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

A process used to assess an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit that may be granted towards completion of a qualification (adapted from Australian Qualifications Framework definition).

## **School recommendation**

A recommendation from a school or other secondary education provider on the abilities of a student. Previously referred to by some as a principal's recommendation.

## **TAC application**

Application made through a tertiary admission centre, namely QTAC, UAC, VTAC, SATAC, TISC and University of Tasmania, in relation to applications to study in that state.

# Capitals

**Capitals** should only be used when absolutely necessary.

**Headings** (H1) and **subheadings** (H2, H3 etc) should start with a capital letter and then be in lower case (except for proper nouns).

**Job titles** are capitalised when referring to a specific job or specific person's job title (eg ACU Lecturer in Sociology Professor Jim Watts); however, capitals are not used when referring to the position in general description (eg ACU lecturers and professors are highly qualified).

Capitals are not used when referring to **course areas**, i.e. nursing. They are used only for the full name of the course, ie Bachelor of Nursing. Similarly, capitals are not used when referring to the type of degree alone (eg students must have completed either a graduate certificate or bachelor degree).

**University** is capitalised when referring to ACU, but in general use is lower case.

**Faculty** should only be capitalised when the full name is used (eg the Faculty of Health Sciences). Use lower case at all other times (eg the faculty has 200 students).

**Institute** or **centre** should only be capitalised when the full name is used (eg Institute for Health and Ageing). Use lower case at all other times (eg the institute has three research streams).

**Policies and programs** may be expressed with initial capitals instead of italics and always without inverted commas (eg ACU's Pathways to Retirement Program).

# Dates and times

## Dates

Within “running text”, use numerals for the day and year but spell out the name of the month. You can also use this style when either the day or year is omitted:

- Semester 1 lectures begin on 26 February 2018.
- More than 100 events have been held since the start of December 2018.
- The books will arrive on 18 February.

When writing dates in a table, use the same format as above. Use a spaced en-dash ( – ) to indicate a date span.

Event	Date
Orientation	19 February – 23 February
Semester 1 lectures begin	26 February

## Times

Use the 12-hour system to express time, together with *am* or *pm*:

- Open Day starts at 9am.
- The doors close at 7.30pm.

Use an en-dash ( – ) to indicate a span of numerals or year, eg 9–12, 2018–19, 1998–2022.

# Italics

Use *italics* instead of inverted commas for names of **events, legislation, publications** and **projects**.

Italics must be used for:

- the titles of
  - books and periodicals (eg He will speak on criminology and sign copies of his new book, *Justice on Trial*.)
  - plays and long poems
  - most types of musical composition
  - films, videos, and television and radio programs
  - works of art
  - legislation and legal cases (for legislation, use initial caps for each word, eg The Western Australian *Young Offenders Act 1994* provides for...)
- the names of ships, aircraft and other vehicles
- the scientific names of animals and plants
- technical terms and terms being defined
- letters, words and phrases being cited
- words used in special senses or to which a particular tone of emphasis is being applied
- foreign words and phrases that are not yet regarded as having been absorbed into English (eg *ex officio*).

Avoid using italics as a typographical device in prose because it hinders readability. Instead, emphasise a statement through choosing your words wisely.



# Lists

## Bulleted lists

Bulleted lists are preferable to numbers or letters for itemised material, as they are neater and take less space.

## Lists punctuation

There are three ways items can appear within a bulleted list, as shown below.

When the *items in a list form complete sentences*, they should be punctuated like a normal sentence, including capital letters and full stops, as follows:

Highlights of the year:

- The financial statements showed a surplus for the year.
- The membership of the club increased by 50 per cent.
- Planning permission was received from Council for a new clubhouse.

When the *list forms part of a sentence*, they should be punctuated with a full stop in the last bullet point, as follows:

Awards won during the year included:

- a fourth-year essay prize
- the literary award for women students
- the Dr Wilson Medal for an Honours thesis.

# Lists

When a *list stands alone* under a heading it requires no punctuation, as follows:

Faculty of Theology and Philosophy courses:

- theology
- philosophy
- practical ministry

In all of the above forms, a colon is always used to introduce the bullet points.

# Research institutes and centres

ACU's research institutes and their abbreviations are as follows:

- Learning Sciences Institute Australia (LSIA)
- Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research (MMIHR or the MacKillop Institute)
- Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (IPPE)
- Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry (IRCI)
- Institute for Religion, Politics and Society (IRPS)
- Institute for Social Justice (ISJ)

## **Institute centres**

The Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research is made up of six centres. When mentioning a centre, note its location within MMIHR.

*Example:*

“The Centre for the Heart and Mind, part of the Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research, has found that...”

# Research institutes and centres

The six centres are:

- Centre for the Heart and Mind
- Centre for Health and Social Research
- Centre for Primary Care and Prevention
- Centre for Research Excellence to Reduce Inequality in Heart Disease
- Centre for Exercise and Nutrition
- Centre for Musculoskeletal Research

## **Institutes within an institute**

When an institute sits within another institute, its location under the ‘umbrella’ institute should be noted.

*Example:*

“The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), part of the Learning Sciences Institute Australia, has published findings on...”

# States and territories

When referring to states and territories in short form, please use the following styles:

- ACT
- NSW
- NT
- Qld
- SA
- Tas
- Vic
- WA

# Titles

**Staff members** should not have their title abbreviated (eg Associate Professor, not Assoc Prof). At first reference,

**Staff members** who have no other title (such as Dr or Professor) should be referred to with Mr or Ms before their surname.

**Students** should be referred to by their first and second name.

# Preferred words and spelling (A-C)

Term	Rule (if applicable)	Example
<b>A</b>		
adviser	Spell with an “e” – with the exception of “career advisor”	Talk with your school career advisor.
and	Always spell out, do not replace with an ampersand (&)	
alumni		
associate degree		
away-from-base		The student studied away-from-base
<b>B</b>		
BA	Abbreviations of courses should not contain full stops	BA not B.A.
bachelor degree, bachelors	Lower case when referring to the general degree; no apostrophe.	She did her bachelor degree in arts.
<b>C</b>		
carpark	One word	
case study	Two words	
casework	One word	
co-curricular	Use this term rather than “extracurricular”	
coursework	One word	

# Preferred words and spelling (D-G)

Term	Rule (if applicable)	Example
<b>D</b>		
database	One word	
<b>E</b>		
eg	Do not use full stops	eg, not eg,. or e.g.,
enrol		enrol, not enroll
etc	Do not use full stops	etc, not etc.
<b>F</b>		
fieldwork	One word	
first year and first-year	Do not capitalise Hyphenate when using as an adjective	'Many first-year students' 'Many students are in first year'
fee-paying	Use hyphen	
full-time	Use hyphen	
<b>G</b>		
graduate entry	Lower case, no hyphen	



# Preferred words and spelling (H-M)

Term	Rule (if applicable)	Example
<b>H</b>		
health care	Two words, unless used differently in an organisation name or title.	
honorary doctorate	Lower case	
honours candidate	Lower case	
honours degree	Lower case	
<b>I</b>		
ie	Do not use full stops	ie not i.e.
Indigenous	Capitalise	
<b>M</b>		
masters degree	Lower case when referring to the general degree, no apostrophe	
midyear	One word	
Mission	Capitalise when referring specifically to ACU's Mission	
multidisciplinary	One word	
multi-mode	Lower case, hyphen	

# Preferred words and spelling (O-U)

Term	Rule (if applicable)	Example
<b>O</b>		
Offshore	Lower case, one word	
on-campus	Hyphenate if used as an adjective, and elsewhere two words.	
online	One word	
<b>P</b>		
part-time	Use hyphen	
per cent	Use two words in the text of content but in tables and formulas use the symbol %	
PhD	Use correct capitals and no punctuation	
postgraduate	One word	
program		program not programme

## Preferred words and spelling (O-U)

Term	Rule (if applicable)	Example
<b>S</b>		
Semester 1, Semester 2	Capitalise and use digits when referring to a specific semester	Download your Semester 1 timetable
support	When referring to student support the preferred term is 'services'	Student services
<b>T</b>		
Term 1, Term 2 etc	Capitalise and use digits when referring to a specific term	Term 1 starts in February
Trimester 1, Trimester 2 etc	Capitalise and use digits when referring to a specific trimester	Apply for Trimester 2.
<b>U</b>		
undergraduate	One word	
Year 3, Year 4, Year 12 etc	Capitalise when referring to school year	Year 12 students

## Further guidance

Generally, Australian English spelling should be used and the preferred reference is the *Australian Macquarie Dictionary*. You can refer to [The Macquarie Dictionary Online](#) or get your hands on a print copy.

For more detailed information on style matters, refer to the *Style Manual: For Authors, Editors and Printers*, 6th edition, John Wiley & Sons, Australia. You can find a local bookseller or online bookstore that stocks this manual at [Wiley Australia](#).

References

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# References

- ACU Verbal Identity
- ACU Style Guide
- Usable Information Technology
- W3G – WCAG: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/quickref/>
- Moz: <https://moz.com/learn/seo/>
- Improving the transparency of higher education admissions