

Website Standards & Protocols

Types of Sites and their Approved Platforms

Depending on the intended usage and audience, each type of website has a variety of options for platforms to utilize in publishing the site content. The matrix below identifies the approved platforms for each of the site types described by the Web Policy. See Appendix A for a brief description and support information for each platform.

	Jan/Dana	wwwX (IIS)	Nau.edu	in.nau.edu	Google Sites	Sharepoint	Teams	LMS	Azure/AWS	Other
College			X	X						
Academic Unit			X	X						
Administrative Unit			X	X						
Alumni & Donor Engagement			X							X
Research Center, Institute, or Laboratory	X	X		X						
Special Program		X		X		X	X			
Event		X	X	X						X
Professional Organization				X						
Student Club/Frat/Sorority	X			X	X					X
Personal/Biographical	X				X	X				X
Projects						X	X		X	
Class	X				X			X	X	

Site Standards & Best Practices

In order to promote consistency in user experience and ensure University brand compliance, the following items are standards for any Official NAU Websites and Web Pages. Not every platform will be able to accommodate each item with a high degree of customization, but in general, approved platforms will support these features in an acceptable fashion. University Units and their authorized users are responsible for ensuring compliance with these standards regardless of platform.

Architecture

Site architecture determines a user's navigation of the website. Best practices for defining navigation with the user in mind can include the following considerations:

- For existing sites, identify and review the current content. Evaluate its accuracy, relevance, and effectiveness. This can be done through analytics, consultations, and site audits requested of University Marketing.
- For new websites, identify the intended audience and determine what type of content would be the most useful and effective. Audits can be requested of University Marketing.
- Organize the content and develop a sitemap based on user-centric categories. For example, users of the NAU website are primarily students. Creating architecture that ensures they can apply, request information, or learn more about the university and degree programs is important for nau.edu.
- Standardize content with consistent verbiage and tone that provides consistency for all users as they navigate the website. Use headers where relevant to structure the content and create hierarchy on each page.
- Periodically review and update outdated content for relevancy. If pages or sections of a site need to be deleted or reworked, please contact University Marketing for assistance to avoid negative impacts such as broken links and loss of search ranking.
- For positive Search Engine Optimization (SEO) implications, ensure pages are interlinked where possible and applicable to improve navigation.
- ITS can provide support in creating redirects and "friendly" URLs (i.e. nau.edu/mysite) to facilitate site architecture.

Site Navigation & Global Menus

Navigation refers to the way a user navigates throughout the website, and is greatly influenced by the site's architecture and content. Best practices for ensuring the navigation of a website is logical and fluid include:

- For all nau.edu web themes, a default global navigation bar is provided. This menu is present across the site and ensures users can always navigate to the content provided no matter where they are within the website.
- Menus should consist of a single row of four to seven tabs to ensure that site navigation and architecture is organized and hierarchical. The menu should be intuitive for users to navigate and find where they want to go next. Menu tab labels should be concise and clear for users.
- An official and appropriate clickable logo or wordmark in the top left hand side of the menu that links back to the main homepage. This guarantees that users can return to the homepage if needed. For approved logos and requirements for usage visit <https://nau.edu/marketing/resources/logos/>
- A consistent footer should be present across the site and serves as an additional navigation path for users while also providing links to policies and additional resources. Standardized footers are provided as part of the centrally managed WordPress platform and can also be made available from ITS for integration into other nau.edu sites.
- Breadcrumbs are present near the top of each page and denote site architecture for each respective menu item on a website. Breadcrumbs are a useful way to create consistent and well-marked navigation paths.

- For additional resources, visit the training pages for Northern Arizona University's Wordpress themes at: (link to training pages when they're ready)

Updated Content & Links

- All pages must keep content updated with the most current information and dates/deadlines.
- Monitor and repair broken links or links to pages that have moved on a minimum of a monthly basis.
- Do not post pages marked "under construction."
- Links from a University page to any non-University site must not imply University endorsement.
- Additional web content guide can be found at:
<https://nau.edu/marketing/resources/web-content-creation-guide/>

Visual Identity Guidelines

- Current standards around color, font, logo, equal opportunity statement, and image usage can be found at: <https://nau.edu/marketing/brand-center/guidelines>
- University Marketing can be contacted with questions at: <https://nau.edu/marketing/resources/>

Contact Information

- On a homepage, contact information is required and typically contains relevant email, phone, and social media links for the site steward or controlling entity.
- For all other pages, a contact block should contain an email address and phone number.
- At a minimum, a contact link should be provided to the main NAU website of www.nau.edu.

Promissory or misleading language

Educational institutions are not immune from lawsuits, so as a result, we have to be on the defensive and carefully consider how our communications are received and perceived by the reader. In every topic below there has been litigation against a college. Awareness of potential legal problems is the first step, so please note:

- Avoid using language that could be interpreted as making a promissory statement. This includes assurances around employment opportunities, passing certification exams, usage of "cutting edge" technology, and transfer eligibility to other institutions.
- Be careful when using absolutes such as never, always, all, none, and every. It only takes one instance to prove it false. Good alternatives include: generally, rarely, typically, usually, nearly all, often, and on average.
- Use caution when advertising for or implying endorsement for an external entity. The use of another organization's logo could, in some cases, be considered advertising. Check with University Marketing if you are unsure when it is appropriate to post a non-NAU logo on your site or webpage.

Web Accessibility

- Web accessibility refers to how easily users with disabilities can access content on your website, ensuring that all users will have access to higher-education materials and resources. Current standards and policies can be found at: <https://in.nau.edu/Accessibility/Web-Accessibility/>
- To learn about the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and additional accessibility requirements, contact Disability Resources at: <https://in.nau.edu/Accessibility/Accessibility-Contact/>

Social Media Accounts

- Only approved social media accounts may be linked from official NAU websites and web pages. Current standards and policies can be found at: <https://in.nau.edu/social-media/policy-guidebook/>
- Social Media can be contacted with questions at: <https://in.nau.edu/social-media/contact/>

Browser/mobile standards

- Websites must display and render content appropriately in current versions of all major web browsers, such as Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge, and Apple Safari.
- Sites should be designed using "mobile first" principles, promoting responsiveness and adaptability in multiple display sizes.

- Content file size, particularly images and videos, should be optimized for page loading speeds on mobile devices.

Preferred file formats

- Only use editable document formats (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) if the user is expected to edit the document in some way, otherwise save as a PDF to control content and preserve formatting.
- Files should also be named relevant to the information they provide. Avoid using special characters (/ , & , #, etc.) or spaces. Instead of spaces, use underscores.
- All files and documents need to comply with prescribed University standards for editorial style, colors, logos, and accessibility.

Forms

- Forms should be used to collect non-sensitive information or solicit feedback in a standardized format. This includes usage around scheduling appointments, event registrations, and light weight requests for information (RFI).
 - RFI's intended to collect information for specific colleges, degrees, or programs from prospective students should be integrated into the Salesforce system in conjunction with University Marketing and ITS.
- Form functionality is provided as part of institutionally developed WordPress themes. When creating a custom form, especially for the first time, read through the instructions that automatically appear to get an idea of the overall process.
- While Google Forms are available, they are discouraged for broad use as they are tied to a personal Gmail account and the results may become inaccessible with staff turnover.
- For sites outside of institution WordPress themes, additional form tools and plugins should be evaluated by ITS prior to use to help vet functionality and security.
- Forms have the potential to be abused by spammers and malicious actors. Only expose forms to the public Internet when required and contact ITS or University Marketing to discuss ways to mitigate risk.*

Lists, Tables, and Posts

- Lists should be bulleted or numbered. Partial sentences are preferred, beginning with lowercase letters and ending with a period in most cases.
- For institution WordPress sites, refer to the University Writing Style Guide for writing list guidelines: <https://nau.edu/writing-style-guide/lists/>.
- Tables are a way to show tabular data that is displayed in rows and columns, similar to an excel spreadsheet. Tables shouldn't be used to display large paragraphs of content or images.
- For posts and blog functions, all comments should be disabled by default. Only enable comments if the intent is to solicit feedback and responses can be moderated.* This will help avoid spamming and abuse of that functionality.

*If you experience abuse or spamming of these features, please contact ITS at <https://in.nau.edu/its/> for cleanup and remediation support.

SEO/Metadata

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to the process in which search engines such as Google organize search results. SEO is measured using a variety of metrics including title tags, meta descriptions, headers, keywords, and more. Websites that rank favorably in these categories appear higher in the search results, resulting in greater visibility and more traffic to the website. SEO best practices include these elements:

- The title tag defines the title of a given web page, and is used to display pages in search engine results. Titles should ideally be no longer than 60 characters to display optimally.

- The meta description renders under the title tag in the search results and serves as a preview of the page. Meta descriptions should be no longer than 160 characters.
- The best way to organize content and insert hierarchy on a page is through using headers, such as H1s and H2s.
- Keywords refer to specific words or phrases that a user may submit a search query for in a search engine. Relevant and consistent keywords can impact search results by ranking the most important content to the top of the page.
- Authority is the importance or weight of a page in a website. Pages that have a higher Authority ranking are more likely to be brought to the top of the search results. Sites built within nau.edu subdomains are encouraged as they benefit from the overall Authority of the domain.
- Linking is an important component of SEO ranking. Internal linking refers to a page containing links to URLs within the same domain and can increase site Authority. External linking is when a site links to a URL outside of its domain and should be carefully considered to avoid negative impacts on user experience and site Authority.
- University Marketing and select partners host training sessions recorded for the benefit of NAU staff and faculty. To learn more about SEO best practices, reach out to University Marketing at: <https://nau.edu/marketing/resources/>
- To learn more about how to improve a site's SEO go here: <https://nau.edu/web-user-guide/search-engine-optimization>

Copyright Materials

Copyrighted materials include photographs, videos, and graphics. The University Marketing photography team creates professional photography to showcase the NAU people, places, and stories that illustrate academic, service, and research excellence at the university. You have access to thousands of high-quality photos in the university's digital photo gallery <https://in.nau.edu/digitalassets/widen-collective/>. The digital photo gallery should be your first choice for photos. If you use non-university photos, videos, or graphics, they must meet the university standards. This includes proper resolution and format, photo/video release information, and copyright authorization.

- <https://nau.edu/marketing/brand-center/guidelines/>
- [Arizona Board of Regents \(ABOR\) Policy 6-908 on Intellectual Property](#)
- [NAU Intellectual Property Policy](#)

Minimum standards for Research oriented sites

Research websites (including centers, labs, and institutes) should be discussed with University Marketing prior to development. Sites will be expected to comply with minimal brand standards that include an approved logo and color palette usage. The approved logo should also serve as a clickable link back to a topically related official NAU website. Contact information should be provided on at least the homepage and includes a valid email address, and optimally, a phone number and social media links. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) ADA standards must also be met. Data classification and site security factors should be addressed prior to a site going live.

- Submit a digital support ticket for UM guidance and support on your research website: <https://nau.edu/marketing/resources/request-support/>

Usage of nau.edu vs in.nau.edu

WordPress serves as the enterprise content management system (CMS) that houses over 300 NAU websites. Using this CMS allows for the rapid creation of websites using institutionally approved and maintained themes (designs) and plugins. University Marketing and ITS provide a broad range of services to support websites created on this platform. Currently, these sites can be created on either www.nau.edu or in.nau.edu depending on content and intended audience.

The WWW environment is intended for sites that speak primarily to prospective students and their decision makers (family, counselors, etc.). This includes College and Academic sites as well as those that provide information about courses, tuition, and the campus experience. IN, or Internal, sites are still publicly accessible but are intended for content catering to existing faculty, staff, and students. This includes administrative sites such as Human Resources and Facility Services, Student oriented sites like

Recreation and Advising, as well as laboratories and institutes that have a broad appeal to the public at large.

For questions about the difference between WWW and IN, or to determine where a new site should be created, reach out to University Marketing at: <https://nau.edu/marketing/resources/>

Appendix A - Platform Information

The following are links with how to request access, site creation, and support for each of the approved platforms.

- Jan/Dana provides hosting for Academic oriented sites in a Linux/Unix environment. Managed by the ITS ARTS team and reachable via a SNOW incident ticket: <https://nau.service-now.com/>
- WWWx/IIS provides hosting for non-Academic oriented sites in a Windows/Internet Information Services (IIS) environment. Managed by the ITS Core team and reachable via a SNOW incident ticket: <https://nau.service-now.com/>
- Nau.edu and in.nau.edu provides hosting for University WordPress sites using enterprise approved themes and plugins. Managed by the ITS Web team and reachable via a SNOW request:
https://nau.service-now.com/sp/?id=sc_category&sys_id=e70bbcc3dbc3e890de006693ca9619f8&catalog_id=c4173bffdb0c810ce1637823996198a&spa=1
- Google Sites provide hosting for smaller scale sites where enterprise level platforms are not appropriate. Managed by the ITS Student Technology Center team and reachable via this page: <https://in.nau.edu/its/google/>
- Microsoft SharePoint provides internally oriented collaborative websites in a standardized, commercial structure. Managed by ITS and reachable via this Knowledge Base Article: https://nau.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article&article=KB0011270
- Microsoft Teams provides multi-function collaboration web services for team and workgroups. Managed by ITS and with no additional approvals required once setup with a Microsoft Affiliated NAU account.
- LMS is the Learning Management System used for online teaching and learning functions and provides many virtual classroom functions. Managed by the ITS ARTS team with access provided to active Faculty and Students by default: <https://in.nau.edu/its/blackboard-learn/>
- Microsoft Azure/Amazon AWS cloud hosting is used for capstones and classroom projects with various colleges and managed by them directly:
https://www.ceias.nau.edu/~edo/Classes/CS_Capstone/Docs/AWS-hosting.html
- Other
 - TrueBlue Connects is used by Student Clubs and Organizations and controlled by the Office of the Dean of Students: <https://in.nau.edu/dean-of-students/start-your-own/>
 - iModules for Alumni and Donor events and outreach controlled by the NAU Foundation: <https://www.foundationnau.org/>
 - Events.nau.edu provides University wide event publication with integrations into Enterprise WordPress sites. Managed by the ITS NAUGo team and reachable via a SNOW incident ticket: <https://nau.service-now.com/>
 - Faculty180/Faculty Activity and Achievement Reporting (FAAR) collects biographical and scholarly information with integrations into Enterprise WordPress sites via the Directory. Managed by the Office of the Provost:
<https://in.nau.edu/provost/vice-provost-for-faculty-affairs/faar-system/>