

LBCC Web Content Guidelines & Best Practices

Introduction

To effectively communicate the mission and offerings of Long Beach City College (LBCC), it is crucial for content contributors to follow best practices when creating web content. These guidelines are designed to ensure high-quality, accessible, and engaging content while ensuring compliance with legal requirements across our website.

1. Understand Your Audience

- **Identify Your Target Audience:**

Before creating content, determine who you are addressing—prospective students, current students, faculty, or the local community.

Example: When writing about enrollment procedures, consider the concerns and questions that prospective students and their families may have.

- **Engage with Your Audience:**

Use relatable language that speaks directly to your audience's interests and needs.

Example: When detailing academic support services, highlight how resources like tutoring, study groups, and workshops can directly assist students in achieving their goals.

2. Maintain Consistent Branding

- **Use Official Logos and Colors:**

Follow LBCC's branding guidelines to maintain consistency and accurately represent the institution's identity.

Example: Ensure that LBCC's official logos and color scheme are consistently applied across all web pages

- **Utilize Approved Templates in the CMS:**

Use the templates provided by PAM & ITS to ensure uniformity in design across all web content. There are several templates available in the CMS for use. For more details, contact the web coordinator or PAM.

Example: The available templates include:

- 1 column with pods on the right OR pod on the bottom
- 2 columns with pods on the right
- 3 columns with pods on the right
- Pathway
- Program
- Department
- Pathway
- Directory

- **Consistent Tone and Voice:**
Maintain a friendly, professional tone that aligns with LBCC's mission.
Example: When writing about campus resources, you might say, "We're here to support your journey at LBCC!" This helps create a welcoming atmosphere for visitors.

3. Ensure Accuracy and Clarity

- **Fact-Check Information:**
Verify all facts, figures, and references before publication to maintain credibility.
Example: If mentioning tuition rates or deadlines, ensure that the information is up to date.
- **Be Clear and Concise:**
Use straightforward language and break up content into manageable sections for easy reading.
Example: Instead of saying, "The institution endeavors to enhance the academic experience of students through various initiatives," you could say, "LBCC offers many programs to help students succeed academically."

4. Follow Accessibility Standards

- **Design for Accessibility:**
Use clear headings to create a logical structure that enhances readability and navigation.
- **Use Accessible Document Formats:**
Avoid images of text, opting for actual text that assistive technologies can read.
- **Optimizing PDF Usage for Web Content**
 - **Prioritize HTML:** Create content in HTML format whenever possible.
 - **Benefits:**
 - More accessible
 - Optimized for search engines
 - Adapts better to various devices and screen sizes
 - Enhances user experience
 - **Share PDF files via OneDrive:** Instead of uploading PDFs directly to the web server: Share them through OneDrive
 - **Advantages:**
 - Ensures users access the most current version of the document
 - Reduces the risk of outdated information being available online
 - **How to Store and Share a File in OneDrive**
 - **Name the File:**
 - Choose a clear, concise name for the file. Avoid abbreviations and make sure the name accurately describes the file's content.
 - For example, use "**Monthly Report - October 2024**" instead of "**Oct Report**".
 - **Store the File in OneDrive:**
 - Ensure the file is properly stored in the appropriate folder for easy access.

- **Set Sharing Permissions:**
 - Right-click the file (or click the three dots next to the file name) and select **"Share"**.
 - In the sharing menu, under **"Link settings"**, click on the **"Anyone"** option.
 - Make sure the link is set to **"View only"** (to prevent others from editing the file).
 - **Copy the Shareable Link:**
 - After adjusting the permissions, click **"Copy link"**.
 - The link will now be copied to your clipboard, and you can share it via email, messaging, or any other method.
 - **Send the Link:**
 - Paste the copied link wherever you need to share the file, such as in an email, chat, or on a website.
- **Reserve PDF files for Specific Use:** essential documents that require a fixed format, such as:
 - Legal Forms: e.g., contracts, applications
 - Official Transcripts: Academic records
 - Policy Documents: Need to be printed or signed
- **Provide Alt Text for Images:**

Include descriptive alt text for all images to ensure visually impaired users can understand the content.

Example: Use “A diverse group of students collaborating in a modern study space at LBCC” instead of “image of students.”
 - **Include Captions for Videos:**

All videos must feature accurate captions synchronized with audio. Captions should also describe relevant sounds (e.g., music cues) to provide context.
 - **Stay Informed on Accessibility Guidelines:**

Familiarize yourself with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and regularly review updates to ensure compliance and accessibility for all users.

5. Optimize for Search Engines (SEO)

- **Use Relevant Keywords:**

Incorporate keywords relevant to LBCC throughout your content to improve search visibility.

Example: When writing about the nursing program, include phrases like “LBCC nursing degree” or “Long Beach City College healthcare programs.”
- **Craft Compelling Meta Descriptions:**

Write engaging meta descriptions that summarize your content and encourage clicks.

Example: “Discover LBCC’s innovative programs designed to help you succeed in your academic journey.”

- **Include Internal and External Links:**

Enhance user experience and SEO by adding links to related internal pages and credible external resources.

Example: When discussing financial aid options, link to the LBCC financial aid webpage and relevant government resources.

6. Promote Engagement

- **Encourage Interaction:**

Invite readers to engage by including questions or calls to action in your content.

Example: At the end of a scholarship webpage, you might say, “Not sure which scholarships you qualify for? Fill out our scholarship interest form, and our financial aid team will reach out with personalized recommendations to help you find the best opportunities!”

- **Utilize Multimedia:**

Enrich your content with images, videos, and infographics to make it more engaging.

Example: Include an interactive campus map that allows users to explore different facilities and resources visually.

7. Stay Up to Date

- **Regularly Update Content:**

Review and revise all web content to ensure it reflects the latest information and events. Prioritize updating program offerings and deadlines as soon as changes occur.

LBCC Policy & Procedure mandates that you review and update all content at least twice a year, or more frequently as needed.

- **Stay Informed on Industry Trends:**

Keep yourself informed about trends in higher education and adjust your content strategies accordingly.

Example: If hybrid or online learning becomes more prevalent, incorporate resources that highlight LBCC’s online course offerings.

8. Proofread and Edit

- **Review for Errors:**

Always proofread your content for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes before publication. Use tools like Grammarly to help catch errors and enhance clarity.

- **Follow College Policies:**

Adhere to LBCC guidelines regarding content creation, copyright, and privacy to ensure compliance and protect our community.

Example: When writing about student events, make sure to follow the college’s policies on promoting events, including getting approval from the appropriate department before publishing any promotional materials.

- **Seek Peer Feedback:**

Collaborate with colleagues by sharing your drafts to gather constructive feedback and

suggestions for improvement. This approach helps you identify areas that may need clarification or enhancement.

9. Comply with Copyright Laws

Ensure media materials are free from copyright issues and properly purchased.

- **Credit Sources:**

Always credit your sources and obtain the necessary permissions for any copyrighted material. If you're using images, photos, or other media, ensure they are either purchased, cleared of copyright, or properly licensed for use.

- **Example:**

- If you include a photo from an external source, make sure you have the right to use it and provide proper attribution.
- For photos featuring people, obtain a signed photo release or waiver from those in the photo.

- **Important:**

You must submit all proof of the right to use copyrighted materials (such as photo releases and licenses) to the Web Coordinator or Public Affairs and Marketing (PAM) for approval. Keep a copy of this proof for your records and provide a copy to the Web Coordinator/PAM.

10. Utilize Analytics

(This applies to the Web Coordinator & Communications Department)

- **Monitor Content Performance:**

Use analytics tools to track engagement metrics and the performance of your web content.

Example: Analyze which pages receive the most traffic to better understand user interests and preferences.

- **Adjust Strategies Based on Insights:**

Refine your content strategies using data gathered from analytics. If certain topics drive more traffic, consider producing additional related content to meet audience demand.

Conclusion

By following these best practices, Long Beach City College web content contributors can create high-quality, accessible, and engaging content that accurately reflects our college's mission and values. Your commitment to these guidelines is essential for fostering a strong digital presence and enhancing our community engagement.