

**University of York**  
**Web Committee**

## **Managing departmental web sites: summary of tasks**

### **1 Purpose of this document**

The purpose of this document is to provide Heads of Department, Departmental Web Officers and Web Authors with a summary of the tasks involved in managing and developing a department's web site. It may be useful to Heads of Department when assigning the role of Departmental Web Officer or Author to members of staff, in Performance Review to aid discussion, or in writing job descriptions for posts.

This paper is a comprehensive summary of all tasks involved in managing a departmental or office website. It is not expected that one individual can carry out all these tasks; therefore this is not a definitive job description for a single member of staff. The employing department should distribute the tasks among appropriate staff according to the skill set and workload of each member of staff involved in managing the departmental or office website.

### **2 Definitions**

The Departmental Web Officer (DWO) is the first point of contact for the web in their department, and represents the department at Web Forum. The DWO has overall responsibility for managing and developing the department's web site. Specific tasks may be shared out or delegated to one or more staff in the department informally or formally via a web management group of some kind.

A Departmental Web Author is anyone within a department who writes or maintains web pages. This could include an academic wishing to put their notes online for a course, or an Admissions Tutor needing to update the department's prospectus entry.

### **3 Training and support**

Departmental Web Officers are supported by the Web Office (for policy and administrative issues) and the Computing Service (for technical issues). The Web Office is developing a DWO Induction Pack that will inform web officers about their role in general and the support and training open to them.

DWOs should receive appropriate training. Depending on the skills already available and the requirements of the department, this could include basic HTML for simple content editing, programming, web design and image manipulation, organisation of information and legal requirements. This need has a time requirement and there may be budgetary implications.

### **4 Legislation relating to the Web**

The University has to fulfil a number of statutory requirements relating to the management, content and design of the site. The University's Ordinances and Regulations make it clear that all members of the University are expected to adhere to the law. This was reiterated and clarified by Information Committee in 2000: Heads of Department are responsible for their department's website, while DWOs are expected to be aware of the implications of relevant legislation, and to know who to turn to for further advice. Relevant legislation includes:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Computer Misuse Act 1990

- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Telecommunications Act 1984
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

## **5 Tasks involved in managing a department's web site**

### **1.1 Management and policy**

- Act as Departmental Web Officer;
- Serve as departmental contact for all web-related matters;
- Develop and implement the department's web strategy;
- Plan and structure the departmental web area;
- Manage special projects, liaising with external suppliers where required;
- Manage the departmental web budget;
- Monitor the content of the departmental web pages to ensure timeliness, accuracy and consistency;
- Monitor the department's compliance with web-related legal issues such as accessibility, copyright and data protection;
- Develop strategies for increasing traffic to the web site, eg by optimising key pages for search engines;
- Facilitate departmental strategic planning efforts to increase departmental information or services provided via the web;
- Identify the need for web services not available centrally and communicate those needs to the departmental web group, the University Web Office and/or Web Forum;
- Undertake any necessary training to learn new skills or update existing skills in order to effectively manage the site.

### **1.2 Coordination**

- Liaise with departmental web authors to get regular updates to information;
- Liaise with the Departmental Computing Officer (DCO);
- Liaise with programmers in maintaining and developing the department's interactive online services;
- Liaise with central services (the Computing Service, the Web Office) where required;
- Meet regularly with the departmental web group, where one exists;
- Coordinate staff, students and any external information providers in developing web content;
- Communicate University and departmental web policies to all members of the department;
- Monitor general web enquiries. Redirect queries to the relevant research group/staff member and follow up to ensure a response;
- Act as the first point of contact for web-related complaints.

### **1.3 Design and content management**

- Design and implement web page graphics and layout;
- Implement the University's web guidelines to ensure consistency with University policy;
- Organise content to maximise users' ability to find information;
- Write new content for the site or revise old content;
- Recommend enhancements or additions to the web site, based on user feedback as relevant;
- Perform any necessary file conversions (eg PDF);
- Research and input relevant links.

## **1.4 Support and training**

- Train staff members in the use of the web;
- Train staff members to create web pages and use relevant web design tools;
- Provide support and advice to staff working on the departmental web site;
- Provide guidance to departmental staff about effective web communication strategies relevant to their specific needs;
- Work with the departmental Training Officer to assess staff web training needs and ensure that appropriate training opportunities are circulated;
- Provide resources for departmental web authors (templates, scripts, etc).

## **1.5 Promotion and evaluation**

- Review departmental web usage statistics and provide reports to the departmental web group/Head of Department;
- Communicate to staff and visitors recent additions/changes to maintain interest in the site;
- Serve as a first point of contact for site problems, suggestions and additions and ensure that these issues are progressed efficiently.

## **1.6 Technical**

This section applies only to departments or groups who run their own web server.

- Design, implement and maintain the departmental web server;
- Install and maintain the associated web server technologies;
- Install and maintain new and upgraded web systems;
- Liaise with the Computing Service Security Officer to maintain the integrity of and protect the department's and University's servers;
- Liaise with the Computing Service regarding good programming practice as required (eg when linking to centrally-provided databases);
- Write, document and support department-specific applications;
- Respond to technical queries (eg about file store, setting up sites) and respond to emails to the webmaster address;
- Provide technical advice to site managers and users;
- Provide technical training and advise the departmental Training Officer on technical training issues;
- Disseminate relevant information to the department (and the Computing Service if applicable).

Dr Nick Hammond  
Chair of Web Committee

Christine Ellwood  
Chair of Web Forum

24 March 2003