General Layout of Pages

There are several locations within a web page to strategically communicate information.

- **Main content area:** This should be used for the main messages, and calls to action. Ask, “what do I want the user to know or accomplish by visiting my page?” Always create content with an end goal in mind. This content section should be written following Google’s guidelines for SEO.
  - The main content area should contain no more than 4 buttons.
- **Top banners:** These are the hero images that appear at the top of a page. All banners need to be designed by UCM and should use OU photography when possible. Banners are used to add a graphic element that makes a page more visually appealing – they are not meant for extensive information or content.
  - Home or “index” pages can contain 1 to a maximum of 4 rotating banners; sub-pages should have 1 banner.
- **Additional content area 1:** This is located in the upper right-hand side of the page. This space should be used for additional contact information, calls to action and buttons. This area should not be used for extensive information and the length should not exceed the total length of the main content area.
- **Additional content area 2:** This is located in the middle right-hand side of the page. This space should be used for calls to action, buttons, or additional resources such as links to sites or PDFs/docs. This area should not be used for extensive information and the length should not exceed the total length of the main content area.
  - Additional content areas 1 and 2 should contain no more than 3 buttons combined.
- **Quick links box:** These are permitted on the home or “index” of a web page. This is used for internal or external links relating to the particular web page.
  - A maximum of 12 links can be used in this space.
- **Top links:** This location is used mainly for the most important information or calls to action on a given page (which varies based on the page). This is also a good place for “Meet the Staff or Faculty” pages.
- **Contact information and social media:** These should be listed beneath the left-hand navigation, and only contain social media links that are active and regularly updated. Contact information should be provided for the main department contact.
- **News and events:** These will only be displayed if there are active news or events pertaining to a web page, otherwise this area will not exist. This can be added or removed at any time.

Index Page (also known as the “home” page of a section)
In addition to the three content areas mentioned above, pages on the left hand navigation can also be organized using collapsible boxes and tabs.

- **Collapsible boxes**: This tool should be used when there is an extensive amount of information that all belongs on the same page. When pages become too long, they are hard to read. Use collapsible boxes to split up the information so that users can easily locate the information they need and read more. This is a great organizational tool.

- **Tabs**: Most of the time, tabs should have explanatory content above them, called positioning copy. This space should be used to introduce the tabs and encourage the user to read further. The tabs themselves should be laid out in a sequence that makes sense, whether it be in order of steps to take, chronological order, etc. The maximum number of tabs a page can hold is generally 7-10 (without content in the additional content areas) depending on the title of tabs (which can take up more or less space, thus altering the number of tabs that fit). If there is content in the additional content areas, only 5-6 tabs should be used. Tabs should never be stacked on top of each other, forming two or more lines. This will happen if there are too many tabs.
  - **Buttons can be used in additional content areas 1 and 2 on sub-pages for calls to action. Buttons in these areas should not exceed 3-4, combined.**

**Basic Rich Text Content**

- **Pre-selected headers**: In Percussion, the rich text editor (see below) has an option for pre-selected headers. Headers 1-4 appear much larger on live pages than they appear on the edit screen. Always use header 5 when using the pre-selected options.
• **Fonts:** All content should be 12px, Helvetica or the operating system default font.

• **Bullets:** Unorganized lists should use closed bullets for the root items and open bullets for the child items. Organized (numbered) lists should use standard integers (0-9) for the root and children list items. These settings are enabled by default in the rich text editor; no special code is required to attain these specifications.

• **Tables:**
  - **General:** Tables should span the full width of the parent container (100% width); static widths should be avoided. If a border is desired, the color #cccccc should be used.
  - **Header:** Column headers should use a bold font and standard font size (12px). The background of the header row may be of a different color (#ededed).
  - **Sample:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column Header 1</th>
<th>Column Header 2</th>
<th>Column Header 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content 1</td>
<td>Content 2</td>
<td>Content 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content 1.2</td>
<td>Content 2.2</td>
<td>Content 3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Links:**
  - **Default link style** (#840831)
    (All links should be bold and underlined when the mouse is hovered.)
  - Using additional links on OU web pages in list format should be limited to 5-7 external links on any given page, and be listed in the additional 1 or 2 content areas as “Help Resources” or “Additional Information”.
    - *Links to outside sources should be checked weekly to make sure they are still active.*

**Images and Videos**

*All design elements (graphics, buttons, banners) must be designed by UCM, as noted in policy 488. To upload any graphics on a web section, clients should contact their account manager.*

• **1 photo** (in addition to the top banner) may be used in the main content area of a page to provide a visual when necessary.

• **Professional headshots:**
  - Should be used on faculty/staff pages. Headshots can be scheduled for entire departments through your UCM Account Manager, or utilize the free monthly headshot form – [http://wwwp.oakland.edu/amguidebook/misc-information/monthly-headshots/](http://wwwp.oakland.edu/amguidebook/misc-information/monthly-headshots/)
  - *The standard size for headshots on OU faculty/staff pages is 115 x 138 px.*

• **Video guidelines:**
  - Videos may be embedded in the main content area within a YouTube `<iframe>` width of 100% px and height of 253 px OR linked via buttons or text.
    - *Only one video may be featured on a page.*
    - *Always use a “featured video” button when possible (created by UCM).*
  - Videos created for marketing purposes, or videos that contain OU brand associations (OU logo, etc.) must be posted to the Oakland University YouTube account.

**News & Events:**

• All news articles posted to the website must follow journalistic principles in order for OU news to continue to rank in Google search results and Google News alerts. News must include the five Ws: Who, What, Where, When and Why.

• All articles posted to any web section’s “news” folder will funnel up into the News at OU. There is also an option to display articles on the OU home page if deemed appropriate by UCM’s editorial team.
• Write headlines and event names for search engines and for people who may find the listing outside of the context of your web section. For example, don’t use the event title “Info Session,” use “Study Abroad Info Session.” Headlines should always:
  o include keywords that people would use to search for the news or event item
  o be enticing and in an active voice
  o sound clear and concise
  o not use “OU did this” or “OU person did that”
• To add a news item to the OU website, fill out the News Request form.
• An event calendar listing should be created for every public facing event. Fill out the form on oakland.edu/calendar to have an event listing created. Use the notes section to request that the event is featured on the OU home page. These events are chosen based on broad appeal and represent Admissions, Campus Life, Academic, Arts/Culture, Campus Milestones and Alumni.
• The main image for a news story or featured event must be 480 px wide by 320 px high in order to display properly on News at OU and the OU home page. Additional images may have different aspect ratios.
• Do not duplicate an event items as a news article.
• Do not use news to post short announcements.

Managing SEO

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or web page in a search engine’s "natural" or un-paid ("organic") search results. All Percussion user levels have the ability to edit content and page descriptions for SEO purposes.

If you are interested in optimizing specific pages of the OU website, please contact your account manager for more information or assistance. See below for more in-depth information.

Guidelines for meta content

• Page title
  o A page title (or title tag) is the main text that describes an online document. It appears in three key places: browsers, search engine results pages and external websites
  o Utilize page titles containing fewer than 70 characters -- the limit Google displays in search results. Page titles longer than 70 characters will be truncated in the results
  o All page titles need to follow this naming convention - page - section - website
    ■ (example - Homepage - Graduate Admissions - Oakland University)

Keywords

o Metadata can help describe any page in a more convenient machine readable format more suited for search engines. Keyword value has become nearly obsolete, however using them correctly can still have a positive effect on a website. Keywords should be accurate and relevant, be careful of focusing them all unnecessarily on one keyword. Wait to define keywords until the section has a clear topic,
concept, purpose and user experience. Describing exactly what a page / section is about helps Google to short cut to important information.

○ If there is a keyword to be targeted, best practice suggests to repeat the keyword in the page title and meta-description. Having targeted keywords in these strategic areas will help raise the page’s Google indexing value. Avoid keyword over saturation; re-mentioning the keyword too many times in the meta content and on the page itself will result in over-optimization penalties, which will have a negative effect on the indexing value. **Target 1 keyword in page title - repeat it in the meta-description - repeat no more than 3-4 times in the body of the page.**

○ When choosing keywords, focus on what a user would search to find that section. Don’t just target “Michigan”… that may be a highly competitive keyword that the page will never rank for. Instead think of long tail keywords like “Undergraduate programs in Michigan” (as one keyword).

**Page description**

○ Page descriptions (or meta description) are extremely important in gaining visits from search results. These short paragraphs are a content managers opportunity to advertise to visitors and to let them know exactly whether the given page contains the information they’re looking for.

○ Use the page description to create a compelling description that a user will want to click. The description should optimally be between 150-160 characters.

○ Avoid duplicate meta description tags.

**Content**

○ **Content is king!** Google’s latest search engine algorithms focus more on content, which means there is less focus on keyword saturation and more focus on whether or not the content is actually relevant to the keywords. You should continue to generate high-quality content that uses appropriate, relevant keywords, but focus more on the content than the keywords themselves.

○ Page content should be updated at least every 3 months (4 times a year). These changes must be large changes to the main body text; minor changes will have no effect.

**Linked content and link sharing**

○ Link sharing determines the popularity of a page. Think of a link as a vote – the more votes from other pages or sites the page has, the more popular the page is to search engines.

  ○ Utilize existing relationships with:

    ○ organizations/companies
- media outlets
- alumni

- Linking content or keywords is a great way to streamline traffic to different pages in order to ensure visitors are viewing what they want or what they need (think supply and demand). Search engines find and index pages from internal/external links, so content that is void of links runs the risk of never being indexed by search engines. The optimal structure for a website would look similar to a pyramid (where the big circle on the top is the homepage):