

WEB ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES

What you need to know

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Web accessibility, in its simplest form, means making sure websites can be used by as many people as possible. Northumbria University's website is used to communicate with a wide range of audiences, so it is important to make sure that all its pages are optimised to be user friendly.

What is WCAG?

As a UK public sector body, Northumbria University has a legal responsibility to make sure the website is compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standard 2.1 AA.

There are also many crossover benefits of optimising the website in line with WCAG:

- It can help with Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- A better website attracts talent
- It encourages diversity and inclusivity

ALTERNATIVE (Alt) TEXT & IMAGES

ACCESSIBILITY FOR WEB

Alt text for images

- When adding images in Sitecore, it is incredibly important to fill out the alternative (alt) text field in the Media Library and make sure that it is clear and concise
- This field ensures images can be read by e-readers and can help users who can't see the images to understand what the image is displaying. Without this field, some users may find it much harder to navigate the website
- To put it simply, we include alt text to ensure all users, regardless of visual ability, can fully appreciate the content on the university website.
- Alt text should always serve the same purpose and present the same information as the media it describes.
- The next few slides will take you through how alt text should be used depending on function



The image shows a screenshot of the Sitecore Media Library interface. At the top, there is a dark grey header bar with the word 'Image' in white text. Below this header, the main area is light grey. On the left side of this area, there is a vertical red bar. To the right of the red bar, the label 'Alt:' is displayed in a dark grey font. Below the label is a white rectangular text input field with a thin grey border.

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Alt text for images

- Alt text, when used to describe images, should accurately reflect the image and/or provide an accurate description
- Alt text offers you another opportunity to include keywords
- Don't include "image of," or "picture of," etc. in your alt text. It's already assumed your alt text is referring to an image, so there's no need to specify it
- Keep it short and simple

[View some good practice examples of alt text for images](#)



Alt text: An Emperor Tamarin monkey sitting on a branch

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Alt text for buttons

- Some images or iconography used on webpages are purely functional to help the user take a certain action i.e., iconography in buttons
- The question needs to be asked - whether it would be hard or impossible to understand what the link or the button does, if the image wasn't there?
- Then the alt text needs to communicate the action taken. For instance, a print this page icon should use the alt text "**print this page**", rather than a description of the image



Alt text: Print this page

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Alt text for pods

- According to WCAG, images of text are not allowed. If you cannot avoid images of text, it's best to have the exact same text in the alt attribute. This is mostly true when creating pods
- You may notice some pods used across the website may be made up of static images, with the title field unselected
- These pods should always contain appropriate alt text so those with e-readers understand where the link is going to



Alt text: Connect with us on social media

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Optimising your images

- It is also important to ensure that images are optimised for speed to ensure that the website works for every user. For this reason, images should be formatted to the appropriate file size before they are uploaded to the media gallery.
- You can find a full break down of image sizes on the [Sitecore Support Hub](#)

PAGE CONTENT

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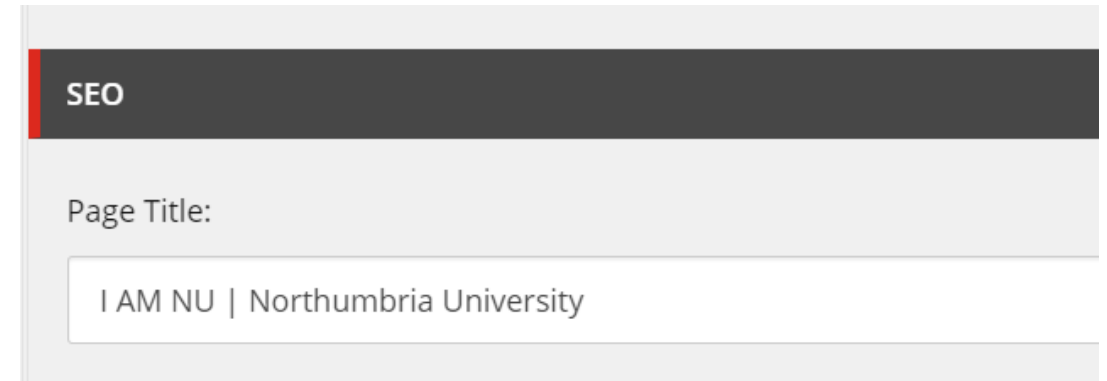
SEO title field

When you are creating or editing pages in Sitecore, make sure the SEO page title field is filled out as well as the title field. This is important as it is the SEO page title field that:

- Appears in the browser tab at the top of the page
- Appears in search engine results
- It is also the first thing a screen reader speaks when a page is loaded

Make sure it is unique, and follows the format of:

Page Name | Site Name



The image shows a screenshot of the Sitecore user interface for editing the SEO field. At the top, there is a dark grey header bar with the word 'SEO' in white text. Below this, the 'Page Title:' label is visible. The text input field contains the value 'I AM NU | Northumbria University'.

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Headings

The title field in Sitecore is the Heading 1 (which is mandatory). The content editor in Sitecore also allows you to use H2,H3,H4 subtitles to break up text.

Headings are great for accessibility as:

- They make pages easier to read
- Using keywords in headings helps improve SEO
- Make sure text is mobile friendly

Try and ensure that you keep pages short and use bullet points to break up text.

Best practice:

- It is important to ensure that headings should not be randomly selected. For instance H3 can only be used as a sub-header under H2
- Don't use bold in place of a headings, only use it to emphasise certain words

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Readability

Readability is a huge part of accessibility. When it comes to language, it is best to:

- Keep things simple and avoid jargon - this helps those whose first language isn't English
- Use shorter paragraphs and sentences – this is more user friendly and works better on mobile

LINK TEXT

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Link text

- It can be tempting when creating links on pages to link to the call to action in the sentence, for instance, **click here**. The problem with this is that it does not give e-readers a good understanding of what the link leads to.
- Links should always be written so they describe where they go. For instance, “click the link **here** to learn more” does not effectively explain the purpose of the link and it is not helpful to users with accessible technology

Learn more about UCAS let's us know exactly what linked page is about.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [Harvard Accessibility Checklist for Content Creators](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) Overview](#)
- [GOV.UK - Understanding Accessibility Requirements](#)