

SETU

Voice and

Style Guide

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OUR VOICE

The world is changing fast. We want to ensure that people have the skills and characteristics needed to secure well-paid, exciting careers in emerging fields.

South East Technological University is a place for people who want to learn these skills. SETU combines high-quality teaching with research and industry engagement, for the benefit of both students and the region itself.

While SETU is not the first technological university in Ireland, we will need to be clear about how we distinguish it from other educational options at this level. Part of this will involve stating - with evidence - how it differs, and how everyone benefits. Another big part will be in how we talk about SETU, and the tone we adopt.

SETU is ambitious, welcoming, adaptable, forward-thinking, innovative, and confident. The aim is to make those qualities stand out in everything we say.

OUR VOICE IS...

CONFIDENT, BUT NOT BOASTFUL

SETU is built on experience, and expertise. It combines the teaching pedigree of two established education institutions. It is built on a strong sense of purpose, and has ambitious aims to build a better future for the region and its people through education.

We are not afraid to talk about our ambitions, and how we intend to achieve them. We are enthusiastic about our approach to teaching, our focus on research, our commitment to our region, and our global collaboration.

When people question what makes a Technological University special and exciting, it is an opportunity to explain this approach to education, and how it can inspire so many to achieve more.

However, while we believe we have a bright future ahead of us, we are also grounded. We do not simply boast that we are “exceptional”. We celebrate where we excel, but justify these statements with evidence. We are clear and honest about why we are the right choice for students and staff, so that they trust what we say.

How we do this:

- We celebrate what makes us special, but we back it up with evidence (data, case studies, etc)
- We do not rely on big language (such as “world-class” or “unparalleled”) without explaining why this is the case
- We do not speak negatively about - or look down on - other approaches or institutions
- We clearly explain the approach we are taking, and how it makes our Technological University different.

OUR VOICE IS...

DIFFERENT, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVE

The technological university represents a new way of thinking about education. In an era of rapid technological and industrial change, it aims to prepare its students to embrace the future and secure interesting and rewarding jobs.

In many ways, it may be different to other institutions in Ireland and beyond. However, it must always feel accessible. The way we talk about SETU should not give people the impression that it is “out of reach” or “not for them”.

SETU has been created as a catalyst for change, both for people and for the region. It should feel like a place that is welcoming to all, regardless of age and background. In this way, we’ll achieve the best results for the region as a whole.

How we do this:

- When talking about the quality of students, stress what they’ve achieved rather than their status at recruitment (eg. Try to avoid phrases such as “only the finest students come here” and opt instead for “our approach to education prepares students for exciting, innovative careers”)
- Keep language accessible and understandable. Use plain English.
- Stress the broad range of opportunities for learning in many different careers, so it feels open to people with many different ambitions and skillsets
- Note the approach to education which caters for people with different learning styles, and the focus around the student in all types of learning
- Do not assume that all students are teenagers. We welcome students of all different ages and experiences.
- We are an inclusive and welcoming university. We should always consider equality, diversity and inclusion when showcasing our community through imagery, case studies and other forms of promotion.

OUR VOICE IS...

OPTIMISTIC, BUT AWARE

Companies in many different industries are calling for employees with the skills and insights to help them respond to change, particularly in fields such as engineering and ICT. Technological universities are in an ideal position to respond to this demand.

SETU strives to be fully aware of the realities of today's workplaces. We collaborate and partner with industries and organisations, help them to respond to changes, and spark new ideas and innovation. We work with employers to ensure that our graduates are prepared for the world, and the world to come.

We also help our students understand both the positive and negative impacts of certain changes, so they can make sustainable and ethical decisions in future.

Our role is to inspire and empower our students, and encourage them to approach their career with confidence.

How we do this:

- Talk to students about the opportunity to find a career that suits them and inspires them in a changing world
- Stress that SETU collaborates with industry to ensure graduates learn what they need to be workplace-ready
- Required skills (such as programming languages) change rapidly, so also stress the importance of learning skills such as adaptability, teamwork, communication and leadership
- Mention work and placement opportunities where possible

OUR VOICE IS...

TRANSFORMATIVE, BUT ALWAYS LISTENING

The ultimate goal of SETU is to transform the lives of the people who go there, and in turn create more career-ready graduates, innovative companies, and a stronger region. We must be clear about how we plan to go about this.

A technological university combines high-quality teaching, close collaboration with industry, impactful research, and close links with our local communities.

However, we should also stress that all of this is not set in stone. Our teaching is centred around the student. We recognise that everyone learns differently, and that students make a valuable contribution to how subjects are taught.

Our research and industry work is informed by those who are creating businesses, or building solutions to society's biggest problems. Only by working together can we achieve meaningful results.

Also, our commitment to the region is shaped by what the region needs. We should always aim to tackle its challenges, but also build on its strengths. This is done through constant dialogue with stakeholders at all levels.

In short, our approach doesn't merely involve arriving with a single, predetermined way of doing things. Our greatest work is done in collaboration with partners, and by pooling our enthusiasm and expertise to achieve a shared goal.

How we do this:

- Be clear about what is being done, rather than just offering up vague statements
- Be open about the partners we engage with, and how they help us
- Stress our student-centred approach to education, and our industry-focused approach to collaboration
- Be open in praising others for their contribution, and what it has helped us achieve together
- Share opportunities to influence or partner, particularly formal arrangements such as boards, panels and committees. Mention the impact they have made where appropriate

OUR VOICE IS...

TECHNICAL, BUT NOT UNINTELLIGIBLE

Our technological university will help people learn the skills they need to secure careers in very technical fields. Some of these courses will require students to master challenging concepts, full of tricky terminology.

However, our teaching staff will endeavour to explain these concepts in a clear and accessible way, so that the meaning becomes clear. We should do the same in talking about SETU to our audiences.

We should avoid using terminology that our audiences do not understand, particularly when explaining what SETU is, and what it does. We should not assume that prospective students are immediately familiar with all the concepts that they may encounter in industry.

We should remember that people may have different ways of learning, and recognise that many of our students may have difficulties seeing, hearing or otherwise processing certain information. We should also be aware that some students may not speak English as a first language, and attempt to make our communication as accessible as possible.

How we do this:

- Avoid jargon and complicated language, particularly on top-level pages
- When explaining courses, try to be clear in explaining the concepts that will be taught, and minimise technical terms where possible
- When using acronyms, explain what they mean in the first instance
- Provide hyperlinks to explanations of difficult concepts where appropriate

OUR VOICE IS...

WELCOMING, BUT NOT "CHATTY"

SETU is a welcoming environment, where people from different backgrounds (and at different points in their careers) learn the skills they need to take their next step. We offer a multi-campus environment that feels like "home", and provides students with friends, and new experiences.

We want to assure them that - while learning may often be challenging - we will offer any support they need. We will help them through any difficulties they have, whether they need support with their studies, their living situation or any other issues. We will also be a community, full of activities, events and gatherings.

However, we are also a professional institution. So we should be approachable, without being too bubbly or colloquial. We should avoid using a tone which is too over-familiar.

How we do this:

- Use the second-person (our/we) in talking to our audiences
- Avoid exclamation marks, slang and emojis in official communications

OUR VOICE IS...

FOCUSED ON THE REGION, BUT ALSO ON THE WORLD

A crucial part of the mission of SETU is to act as a catalyst for growth in the south east of Ireland. This involves empowering our citizens to learn exciting new skills, and ensuring they have exciting new careers to match. It involves working with policymakers and businesses to make sure that they are innovating and recruiting, and collectively raising the fortunes of our region.

However, we also want our students to look further. We want to ensure that students graduate with skills that are in demand all over the world. We want our regional businesses to be able to compete and succeed globally. We want our teaching to respond to new approaches and insights from all over, rather than just from here.

We should be proud to talk about the work we are doing with partners to inspire growth and change in our region. But we should also be able to talk about how we are responding to global trends, and reaching out to learn and collaborate with people beyond our shores.

How we do this:

- Talk about our longstanding and emerging local partnerships, and what they aim to achieve
- Discuss the impact of quality education to the region, economically and culturally
- Stress that the standards for innovation and education are not local standards, but global ones, and that SETU aims to draw on best practice worldwide
- Talk up international partnerships, collaborations and multi-disciplinary research, and explain how this benefits the region

OUR STYLE

When we are talking about SETU, we may find ourselves talking to different audiences, about different subjects, in slightly different ways. We do not expect every conversation to be written in exactly the same way (that would be boring and robotic).

However, the following sections aim to share some guidance that you may wish to consider, to ensure that you are writing in a consistent, clear and accessible way.

This is intended as an evolving document, which will include conventions and other useful notes that arise from communications in future.

INCLUSIVITY

SETU is a university for everyone. We welcome people from different backgrounds and cultures, anywhere in the world. We do not tolerate any statements or language that are discriminatory, or make others feel unwelcome.

There may be times in which our use of language offends or upsets others. This can happen, even if we try our best to avoid it. In these situations, it is important that we do not respond defensively, listen to what is being said, and make a note so that others are aware in future.

TENSE

In most cases, choose the tense that makes your sentence clearest. For example, if you are saying “The campus is home to 18,000 students”, use the present tense. Whereas, if you wish to say “The event will take place on 17 March”, the future tense is obviously the best option.

However, when referring to the aims and visions of SETU, it is worth noting that we prefer not to over-use the future tense, as this may imply that none of the things that make SETU great are currently true, or presently in place.

For example, while it is technically true to say:

“SETU aims to be a vibrant and collaborative home for research, working with partners on global issues”

...it may give the impression that SETU is starting from scratch, and has no partnerships and no experience, projects and expertise already in place. SETU is - as we know - building on a strong platform of partnerships, collaborations and experience, established by both WIT and IT Carlow.

While it would be strange to suggest that you avoid using the future tense and refer to everything (including things that are not currently in place) as if it already exists, our advice would be to balance “what is” with “what will be” when speaking about aims and objectives.

For example:

“Our researchers have built a reputation for collaborating with partners across the world on projects with global impact. We aim to deepen those relationships, and secure more opportunities for the south east of Ireland.”

PLACE

REFERRING TO SETU

The name of the university is South East Technological University, or SETU.

Its Irish name is Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Oirdheiscirt. The “an” is sentence case, while all other words begin with a capital letter.

SETU is pronounced by saying the individual initials rather than an acronym (S pause E pause T pause U).

Please avoid referring to it as THE South East Technological University. It is also SETU, rather than South East TU.

There is no hyphen between “South” and “East” in South East Technological University. There are no full stops between the letters of SETU.

The university is referred to in the singular (“it”, rather than “they”).

You may want to use the acronym “SETU” in communications for brevity. In these cases, we recommend referring to the university by its full name on the first occasion, with the acronym in brackets. Then you can use the acronym from that point.

For example:

“Welcome to South East Technological University (SETU). SETU is...”

When referring to the previous institutions, “Waterford Institute of Technology” and “Institute of Technology Carlow” are abbreviated to “WIT” and “IT Carlow”.

REFERRING TO TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITIES

When referring to technological universities, use sentence case (“a technological university” rather than “a Technological University”). Only capitalise proper nouns.

For example, “South East Technological University” and “Ireland” should feature capital letters. University should not.

CLEAR WRITING

BE AWARE OF YOUR AUDIENCE

Before you begin writing anything, you should be aware of who it is for, and what it is designed to achieve.

For example, a page talking about courses will have a different audience to a page talking about alumni fundraising. These audiences will obviously require different information, but may also require you to tweak your tone of voice.

Always consider your audience, what questions they have, what they want to achieve, and where they need to go next.

This will enable you to write in a more focused and useful way, and engage better with your audience.

PLAIN ENGLISH

We have many different audiences. However, regardless of who we are talking to, we must ensure that we speak clearly.

Our main priority is to make sure that all our communications - in all forms, and on all platforms - use plain English, and do not feature any unexplained jargon, or unfamiliar concepts and language.

For example:

“Endeavour” could be “try”

“Commence” could be “begin” or “start”

“Facilitate” could be “help”

This is not true in all cases (as certain words may have a subtle meaning that is apt for the context). But if there is a simpler way to say something, go for that option.

When writing on behalf of SETU, always try to avoid cold and lofty tones, and appear warm and friendly without being over-familiar. If in doubt, try reading what you have written aloud to see if it flows and sounds natural.

CONSISTENCY

When writing, aim for consistency. Where you can, refer back to this document for advice on grammar, punctuation and other conventions. However, if there is no clear guidance, choose one approach and stick to it throughout.

When in doubt, refer to the [Guardian Style Guide](#) unless specific guidance is given here.

JARGON

We should aim to be as clear as possible at all times. Therefore we should always be aware of when we use jargon, and how this may exclude or confuse certain audiences. We use many words internally that make sense to us, but not to those outside our circle. Where these are particularly problematic, we should remove them or replace them. Where they are unavoidable, we should take the time to clearly explain what they mean.

BRITISH OR AMERICAN ENGLISH

SETU uses British-English. This means that you should use British spelling and grammar rather than American.

This means you should opt for “colour” instead of “color” and “prioritise” instead of “prioritize”.

USE OF “YOU” AND “WE”

In recent years, the use of “you” and “we” has become commonplace in communications, particularly on websites and social platforms. This is because it is a clear and easy way to establish connection with an audience. It also makes sentences clearer and easier to follow.

For example:

“We work with industry to ensure that all of our courses prepare you for an exciting career”.

At SETU, we are comfortable with the use of “we” and “you” in general communications. However, there may be situations in which you may need to refer to the university in the third person, such as extremely formal communications.

ACTIVE VOICE

Using active voice in sentences generally makes them clearer and easier to understand. There may be times when the passive voice is appropriate, but opt for active when you can.

For example:

“We partner with industry”, rather than “companies from many different industries have been sought out”.

YOU'RE OR YOU ARE?

The use of contractions such as “you’re” is more common today. However, you may wish to use your judgement as to whether they are appropriate, based on the context and audience.

For example, in a more formal document, you may wish to opt for “you are”. In more informal situations - such as social media posts - “you’re” is fine.

CAPITALISATION

We opt for sentence case wherever possible, and try to avoid unnecessary capitalisation. If in doubt, use lower case except when referring to proper nouns.

ABBREVIATION

When using abbreviations and acronyms, be aware that some of your readers may not be familiar with them.

This does not mean that you should rule them out entirely. Instead, simply spell out the abbreviation in the first instance. Then consider whether giving its full unabbreviated name actually reduces the confusion. If not - explain a little about its role and importance in this context.

For example:

When referring to CAO, first give its name in full (“Central Applications Office”). However, this does not necessarily make its purpose any clearer for those unfamiliar with Irish education.

So add a sentence explaining that it processes undergraduate course applications for higher education institutions in Ireland.

When you are using acronyms and abbreviations, do not leave full stops between the letters, or at the end.

For example:

Use "SETU" rather than "S.E.T.U." and "Dr" rather than "Dr."

TITLES OF PEOPLE

We do not use Mr, Miss, Mrs, or Ms in communication. This is because it can be time-consuming to check, and risks offending for little benefit.

However, we do use academic titles where appropriate, such as "Dr" and "Prof". These abbreviations are generally understood and are therefore acceptable. We would not add "PhD", "BA" and so on to the end of someone's name in general communication.

In terms of job titles, you can capitalise unless you are referring to the job informally.

For example:

You would not capitalise "a researcher", but you may capitalise "Head of Research".

When referring to people, use their full name first (including any academic title). Subsequently, you may choose to refer to them by the first name alone in more informal contexts. There may - of course - be situations where this feels inappropriate, such as formal communications. In this case, the writer may wish to make a judgement call.

Where people have clearly stated their preferred pronouns, we should respect this and use them in our communications with - and references to - them.

TITLES OF DEPARTMENTS, SCHOOLS, OFFICES, CLUBS AND COURSES

When referring to departments, schools or offices, only use capitalisation if you are using the title of the department itself.

For example, if you are referring to “the engineering department”, use lowercase. However, “the School of Engineering” would be capitalised.

Likewise, you would not capitalise “I’m doing a science course” but you would capitalise “I am applying for the Bachelor of Physics course”.

When referring to campuses, use “our Waterford campus” and “our Carlow campus”.

Our buildings are generally capitalised.

For example:

“The Walton IT Building”, “The Luke Wadding Library”, “The Haughton Building” and “The Barrow Centre”

Clubs and sports teams are only capitalised when they are referred to by name, such as Chess Club.

SINGULAR OR PLURAL?

When referring to institutions such as SETU, use the singular “it”. This also applies to schools, offices, and departments. As a rule of thumb, the only time that “they” is commonly used to describe an organisation or entity is when they are a sports team.

However, in terms of referring to a person, make note of their preferred pronouns.

TIMES AND DATES

Our preferred way of presenting dates is as follows:

- 17 March 2022, or Friday, 17 March 2022

We present times as follows:

- 10am
- 10.30am
- 5.15pm

We do not use 24 hour time in general communications (eg. 20:00). In cases where timezone may be important, add the relevant abbreviation after the time itself (eg. 5.30pm IST).

If you wish to avoid confusion when setting an embargo on a press release, use 12.01 am rather than 12am or midnight.

If you are talking about periods of time, you can use either 9-5pm or 9am to 5pm.

NUMBERS

Our preference when using numbers is as follows:

- Spell out numbers one to nine
- Use numbers for 10 upwards
- Place a comma in numbers over 1,000
- Spell out any number at the start of a sentence (eg. Twenty five years ago...)

When referring to percentages, our preference is to use “per cent” in written copy.

You do not need to spell out numbers if they are presented as addresses, distances, weights and measures (eg. “1km”, “3m”, “8kg”, “23 Priory Close”). When referring to millions and billions, present as “8.7 billion units”.

COMPANIES AND PRODUCTS

When referring to companies and products, it is useful to check how they spell and capitalise their name in their official communications. For example, our convention is to capitalise the first letter of a company name (eg. “Microsoft”) but there may be instances in which a company uses capitalisation, or lowercase letters at the start of the name (such as “iPad”).

When in doubt, spell out the company name as the company itself does.

Using “Ltd” at the end of the name is not necessary, except in some formal contractual agreements.

COURSES vs PROGRAMMES

Both words are used in our communication. We prefer to use “courses” when referring to undergraduate, and “programmes” for postgraduate. When referring to the full portfolio, the general rule of thumb is to use “courses”.

WHEN IN DOUBT...

If you are unsure about a point of style that is not mentioned here, please feel free to consult the [Guardian style guide](#).

There are also tools on the market to help you identify grammar and style errors, and improve the clarity of your sentences, including:

- Hemingway (<https://hemingwayapp.com>)
- Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com/>)
- Writer (<https://writer.com>)
- Readable (<https://readable.com>)
- And more...

WRITING FOR THE WEB

When you're writing for the web, much of the guidance we've discussed above still applies. However, there are some other things that might be useful when you're delivering content that is useful, accessible and clear online.

PAGES NEED TO BE USEFUL

People generally come to your website because they want to "do" or "achieve" something. This could be finding a course that suits them, searching for accommodation, or even just finding out where your campus is located.

So every page should be designed based on:

- Who the audience is
- What they want/need to do
- What information they need to do that

If your audience finds it difficult to find the information they need on your page, they will leave quickly.

Some things that can lead to that happening include:

- Confusing or elaborate design
- Headers that don't tell you what the page is actually about
- Unfocused content
- Huge amounts of unnecessary information and copy
- Pop-ups and links to a variety of irrelevant destinations
- Language that is difficult to digest

Planning a page out before starting it can make a huge difference, and make it feel more focused, clear and accessible.

WHO IS YOUR USER, AND WHAT DO THEY WANT?

A great way to work out who and what your page is for is to consider User Stories.

This is a way of breaking down what a user wants to achieve on a specific page.

Here is a template:

As a [person in a particular role]
I want to [do, find or achieve something]
So I can [complete a specific task]

There may be more than one user coming to this page, with more than one goal, so you may find it useful to create lots of these to focus your content for this page.

For example:

As a Waterford-based pharmaceutical business
I want to find out what research expertise exists at SETU
So I can decide whether and how we can collaborate on new products and ideas

When we are thinking about who our audience is, and what they want, it is also important to be clear about “when needs are met”.

This can be a statement which lays out what needs to happen for that person or organisation to be happy that their job here is done.

For example, the need may be met when:

The business has found out which areas the university is particularly expert in, and has a contact number or email for someone who can connect them with researchers at the university.

CALLS TO ACTION

When you are designing a page, consider what your Call to Action is. This will be a link or a paragraph with information on it that takes your visitor to where they naturally need to go once they're done with this page.

For example, if this page is about “How to Apply”, your Call to Action might be a link button taking them to an application form, or a paragraph giving them a name of a person to get in touch with, along with a phone number or direct email address.

A good Call to Action is:

- Clear, showing the visitor exactly where they are going
- Convenient, allowing the user to do exactly what they want to do (cancel a subscription, rather than phone a call centre in the USA)

- Trustworthy, reassuring your user that this will take them to somewhere they want to go

Always consider what Calls to Action are relevant on your page, and include them prominently and in the right place in your user's journey.

CLARITY AND BREVITY

You will hear a lot about the need to be clear and concise when writing for the web. This is because people are generally searching your website with a purpose, and want to get answers or support quickly.

It is also because - on devices such as smartphones - screen-size is limited, so you will need to get as much as you can across in a small space, without confusing anyone.

Here are a few tips for making your content clearer on the web:

- Keep sentences short. Ideally between 15 and 25 words.
- Avoid clauses, and splitting up sentences in confusing ways.
- Be direct, and use plain English.
- Aim for fewer syllables.
- Keep paragraphs short. Try to explain just one idea per paragraph, in two or three sentences.

You will also be told to avoid jargon wherever possible. This is true, but there may be some cases in which it is unavoidable, either because there is no suitable alternative, or because the word or phrase is a popular search keyword.

In those cases, make sure it is clearly explained.

WE'RE A UNIVERSITY. WHY CAN'T WE USE MORE COMPLEX WORDS?

This question occasionally comes up when talking at universities and other institutions of expertise. The answer is that our audiences may be coming from a different place to us.

For example, they may be:

- Prospective students who do not yet have the required knowledge
- People who don't speak English as a first language
- People who are in a hurry

- People who have disabilities which may affect cognition in some ways but not others

In all these cases, being clearer about what you want to tell your audience costs you nothing, but may be a huge help to them.

SUB-HEADINGS, BULLET POINTS AND LISTS

When you are explaining a complex situation or a detailed point, we recommend breaking your content down into sub-headings, with clear titles.

If you have a long list of options, use bullet points. It is clearer and more digestible.

TITLES AND META DESCRIPTION

We suggest character limits to your titles and meta descriptions so that they fit in their respective spaces entirely, without “dropping off the end”.

Titles appear at the top of the page, and are headers on the results that pop up on a search engine. Meta descriptions are the short bits of text that sit under those titles.

As a general rule of thumb, you should keep titles between 60 and 70 characters (including spaces), and meta descriptions between 140 and 155 characters (including spaces).

KEYWORDS

Search engines have evolved now to the point where we no longer have to cram multiple mentions of the same word into ugly cluttered sentences.

However, you should consider which words your audiences are searching for, and be strategic about including them.

If you want a search for a certain word to lead them to this page, consider using these keywords in your copy. These mentions should preferably be in the headline or near the beginning of the copy.

CAREWORDS

Carewords are different to keywords, but can also have a strong impact on your audience's experience on your page.

Keywords are words that a reader specifically types into search engines, such as "cheap flights" or "Irish universities".

Carewords are words that they expect to see on the page, in order to reassure them that the organisation knows what matters to them.

In a university's case, that may include:

- Practical learning
- Opportunities for hands-on experience
- Flexible courses
- Diverse community
- Tuition in small classes

Think about which carewords people may be looking for on your page. However, make sure that you are offering words that audiences are legitimately interested in, rather than common buzzwords that are well-used in the industry, but not as attractive to your audience.

BENEFITS vs FEATURES

When you are describing why your university, your course, or another product or service might be of interest to your audience, consider the difference between "benefits" and "features".

Organisations such as Apple offer a blend of both.

When they discuss a product such as an iPad or a Macbook, they talk about the features, such as the type of processing chip or the size of the screen.

However, they also talk about the benefits. These are the ways that this particular feature might make your life easier or better.

For example:

"The new A15 Bionic chip makes iPad mini just as powerful as it is portable. Whether you're tearing through your inbox or editing photos with Photoshop, it has the power to do everything. Use

advanced apps, capture brilliant content, and bring your creative projects to life – anywhere.”

The A15 Bionic chip might be something that would appeal if you knew what that was. However, explaining the benefits clearly to the audience helps them visualise how it will help them achieve their own personal goals.

Of course, this is not to say that benefits should always be included at the expense of features. Sometimes your audiences are looking for specific things about a university or course, and including them help them to make a clear comparison between their options.

IMAGERY, VIDEO AND OTHER MULTIMEDIA

Explaining concepts can be so much simpler when you're using different types of media. Consider how an infographic or image can get an idea across quicker and cleaner, or whether you can deliver a more impactful experience using audio or other forms of content.

However, in all of these cases, be sure that:

- You have copyright over the media in question, and permission to publish it in your chosen space
- You have considered the accessibility of this content (we will talk about this a little more next).

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is a hugely important consideration when creating and distributing any type of content.

Many people have difficulty with content, for a variety of reasons, including:

- Blindness, deafness or other impairments
- Dyslexia and other reading difficulties
- Learning disabilities
- Unfamiliarity with English as a main language

But also, they may be looking at your content:

- While under stress, on the move, or facing multiple distractions
- While using different devices, with different operating systems and screen sizes
- Using tools such as screenreaders
- Using keyboards, trackpads, joysticks or voice control

We can help them by:

- Making sentences clear and brief
- Using plain English
- Using short paragraphs
- Using bullet points or lists
- Keeping the page clean and uncluttered
- Talking in their language, without jargon or complex words
- Focusing the page on what they want to see or do
- Making the page simple to navigate

However, there are also some other things to be aware of...

COLOUR CONTRAST

This may not be relevant for everyone writing for the web, as colours may already be decided by those in charge of the site's design.

However, it is worth noting that your site may be unreadable to some because of your choice of colour combinations, as well as the contrast between text and background and link colour.

Consider the impact your design and colour contrast may have on people with colour blindness and other visual impairments.

ALT-TEXT

When someone with a visual impairment visits your site, they may use a screenreader. Alt-text is the text that you use to describe images, which then helps screenreaders explain what is being pictured.

If you include alt-text in your images, the screenreader will read that text aloud to your visitor. It also affects Search Engine Optimisation, as search engines look for this to help them understand what an image is and what it is showing.

This has become increasingly common, and you can now add alt-text directly to images you upload to social platforms such as Twitter.

When inputting alt-text, remember to be clear and descriptive.

For example:

“Students enjoying a game of football on the pitches at SETU Waterford campus” is better than “student football” or “image2GNTWIT.jpg”.

HYPERLINKS

Hyperlinks are links embedded within words or phrases that send your visitors to another site or page when you click them.

They are useful for:

- Taking your user on the next stage of their journey
- Including information that you do not want to clutter your page
- Helping to improve your page’s search ranking

When you are using hyperlinks, do not just add a link on top of the description “click here”. That is vague, and does not offer important context for users with screenreaders.

Instead, spell out where the link will take you.

For example:

“Follow this link to [find out more about how SETU works with industry on impactful research](#)”

TRANSCRIPTS

Different types of media can make your site look exciting, colourful and compelling. However, consider what you can offer to people who are not able to access the content in question (for a variety of reasons).

If you have video on your site, for example, think about adding captions. This is useful for people with hearing impairments, but also people who might not want to switch the sound on while watching in a public place.

Also consider making transcripts of video and audio content available on your site, which your user can download.

