Review strategy

Part of the ‘Effective Digital Content’ training

# No such thing as a finish line

Alongside your content strategy planning, you should put a review cycle in place. Your website is never ‘finished’; it is a continuous work in progress.

# Regular reviews are crucial

Regular reviews help to avoid the ‘boom and bust’ cycle so many websites fall into. That’s where a site is identified as being out of date, so intensive effort is put into creating a new website, which is launched with great fanfare, and then the left to get out of date again. The average length of this cycle is around five years. Regular small-scale reviews of your content mean that it doesn’t get out of date.

# Users distrust dated content

Be particularly mindful about the damage that can be done by dated content, in terms of loss of confidence in your site. You also need to bear in mind that in some cases, users can hold you to what you said online, and it’s up to you to prove that you didn’t say it. This is particularly relevant to things like tuition fees and entry requirements.

# Ground your content in time

Always make sure what you’re saying is clearly grounded in a time period. If you’re publishing course details, don’t say they are for ‘next year’. Say what year you mean. If you have to advertise an event before a speaker is confirmed, don’t tell users to expect confirmation ‘soon’ or ‘in a few weeks’. Give a time frame, like ‘By the end of March 2019’. (If you’re not sure of the time frame, overestimate. People don’t mind having their expectation exceeded.)

# Beware broken links

And remember it’s not just content you publish directly that you need to be mindful of. When reviewing your content, make sure the links it points to still work, and are still relevant.

# Review dates

It’s often a good idea to think about setting review dates for your content when you are publishing information that’s particularly time sensitive, reminding you to come back and check it’s still relevant.

More widely, we always recommend having a review schedule to check all of your content. There’s no set rule as to how often you do this – some pages might need to be checked once a week, others once every six months. You should really be checking all your pages at least once in a 12 month period though – even if it’s just to read them over and republish. This helps to make sure you’re not saying anything out of date, and reassures search engines that your site is being maintained.

# Automated reviews

There are also some automated tools available to University staff free of charge which will quickly identify spelling errors, broken links and other issues on your site. Get in touch if you’d like to use these for your review cycle.

# Focus on your top pages…

A quick look at the analytics for your site can help you identify which pages to focus your effort on when reviewing content. They will show a few pages that are significantly more popular than the rest of your pages.

# …and top tasks

Combine this information with what the top tasks are for your priority users. Focusing your effort on these bits of content will mean the biggest improvement for the largest number of people.

# Take down unnecessary content

Analytics can also tell you what content you should perhaps take down. Publish as little content as you can to do the job you need to do.

Link out where possible; avoiding duplication wherever you can. A small, well-managed website will serve your needs much better than a large complex one that is difficult to keep track of.