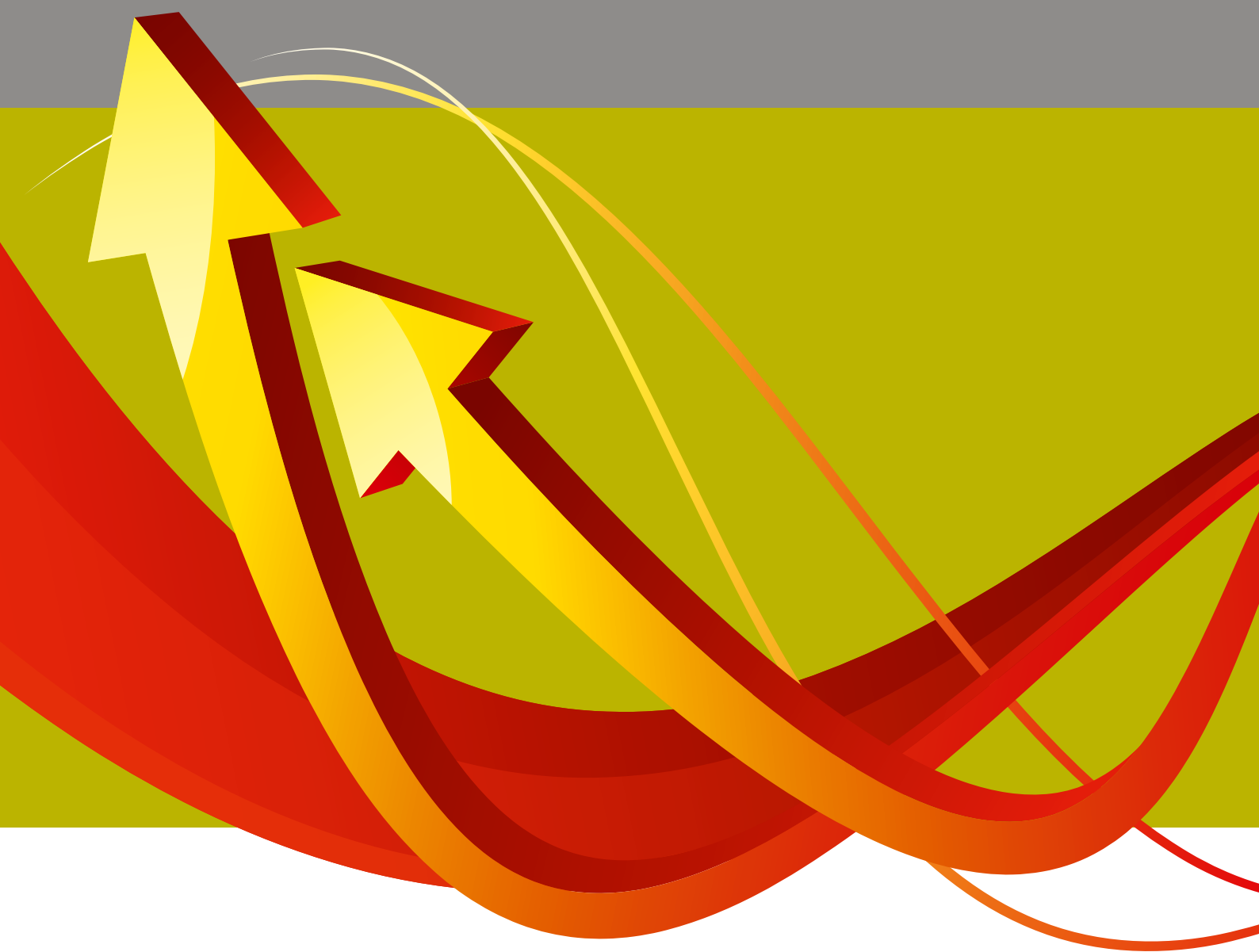


PAS 124:2011

Defining, implementing and managing
website policies and standards

Code of practice



MAGUS™

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Foreword

This Publicly Available Specification (PAS) was commissioned by Magus, who provided the initial draft for development. Its development was facilitated by the British Standards Institution (BSI) and it came into effect on 22 March 2011.

Acknowledgement is given to the following organizations that were involved in the development of this PAS as members of the steering group:

- Cabinet Office
- LBi
- Magus
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Acknowledgement is also given to the members of a wider review panel who were consulted in the development of this PAS.

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This PAS is not to be regarded as a British Standard. It will be withdrawn upon publication of its content in, or as, a British Standard.

The PAS process enables a specification to be rapidly developed in order to fulfil an immediate need in industry. A PAS may be considered for further development as a British Standard, or constitute part of the UK input into the development of a European or International Standard.

Supersession

This PAS supersedes PAS 124:2008 which is withdrawn.

Information about this document

This is a full revision of the PAS and introduces the principal changes of additional procedural content on website governance, a new Annex B on website governance policy and an updated Annex A on the key areas of website policies and standards.

Use of this document

As a code of practice, this PAS takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Any user claiming compliance with this PAS is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

Presentational conventions

The provisions in this PAS are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a PAS cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Introduction

0.1 General

Website policies and standards are the library of documents specified by an organization to govern the content, function and appearance of their websites and to articulate their website governance structure and process.

The remit for website policies and standards can be understood to cover traditional websites, mobile websites and external digital channels, such as web portals and social media sites.

Managed effectively, website policies and standards are powerful tools for controlling the process of website creation and publication and deliver tangible performance, operational and financial benefits. However, defining, implementing and managing website policies and standards presents organizations with common logistical challenges. Many organizations are also unaware of the extent to which they need to be defining them and the benefits that they deliver (see 0.4).

This Publicly Available Specification (PAS) provides recommendations to help organizations deploy website policies and standards efficiently and harness their full potential.

This PAS has six main parts:

- Defining website policies and standards (Clause 3);
- Implementing website policies and standards (Clause 4);
- Managing website policies and standards (Clause 5);
- Key areas of website policies and standards (Annex A);
- Website governance policy (Annex B);
- Useful sources of information (Annex C).

0.2 What are website policies and standards?

Website policies and standards are the two main types of documentation an organization uses to communicate requirements to the people responsible for commissioning, developing, managing and editing their websites.

Website policies and standards serve different but complementary purposes:

- A website policy is a high-level statement that outlines the organization's strategic requirements with regards to their website(s).
- A website standard is a detailed statement that sets out the specific criteria that need to be met in order to fulfil the website policy mandates.

The difference can be illustrated by the following examples:

- A website policy on accessibility states the target level of accessibility conformance for the organization's website(s). However, it does not explain how this target is to be achieved.
- Website standards for accessibility set out the specific criteria that are to be adhered to in order to meet the specified level of accessibility.

The differences between website policies and standards are outlined in Table 1.

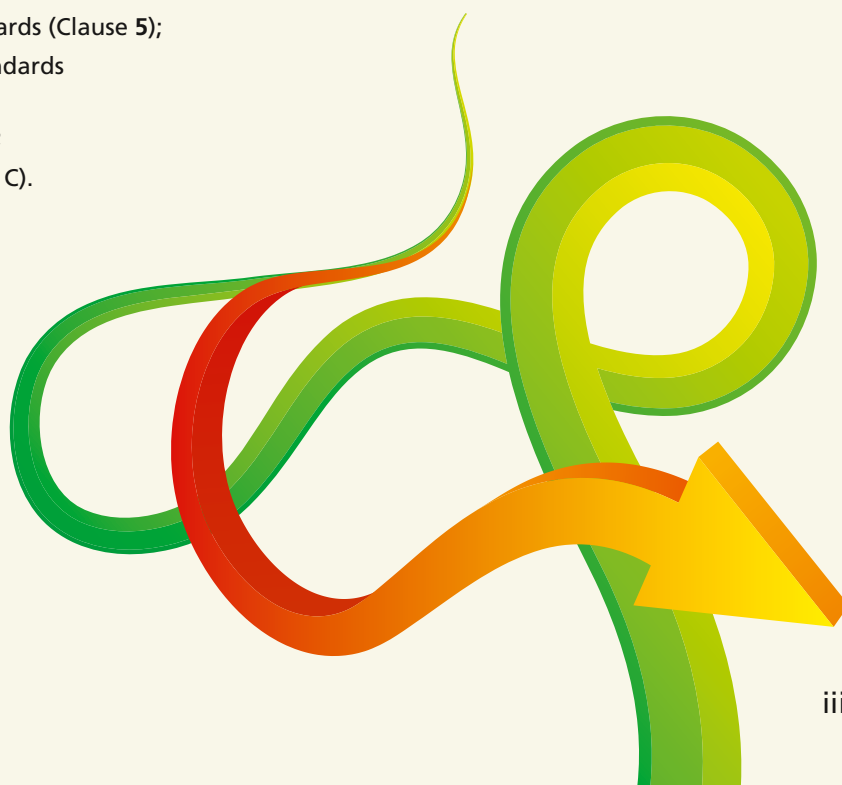


Table 1 – Differences between website policies and standards

Document	Description	Use	Users	Purpose
Website policy	A high-level statement that outlines the organization's strategic requirements with regards to their website(s) Few in number Change rarely	To communicate the top-level strategy and requirements for the development and maintenance of a website	All organizational stakeholders in the website(s)	To protect the organization from risk and align their website(s) with their strategic goals
Website standard	A detailed statement that sets out the specific criteria that need to be met in order to fulfil the website policy mandates Many in number Change frequently	To guide web developers, managers and editors in the development and maintenance of a website	Web developers, managers and editors	To secure website quality and compliance and fulfil the website policy mandates

0.3 Key areas of website policies and standards

Website policies and standards are typically produced as a set of point-specific documents covering key areas, as given in Table 2.

Organizations often choose to document website policies alongside their related standards rather than produce them as stand-alone documents. This has the advantage of ensuring that each set of standards is presented within the context of its website policy mandate, which can increase understanding and buy-in.

Table 2 shows the key areas of website policies and standards as defined in this PAS. They include both organizationally specific website policies and standards (e.g. brand and website governance) and those referencing specifications by external agencies, such as governments and official standards bodies (e.g. legal and accessibility).

Annexes A and B provide recommendations on the key areas of website policies and standards.

Table 2 – Key areas of website policies and standards

Area	Cross reference
Accessibility	A.1
Brand and template	A.2
Co-branding	A.3
Domain name and URL structure	A.4
Editorial and copywriting	A.5
Legal	A.6
Search engine optimization (SEO)	A.7
Social media	A.8
Usability	A.9
Website governance policy	Annex B

NOTE This list of key areas of website policies and standards is not exhaustive and not all areas will be applicable to every organization.

0.4 The benefits

The benefits of website policies and standards are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 – Key benefits of website policies and standards

Brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforcement of the brand by ensuring consistency of brand presentation and messaging • Protection of brand and company reputation by ensuring a consistent, high quality user experience
Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimization of online risk through compliance with legal requirements • Securement of appropriate protection of intellectual property
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of investment in web-related projects by ensuring quality and performance is maintained on an ongoing basis • Reduction of development and maintenance costs through regulation and rationalization of the web development environment • Provision of access to the widest possible market, by ensuring compliance with accessibility guidelines and compatibility with target user platforms • Optimization for targeted customer acquisition due to the effective localization of content • Increased visitor traffic through optimization of content for search engines • Increased user confidence through a consistent, high quality user experience
Workflow efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased agility and reduction of time to market, through streamlined development and maintenance processes • Communication and enforcement of best practice across web teams and the organization as a whole and reduction of dispute • Simplification of design and build processes of new or redesigned sites, particularly in relation to the management of multiple suppliers
Performance measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of objective criteria for measuring performance towards compliance targets • Increased reliability of visitor and performance data through the consistent application of traffic tags

0.5 Current trends

The web has matured to be a business-critical medium, achieving increased recognition and support at board level. This has been boosted by the economic downturn where the superior audience reach, efficiency and measurability of online media have commanded an increasing slice of organizations' marketing budgets.

Website governance systems and processes are also maturing. Organizations are increasingly moving from manual to automated quality assurance processes to enable them to keep pace with the speed and scale of publication, and are making sophisticated use of compliance metrics to drive improvements in their websites and inform strategy.

However, many organizations have been slow to embrace effective governance systems and processes, with the result that serious website standards compliance problems continue to undermine user experience, damage brand and put organizations at risk. Current trends are set to amplify the website governance challenge, as websites are becoming ever more complex and dynamic.

Key trends and challenges:

- Websites are incorporating an expanding array of content sources and publication platforms, such as blogs and user-generated content, all of which need to be brought under the website governance umbrella.
- Content is increasingly localized, personalized and dynamically targeted, which leads to an expansion in the number of digital touch points that need to be monitored and managed.
- The remit for website governance now extends beyond the website to cover a proliferation of external digital channels, such as web portals and social media sites.
- There is an increased speed and volume of publication.

Effective website policies and standards, and website governance, are key to enabling organizations to exploit this increasingly agile environment, without sacrificing control over brand presentation and messaging or increasing their exposure to risk.

1 Scope

This Publicly Available Specification (PAS) provides recommendations for defining, implementing and managing website policies and standards.

This PAS is applicable to all types of organization (including public and private companies, non-profit organizations, government departments, local councils, public sector organizations and academic institutions).

NOTE *Although the guidance contained in this PAS is relevant to any organization with a website (including public websites, intranets or extranets), the scope of the recommendations are most directly applicable to organizations with enterprise-scale websites.*

This PAS is for use by:

- organizations considering, planning, or in the process of developing, website policies and standards;
- organizations with existing website policies and standards wishing to align themselves with best practice methodologies;
- organizations looking to improve or articulate their website governance structure and process.

This PAS can be used by anyone who manages or has responsibility for a website. This could include:

- global communications teams;
- marketing teams;
- corporate communications teams;
- brand guardians;
- website managers;
- external agencies responsible for defining and/or managing website policies and standards;
- IT managers, especially those involved in setting up a content management system (CMS);
- legal/compliance/IT risk teams.

This PAS is intended to be independent of the underlying publication platforms and technologies used in the creation of websites. It can therefore be used to inform the definition and deployment of website policies and standards for all types of website including: static websites, dynamic websites, web portals, mobile websites, e-commerce websites and content published by organizations on external sites, such as social media sites.

This PAS does not cover website policies and standards for the following types of web-based services and applications: "software-as-a-service"/cloud computing services, virtual learning environments and internet-enabled "widgets" and applications (e.g. mobile applications).

This PAS does not cover the following types of technical standards: infrastructure standards (e.g. connectivity, performance and availability), security standards, code standards or the use of semantic web technologies.



2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this PAS, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 accessibility

degree to which people can perceive, understand, navigate, contribute to and interact with web content and functionality, regardless of disability or the web browser, technical platform and access device they are using

NOTE The concept of accessibility addresses the full range of user capabilities and is not limited to users who are formally recognized as having a disability.

[adapted from BS 8878:2010, B.1.1]

2.2 assistive technology

hardware or software added to, or incorporated within, a system that increases accessibility for an individual

NOTE 1 This includes all such software which is either: installed into the operating system (executable extensions or applications), installed into the browser (plug-ins), or included on the website.

NOTE 2 Examples include the provision of screenreaders and text to speech systems; screen-magnification software; tactile Braille display, trackballs, touch pads/screens, etc.; alternatives to standard computer mice, keyboards, switches and speech recognition software.

NOTE 3 Also referred to as “access technology” and “adaptive technology”.

[BS 8878:2010, B.1.3]

2.3 automated compliance testing tools

software applications used, without direct human intervention, to assess whether a website is standards-compliant

2.4 cascading style sheets (CSS)

mechanism for adding style, layout and presentation (e.g. fonts, colours, spacing, positioning) to web documents

NOTE CSS enables the separation of content from the way it is presented to users.

2.5 content management system (CMS)

software application that provides facilities to create, manage, store and publish web content

NOTE There are many varieties of CMS designed to manage different content types. For the purposes of this PAS, the term CMS is primarily used to refer to web CMSs – a type of CMS that is concerned with the management and publication of web content. However, the boundaries between different types of CMS are blurred and other types of CMS include web content management as part of their wider service offering. The term can therefore be understood to include other types of CMS (e.g. enterprise CMSs) that provide integrated web content management functionality.

2.6 contributor

person who contributes to the content, code or design of a website on behalf of the organization as distinct from a person who adds content in a private capacity

NOTE Adding content in a private capacity includes, for example, commenting on a blog posting.

2.7 common publication platform

centrally provided CMS that is shared across an organization, along with the associated web services and technical platform

NOTE Compare definition of common publication platform with diverse publication platform (see 2.9).

2.8 disability

physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

NOTE This definition is based on the definitions of disability contained in the DDA [1] and the Equality Act 2010 [2].

[BS 8878:2010, B.1.4]

2.9 diverse publication platform

dispersed website infrastructure comprising a variety of CMS (and other website publication toolsets), technical platforms and web services

NOTE Compare definition of diverse publication platform with common publication platform (see 2.7).

2.10 domain name

unique name that identifies an organization, website or other entity on the internet

NOTE Domain names are made up of one or more segments, termed "labels" that are organized hierarchically and separated by full stops, for example, "ourcompany.com".

The hierarchy of domains descends from the right to the left. The right-most label represents the top-level domain. For example, the domain name "www.ourcompany.com" belongs to the top-level domain "com". Each label to the left specifies a subdivision (or subdomain) of the domain to the right. For example, the label "ourcompany" specifies a subdomain of the "com" domain and "www" is a subdomain of "ourcompany.com".

2.11 editor

person who contributes to or makes editorial changes to the content of a website on behalf of the organization

2.12 information architecture

organization, labelling and navigation schemes which make up the information system of a website

2.13 key performance indicator (KPI)

pre-agreed, quantifiable measurement that is used to measure progress towards identified goals

NOTE Also known as "key success indicators" (KSI). KPIs are different to "critical success factors" (CSFs).

2.14 localization

adaptation of a website to make it appropriate to the target locale (country/region and/or language)

2.15 rich media

media that consists of any combination of graphics, audio, video and animation

2.16 search engine optimization (SEO)

process of planning, implementing and maintaining a website's information architecture, content and underlying technology so that its pages rank higher in relevant organic search engine results

2.17 semantic web

group of technologies and methods that enable computers to understand the meaning of information on the web and to link, search, share and combine data in useful and interesting ways

2.18 technical platform

computing environment with a particular user or programming interface, including hardware and operating system, supporting execution of application programs

[adapted from ISO/IEC 18019:2004, 2.42]

2.19 template

pre-specified layout to which editors may add content in controlled ways to produce a completed web page matching organizational design standards

NOTE Typically a template consists of sections of code that are locked and others into which content can be added.

2.20 uniform or universal resource locator (URL)

address of a file, web page or other resource on the internet, combined with information about how to access it

NOTE 1 A URL contains both a domain name (see 2.10) and a protocol (see Note 2), for example, in "http://www.ourcompany.com/folder/filename.html", the domain name is "www.ourcompany.com" and the protocol is "http://". If the resource is a specific file, the URL also includes its path, in this example, "/folder/filename.html".

NOTE 2 A protocol is a method of exchanging data on the internet. In a URL, the protocol "http://", for example, indicates that the file needs to be accessed as a web page, whereas "ftp://" indicates that it needs to be obtained by file transfer.

2.21 usability

extent to which a website can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use

[adapted from BS 8878:2010, B.1.14]

2.22 user

end user of a website

2.23 website

set of interconnected web pages, images, or other digital assets that are addressed relative to a common uniform resource locator (URL) and delivered to users via internet protocol, through a web browser

NOTE Websites can be viewed on different internet enabled platforms, including computers, mobile phones and other internet enabled devices such as eBook readers, tablets and televisions.

2.24 website governance

framework of strategy, people, roles, responsibilities, policies, standards and processes involved in managing an organization's website(s)

2.25 website life cycle

four stages of a website's life: inception, growth, stabilization, end-of-life

NOTE In the end-of-life stage a website is considered no longer fit for purpose and the cycle is initiated again with the launch of a new website designed to meet the organization's current needs. An organization's old website can be archived at this stage.

2.26 website policy

high-level statement that outlines the organization's strategic requirements with regards to their website(s)

2.27 website standard

detailed statement that sets out the specific criteria that need to be met in order to fulfil the website policy mandates

NOTE The term "website standard" is differentiated in the context of this document from the term "web standard". The term "web standard" is commonly understood to refer to code standards, established by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) (see Annex C) and other standards bodies, for the creation and interpretation of web-based content.

3 Defining website policies and standards

3.1 General

The organization should define website policies and standards to ensure that their websites meet the needs of their users, the organization, and technical and regulatory requirements.

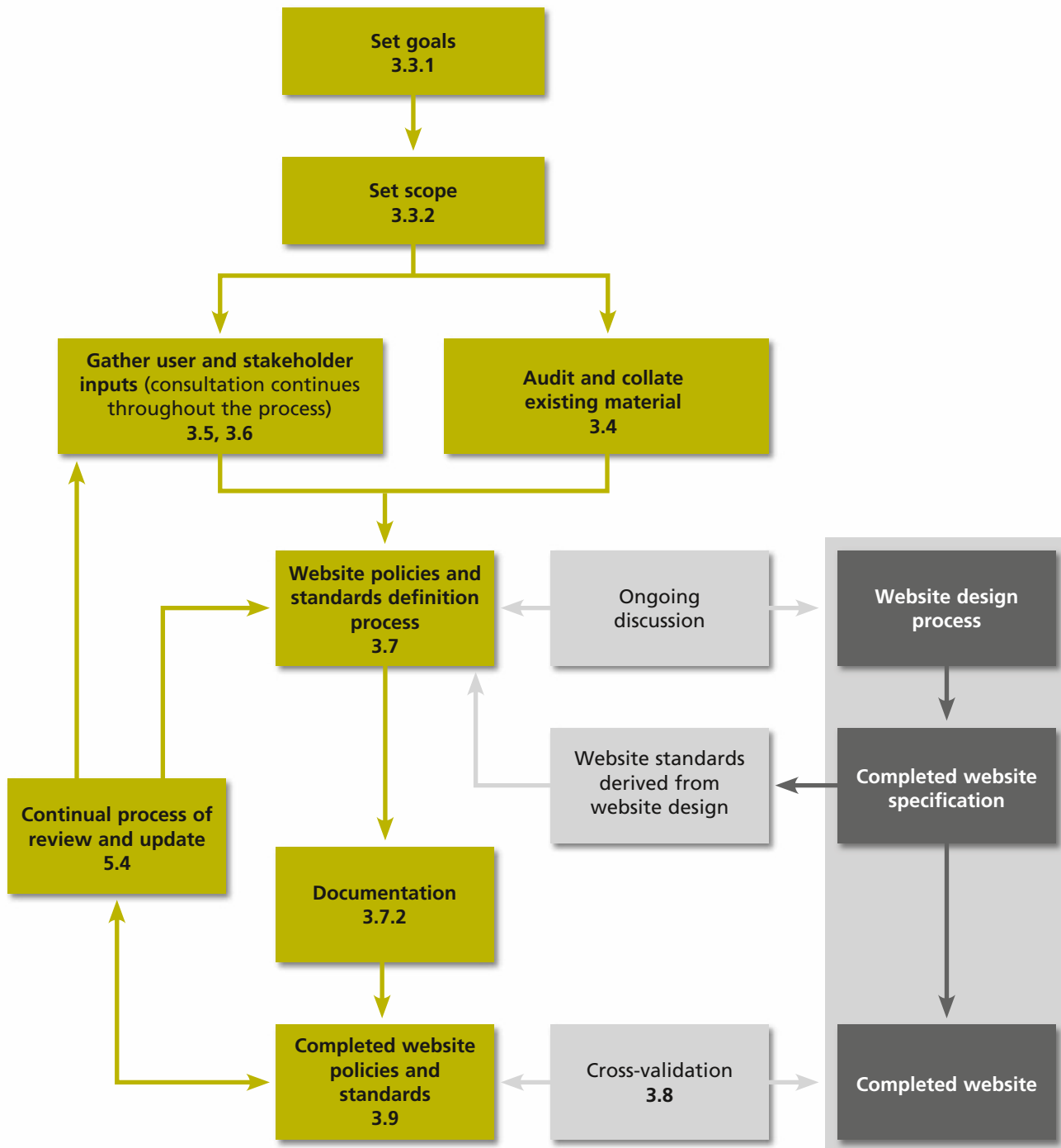
In parallel, the organization should document the components of their website governance. This should include the formal mechanisms by which the website policies and standards should be managed, communicated and updated, and how compliance with the standards should be monitored and measured.

3.2 Definition workflow

The definition process should be carried out in conjunction with, rather than after, the website design process (see Figure 1).

Website policies and standards should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis (see 5.4) to meet changing internal and external needs.

Figure 1 – Recommended standards definition workflow



NOTE 1 Although website policies and standards can be defined at any point in the website life cycle there are several operational benefits to running these two processes in parallel:

- it helps to clarify and formalize decisions;
- it facilitates communication and change management;
- it reduces errors and iterations in the design and

development process – the website policies and standards can be used to both inform the website design process and be informed by it;

- it provides a blueprint against which the finished website can be evaluated.

NOTE 2 Defining website policies and standards is not usually a linear process. Different processes will feed into each other as illustrated in Figure 1.

3.3 Planning

3.3.1 Setting goals

The organization should set and document goals to establish the aims of the website policies and standards.

NOTE Goals are important for gaining stakeholder buy-in and consensus at the start of the project, keeping the project on track and providing the objective criteria required to measure success.

Some typical goals could include:

- to convey consistent global branding across all websites;
- to ensure that all visitors have a positive user experience by ensuring high standards of website quality, consistency and performance;
- to ensure the website is accessible across all target technical platforms and by all target users regardless of disability;
- to aid e-commerce by maintaining high standards of usability and accessibility;
- to unify diverse website(s) following acquisition or merger;
- to optimize cost-effectiveness by reducing time and resource requirements for website maintenance;
- to effectively communicate organizational requirements and best practice to a large team of editors of varying background and experience;
- to ensure consistent messaging across multi-lingual website(s);
- to ensure that the website meets all legal requirements across all relevant jurisdictions.

3.3.2 Setting the scope for standardization

3.3.2.1 General

Website policies and standards should be mandated across all websites. Where variations are required, these should be kept to a minimum.

NOTE 1 It is usually possible to mandate a single set of core website policies and standards (e.g. on usability principles and accessibility standards), even when local variations are necessary.

NOTE 2 Variation in website policies and standards can be complex to communicate and manage. This can drive up overall costs and be detrimental to the global brand.

The scope for standardization should be determined by assessing the following factors:

- a) the types of websites (see 3.3.2.2 to 3.3.2.4);
- b) localization needs (see 3.3.2.5);
- c) the publication platform, i.e. common or diverse (see 4.2).

NOTE 3 These factors could impact the need for variation in website policies and standards.

NOTE 4 There are significant benefits in imposing a degree of consistency through the use of website policies and standards.

Benefits can include:

- alignment of web properties with centrally mandated strategy and requirements;
- economies of scale;
- ease of management;
- ease of measurement;
- speed of publication;
- facilitated content sharing across websites;
- dissemination of best practice amongst web editors and other contributors;
- ability to empower web editors but retain central control.

3.3.2.2 Multiple websites of similar type

Where an organization has multiple websites that serve similar purposes and handle similar content types, a single set of website policies and standards should be mandated across all websites.

NOTE 1 The most effective and resource-efficient method of achieving consistency and increasing compliance is through shared code. The most powerful way of sharing code is through organization-wide use of a CMS with centrally managed templates.

NOTE 2 An organization with a diverse publication platform can attain some of these efficiencies through the use of shared assets, template modules and code modules.

3.3.2.3 Multiple websites of different type

Where an organization has multiple websites that are highly diverse in terms of brand purpose or functionality, website policies and standards should stipulate permitted variations from the core standards, where needed.

NOTE Website types that could necessitate specific website policies and standards include:

- intranet;
- extranet;
- e-commerce;
- corporate;
- product;
- event;
- joint venture;

- promotional;
- websites owned by product resellers and distributors;
- websites optimized for particular platforms (e.g. mobile devices);
- external channels (e.g. social media sites and portals).

3.3.2.4 Third-party applications

NOTE Variation in website policies and standards may also be required when using third-party applications (e.g. CMSs, shopping cart functionality, external data feeds) to deliver some or all of a website's content and functionality. It might not be possible to customize third-party applications to meet all aspects of an organization's website policies and standards. Compromises might have to be made in areas such as brand and visual standards and target level of accessibility.

The organization should evaluate the impact of any trade-offs between functionality and compliance when selecting third-party applications.

3.3.2.5 International website(s)/localization

Website policies and standards should be set and managed centrally and should define localization variations, where needed.

There should be channels for local editor input into the ongoing refinement of the organization's website policies and standards (see 5.3).

NOTE 1 Variation in website policies and standards might be required at a local level to ensure a website meets local audience needs and fulfils the legal obligations of the jurisdictions in which it will operate.

NOTE 2 The balance struck between levels of central and local control is likely to reflect the degree of centralization within the organization as a whole.

In planning for localization variation, the following factors should be considered:

- a) language:
 - 1) different character sets;
 - 2) major linguistic differences (e.g. languages that read from right to left);
 - 3) text expansion (e.g. some languages have longer average word and/or sentence lengths than others);
 - 4) differences in syntax and language structure, particularly for system-generated messages (e.g. different pluralization of terms).
- b) culture:
 - 1) a brand which is perceived differently in different markets;

- 2) local cultural sensitivities;
 - 3) local conventions.
- c) legal requirements:
 - 1) local laws, regulations and legislation that could apply to an organization's website.
 - d) infrastructure:
 - 1) infrastructure/resource differences (e.g. the speed of the internet connection available to the target audience might impact standards set for maximum web page download time);
 - 2) differences in target platform (e.g. the mobile web is becoming an increasingly popular platform in many countries).

3.4 Auditing and collating existing material

Website policies and standards should be considered within the context of an organization's wider corporate governance and should be consistent with the organization's core policies and values.

Before defining new website policies and standards, the organization should audit and review all their existing website policies and standards, together with any other documentation relating to other communications channels, and should capture any that have relevance to the website(s).

NOTE 1 The review of documentation relating to other communications channels will reinforce consistent communications, for example:

- brand policies and standards;
- advertising policies and standards;
- policies and standards for printed documentation;
- house style guides;
- external policies and standards (e.g. accessibility and legal).

When assessing the applicability of website policies and standards from offline channels, the dynamics and constraints of different types of media should be taken into account.

NOTE 2 For example, presentation standards for printed documentation might not be suitable for the web; however, "tone of voice" standards might be suitable for both channels.

The collated material should be adapted and interpreted to develop website policies and standards. Any gaps should be identified and addressed.

3.5 Gathering user requirements

User requirements for certain website policies (e.g. usability) should be gathered from the target audience.

NOTE Requirements may be solicited directly (e.g. from surveys and user testing) or indirectly (e.g. from the analysis of visitor statistics and usage patterns on existing or related websites).

3.6 Stakeholder consultation and management

Stakeholders in the organization's website(s) should be identified. The key stakeholders should be consulted during the development of website policies and standards to obtain their inputs and requirements.

Consultation should be as broad as possible to draw on a wide range of skill and knowledge areas, including information architecture, design, brand, technical,

usability, legal, accessibility, country and content expertise.

Where the website design process runs in parallel with the initial website policies and standards definition phases, those involved in the design process should comprise a key stakeholder group. The design should both feed into the website policies and standards and be measured against them.

NOTE 1 It might be appropriate to bring in external experts on key areas, for example on accessibility, usability or localization. Benefits of using external expertise include:

- access to industry best practice;
- aids internal buy-in and speeds up consensus.

The consultation should involve stakeholders from all levels of the corporate ladder, as shown in Table 4. Where possible, a high-level "sponsor" or "champion" for the website policies and standards should be instated.

Table 4 – Scope of consultation

Document	Stakeholder consultation
Website policies	Set at a senior level with guidance from key subject matter experts
Website standards	Set by a team of web experts with input from key organizational stakeholders

In managing the consultation process, the organization should ensure that there is effective communication between all stakeholders throughout the project.

The organization should identify a person or team to own the website policies and standards, both during the initial definition process and the ongoing management.

NOTE 2 Stakeholder management methodologies can help to support this process, by clarifying key stakeholder roles and responsibilities.

An example of such a methodology is the RACI model. This splits project tasks into four types of responsibility which are then mapped to different roles in the project: responsible, accountable, consulted and informed, which make up the acronym RACI.

NOTE 3 The organization might wish to document the consultation and decision-making process so they have a record of the requirements, values, principles and expertise that have informed the policies and standards.

3.7 Definition and documentation

3.7.1 General

Website policies and standards should be defined for all aspects of an organization's website(s). These should include both organizationally specific website policies and standards (e.g. brand and editorial) and those mandated by external agencies, such as governments and official standards bodies (e.g. legal regulations, accessibility standards).

Website policies and standards should be defined in accordance with Annex A.

In parallel, the organization should document the components of their website governance structure and process. This should include the formal mechanisms by which the website policies and standards should be defined, managed, communicated and updated and how compliance with the standards should be monitored and measured.

Website governance policy should be defined in accordance with Annex B.

3.7.2 Documentation process

Once the website policies and standards have been defined, they should be documented as a set of point-specific documents covering each of the key areas of online compliance (see Annex A).

NOTE 1 Website policies may be documented alongside their related standards rather than produced as stand-alone documents. This has the advantage of ensuring that each set of standards is presented within the context of its website policy mandate, which can increase understanding and buy-in.

NOTE 2 Documentation can also form part of the sign-off process, as it can help to identify and remove areas of ambiguity or gaps in the standards.

Website policies and standards should be comprehensive and should include:

- guidance for as wide a range of situations as possible;
- instructions and use cases.

NOTE 3 Advice on drafting guidance and instructions includes the following:

- avoid ambiguity – present specific requirements rather than preferences;
- describe correct and incorrect implementation – “Dos and Don’ts” lists can be useful;
- include diagrams and screenshots, where appropriate;
- communicate the benefits and rationale behind website policies and standards – this can be helpful in getting editor buy-in and also act as a coaching mechanism;
- consider the users of the documentation and ensure the content is appropriate for their anticipated level of web and technical expertise.

3.7.3 Presentation formats

The organization should make their website policies and standards available in one or more of the following digital formats:

- online resource (typically hosted on an organization's intranet or extranet);
- context sensitive help within a CMS or compliance monitoring tool;
- downloadable document (typically a PDF), available from a centrally maintained online location.

NOTE 1 An organization might consider supplying their website policies and standards in more than one format to make them easier to reference in different contexts. However, this would need to be weighed against the additional management overheads of keeping multiple versions synchronized.

NOTE 2 It is rarely advisable to publish website policies and standards as printed and bound documents. Printed documents are subject to problems with distribution and version control. They are also relatively expensive to produce and update.

The advantages of digital over print formats include:

- easy and low-cost to update and maintain;
- centralized distribution facilitates version control;
- self-service;
- searchable.

3.7.4 Documentation architecture

The documentation architecture should differentiate documents by contributor roles so that contributors are directed to documents relevant to them.

NOTE For example, documents can be differentiated as:

- website creation standards – typically aimed at the development team which builds the website;
- website population/maintenance standards – used by the editorial team which publishes content on an ongoing basis;
- executive overview, outlining the general principles of an organization's website policies and standards – useful as a reference tool, especially for senior management.

3.8 Cross-validation

Website policies and standards should be cross-validated against the live/completed website(s) before they are published.

NOTE 1 Website design and implementation is an iterative process and the finished website can vary significantly from the initial blueprint.

Where differences between the website and the website policies and standards are identified, either:

- the website policies and standards should be amended to align them with the website; or
- the website should be amended so that it conforms to the website policies and standards.

NOTE 2 Website policies and standards will be undermined from the outset if the documentation and the website are not fully aligned.

3.9 Stakeholder sign-off

Stakeholder sign-off should be obtained for the completed website policies and standards.

NOTE 1 Stakeholder sign-off may be closely linked with the website design sign-off process.

NOTE 2 Successful sign-off will be dependent on a well-managed stakeholder consultation process (see 3.6). Key factors influencing sign-off are:

- stakeholder communication and engagement throughout the mid-part of the definition project;
- communication about website policies and standards to senior management to obtain their buy-in.

Website policies and standards should be reviewed and updated on a continuing basis to meet changing needs (see 5.4). All subsequent changes should be subject to the organization's approvals process and should receive official sign-off.



4 Implementing website policies and standards

4.1 General

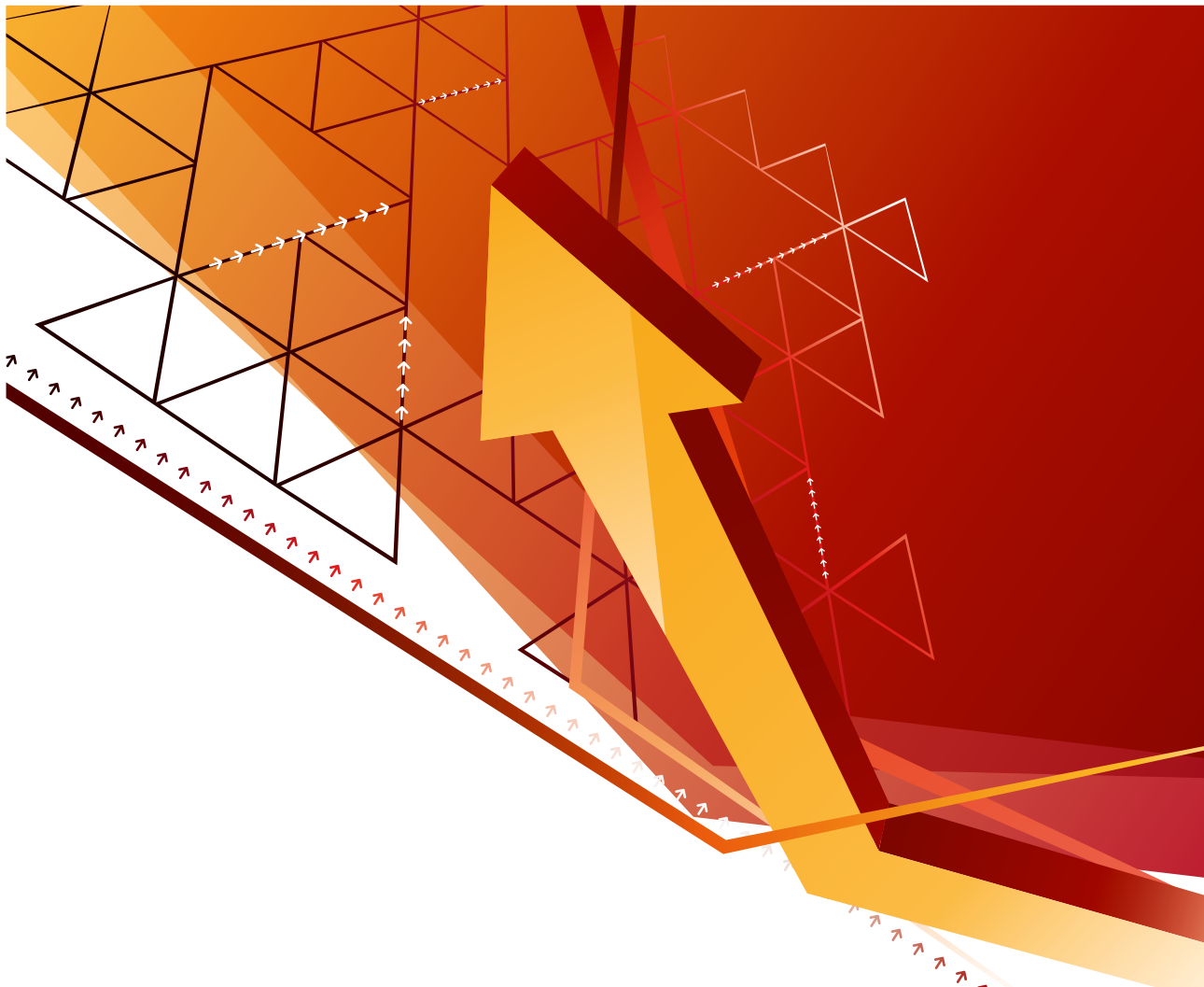
Once defined, website policies and standards should be applied to the website(s).

Where the definition and documentation process is running in parallel with a website upgrade or redesign, the individual standards should be implemented via website templates and within the build and population of new websites.

Where new website policies and standards are developed independently of a major website development, the organization should phase in the new requirements accompanied by training and education of contributors.

NOTE Adopting a phased rollout – starting with one, or a small group of key websites – allows the organization to pilot the new or updated website templates alongside their supporting website policies and standards. The organization can then:

- demonstrate the benefits of the new website policies and standards to get buy-in from website owners and editors;
- test the effectiveness of the website policies and standards and identify gaps and shortcomings;
- provide a flagship deployment as a useful reference for editors;
- gain valuable lessons to assist the future roll-out process.



4.2 Impact of the publication platform

NOTE The organization's publication platform will affect the implementation of website policies and standards (see Table 5). It can be seen that the use of a common publication platform leads to a much higher level of standards compliance and overall economies of scale in the long term.

Table 5 – Impact of the publication platform

	Common publication platform	Diverse publication platform
Description	Provision of a centrally managed CMS across all or most websites. This will typically include associated web services and technical platforms.	Website owners have responsibility for their own publication mechanism. This could result in a variety of technical platforms being used.
Template deployment	Key templates are centrally defined and updated and used globally.	Any templates supplied will need to be adapted for the local publication mechanism. This process might be required for each and every website in a multi-platform web presence.
Standards compliance	Some standards can be embedded within the system set-up, ensuring that a basic level of compliance is met by default. Some CMSs are able to support compliance with certain types of standards via automated warnings and error messages at the point of data entry. Some applications will also provide integrated compliance testing tools, such as HTML and accessibility validators, or interface with more sophisticated compliance monitoring tools.	It is up to the website owner to determine the means of implementing individual website policies and standards in relation to their specific publication platform. This can be impacted by the capabilities and constraints of the local platform and by the expertise of the website owner or agency.
Cost implications	Major central cost, economies of scale. Central budget and high degree of centralized governance required.	Where budgets are administered at a local level, cost is spread across the group, often with little transparency. Costs for a diverse publication platform typically end up being higher on aggregate.

4.3 Determining the degree of template lock-down

The balance of lock-down and flexibility within website templates should be determined.

The organization should lock down standards within common web page elements (such as headers, footers and navigation) by embedding them within website templates and CSS, wherever possible.

NOTE 1 Most publication mechanisms will allow parts of the template and code to be locked down. These areas can then only be modified by “super-users”. Embedding standards reduces the knowledge burden for editors and makes websites less vulnerable to the types of errors that can be introduced during site updates.

When determining the degree of lock-down imposed on the remaining areas of the web page, the following factors should be taken into consideration:

- a high degree of lock-down can restrict flexibility, which is likely to reduce editorial engagement with the system;
- control mechanisms, such as heavily fielded data input systems, can be cumbersome to use and slow the publication workflow;
- simple templates are easier to monitor for compliance with standards (see 5.5.3), whether this is done manually or by using automated tools;
- rigid systems are vulnerable in the face of change and can be costly to re-engineer;
- system set-up can become lengthy and expensive;
- localization requires a degree of flexibility.

NOTE 2 On an international website, the degree of template lock-down relates to the issues of balancing control and empowerment when setting the scope of localization (see 3.3.2.5).

NOTE 3 Within a diverse publication platform, the level of lock-down can vary significantly between systems, as websites are hosted on a variety of platforms and their build is under local control.

Monitoring processes should be in place to catch compliance violations that slip past the quality assurance undertaken at the point of data entry (see 5.5).

NOTE 4 Whatever the degree of lock-down imposed, there will be areas where flexibility is both necessary and desirable. Here the organization is reliant upon the editors to ensure compliance with the website standards, which makes them vulnerable to human error.

4.4 Communication, training and support

The website policies and standards should be communicated throughout the organization to target groups and to external agencies, as required.

Contributors should be supplied with information about how to implement the website standards and verify compliance, along with information about the rationale behind them and the benefits they deliver.

NOTE 1 One of the key challenges of operating a multi-editor website is educating and supporting editors, especially when the management of their website or website area represents only a small part of their job function. Obtaining buy-in from web editors and their managers is critical.

NOTE 2 It is equally necessary to sell website policies and standards up the corporate ladder to ensure that senior management understands their importance in enabling the organization to achieve its online goals.

Communication, training and support on website policies and standards should be provided to contributors on an ongoing basis (see 5.3).



5 Managing website policies and standards

5.1 General

Website policies and standards should be managed in accordance with the website governance policy (see B.6).

NOTE The key processes are outlined in 5.2 to 5.6.

5.2 Ownership and responsibility

Website policies and standards should be centrally owned and managed.

NOTE 1 Responsibility for informing the central standards owner of changes and updates may be devolved to different parts of the organization that have expertise in those areas. For example, an organization's legal team could be responsible for informing the standards owner of any new laws, regulations and legislation that could require a change in website standards.

This responsibility should include:

- authorization and communication of new website policies and standards;
- the establishment of a formal approvals process and criteria for website standards exceptions;
- top-level responsibility for ensuring all website policy and standards targets are met, along with the authority to achieve this.

NOTE 2 In the case of a large website or multi-site web presence, the organization may subdivide this role by territory (e.g. by website type or region) or by standards type (e.g. brand, legal or editorial standards).

5.3 Ongoing communication, training and support

Training in the application of website policies and standards should be provided to all contributors including third-party agencies (see 4.4). Training needs should be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Regular refresher or upgrade training should be provided, as needed. An effective dialogue between editors and the standards owners should be maintained.

NOTE Some effective tools for providing training and support include:

- a dedicated intranet, which can include resources, guidance, feedback mechanisms and news;
- wikis, blogs, forums, newsletters and other community communication tools;

- ongoing workshops and training;
- formation of regional contributor groups for mutual support;
- access to dedicated expert support;
- access to automated compliance validation and performance measurement tools;
- a forum for communicating trends and championing development to decision makers and budget holders.

5.4 Reviewing and updating

The organization should ensure that all website policies and standards resources are kept current and any changes are communicated effectively.

The website policies and standards themselves should be reviewed on a regular basis and updated if appropriate.

NOTE 1 It is important to recognize that website policies and standards are never static and will need to evolve in line with changing internal and external needs. Website policies tend to change less frequently than website standards as they are concerned with top-level principles and are tied to other areas of organizational policy and governance.

NOTE 2 Drivers for updating website policies and standards could include:

- to take advantage of new web technologies or trends;
- to reflect changing legal requirements;
- to incorporate new content or functional requirements;
- to incorporate findings from user behaviour analysis;
- to align with changing organizational requirements;
- to incorporate feedback from the website contributors, owners and users;
- to manage terminology for the organization and to reflect changes in terms as they occur (e.g. an approved term could become obsolete once a product is retired).

The effectiveness of the website standards training and communication process should also be periodically reviewed.

NOTE 3 Performance can be measured by:

- direct feedback from managers, editors and contributors, possibly via surveys or informal interviews;

- quantitative information provided by automated compliance testing tools (see 5.5.4.3);
- metrics for usage of any website policies and standards resources.

These inputs can be fed back into training campaigns and help to improve editor support (see 5.3).

5.5 Monitoring

5.5.1 General

Website policies and standards should be monitored on an ongoing basis to:

- ensure that they are consistently implemented and maintained throughout the website's life cycle;
- identify any shortcomings and gaps in the specifications;
- provide data to enable an organization to benchmark performance against their original online goals.

Where an organization outsources the management of its website, target levels of website standards compliance should be stipulated in the service level agreement (SLA). The organization should verify that these targets are being met.

NOTE An organization that does not monitor its websites for compliance incurs the following risks:

- inability to objectively measure the effectiveness of its website policies and standards;
- degradation of user experience;
- brand dilution;
- inconsistent messaging;
- damage to reputation;
- legal liability and litigation costs;
- wasted investment;
- erosion of website integrity;
- propagation of errors throughout the website(s).

NOTE If errors are left unchecked on one website, there is a high risk that they will be copied to other websites in the group by editors referring to live sites for guidance, amplifying the consequences of the initial error.

5.5.2 User behaviour monitoring

The live website(s) should be monitored to ensure that the website standards are delivering the optimum user experience.

NOTE Analysis of visitor logs can provide important data about the usability and accessibility of a site and how well the information is structured (e.g. number of incomplete processes, web pages with little visitor traffic). Feedback can also be gathered more directly

through surveys and user testing. Guidance on selecting appropriate methods for user surveys and user testing is provided in ISO/TR 16982.

5.5.3 Designing for measurability

NOTE Monitoring and measuring website compliance presents certain logistical challenges due to the scale and fluidity of websites and the number of website standards types involved. However, the organization can greatly facilitate the process by taking these logistics into account during the initial website planning and design phase. It is far easier to spot errors and inconsistencies in a well-structured environment, where the standards are clearly specified and understood.

The organization should:

- evaluate the extent to which repeating components of the website can be standardized;
- embed top-level website standards at the template and CSS level;

NOTE Embedded website standards will only need to be validated once and will not need to be checked on every web page.

- minimize the number of variations in website standards.

NOTE Variations add complexity to the monitoring process.



5.5.4 Selecting an appropriate level and type of monitoring

5.5.4.1 General

The level and type of monitoring appropriate to a particular organization will need to be determined by a cost-benefit analysis, which should take into account the following factors:

- importance of the online channel to an organization;
- legal requirements and potential legal liability (including liability for third party content, e.g. content posted by users on discussion forums on the organization's website) (see **A.6.1**);
- attitude to risk;
- importance an organization attributes to its online brand and reputation;
- budget.

For optimum results, the organization should employ a combination of manual and automated monitoring.

5.5.4.2 Manual monitoring

The organization should establish formal processes for the approval of all content published to its website(s).

NOTE 1 This may be through:

- editorial QA at point of data-entry, including use of systematic processes (e.g. checklists) for data approval;
- auditing of key web pages and assets for "soft" website standards (such as brand messaging or image suitability);
- auditing of content for freshness, accuracy and subject matter;
- auditing content for potential legal liability.

NOTE 2 It is not possible to provide a comprehensive audit of all quality and compliance issues using manual monitoring processes, unless the scale of the website(s) is very small. An organization can be open to unacceptable risk if it uses manual monitoring alone to audit all areas of website standards implementation.

Limitations of manual monitoring include:

- human error;
- time and resource constraints;
- metrics produced by sampling are not comprehensive or directly comparable over time.

5.5.4.3 Automated monitoring

The organization should automate the ongoing monitoring of their website standards, wherever possible.

NOTE 1 A variety of tools exist to perform automated monitoring of several different types of website

standards on a systematic basis. The types of tool available range from free single-page checkers, to commercially available enterprise solutions.

NOTE 2 The benefits of automated monitoring solutions include:

- reduced risk through automated error detection and global visibility of quality and compliance vulnerabilities across web properties;
- increased customer conversions through reduced errors and improved user experience;
- ability to process high volumes of data – full compliance monitoring can require hundreds of thousands of checks on a regular basis;
- increased operational efficiency and reduced cost through the automation of time-intensive manual quality assurance processes;
- data currency – the high speed and low overheads of running automated monitoring sessions facilitate regular site audits;
- data accuracy and comparability – in contrast to "sampling" methodologies, automated monitoring produces comprehensive data sets that are directly comparable over time, enabling changes in performance to be accurately tracked and measured.

5.5.5 Pre- and post-publication monitoring

The organization should monitor the live versions of their websites in addition to sites in staging or production environments.

NOTE 1 While an effective CMS and governance framework are both essential for securing compliance, the practicalities of a highly dynamic, multi-editor publication environment mean that compliance errors inevitably make it through to the live website(s).

Typical issues which impact the compliance of live websites include:

- human error;
- time and resource constraints, resulting in inbuilt quality control mechanisms (e.g. spelling and accessibility checkers) being bypassed by editors at the point of publication;
- discrepancies between staging/production environments and the live website environment;
- integration of multi-sourced content which has been subject to differing levels of quality assurance;
- gaps and inconsistencies in governance process between different websites and platforms.

NOTE 2 In addition to helping to secure compliance, post-publication monitoring enables an organization to collect common compliance metrics across all its websites, to facilitate benchmarking and transparency.

5.6 KPIs and data analysis

5.6.1 General

NOTE While the primary purpose of website monitoring is the identification and remediation of errors, compliance data can provide a range of valuable insights that can help the organization optimize their website governance and operational performance.

Data analysis should be used to:

- track KPIs;
- refine website policies, website standards and governance processes;
- identify problem areas/demonstrate success;
- target resources more effectively;
- gain insights to inform future strategy and planning;
- communicate strategic issues and requirements to website stakeholders.

5.6.2 Establishing KPIs

The organization should establish KPIs to enable compliance with the website policies and standards to be objectively benchmarked and evaluated across their website(s).

KPIs should fulfil specific reporting needs and should:

- be simple and easy to understand;
- be measurable;
- be aligned with the organization's strategy;
- have an identified purpose and audience;
- be repeatable over time.

NOTE KPIs can help to simplify the compliance management by rolling up multiple website policy and standards requirements into easily communicable top-level goals and uniting stakeholders around them. KPIs can be especially powerful in driving change when they are formally specified as part of the objectives for performance review.

5.6.3 Communicating results

Results should be presented in a format designed to meet the needs of the various website stakeholders. Key findings should be summarized and highlighted and data presented in a range of easily intelligible formats (e.g. charts, graphs and league tables).

5.6.4 Distribution formats

The organization should take into account the varying requirements of stakeholders who might require different data insights.

NOTE For example, editors are likely to require granular information pertaining to their specific

areas of responsibility, whereas managers are likely to require information about top-level trends relevant to their tactical or strategic focus. This could necessitate providing the information in different formats.

The organization should consider:

- appropriate level of detail;
- distribution format (e.g. online dashboard, PDF, intranet, wiki, email newsletter, training);
- frequency of reporting (e.g. daily, weekly, quarterly).



Annex A (normative)

Key areas of website policies and standards

COMMENTARY ON Annex A

This Annex provides recommendations on defining the key areas of website policies and standards. The recommendations are generic and are not specific to any platform, technology or online channel. It can be used as a framework to inform an organization's website policies and standards definition process.

Examples of the types of standards an organization needs to consider defining have been included to illustrate each area. Specific recommendations for the content of each type of website standard have not been provided as these will be specific to each organization's requirements.

The list of areas of website policies and standards is not exhaustive.

Not all areas of website policies and standards listed will be applicable to every organization.

A.1 Accessibility

A.1.1 Policy

An organization's accessibility policy should at a minimum include:

- a statement of the *Web content accessibility guidelines* (WCAG) [3] conformance level the organization aims to achieve (A/AA/AAA);
- a statement of the organization's accessibility aims with regards to the function of their website(s) and their target audiences.

The organization should prepare a summary of their accessibility policy in the form of an accessibility statement, which should be made publicly available on their website(s). The statement should include guidance on how disabled people can customize their experience of the website to suit their individual requirements.

NOTE 1 The World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C's) WCAG [3] takes the form of checkpoints grouped into three levels of accessibility, corresponding to conformance levels: A, AA or AAA.

NOTE 2 BS 8878 provides recommendations on the specification of an accessibility policy, together with example policy statements.

NOTE 3 In many countries the organization has a legal duty to ensure that websites meet minimum accessibility requirements, for example:

- UK Equality Act 2010 [2];

(From October 2010 this act replaces the legal duties relevant to web accessibility presently found in the DDA, in England, Scotland and Wales.)

- UK Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 [1];
(Applied across the UK until October 2010. From October 2010 the legal duties relevant to web accessibility apply in Northern Ireland only.)
- US Rehabilitation Act, Section 508 [4].

A.1.2 Standards

The organization should define standards for accessibility that meet the WCAG [3] conformance level mandated in the organization's accessibility policy (see A.1.1).

NOTE Adherence to WCAG [3] alone does not guarantee the quality of the user experience and the organization needs to be aware that a wider body of accessibility best practice exists, including:

- BS 8878, *Web accessibility – Code of practice*
This standard provides guidance on selecting approaches to accessibility appropriate to an organization's web products and target audiences.
- BS EN ISO 9241-171, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Guidance on software accessibility*
This standard provides ergonomics guidance and specifications for the design of accessible software for use at work, in the home, in education and in public places. It covers issues associated with designing accessible software for people with the widest range of physical, sensory and cognitive abilities.

A.2 Brand and template

A.2.1 Policy

Brand and template policy should state which brands are to be represented on which websites and how much flexibility or interpretation there should be in their application.

NOTE An introduction to the organization's brand identity and their online objectives may be included. Examples of brand objectives include:

- to strengthen the corporate identity;
- to convey organizational values (e.g. innovation, trust, confidence);
- to build brand awareness and preference;

- to build relationships with customers.

This contextual information is useful for:

- communicating the rationale for the standards and gaining editor buy-in;
- providing a means for anyone working on the website to evaluate whether their contribution is meeting the organization's top-level online objectives.

A.2.2 Standards

A.2.2.1 Logos

The organization should define standards for the treatment of logos on their website(s).

NOTE 1 Logos are a key component of any organization's brand and most organizations have strict rules governing their use and treatment in offline media.

NOTE 2 Examples of logo standards include:

- permitted and prohibited uses;
- visual treatment (e.g. size, colour, placement and alignment);
- minimum amount of clear space between the logo and any other visual element;
- rules for the pairing of logos with other logos or straplines (e.g. those of products or subsidiaries).

A.2.2.2 Colour palette

The organization should define a web-specific colour palette.

Where the colour palette is based on an organization's existing off-line brand palette, it should be optimized for the web and the colours should be adapted to meet accessibility requirements for colour contrast.

The difference in gamma setting across different access platforms and devices (e.g. colours appear lighter on Macs than on PCs) should be taken into account. The colour palette should be tested to ensure acceptable results across all target platforms and devices.

Appropriate image asset production processes should be in place to remove gamma chunk information from portable network graphic (PNG) images.

NOTE 1 Direct translations of print colour values (CMYK, Pantone) to web colour values (RGB, HEX) could produce colours that render unattractively on screen, so the brand palette might need to be adapted for the web.

NOTE 2 The existing brand palette might need to be supplemented with additional colours for web-specific interface components.

A.2.2.3 Typefaces

A.2.2.3.1 General

The organization should define standards for the use of typefaces.

A.2.2.3.2 Licensing

NOTE 1 Some fonts are not standard on all operating systems and therefore an end user licence would be required to use them.

The organization should ensure there is a process in place for ensuring compliance with typeface end user licensing agreements (EULAs). Care should be taken to ensure that the chosen technical solution for font rendering is permitted by the EULA.

NOTE 2 Many EULAs now make specific references to font-rendering technologies (e.g. font face embedding, graphical text or runtime base solutions).

A.2.2.3.3 HTML text

Where a specific font is expected to be available (via font face embedding, proprietary technology or native operation systems support), the organization should either:

- a) specify mechanisms to support fallback to appropriate typography where the user's system does not support the organization's chosen typefaces; or
- b) specify that a generally available font is used to ensure maximum consistency across platforms.

NOTE 1 Examples of generally available fonts include Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana and Georgia and more generically, serif or sans serif.

Designers should consider how typefaces render on screen, particularly at smaller sizes and ensure the specified font is readable at all target display resolutions.

NOTE 2 A font that is readable in print might not render well within a limited number of pixels on a screen.

A.2.2.3.4 Graphical text

The organization should define standards for the use of typefaces in website graphics.

NOTE 1 These are usually defined to be consistent with the organization's offline communication materials.

The organization should define when it is acceptable to use graphical text instead of HTML text.

NOTE 2 Text graphics can adversely impact accessibility, web page download times and search engine optimization (SEO).

A.2.2.4 Imagery

The organization should define standards for the use of all types of imagery, including photography, iconography, graphs, charts and illustrations.

NOTE 1 These are usually aligned with other communications channels.

NOTE 2 Examples of image standards include:

- permitted and prohibited uses;
- requirements for images to express particular brand values, concepts or types of subject matter;
- stylistic rules regarding colour, cropping, shape, dimension, placement and alignment;
- maximum file download size.

A.2.2.5 Templates and components

When defining template standards, the organization should provide guidance on the following issues:

- how to identify the appropriate template for a particular function;
- areas of flexibility in template application;
- permitted exceptions to template use;
- appropriate implementation of templates;
- mandatory and optional templates (especially within a diverse publication platform).

The organization should define standards for each repeating component of the website.

NOTE 1 Examples of repeating components include:

- web page headers and footers;
- navigation systems;
- content modules (e.g. data tables, forms and feature boxes).

NOTE 2 Examples of component standards include:

- appearance and presentation;
- position on the web page;
- appropriate content types;
- content length;
- maximum number of usages per web page;
- linking rules;
- permitted and prohibited uses;
- mandated components.

NOTE 3 Within a common publication platform many of the template and component standards can be fixed within the CMS and therefore do not require extra effort on the part of the editors to comply with them.

A.2.2.6 Layout grids

The organization should define layout grids for each type of web page (e.g. homepages, inner pages and pop-up windows).

NOTE 1 Examples of layout grid standards include:

- dimensions of each area of the web page;
- whether each area is fixed-width or flexible;
- any mandated content types for each area.

NOTE 2 Layout grid standards are aimed primarily at those developing rather than maintaining websites.

A.2.2.7 Structure and organization of content

The organization should define standards for the structure and organization of content.

NOTE Examples of content structure and organization standards include:

- rules for the hierarchical organization of information;
- specified location for different content types, both within the website and within the web page;
- rules relating to SEO standards (see A.7.2);
- how to handle content which relates to more than one website or section of a website, for example:
 - use of shared content modules in a CMS;
 - physical duplication of content;
 - section interlinking.

A.2.2.8 Navigation

The organization should define standards for navigation components (e.g. side menus, breadcrumb trails and pull-down menus).

NOTE Examples of navigation standards include:

- the number of permitted levels of navigation;
- naming conventions for navigation elements;
- the devices to be used to convey location within the website;
- rules specifying any instances where links need to open in a new browser window;
- required navigation elements (e.g. a requirement that there needs to be a link to the homepage on every web page).

If an organization has a multi-site web presence, they should define an inter-site navigation strategy. The organization should consider:

- whether it needs to be possible to navigate from every site to every other site or just to key hub sites;
- whether links to other group sites needs to be differentiated from external links in the website interface;

- whether it needs to be possible to use a website's search facility to find content on other sites belonging to the organization.

A.2.2.9 Metadata

The organization should define standards for metadata usage to ensure consistency in the structuring and content of metadata.

NOTE 1 *Meta tags are a series of tags that are located in the "head" section of a web page that are used to classify the contents of the web page and to provide instructions to user agents (such as browsers or CMSs) on the correct handling of content.*

NOTE 2 *Within a CMS, many metadata fields can be automatically populated by the system, reducing the need for editorial input.*

A.3 Co-branding

A.3.1 Policy

Where an organization is involved in co-branded or partnership online initiatives, the organization should define a co-branding policy. The co-branding policy should include:

- the degree of policy adherence required;
- domain name requirements;
- maintenance responsibilities.

A.3.2 Standards

NOTE *Examples of co-branding standards include:*

- *presentation of the organization's brand and logo;*
- *linking relationship to the organization's main website.*

A.4 Domain name and URL structure

A.4.1 Policy

The organization should define a policy to ensure a systematic approach to naming domains, files and URLs across their website(s).

Domain names should be managed centrally, often alongside trademarks and other intellectual property. The policy should document the processes for registering and managing domain names.

A.4.2 Standards

A.4.2.1 Domain name structure

The organization should define standards for the structuring of website domain names.

NOTE 1 *Examples of domain name standards include:*

- *the use of domain name variants and aliases;*
- *the use of generic top-level domains (gTLDs) (e.g. .biz, .info, .org);*
- *the use of country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) (e.g. Germany [de], France [fr]);*
- *the use of sub-domains.*

NOTE 2 *Applying a systematic approach to domain names has several advantages:*

- *it aids predictability and memorability for users typing domain names directly into the browser address bar;*
- *it aids navigation – systematically structured sub-domains can provide information to users about the hierarchy of websites within a multi-site web presence;*
- *it can increase a website's search engine ranking as part of an organization's SEO strategy (see A.7);*
- *a well-structured domain name policy will facilitate the capture of metrics at group, division, or organizational level;*
- *it can ease potentially contentious choices of domain names for new sites;*
- *it can reduce costs by reducing the number of domains registered and maintained;*
- *it can reduce and help manage the risks associated with external parties making inappropriate use of an organization's brands and domains (e.g. cybersquatting, domain name warehousing).*

A.4.2.2 File names and URLs

The organization should define standards for the naming of files, folders and assets to ensure a logical and consistent approach. File names/URLs should be platform independent for portability.

NOTE 1 *There are several benefits to the adoption of naming standards including:*

- *the creation of consistent, predictable and user-friendly URLs and path names;*
- *aids the internal organization and management of files;*
- *SEO (see A.7);*
- *reduction of errors (such as broken links).*

NOTE 2 *Examples of file name and URL standards include:*

- *standardizing use of text case – failure to do this can lead to the duplication of web pages within case-sensitive publication platforms;*
- *use of non-alphanumeric characters – these can be unpredictably interpreted in certain environments;*
- *use of keywords within file and directory names to*

support the organization's SEO strategy (see A.7);

- use of hyphens or underscores to separate keywords;
- ensuring that all keywords used reflect the language of the website.

The organization should define standards on the use of URLs, marketing URLs and third-party URL shorteners (e.g. bit.ly).

NOTE 3 An organization often requires alternative URLs for marketing purposes. These URLs, sometimes known as "marketing" or "promotional" URLs, are mapped to underlying natural URLs on the website.

A.5 Editorial and copywriting

A.5.1 Policy

The editorial and copywriting policy should define how the organization wants to communicate online. It should cover, at a minimum, the use of a consistent tone of voice and style and any necessary variation in addressing different audience groups.

A.5.2 Standards

A.5.2.1 Editorial style

The organization should define standards for editorial content. Where an organization has an existing house style guide, this should be included or adapted for website editors.

NOTE 1 Generic style guides are also freely available on the web.

NOTE 2 Examples of editorial style standards include:

- tone and style of content (e.g. level of formality, use of active/passive voice);
- use of sentence case or title case and other forms of capitalization;
- conventions for spelling, grammar and punctuation;
- conventions for the formatting of dates and times, taking into account the range of international conventions and the need to be unambiguous in all contexts;
- web page structure, including sentence and paragraph length, use of bullet lists and frequent use of subheadings.

The organization should define the techniques to be used for writing and repurposing content for the web.

A.5.2.2 Terminology

The organization should define and collate all corporate terminology across the organization. Terminology should be stored in a shared central

repository to enable all web content creators to use approved and accurate terms and deliver consistent branding.

NOTE Examples of terminology standards include:

- key brand words and phrases and how to use them;
- use of boilerplate text for marketing purposes;
- forbidden words and phrases;
- use of abbreviations or other alternative formats;
- use of copyright or trademark symbols.

A.5.2.3 Text formatting

The appropriate HTML tags should be used to apply structural information to a web page, including paragraphs, bullet lists, headings and text emphasis.

NOTE 1 By implementing HTML tags, the semantic structure of a web page is available to any device or search engine accessing the web page, irrespective of presentation.

The presentation of a web page (styles, colours, positioning, etc.) should be controlled by CSS.

NOTE 2 CSS enables the separation of content from the way it is presented to users.

NOTE 3 Within a common publication platform, CSS may be centrally controlled for ease of management. Within a diverse publication platform, website owners may either link their sites directly to a centrally controlled CSS or use a pre-defined CSS for local hosting.

A.6 Legal

A.6.1 Policy

The legal policy should identify:

- a) the local, national and international regulations and legislation that are applicable to the organization's website;
- b) the legal information that needs to be considered and made available on its websites and the extent to which information needs to be adapted to local market jurisdictions.

NOTE 1 Legal requirements differ in different countries. Failure to comply can result in fines and damage to an organization's reputation. It is an organization's responsibility to ensure that their site is compliant with all applicable national and international laws, regulations and legislation.

Examples of legal issues that an organization might need to consider include:

- terms and conditions of use (including those relating to competitions or prizes and contracts with the user);

- advertising laws and regulations;
- defamation;
- data protection and privacy (including the extent to which the organization can use personal data collected);
- website accessibility (see A.1);
- requirements regarding clarity of language and terms used;
- provision of company information (certain jurisdictions require that an organization provides specific information about itself and contact details on its website);
- intellectual property (including in relation to the use of copyright material and trade marks);
- e-commerce terms and conditions of supply;
- potential liability of the organization for material posted on their website by third parties (e.g. on discussion forums) including for defamation and breach of copyright – such liability could depend on the extent to which the organization knew about the unlawful material being published;
- consumer protection laws and regulations.

This list is not exhaustive.

NOTE 2 Attention is drawn to the following laws and regulations on consumer protection:

- Provision of Services Regulations 2009 [5];
- Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002 [6];
- Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 [7];
- Companies (Trading Disclosures) Regulations 2008 [8];
- advertising laws and regulations including the Committee of Advertising Practice's code, the CAP Code [9].

This list is not exhaustive.

A.6.2 Standards

NOTE Examples of legal standards include:

- use and presentation of copyright statements;
- provision of contact information;
- legal information access required for general web pages and specific content types;
- use of localized or global legal information.

A.7 Search engine optimization (SEO)

A.7.1 Policy

Where an organization has invested in the development of a SEO strategy, they should define the scope of its deployment.

NOTE SEO is the practice of tailoring the content, code and structure of a website to boost its search engine ranking.

A.7.2 Standards

NOTE Examples of SEO standards include:

- the structure and content of web page titles and metadata;
- the naming of files (both image and code) in addition to directories (folders) (see A.4.2.2);
- the structure and content of web pages including:
 - correct use of semantically-appropriate html elements (such as headings);
 - internal and external links;
 - keyword formatting, density and positioning.
- linking strategies;
- managing search engine robot access to content;
- use of text and XML sitemaps.

A.8 Social media

A.8.1 Policy

Where an organization uses social media, they should define social media policy to provide their employees with guidance and to manage the risks involved.

The policy should distinguish between different types of social media spaces including:

- spaces provided and managed by the organization;
- externally provided spaces over which the organization might have limited control;
- social media content imported into the organization's website from external sources.

NOTE Increasingly, employees are required to post user-generated content on behalf of organizations. This can be either within an organization's website or within other social media/networking sites.

A.8.2 Standards

NOTE Examples of social media standards include:

- appropriate online behaviour and etiquette;
- prohibited topics;
- approval procedures for an individual to post content on behalf of the organization;

- creation of avatars or backgrounds for use on social media sites, including whether the company's logo may be incorporated into the design;
- legal restrictions;
- account naming and management.

A.9 Usability

NOTE Usability (as defined in 2.21) is the extent to which a website can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use.

A.9.1 Policy

A usability policy should outline the benefits of usability and user-centred design and define any requirement for user testing during the website life cycle. The organization should define a target set of browsers, versions, platforms and access devices through which the website should be usable.

NOTE Guidance and requirements on usability are given in several parts of BS EN ISO 9241 including general dialogue principles (Part 110), web interface usability (Part 151) and human centred design processes (Part 210).

A.9.2 Standards

A.9.2.1 General

Key areas that the organization should consider when defining usability standards are set out in A.9.2.2 to A.9.2.6.

NOTE 1 There is a high degree of overlap between usability standards and the other types of standards outlined in this Annex.

NOTE 2 User testing provides vital feedback on the efficacy of usability standards.

A.9.2.2 Consistency

NOTE Consistency is a key usability principle.

The organization should ensure the visual, behavioural, structural and editorial consistency of all components of their website(s).

A.9.2.3 Labelling

NOTE 1 Labelling, particularly of navigation links, has a significant impact on website usability.

Labelling should be consistent and user-focused.

NOTE 2 Example labelling standards include:

- use of clear and simple language for navigation labels;

- use of terms a user would employ to describe the content rather than internal terminology.

A.9.2.4 Visual presentation

The organization should optimize the viewing experience at the target screen resolution.

NOTE Examples of visual presentation standards include:

- users do not have to scroll horizontally to view content;
- the most important elements of a web page are visible without vertical scrolling;
- there is consistent presentation of common elements (e.g. logo, search box, link to homepage).

A.9.2.5 Functionality

The organization should define standards on the usability and accessibility of all interactive areas of the website including:

- internal and external hyperlinks;
- user generated content;
- rich media (e.g. Flash, PDFs, video, Ajax);
- navigation systems;
- forms;
- pop-up windows;
- frames.

A.9.2.6 User support

The organization should define standards for the provision of user support documentation and tools including:

- site maps;
- help:
 - on-page;
 - context-sensitive.
- frequently asked questions (FAQs);
- support contact details.

User support standards should be defined for the following common components:

- accessibility features (e.g. skip navigation);
- data input forms (e.g. registration forms, booking forms, contact forms);
- applications (e.g. search, tag clouds, interactive tools).

Annex B (normative)

Website governance policy

NOTE A well-defined website governance framework will enable the organization to adapt with agility to changes in business requirements or regulations and to quickly deploy new websites or online channels.

B.1 General

The organization should document the components of their website governance in the form of a website governance policy document.

The website governance policy should include the key components given in B.2 to B.6.

B.2 Scope and mandate

The organization should define:

- the scope of the website governance remit and how it relates to and integrates with other areas of governance within the organization;
- a mandate with high-level endorsement.

B.3 Roles and responsibilities

The organization should define:

- key website stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities;
- structure of reporting and accountability and identification of top-level decision-makers;
- performance targets.

B.4 Process

Process issues that should be considered include:

- change management;
- management of non-compliant websites or assets;
- approvals process for shared assets;
- approvals process for third-party components/applications;
- crisis management, including technical crises (e.g. external hack, disaster recovery) as well as organizational crises (e.g. brand/PR issues);
- working with external agencies and suppliers;

- creating new websites;
- website archiving and records retention.

NOTE Complex processes, such as website creation, may usefully be documented as standalone policies.

B.5 Website strategy

Strategy issues that should be considered include:

- statement of the strategic goals of the website and top-level requirements and constraints;
- risk management strategy, including top-level regulatory requirements;
- content strategy, including content sharing, publication frequency, content housekeeping;
- content related policies and compliance management;
- agreed common metrics and KPIs.

B.6 Compliance management

Compliance management issues that should be considered include:

- ownership and responsibility of website policies and standards;
- definition process for website policies and standards;
- communication, training and support of website policies and standards;
- reviewing and updating of website policies and standards;
- monitoring and measurement of standards compliance;
- compliance KPIs and data analysis.



Annex C (informative)

Useful sources of information

C.1 Accessibility

BS 8878:2010, *Web accessibility – Code of practice*

NOTE BS 8878 replaces PAS 78, Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites.

BS EN ISO 9241-171, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 171: Guidance on software accessibility*

ISO 14289 (draft), *Document management applications – Electronic document file format enhancement for accessibility*

ISO/IEC 24786 (draft), *Information technology – User interfaces – Accessible user interface for accessibility settings*

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative
www.w3.org/WAI

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php

Accessible Rich Internet Applications (WAI-ARIA) 1.0
www.w3.org/TR/wai-aria

AbilityNet
www.abilitynet.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Blind
www.rnib.org.uk

eAccessibility, part of the European Commission's e-Inclusion initiative
www.ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/policy/accessibility/index_en.htm

US Section 508 law for federal agencies
www.access-board.gov/sec508/standards.htm

C.2 Automated code validation tools

W3C Markup Validation Service
http://validator.w3.org

W3C CSS Validation Service
http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator

W3C Feed Validation Service
http://validator.w3.org/feed

C.3 Code standards

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
www.w3.org

The Web Standards Project (WaSP)
www.webstandards.org

C.4 Governance

BS ISO/IEC 38500, *Corporate governance of information technology*

C.5 Legal: International privacy law

UK
www.ico.gov.uk

Europe
www.ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/privacy/index_en.htm

US
www.ftc.gov/privacy

Canada
www.privcom.gc.ca

Australia
www.privacy.gov.au

New Zealand
www.privacy.org.nz

C.6 Multimedia design

BS EN ISO 14915-1, *Software ergonomics for multimedia user interfaces – Part 1: Design principles and framework*

BS EN ISO 14915-2, *Software ergonomics for multimedia user interfaces – Part 2: Multimedia navigation and control*

BS EN ISO 14915-3, *Software ergonomics for multimedia user interfaces – Part 3: Media selection and combination*

ISO/IEC 18035, *Information technology – Icon symbols and functions for controlling multimedia software applications*

C.7 Security

This is an area where there are a lot of standards. Visit the BSI website to view the range of available standards: www.bsigroup.com

C.8 Usability

UsabilityNet
www.usabilitynet.org

ISO TR 18529, *Ergonomics of human system interaction – Human-centred lifecycle process descriptions*

ISO/TR 16982, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Usability methods supporting human-centred design*

BS EN ISO 9241-110, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 110: Dialogue principles*

BS EN ISO 9241-151, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 151: Guidance on World Wide Web user interfaces*

BS EN ISO 9241-210, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 210: Human-centred design for interactive systems* (replaces BS EN ISO 13407)

C.9 User help and documentation

BS ISO/IEC 18019, *Software and system engineering – Guidelines for the design and preparation of user documentation for application software*

C.10 Website engineering

BS ISO/IEC 23026, *Recommended practice for the internet – Web site engineering, web site management, and web site life cycle*

C.11 Website governance and management

BS ISO/IEC 38500, *Corporate governance of information technology*

BS 25777, *Information and communications technology continuity management – Code of practice*

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For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

Standards publications

BS 8878:2010, *Web accessibility – Code of practice*

BS 25777, *Information and communications technology continuity management – Code of practice*

BS EN ISO 9241-110, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 110: Dialogue principles*

BS EN ISO 9241-151, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 151: Guidance on World Wide Web user interfaces*

BS EN ISO 9241-171, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 171: Guidance on software accessibility*

BS EN ISO 9241-210, *Ergonomics of human-system interaction – Part 210: Human-centred design for interactive systems (replaces BS EN ISO 13407)*

BS EN ISO 14915-1, *Software ergonomics for multimedia user interfaces – Part 1: Design principles and framework*

BS EN ISO 14915-2, *Software ergonomics for multimedia user interfaces – Part 2: Multimedia navigation and control*

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Other publications

[1] GREAT BRITAIN. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995. London: The Stationery Office.

[2] GREAT BRITAIN. The Equality Act 2010. London: The Stationery Office. (Online publication: www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/pdf/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf)

NOTE It is not yet available in HTML or in hard copy.

[3] WEB CONTENT ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES WORKING GROUP. *Web content accessibility guidelines*. WCAG. World Wide Web Consortium. (Online publication: www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag.php)

[4] US. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (amended 1998) Section 508. Washington, DC., US Office of Personnel Management.

NOTE At the time of writing, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was currently under review and may be extended to certain groups of websites providing a “place of public accommodation”. It is not yet decided what the legal standards will be, but it is likely to be WCAG or Section 508.

[5] GREAT BRITAIN. The Provision of Services Regulations 2009. London: The Stationery Office.

[6] GREAT BRITAIN. The Electronic Commerce (EC Directive) Regulations 2002. London: The Stationery Office.

[7] GREAT BRITAIN. The Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000. London: The Stationery Office.

[8] GREAT BRITAIN. The Companies (Trading Disclosures) Regulations 2008. London: The Stationery Office.

[9] COMMITTEE OF ADVERTISING PRACTICE. *The UK code of non-broadcast advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing* (as administered by the Advertising Standards Authority). CAP Code. London, Committee of Advertising Practice: 2010.

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