



Technology Council

George Mason University

Response to State Web Site Standard

Adopted September 2003

This document provides the George Mason response to the Web Site Standard of the Commonwealth of Virginia. George Mason accepts the majority of the state standards for its web site, but it allows greater flexibility than the state standards in specific areas because of the special nature of the university environment.

For the purposes of this discussion, the George Mason University web site is defined to include the university's home page (the top-level web page) and every web site that links directly from the home page (second-level web sites) unless the site is not on a university server or the site is licensed from a vendor. It also includes all the web sites that are designed by George Mason electronic publications and the many sites that are developed using the university web templates.

George Mason University applies these standards to web sites defined in this way. All other units and offices of George Mason are encouraged to follow these standards wherever possible, with the possible exception of web sites that are funded externally or developed with external partners, research web sites, course web sites, and web sites of individual faculty, students, and organizations.

George Mason's response to the state standards follows.

(I) A. 1. Accessibility Standard – Level “A” Validation: A web site must follow the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Level A validation (Level 1 in Version 2 of the WAI guidelines.)

George Mason utilizes Section 508 web accessibility standards developed by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board).

(I) B. 1. Accessibility Standard – Browser Windows: The opening of new browser windows should only be done if the user is warned that a new window will open.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B2. Accessibility Standard – Equivalent Versions: Provide equivalent versions for multimedia elements that can be read aloud using assistive technology.

This is George Mason's standard unless the multimedia element is non-essential to content.

(I)B3. Accessibility Standard – Font Types: Fonts should be selected only from the following choices: Arial, Tahoma, and Verdana. Sans-serif should be used as the default backup for non-PC systems that may not have these fonts installed.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B4. Accessibility Standard – Font Size: Font sizes should be relative instead of absolute.

George Mason will adopt this standard when its core business applications can work with Netscape 7.0.

(I)B5. Accessibility Standard – Style Sheets: Use style sheets to control layout and presentation.

George Mason will adopt this standard when its core business applications can work with Netscape 7.0.

(I)B6. Accessibility Standard – Color Usage: Ensure that foreground and background color combinations provide sufficient contrast when viewed by someone having color deficits or when viewed on a black and white screen.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B7. Accessibility Standard – Text-Only Site: If an agency uses a text-only site, that link must be in the top row of the template.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B8. Accessibility Standard – Content Headers: Content headers should use the <H1>-<H6> hierarchy, although style sheets may be used to modify the size of that text.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B9. Accessibility Standard – Site Title: Provide appropriate descriptive and meta tags to allow both assistive technology and search engines to accurately access a site's title, description, and other information.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B10. Accessibility Standard – Frames: The use of frames within the template is prohibited.

This is George Mason's standard.

(I)B11. Accessibility Standard – Search Engine: If a search engine is used, it must be in the upper right of the template.

George Mason does not require an exact position for a search engine. It allows flexibility in positioning for university branding and design purposes.

(I)B12. Accessibility Standard – Navigation Trail: A “bread-crumbs” navigation aid must be used in the template in the designated spot.

This is George Mason’s standard though it requires flexibility in positioning for university branding and design purposes.

(I)B13. Accessibility Standard – Banner Image: If an agency creates its own banner for use in the template, it should be 50 pixels high and able to accommodate screen resolutions up to 1024 gracefully.

George Mason does not require a specific size for banner images.

(I)B14. Accessibility Standard – Content Sections: The two center content sections in the template may be merged into one large content section.

George Mason requires flexibility to organize content relative to the needs of the university.

(I)B15. Accessibility Standard – Number of Navigation Links: No more than eight main navigation links may be on the home page left navigation.

George Mason encourages limits on the use of links, but they may exceed 8.

(I)B16. Accessibility Standard – Agency Name: The agency name shall be visible in the header space when the page is printed.

George Mason requires the agency name to be visible when printing, but the location of the name is not specified.

(I)B17. Accessibility Standard – Contact Instructions

These are George Mason’s standards for contact information standards as long as the specific contact information is public and available (e.g. not all offices have fax numbers).

(I)B18. Accessibility Standard – Page Footer

This is the standard for page footers on George Mason’s home page.

(I)B19. Accessibility Standard – Web Policy

This is the George Mason standard for web policies on its home page. Other George Mason University web sites link back to this page which will direct users to the university web policy.

(I)B20. Accessibility Standard – Exceptions.

Not applicable.

(II)A.1. Template Standard

If a template is used, George Mason requires the use of its own templates and not that of the Commonwealth.

(III) George Mason does not require a link to MyVirginia portal.

The standards under III concern web portals and are not applicable.

As a final point, at George Mason University, the Information Technology Unit (ITU) is designated as the central repository of university offered online services and email. However, there is no central place for online forms. Rather, online forms exist in many different locations.