

Dawson College Digital Guidelines

These guidelines will be updated periodically based on current best practices.

Last updated: April 28, 2023

Preamble

The Dawson College Digital Guidelines are related to the Dawson College Communications Policy, as well as the Dawson College Branding Guidelines. Adherence to these guidelines is the joint responsibility of the Communications Office (CO) and Information Systems and Technology (IST).

Dawson College provides a variety of digital services to promote the College and facilitates communication and administration for students, employees and visitors.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to ensure all digital representations of Dawson College are managed in a professional manner and are properly resourced in terms of staffing, financing and technical infrastructure. The Dawson College website and social media channels represent the College to the public and ensuring a coherent visual identity and accessible user experience is fundamental to upholding the reputation of the College. Digital representations include any website with the dawsoncollege.qc.ca domain name; official social media accounts containing the Dawson name, logo or insignia; as well as mobile applications.

The College reserves the right to remove online content on the Dawson domain that does not abide by these guidelines.

Content Responsibilities

The Communications Office (CO) and Information Systems and Technology (IST) are the primary departments responsible for maintaining website design, content and architecture for any site under the dawsoncollege.qc.ca domain.

IST will grant and provide training to College department staff who need to regularly post and update web content relevant to their department or function. Accounts may only be used by the individual to whom access has been granted by the College.

All digital material is continuously scanned for accessibility compliance. Website content must comply with Quebec's [Standards for Website Accessibility](#) under the *Loi assurant l'exercice des droits des personnes handicapées en vue de leur intégration scolaire, professionnelle et sociale*.

The CO will provide advice to College department staff who wish to create a dedicated social media presence separate from the College's institutional social media accounts. However, as per Dawson's

Communications Policy, use of Dawson's name, logo and insignia first requires the approval of the Communications Coordinator.

Content Restrictions

Any web presence hosted on Dawson's servers or departmental social media account after April 2023 should display Dawson's current branding as per the Branding Guidelines. Departments wishing to develop their own visual identity are discouraged from creating custom brands, which dilute the overall image and reputation of the College.

Exceptions include:

- Research centres whereby funding or other agreements stipulate specific graphic and logo use guidelines. Nevertheless, the website domain name (if applicable) must be approved by IST and the CO and must contain the Dawson logo in a prominent location.
- Departments that already have an established brand and approved element being used prior to entry into force of these guidelines may keep their current branding for use with internal audiences. These departments are however encouraged to contact CO if they wish to update their visual identity to align with Dawson's Branding Guidelines.

All information posted on the College website must be current and accurate, so as not to be misleading. The CO and IST will meet with departments and content managers when questions are raised about the posting of misleading or unofficial content on the College's website.

All content posted to Dawson's digital platforms must conform to Article 9 of Dawson's Communications Policy and must not contain any prohibited content.

Please note that in all instances where the user is planning to collect money or process payments the IST and Finance Department or Foundation Office must be consulted. In addition, using the main Dawson websites to collect personal information (i.e. student and employee IDs, banking information) is prohibited.

Web Publishing Protocols

1. There are three 'tiers' of web content publishing at Dawson College:

- A. Web content that represents a core function of the College i.e. academic, service and administrative units
- B. Web content created in partnership with the College i.e. research partnerships, initiatives, research platforms
- C. Web content that exists externally to Dawson's servers and supports work of an organization external to the College or of a more individual nature by a faculty member i.e. personal website for a faculty member or website to support a specific course. Other examples include unions, staff associations or student clubs

Tier A: This is ultimately the responsibility of IST and the CO and all content must be published on the main content management system.

Tier B: If the content is hosted on dawsoncollege.qc.ca, this is ultimately the responsibility of IST and the CO. Whether or not the content should live on the main dawsoncollege.qc.ca domain is at the discretion of IST and the CO and each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

In cases where an exception has been granted and the website can live externally from the dawsoncollege.qc.ca domain, but still be hosted on Dawson's servers, IST and CO retains the authority over this content and technical maintenance, and IST must be given administrative access to the chosen platform.

Tier C: IST and the CO are not responsible for content that falls under this Tier. However, websites hosted outside Dawson's servers but which display the Dawson College logo, name and insignia have to adhere to branding guidelines and refrain from posting prohibited content as per Articles 5 and 9 of Dawson's Communications Policy.

Any website with the Dawson logo, name or insignia, whether hosted on the Dawson College domain (www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca) or Dawson's servers is subject to the College Communications Policy and needs to follow best practices and regulations regarding cybersecurity.

2. Expiration of content

Ensuring content that appears on the website remains timely and accurate affects the reputation of the College. The website should not be used or viewed as an information archive. In addition, the proliferation of multiple web pages over time can create a website that is cluttered and unmanageable. Stakeholders with **web pages that have not been updated or maintained in three years or more will be notified by the CO/IST that their page must be updated, deleted or archived.**

In line with best practice, departments are required to review content under their jurisdiction every 6-12 months for accuracy and timeliness. The CO reserve the right to remove content that is outdated or no longer relevant to Dawson College audiences. **Therefore, all website users should ensure they have a secondary copy of their web text, PDFs and images.** Requests from alumni to remove their work at any time must be respected in a timely manner.

3. Content hosted on external websites and servers

Content created by Dawson employees but hosted on external websites and servers created before April 2023 will continue to be accommodated to the extent that it is possible to do so within the parameters established by IST for ease, security and maintenance.

4. Request to migrate to Dawson domain

If you wish to move content from an external website to the dawsoncollege.qc.ca domain approval must be received from IST and CO.

5. Domain names

All content related to Dawson College activities or hosted on Dawson's servers should live on the dawsoncollege.qc.ca domain.

If your situation represents an exception that requires a domain outside of dawsoncollege.qc.ca, approval for its creation, technical support and financing must be received from the IST and the appropriate sector's Dean, if applicable.

6. Request for major changes to Dawsoncollege.qc.ca

There may be requests from time to time to change the architecture, visual design or to develop new features, sections and functionality on the website. Any structural changes must be discussed with IST and the CO well in advance (3-6 months) of implementation to determine whether to proceed with a major change to the site. Considerations or information to consider for such changes to the architecture include target audiences, reason for the request and analytics to support the request.

7. Requesting the creation of a microsite or web-based application

Ideally, most content created by Dawson employees should be housed within the main content management system. Some examples of situations that could require the creation of a separate microsite or web-based application include:

- A research centre consortium that involves external partners
- Research units from which the visual component is considered integral to the research-creation itself
- An initiative which requires processing payments (conferences, for example)
- Results of a particular class or program

Individuals who would like to create a microsite or web-based application should not begin the work before submitting a request to IST using the form available on **Omnivox** - > **Website Request Form**. Your request should include:

- Motivation behind the requested content
- Target audience
- Project summary + stakeholders
- Technical/user requirements
- Future maintenance (efforts and costs)
- Target end date of the project

Representatives from IST and CO meet regularly to evaluate such requests. A prospective timeline can then be developed. It should be kept in mind that development of applications outside of the day-to-day

needs of the College should be planned months in advance. If possible, use of external resources or suppliers should be considered, although implementation will ultimately remain under the management of IST.

Institutional Social Media Accounts

1. Creating an institutional social media account

If a program or unit wishes to create a dedicated social media presence with the display of Dawson's name, logo or insignia, permission must be obtained from the Communications Coordinator as per the Communications Policy. Social media accounts created prior to April 2023 shall be exempt from this requirement. Write to communications@dawsoncollege.qc.ca to request the creation of a new social media account.

With tens of thousands of followers, an analysis should be made whether or not the initiative might be better-served by Dawson's main social media channels.

The College has active presence on several social media platforms. Each of these platforms provides specific communications advantages linked to demographics, content type and following:

- LinkedIn: Biggest platform for Dawson in terms of following. Ideal platform for sharing senior staff appointments, recruitment, corporate announcements and connecting with alumni who self-identify in their profiles as former Dawson students.
- Twitter: Ideal platform for engaging with journalists, politicians and showing thought leadership.
- Facebook: Good platform for targeting with ads based on geolocation, interests and demographics. Also, a good platform for promoting events or creating groups around a certain initiative or area of interest.
- Instagram: Caters to a younger demographic (that of our students) and an ideal platform for promoting initiatives and events to our students.
- VIMEO: A video-hosting tool to house various materials for all College departments. Videos are then distributed via other communications channels.

If you still believe a dedicated social media account is required for your initiative, consider the following questions:

1. What are the goals?
2. What audience are you trying to reach?
3. What content will you be sharing? Which platform is the right fit?
4. How would this content work with Dawson's other official communications channels?
5. Does a similar social media presence already exist? If so, would a collaboration be better?
6. How often can you feed the account with content?
7. How can the Dawson brand be protected? Will moderation be necessary?
8. How long will the proposed account exist? What is the exit strategy?

Once these questions have been answered, the CO can provide the following elements:

- Suggestions for names, handles and hashtags

- Help set up the account
- Provide graphic materials and branding guidelines
- Provide content for the 'about' and other sections
- Offer suggestions on engagement and how to handle negative comments

External Linking

Linking to external sites from the dawsoncollege.qc.ca comes with responsibilities. For example:

- The audience should be informed of the name of the website and the purpose of the external link
- External linking should not pose any security risk to users to lose personal information, such as banking information
- You should not link to websites containing any prohibited content under Article 9 of the Dawson Communications Policy

Links to internal resources where the link is to an internal domain must not include circular references (i.e. links that redirect the user back to the same location from which they came).

Suffix names and creation of shortcuts

If you want to create a branded shortlink with a specific word (i.e. dawson.college/apply) to drive promotional traffic to the site, contact IST and the CO. Use of third-party shortlink generators such as bit.ly is discouraged.

QR Codes

If you require a QR code, contact IST for assistance. For security purposes, creating QR codes on your own should not be done using external applications due to the risk of fraudulent redirects.

Use of photography

Users of photographs (other than photos taken by the user themselves) on any digital platform must ensure compliance with the terms of use or copyrights, for example proper credit is given to the photographer. For stock photography, use of free platforms such as Unsplash is not permitted due to the risk of misuse or improper usage according to each individual photo license. The Communications Office has a subscription to iStock and a large bank of photographs. Please contact the Communications Office at communications@dawsoncollege.qc.ca for support in sourcing stock photography.