

Site content. Instructions for creating the content

This manual has been created as a guide for authors commissioned to write e-learning content for the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. They should use it to learn about working with and developing:

- the general characteristics of learning resources in site format;
- the structure of the site;
- the components of the site;
- the style guidelines; and,
- the formats in which materials should be provided.

The manual seeks to guide authors in their work, while also optimizing the creative process and subsequent production of each learning resource in this format. Authors should follow the instructions given in this manual as closely as possible, taking into account the recommendations for ensuring that the content is inclusive, respectful, non-discriminatory and non-sexist.

1. Structural features

The content created must conform to a particular structure. Textual learning resources for UOC courses are usually structured in different units, which we can simply call *sites content*. Each site is a standalone text of between 10 and 50 pages and is submitted individually.

Each site has the following structure: the table of contents and then the main body of text; it may also have other elements such as an introduction, a glossary, a bibliography or appendices.

2. Formal features

In UOC sites content, there are various ways to highlight the different degrees of importance of different parts the content.

You can use the following resources, adding indications to the document to help the editing team.

2.1. Hierarchies and bullets

The text must be well-structured. Long documents should be divided into sections to make them easier to read. The UOC's learning resources can have a maximum of four hierarchical section levels in each site; three appear in the table of contents and the fourth does not appear in the side menu:

1. Section title

1.1. Section title

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Title of section 1.1.1.1.

Make the section titles as short as possible (no more than about 20 words) for better adaptability to the different reading devices that students use.

Use lists with bullets to structure the information. The lists may have up to three levels of depth (more levels are not recommended as they make it more difficult to understand a classification).

Formally, lists are ordered as follows:

1. Sample paragraph to show what it looks like in a list.

- Sample paragraph to show what it looks like in a list.
 - Sample paragraph to show what it looks like in a list.

To indicate hierarchies in the text, always use Word's automatic bullets. You may choose to use numbers. The automatic hierarchization is number, followed by bullet and lastly empty bullet. If there are only two, then it is bullet followed by empty bullet.

Lists must have an introductory sentence from which the different items must follow on. It must be possible to read each of the items as the completion of initial sentence, each making a sentence that is easy to understand and syntactically well-constructed.

2.2. Content assimilation resources

The list below offers various resources you can use in sites content (there may be minor style variations depending on the template chosen). However, you are under no obligation to use the resources. As authors, it is important that you select resources that will help the student assimilate the content studies; you are the expert in the subject and are best equipped to decide which resources are best.

As a general rule, you should not use one resource inside another (a citation within an example, an image within a key idea, etc.); this is to ensure their optimal display on different devices.

With this in mind, we recommend that you use these resources in moderation, both in terms of how many you use and the length of each one.

We can distinguish between the main text, complementary content, and other important elements.

Main text

a. Key idea

This is a text that contains the key ideas for understanding the content. It is key information for the students, for example a definition.

They should be short texts, such as the highlights that we can find in newspaper articles (about 40 words). Bear in mind that excessive use of key ideas makes them less effective.

These texts may have a title. If so, the title should have a maximum of 5-7 words.

b. Bold

This is used to highlight key concepts or words. If you want to highlight entire sentences, then the most suitable resource may be the key idea.

Complementary text

Complementary texts are used to make the text more enjoyable to read, clarify difficult concepts, or connect the content to reality, using real-life cases or examples.

In a second reading, it should be possible to read through the site without losing the thread, despite ignoring the complementary texts.

The complementary texts can be slightly longer than the key ideas; the recommended length is about 100 words.

There are different types of complementary text explained below, but you don't have to stick to just these types. If you want to insert a pop-up with another title, you can. In this case, the titles would also have to be short (about 5-7 words). Here are some examples of complementary contents.

a. Pop-up

This is a text that expands the idea discussed in the main text. It can contain clarifications, supplementary notes, bibliographical references or brief notes. It is best to provide a brief title.

b. Example

Its purpose is to illustrate or exemplify an idea, concept, procedure or appraisal present in the body of the material.

c. Reflection

This is used to highlight an open-ended question that stimulates thought about the content. (This resource is only available in the C3a template: multisite home + sites with resource types)

Other important elements

a. Citation

A literal citation of a text from an author we want to highlight. It must state the source (author's name, bibliographical reference, etc.).

b. Code

Part of an executable code (or pseudocode) that we want to include in the material.

c. Figures: diagrams, images, illustrations, graphs and tables

You can insert graphs, images and tables directly in the text but you must also deliver them in a separate file. You must give each graph and image a number and a footer explaining its content. You must clearly indicate its location in the text.

If the images used are subject to copyright, as the author you will be solely responsible for obtaining the appropriate authorization. As a general rule, we cannot use images taken from the internet, for legal reasons, with the exception of logos or images available for public use. Such images can be used to refer to something, but in any case it is important that you clarify to us what concept you want to illustrate or why you are suggesting a figure so that we can propose alternatives.

We recommend inserting images or graphs to make the text easier to read and give the material a more dynamic appearance. However, you should not use images that do not add to the written content. They must be necessary and they must be justified in the explanation.

As a general rule, tables must be included with the data typed out (i.e. in editable format), not in image format.

d. Videos

Authors can add videos in the following cases:

- When they are videos covered by an open-access licence that allows this specific use.
- When they are videos subject to copyright and the copyright owners have been asked to authorize the specific use.
- When the video is used as a citation, for making an analysis or comment about it, or for making a critical judgement about the video as a whole.

e. Links to external sources

We advise against including links to external sources from the text; if you have to, then they should be kept to the bare minimum. In this case, make sure that they are URLs to documents that can be used (rights) and that they are permanent (the link will not change over time and will always work, with no need for the content to be reviewed, updated or edited).

3. Style

Try to use a direct style that will motivate students while also maintaining a register that is appropriate for university material. For reference purposes, you can apply the following general indications about style:

- a. To make students feel involved with the author, use the first person plural:
we will explore... , we can see... , as we noticed...
- b. Address students directly with imperative or modal verbs:
check... , make sure... , you can look up...
- c. Paragraphs should not be overly long (no more than 15 lines).
- d. It is not possible to refer to other materials used in the course, as each text must function as a standalone unit.
- e. The size of the sections should be balanced whenever possible (for example, try to avoid having one section with one page and another with 10 pages).
- f. Check whether all the references cited in the text are included in the module's bibliography.
- g. Avoid overuse of **bold type**, **italics** and **inverted commas**:
 - i. Use bold type sparingly, only for the **keywords**; if you have an entire paragraph in bold type, consider formatting it as a 'key idea' instead.

- ii. Use italics for **words from other languages** and for metalanguage.
- iii. Use inverted commas for **citations**.

4. Diversity and gender

The contents that appear in the sites content, whether they are in graphic or audiovisual format, must respect equality and dignity, guaranteeing representation of the diversity in our society. This entails using language that respects people, thus avoiding terms or expressions that could marginalize certain social groups.

When it comes to choosing examples, we should reproduce everyday situations with an equal representation of both sexes. Try to avoid disseminating messages that promote stereotypes, except in cases in which the example is actually intended to highlight a discriminatory situation.

Similarly, the images or visual resources provided (photographs, videos and illustrations) should ensure that, across any given hierarchical level, there is balanced representation in terms of gender, culture, religion, race, etc.

In bibliographical references, the same visibility should be given to both men and women. The full name should be given instead of simply the initial.

For example:

Cortés, Josepa; Pons, Vicent (1993). "La biblioteca jurídica de Jaume d'Eixarc (1479)". Saitabi (XLIII, pp. 181-194)

On the Language Service website, you will find basic advice on how to use gender-neutral language in your writing.

5. Submission format

The originals should be sent in .doc file format. The length of the originals should be appropriate for the nature of the commission, between 10 and 50 pages for each site, assuming 270 words (or 2,100 characters including spaces) per page. Another good rule of thumb as regards text length is to use the standard A4 page size, 1.5 line spacing and Verdana 10 or Arial 12 font.

When establishing minimum presentation requirements, a distinction should be made between newly created learning resources and revisions of existing sites (updates, errata, etc.).

5.1. Newly created site

a. Authors do not need to use a specific template when creating a new, non-multiformat resource. This means you can focus on the content and not worry about the text's format or final layout. Each case is treated differently. We recommend using delimiting tags like [Start key text] / [End key text] to identify the different elements, or any other unambiguous system that is easy to understand.

b. We prefer original documents written in Word or equivalent formats such as OpenOffice.

c. The figures can be embedded in the document or they can be submitted separately with references indicating their positions in the text.

d. We ask that authors put their names at the beginning of each original.

e. If there are mathematical formulas, it is best if they are created using MathType. Alternatively, you can use the formula editor in Word. Formulas must never be imported as images, made using other applications that cannot be exported to MML, or handwritten, as this would require rewriting them, increasing the margin of error.

f. Instructions, comments or general notes for the editors should be provided in a separate document.

The final format of a non-multiformat material will be WEB. It may be possible to optionally request a semi-automatic PDF based on the print CSS.

5.2. Revisions of existing sites

The first thing to consider is how extensive the update of the existing resource will be. If it is a correction of errors with very few changes, how the originals are submitted will be much less important than in the case of a complex content update.

When identifying the changes, we ask authors to use the latest version of the PDF (if it exists) as the basis for reference. It is important to make sure that the latest version is used.

When making changes to the PDF, we recommend using the tools provided by Acrobat (*Insert*, *Replace*, *Comment*). Very short indications, notes and amendments can be made directly in the PDF; changes in sentences, paragraphs and longer content should always be made in separate documents, referenced as "text 1", "text 2", for example.

Any other method that is easy to understand and consistent may be valid. What is important is to avoid ambiguity or contradictions.

For revisions with very few changes, it is practical to create a document (similar to an errata list) detailing the changes by page (URL) or by section, etc.

If the revisions apply to resources in more than one language, it is sufficient to submit the updates and changes in just one of the versions. The editors will transpose them to the other versions as required.

The updates must always be made to the latest version of the final documents; they must never be made to draft originals or any earlier version. However, if the author wishes to work on a Word document and decides to convert the latest version of the resource into Word (that is, converting from PDF to Word or copying the text directly from the website), the changes must be marked in the text (for example by enabling track changes).

When converting the final PDF into Word, sometimes the format and the images are changed with respect to the original PDF, but the authors are not required to fix it if this happens.

In highly complex revisions, to assess specific cases or whenever you consider it necessary, we recommend asking the contact person at the Library about your doubts.