Introduction

This document is meant to provide guidance for the creation and design of web pages, modules, components, and interface elements to ensure that Carleton’s public web sites maintain a consistent look, feel, and branding.

This document focuses on the visual design of web page elements. While it touches from time to time on technical, accessibility, and content-related matters, that is not its primary focus. Throughout this document you will see three major types of guidelines:

- **Requirements**: These must be followed in order to maintain basic branding consistency among public-facing Carleton web properties. There are few hard and fast rules, but these are critical. Indicated by Requirement

- **Recommendations**: A site or tool should follow most – if not all – recommendations. These are strongly recommended to ensure that a site remains visually unified with the rest of carleton.edu. If you wish to take a different path, it is best to consult with Web Services on your plans.

- **Suggestions**: These are “best practices”. In general you should see if these work for your project before trying another route. Indicated by Suggestion

Unless otherwise noted, all guidelines are recommendations.

Questions about this style guide?
Please contact Matt Ryan in the Carleton College Web Services Group: mryan@carleton.edu
Carleton Branding

**Requirement**

**Include the Carleton Logo on every page**

Include one of the following versions of the Carleton logo on every page.

- Carleton Word Mark
- Carleton Word Mark and Large C-Ray
- Carleton Word Mark C-Ray Left
- Carleton Word Mark Small Open-Ray

Other versions should be avoided as they do not render legibly on screen at small sizes.

**Render the logo in a consistent manner**

Logo must be rendered at at least 125 pixels in the largest dimension, in one of the following colors:

- \#0B5091 / rgb(11,80,145) on \#ffffff / rgb(255,255,255)
- \#ffffff / rgb(255,255,255) on a color or image sufficiently dark to support WCAG Level AA

Logo must be rendered at or near the top of the page, above the fold down to a 320x480 pixel screen.
Carleton Branding (Continued)

Requirement

Carleton branding guidelines must be followed throughout, per the Carleton Identity Style Guide

Note that the yellow and blue colors specified in the style guide for the web are not identical to those specified for print, because Pantone’s equivalents to the preferred PMS print swatches are not appealing on-screen colors. Use the web versions for web design and content.

Use the Bluebar navigation

Use the standard Carleton Website navigation (“Bluebar”) wherever technically possible to ensure visual and navigation consistency across Carleton web properties. This also satisfies the requirement above.

The latest version of the Bluebar and instructions for its use are at go.carleton.edu/bluebar.
Typography

**Requirement**

**Type should have sufficient visual contrast with background**
Type should be rendered with sufficient contrast to meet the WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard of 4.5:1. See Accessibility.

**Use Proxima Nova for body text**
Because it is used throughout Carleton’s standard web theme, this typeface powerfully communicates consistency and a unified feel among Carleton web properties. Carleton has a license for unlimited domains and page loads for Proxima Nova, and copies for web use are available from the Web Services Group.

**Use contrasting weight, size, and color for headings**
Use very light or extra bold text for headings, rather than “normal” weights. Use color as an additional method to help headings stand out. Note that Proxima Nova has a wide range of weights available; Thin, Light, Extrabold, and Black are preferred for major headings.

**Use no more than two typefaces**
If you wish to have a bit more pizazz than is available with just Proxima Nova, select a single contrasting typeface for headings and titles. This is an axis where considerable freedom is permitted within the style guidelines, so feel free to experiment with your display type. It is also acceptable to use Proxima Nova for display type.

**Use generous type size**
Body text should be a minimum of 17px. Captions and other secondary text may be smaller, but should generally be given a minimum size of 13px.
Typography (Continued)

Use generous line height for body text
Line-height should be a minimum of 1.5x body text size (e.g. 26px for 17px type) at desktop screen widths. Headings or other display type should be set with a tighter line-height, typically 1.1x-1.3x.

Left-align text
Avoid right-aligned and fully-justified type. Use centered type sparingly, and only within “boxed” content – never in body copy.

Strive for comfortably readable line-lengths
Responsive layouts should manage type size and column width to achieve between 40 (narrow settings) and 100 (wide settings) characters per line for body copy. A measure of 70 characters per line is ideal, but because column widths can vary greatly on different screens, prioritize readable text (see “Use generous type size”) over forcing an ideal width.

Use H1-H6 headings
Avoid bold and italicization on entire lines.

Avoid underlines on non-link text
Underlines should only be used to communicate links.
Color & Contrast

In general, Carleton Web style permits each subsite to use a distinct color palette. Consistency site-to-site is primarily provided by the layout and non-color styling of interface elements. This section provides guidance for developing a color palette that will coordinate nicely among the family of Carleton-branded subsites.

Use Carleton Web Blue (#0B5091) prominently on each page
Communicate a consistent Carleton branding by color as well as use of the logo by ensuring that a consistent blue color is used across Carleton’s web properties. Color palettes should harmonize with this color. The easiest way to prominently incorporate this color is to use the standard Carleton bluebar (see “Use the Bluebar navigation”)

Use a white (Preferred) or light page background
#ffffff/rgb(255,255,255) or no darker than #e6e6e6/rgb(238,238,238)

Use black or dark grey for body text
#333333 or rgb(51,51,51)

Use flat colors; avoid borders and shadows
Avoid gradients, patterns and textures on page elements. Limit use of borders and shadows.

Use a limited-hue color palette
Use no more than 4 distinct hues.
**Color & Contrast** (Continued)

**Use tints and shades for variation within the palette**

Tints (mixes of one of the main hues with the background color, typically white) and shades (darkened and saturated versions of the hue) are recommended for variation.

These are easily produced in a CSS preprocessor from a set of base colors. The following examples are in LESS:

```less
@tint: mix(@base_color, @background_color, 75%);
@shade: saturate(darken(@base_color), 10%), 10%);
```

**Use same palette for all pages in a subsite**

Maintain visual coherence within a subsite; avoid changing palette from page-to-page.

**Avoid placing a box around the primary page content**

Primary page content should sit directly on the page background. Secondary or callout content may be placed in a tinted box with generous padding (at least 1em/17px).

**Requirement**

**Use sufficient contrast between background colors and text colors**

See above guideline “Type should have sufficient visual contrast with background”
Color & Contrast (Continued)

Use “Maize and Blue” palette on key branded pages/sites

While various color palettes are used on office and department sites, use of this consistent palette by key institutional branding pages (e.g. top-level external audience pages) helps maintain an additional layer of brand consistency and design cohesion.

**“Maize and Blue” Palette**

- **Primary 1**: #3676b3 (rgb(54,118,179))
- **Primary 2**: #f3b61d (rgb(243,182,29))
- **Accent 1**: #923535 (rgb(146,53,53))
- **Accent 2**: #588745 (rgb(88,135,69))

If darker blue is needed, use #0b5091

Visually separate elements with different background hues

Elements with different background hues should be separated by margins or borders of the background color. Elements with different tints of the same hue may visually touch.
Links

Indicate textual links by underlining or by placing background-colored box around link
Avoid using plain text or just applying a color to the text itself.

Suggestion
Use Carleton Web Blue for links in running text
#0b5091 or rgb(11,80,145)

Layout

Requirement
Ensure all design is responsive
Ensure layouts, widgets, video, images, and other elements are fluidly responsive down to a 320px wide viewport.

Show site navigation where possible
Where there is room on screen, navigation elements should not be hidden behind a menu button, but should instead be available via direct links. On small screens, open navigation at the bottom of the page with a jump-to-menu link at the top of the page is a common pattern.

Use generous margins between layout elements
Avoid placing a box around the primary page content
See recommendation in Color & Contrast.

Suggestion
Use a the Carleton Standard Theme custom grid
The Carleton Standard Theme uses a custom grid. For more information about this grid, see go.carleton.edu/grid
Iconography

Use flat icons
Use “flat” icon treatments. Match icon colors to page color scheme. Prefer vector (e.g. font- or svg-based icons) for scalability, resolution independence, and ease of color change.

Use consistent icons
Visit go.carleton.edu/icons to see and download a standard set of icons in SVG and webfont formats. Use of these icons promotes consistency across sites and interfaces.

Ensure icons are accessible
Ensure that screen readers will read appropriate alternate text, or follow “Combine icons with textual labels.”

Combine icons with textual labels where possible
Avoid “mystery meat” navigation by combining icons with text rather than using icons alone. For example, if there is room, use both the hamburger icon and the word “menu”, a pencil with the word “edit”, or a plus with the word “add”. Extra bonus: if you do this you automatically fulfill “Ensure icons are accessible” above.
Forms

**Action buttons (e.g. form submissions)**
- Use rounded corners, approx. 0.33 em radius
- Use larger type than conventional body text
- Flat color background
- Use white text on a darker, more saturated color
- Use distinct background color states for hover, focus, active: use lightened & darkened variations for these states
- Use Accent Color 2 (#588745) background if using “Maize & Blue” palette
- Use descriptive labels where possible, e.g. “Sign Up” or “Send Request” instead of “Submit”

**Text inputs**
- No border-radius
- 1px “inset” border treatment
- Light neutral background colors
- Use light, colored backgrounds when field is active

**Labels**
- Place labels above input elements, aligned left
- Exception: for radio buttons or checkboxes, place labels to the right of the input, use fieldset & legend or aria-description or aria-describedby on a containing element.

**Required elements**
- Place a red asterisk to the right of the element label to indicate required fields; include a note explaining that required fields are indicated in this way

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Suggestion

Forms

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Required elements

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Navigation & tabs

Use background color to distinguish navigation elements
Navigation elements should use a clearly different background color from the page.

Highlight currently active navigation item with color & “pointer triangle”
Indicate current item by varying tint level of navigation background color and with a triangular “pointer” in the direction of the current item content.

Avoid border-radius on navigation/tab elements
Use square corners.

Requirement: Ensure all navigation elements are screen-reader and keyboard accessible
Navigation elements should be accessible. Use appropriate ARIA attributes, html5 elements (like <nav>), and test your navigation for keyboard and screen-reader use. Links in nested unordered lists are the preferred underlying markup.

Indicate links that will remove users from navigation context with “outside page” icon
If a set of navigation links includes any that will take the user to another context, include the “outside page” icon. Note that this icon is not necessary for inline links.
Widgets & Mini-Modules

Use Standard Theme “Mini-Module” design pattern
Example shown here.

Interactivity

Interfaces should be touch-, mouse- and keyboard-friendly

- Touch-friendly: Avoid using hover effects to indicate interactivity or to access functionality. Ensure interface elements are at least 16x16px.

- Mouse-friendly: Gesture-based interfaces should provide “point-and-click” methods rather than requiring users to perform gestures with a mouse or trackpad.

- Keyboard-friendly: All interactive elements should be accessible via keyboard-only methods.

Autoplaying elements should provide a way to be paused

Autoplay elements pose accessibility challenges. Avoid where unnecessary; where necessary, provide a way to pause.

Accessibility

Meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA

Follow progressive enhancement principles
Ensure interfaces are accessible and functional with javascript off.

Note: this section has only just been started. Please contact Matt Ryan for specific accessibility questions.
General Development Considerations

Consider that content, modules, widgets, etc. may be reused elsewhere on carleton.edu
Design and style elements to support the application via CSS of different color schemes, typographic treatments, and layouts. Avoid inline styles.

Implement print stylesheets
Implement a print stylesheet that strips away navigation and other page chrome and clutter.

Browser support
Browsers that represent at least 1% of visits to carleton.edu should be fully supported (e.g. all functionality works and looks consistent across browsers).

Browsers that represent less than 1% and more than 0.5% should receive basic support (e.g. visual differences acceptable, non-critical functionality may fall back to less-user-friendly but still functional interface).

Next-generation versions of fully supported browsers should be tested and supported to the same standards as their current versions.

For rapidly updating browsers like Chrome and Firefox, usage statistics should take into account visits spread across multiple versions. For example, if we have 0.5% visits from each of 6 versions of Firefox, consider that 3% (1 out of 25) visitors is visiting with one of these versions.

As of November 2016, browser support should be as follows:

**Fully supported**
- Internet Explorer 11
- Edge 12+
- Chrome 49+
- Safari 8+
- Firefox 38+
- iOS Safari 8+

**Basic support**
- Chrome 43-48
- Internet Explorer 9-10
- Safari 7
- Firefox 31-37
- iOS Safari 7
- Android Browser 4.4

This list should be reviewed and updated regularly.