Websites for Research Projects

If your research project requires a website about the project, there are several options to consider. Each option has advantages and disadvantages so you should consider both and choose the best option for your project.

For many research projects, the best option will be to create a WordPress site on the research network, but please ensure that you have considered what will work best for your project.

For all options, you should plan who will take responsibility for the website and maintain and update it during the period of the project. In addition, you will need to consider what will happen at the end of the project. For example, how long will the website need to remain available, should it remain public or be archived, will it need continued maintenance?

Remember that if your website will collect or store any personal data, you should discuss this with the Information Governance team before proceeding.

Contents

Option 1: CMS Page(s)

If you only need to provide basic information about your project with no requirement for a lot of pages or custom branding, we can create pages for you within the University's CMS.

Your pages will be part of the main University website and the web address will depend on their location within the structure of the site.

You will be restricted to a small number of pages and will not be able to use custom branding or page layouts.

CMS pages are quick and easy to set up and full training and support is available.

Option 2: WordPress Site

We have two WordPress networks available within the University: the internal network and the research network. WordPress is in effect a mini-CMS which allows you to create webpages and blog posts. Unless your site about your research project will need to include custom databases or host unusual file types, WordPress is often the best option.

Option 2a: Internal Network

Sites on this network can only be used by AU staff, so this option is only appropriate if you do not need to allow external users to contribute to the site. External users will still be able to view the site.

Sites will have web addresses beginning with wordpress.aber.ac.uk, e.g., https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/researchproject/. Custom domains or AU sub-domains cannot be used with this network.

You will be restricted to certain themes but will be able to choose colours and layouts.

View existing sites on the internal WordPress network

Option 2b: Research Network

Sites on this network can be edited by both AU staff and external users, so this option is ideal if you will need to allow external users to contribute to the site.

There are several options for web addresses on this network – you can:

- use the default address (e.g., https://wp-research.aber.ac.uk/researchproject/)

- use a custom domain (e.g., https://researchproject.org.uk/)

- use an AU sub-domain (e.g., https://researchproject.aber.ac.uk/)

If using a custom domain, you should purchase this via the University.

You can customize sites on this network by choosing themes, colours, fonts and layouts. You won't be able to install new themes or plugins yourself, but these can be requested and installed centrally.

View existing sites on the research WordPress network

WordPress Support

We can provide support in the following areas:

- Site creation and basic set up

- Liaison with Systems Team regarding domains or sub-domains

- Installation of themes

- Installation of plugins

- Assistance with bugs and issues with our networks

- General advice

While we would like to provide as much support as we can, there are some areas which are your responsibility:

- Choosing a theme for your site

- Adding and updating content on your site

- Laying out your pages

- Overall site design

- Assessing the accessibility of your site and providing an accessibility statement using our Accessibility Statement Toolkit.

- Ensuring you meet GDPR regulations if you collect any data

Option 3: Independent Site

If your requirements are not met by a WordPress site, you will need to create an independent site. This could be hosted internally or externally.

The website can be created and maintained by the project team if you have this expertise, or you will need to either use an external web development company or employ a web developer as part of your project.

Option 3a: Internally Hosted

An internally hosted website will be located on our AU servers. There is no charge for hosting unless you require a very large amount of storage space (more than 100GB).

Tools available on our servers include MySQL, PHP, Python etc. Please contact us is there is a specific tool you need, to make sure it is available.

Web addresses for internally hosted sites can either use your own domain (e.g., https://researchproject.org.uk/) or an AU sub-domain (e.g., https://researchproject.aber.ac.uk/). If using a custom domain, you should purchase this via the University.

Any software used on your internally hosted website must be kept up to date to ensure that it is secure and can continue to function when core systems and tools are upgraded (e.g. PHP).

We can help you if something goes wrong with the hosting, but we are not able to provide support for the development of the website. We may be able to provide limited support if you need to migrate data from elsewhere.

Option 3b: Externally Hosted

An externally hosted website will be located on servers belonging to a hosting company. You will have to pay for the hosting.

Web addresses for externally hosted sites must use your own domain. You should ideally purchase your domain via the University, or you may be able to purchase through your hosting company.

We will not be able to provide any support with externally hosted websites.

Comparison of Options

To assist with your decision making, please use this comparison table to assess the relative advantages and disadvantages of each option for your project.

	Support	Custom sub-domain	Custom domain	External editors	Custom branding & layout	Costs
1. CMS Page	Yes	No	No	No	No	None
2a. WordPress internal network	Yes	No	No	No	Limited	None
2b. WordPress research network	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Domain purchase (optional)
3a. Independent site (internally hosted)	Limited	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Domain purchase (optional) Hosting (if over 100GB storage required) Development
3b. Independent site (externally hosted)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Domain purchase Hosting Development

Procedures

Planning

When you are in the process of creating your data management plan and research project proposal, consider which option would work best for you from the options above and ensure that you have included any costs that the option will incur.

Costs may include:

- Salary cost for a Web Developer post

  - For general web development we'd suggest grade 6 on the AU salary scale.

  - For more specialised and complex web development we'd suggest grade 7 on the AU salary scale.

- Website design cost for your chosen Web Development company – you could approach a company in the planning phase for a rough quote for the estimated number of pages you will need.

- Domain costs

- Hosting costs

- Archival costs

- Long-term support costs

Getting Started

For options 1 to 3a, the first step is to contact us giving details of the website you wish to set up. You should contact us when you are at the application stage so that we can advise you early on in the process.

For option 3b, you should begin by contacting us to let us know that you are creating an externally hosted website and then either:

- purchase web hosting if you are going to build the website yourself

- employ a web developer, or contract a web development company to develop the site for you (remember to follow AU procurement rules)

Useful Links

Local Web Development Companies

Note: the inclusion of these links does not indicate that these companies have been vetted – please ensure that the company you choose is right for you and your project.

- Gwe Cambrian Web: https://cambrianweb.com/

- Coast Web Solutions: https://www.coastwebsolutions.co.uk/

Consultancy

Jisc Consultancy: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/consultancy