The digital communications footprint at YorkU grows exponentially.

As we grow our offerings our digital footprint grows even faster. New faculties create new programs, and new programs mean a wealth of social and research programs.
Establishing the depth of site content is essential to helping users find what they need.

Google scrapes sites from the homepage down. With 100s of sites within the YorkU network, deciding how frequently content is crawled and how it’s indexed is key.
As a builder or site manager, how you layout your site map, plan your site depth, and craft your URLs is essential.

This requires an understanding of our plan, best practices, and common URL naming nomenclature.
How we plan our site structure and depth has a direct impact on SEO.

The connection between pages impacts internal linking and link equity, while the depth of our content helps Google prioritize which pages to crawl and which pages to rank for high funnel, early stage search terms.
WHAT
YOU’LL LEARN

YORKU
You’ll learn the **best practices for URL naming** to improve search engine optimization, know how to **setup a new URL path**, and have **templates for common naming conventions** relevant to your department.
THE GOAL
STANDARDIZATION & OPTIMIZATION
Our primary goal is to **prioritize site content into depth levels & standardize naming nomenclature of URLs.** Future proofing our digital strategy with a clear site architecture and shared naming conventions.
Our secondary goal is to **make site URLs** and page placement so **easy to follow** that it can be guessed by experienced students & faculty, making the site easier to use for everyone.
Finally our goal will be the long term SEO health of our site. Ensuring that the right content is crawled at the right frequency, using the best possible search terms when we name pages and URL paths.
OUR PLAN
DEPTH & NEED
WHAT IS SITE DEPTH?

A website is a lot like your computer. Programs, files, and images, are housed within folders.

This PC > Documents > 2022 Grading > grads-tracking.xlsx

This concept is called site depth or folder depth, and the principles are similar within URL paths that house specialized content. Easy to navigate, easy to find.
When our site, or your desktop, looks like this, it creates inefficiencies, errors, and makes it hard to scan for the content you need to find. **This plan is designed to avoid this exact situation.**
WHAT IS A SITE MAP?

A site map is a navigational tool for search engines. Even Google can’t commit the resources needed to crawl and rank every file on the YorkU site every day.

*Site maps show the connection between files and prioritize how often these pages change.*

**Crawl priority** is the term given to these rankings and keeping crawl priority available for frequently updated courses, events, and news items is essential.
Like a fantasy novel family tree, site maps can get complicated, and often the **items at the top are less likely to change** than the items deeper within the framework. These priority and linking elements matter across silos and make connections.
DEFINING DEPTH
DEPTH LEVEL 1,2,3 & YOUR SITE

Your WordPress CMS will start with a homepage. This homepage is your sites depth starting depth level. Below this level all your content will cascade, with your menu items one level below, your sub menus two levels below, and speciality content at three levels and below.

YORKU.CA is the home to all the content we create, globally it’s depth level 0 for all content. Your site will start at level 1, level 2, or level 3 globally, but the same principles apply.
DEPTH
LEVEL ZERO
YorkU.ca represents **Level Zero.** It’s fixed and represents the university brand. Housing your site under this level has a direct impact on search traffic and discoverability of both your site and YorkU overall.
Below Level 0 - Every site at YorkU is designed on a 7x7 menu rule, with 7 major content categories and 7 subcategories to classify content types. Every site’s subsequent content is housed under this Level 0.
DEPTH
LEVEL ONE
LEVEL 1 - REPUTATION & GROWTH

Sites which are designed to directly raise the public profile of YorkU's **global reputation**.

Sites which help new students decide, select, and **apply for their education**. Programs like future students, faculties, and research.

The quality of the education we provide and the growth of departments are a first point of contact for most first time visitors. **These sites are placed at depth level 1.**
LEVEL 2 – KEY POINTS OF CONTACT

Sites which are formative in establishing, developing, and maintaining our relationship with our community.

These sites often shape student & faculty identity or represent the places they go to for support.

Financial Services, Ombudsman, The Department Of Biology, Vanier College, are all examples of key points of contact that design and shape experience.
LEVEL 2 – ESSENTIAL UPDATES

Multi-site tools that drive news and events, are always producing new content.

Site functionality that targets the deepest and most important content, faculty profiles, courses, and other aggregate systems.

Staff profiles are one of the most frequently searched items of micro content (along with courses) keeping these systems up to date is essential.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 0</th>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YorkU.ca</td>
<td>news</td>
<td>article-title*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faculty-department*</td>
<td>first-name-last-name*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faculty-department*</td>
<td>course-name-and-code*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>events</td>
<td>event-instance*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professor</td>
<td>professor-name*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tools are a special case at Level 2. These frequently updated pages are often situated higher than their parent folder.

Meaning their folder depth and final URL path differ from one another.
This is done to allow the databases that populate these structured content items to be **crawled more frequently** than their path would otherwise suggest.

YorkU IT can support you with these **systems**, should questions arise.
DEPTH
LEVEL THREE
LEVEL 3 – SPECIALIZED COMMUNITY

Sites which perform a specialized service for a highly specialized community.

Sites which perform a unique type of faculty support or that caters to a subsection of students.

Statistics Canada Research Data Centre, Economics Students' Association, and NATS-AID all support specialized communities and interests.
THE BASICS
WHAT & WHERE
WHAT IS A URL EXACTLY
A URL is the unique location of content within our servers.

By typing that information into a web browser or clicking a link, a user’s computer is sending a request to download the information contained at that exact address.
The protocol is how our site information is transferred to a site visitor’s computer. **YorkU uses HTTPS access** to ensure the security and privacy of this data transfer.
The domain name is the name & location of all the content we produce. **All new YorkU content sits within in this fully branded location.**
The top level domain indicates that our content comes from Canada. This top level domain helps to further differentiate our content from any other ‘York’ sites or brands that may exist globally.
While the first three elements are managed by IT services, the URL path(s) will be created within your content management system (CMS) and **indicate the exact location of the content you create.**
URL DESIGN IN A SENTENCE

A great URL path should be easy to say, easy to read, and be easy to remember.

Remember, we read URLs frequently, in messaging apps, emails, and in search results. We scan these URL names to make sure the content is the content we want. **Good URLs build trust.**
These rules may look complex at first, but remember these **paths** work exactly like the **folders on your computers desktop**.

- Only use lower case letters
- Use 2 to 3 keywords max
- Include important keywords
- Use hyphens to separate words
- Do not use special characters (**& # *')
- Do not use any punctuation (**! . ?')
- Ideally no more than 160 characters
- Must be unique to all other URLs
Internship Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the LA&PS Internship program, students must meet the following criteria at the time of application:

- Enrolled in full-time studies in a LA&PS Honours Undergraduate Program
  - Full-time refers to York University's definition:
    - at least 60% course load (at least 9 credits in each term) for undergraduate students
    - at least 40% course load (at least 6 credits in each term) for undergraduate students with a disability.

- Have completed a minimum of 54 credits

- Have a minimum of 9 required credits remaining to complete their Honours Degree by the start of the internship

- Able to return to York University for full-time studies (minimum 9 credits per term) after completion of the final work term

- Have met additional academic requirements and the grade point average (GPA) specific to their program of study (see below)

- Are able to work in Ontario (as a Canadian Citizen, permanent resident or Indigenous to Canada). International students see below.

- Have attended a mandatory LA&PS Internship Information Session. Register on Experience York website.

Above, the LA&PS site content related to internships and eligibility for those internships is found at the URL path:

https://www.yorku.ca/laps/internships/eligibility/
Internship Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the LAPPS Internship program, students must meet the following criteria at the time of application:

- Enrolled in full-time studies in a LAPPS Honours Undergraduate Program
  - Full-time refers to York University’s definition:
    - at least 60% course load (at least 9 credits in each term) for undergraduate programs
    - at least 40% course load (at least 6 credits in each term) for undergraduate students with a disability.
- Have completed a minimum of 54 credits
- Have a minimum of 9 required credits remaining to complete their Honours Degree by the end of the final work term
- Able to return to York University for full-time studies (minimum 9 credits per term) after completion of the final work term
- Have met additional academic requirements and the grade point average (GPA) specific to their program of study (see below):
  - Are able to work in Ontario (see a Canadian Citizen, permanent resident or Indigenous to Canada)
  - International students see below.
- Have attended a mandatory LAPPS Internship Information Session. Register on Experience York website.
At each stage of URL path naming, decisions have been made to meet our key rules about: keyword inclusion, path length, and character usage. **The results are an effective URL path.**
CREATING A URL
WHY & WHEN
SETTING UP NEW URLs
When we create a new page and before we publish it, we’ll need to craft a URL path name that meets these rules.
When creating a new draft page, a URL slug will be automatically generated based on the page’s location within the site and the page headline element.
We can change the name of this path or “slug” before publishing using the URL Slug option. 1 to 2 words, all lower-case, and easy to read is the goal.
The final URL path will be shown below the URL slug. It's important to note that once published, changing a URL is much harder – so getting it right is essential.
Here, for example, we might want to trim the word “stream” to make a more concise URL. Again, we can only change the URL slug of the page we’re editing, not the entire URL path.
LINKING CONTENT
SITE PLANNING
CROSS SITE LINKING
DOES THE PAGE ALREADY EXIST

In many cases, the content your users need might already exist within YorkU.

In these cases, instead of creating a new page and replicating content, you can link directly to the existing page from your site.

This process is called interlinking. Google uses these internal links to assign value to pages, with more links creating more value.
EXAMPLE ONE

FUNCTIONALITY
Instead of creating a new page and functionality to match, the Centre for Feminist Research **leverages a menu link from their home page** (depth 1) directly to the Make A Gift page complete with tracking functionality. Interlinking research to gift giving.
Founders College wants to provide its users access to mental health and well-being resources. **Instead of creating a new page, they’ve leverage their menu space to link directly** to LA&PS wellness directory.
CONSIDER COMMON RESOURCES

Surfacing content related to our **UN Goals**, research programs, facilities, campuses, as it relates to the users is not only good practice, but good for users as well.

Most new users don’t know all the resources available to them. Cross linking allows for your site to become a discovery engine for all the amazing things we do.
DEFINING
SHARED URL
AND SITE PATHS
YorkU is a big place, often with multiple sites that provide similar types of information.

This makes it possible to provide a framework for similar departments & services for how the most common URL paths should be named.
Exposure breeds wayfinding context, an additional benefit to our users.

Understanding that all research centres are housed under yorku.ca/research/centres/ gives additional context to a user when they discover or navigate to a new centre.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACULTIES, SCHOOLS &amp; DEPARTMENTS</th>
<th>PROGRAMS &amp; DEGREES</th>
<th>CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION &amp; FACILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational organizations within YorkU that teach a subject, discipline, or provide accredited training.</td>
<td>Educational tracks in a specific field of study, that often lead to a degree or certificate</td>
<td>Administrative organizations which help manage YorkU and its student population.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common features often include:**

FACULTIES, SCHOOLS & DEPARTMENTS:
- Undergraduate Programs
- Graduate Programs
- Research
- Faculty
- News
- Services
- Experiences
- Courses
- Certificates
- Academic Resources
- Contact

PROGRAMS & DEGREES:
- Course
- Requirements
- Contact
- Applications
- Faculty
- Research
- Alumni
- Publications
- Awards
- Bursaries

CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION & FACILITIES:
- Services
- Contact
- Applications
- Locations
- Accessibility
- News
- Workspaces
- Events
- FAQs
- Partners
- Resources
**RESEARCH CENTRES, LABS & SPECIAL PROJECTS**

Dedicated research projects that cross departments, have their own location, or are special projects outside of a faculty day-to-day.

**Common features often include:**

Research, Publications, Events, News, People, Services, Workshops, Awards, Administration, Projects, Faculties, etc.

**LIBRARIES**

Buildings or digital databases that collect, store, and provide access to information.

**Common features often include:**

Collections, Research, Locations, About, Staff, Support, Academic Support, Contact, Borrowing, Special Requests, Exhibitions, etc.

**CLUBS & STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS**

Activities, groups, and communities that enrich or improve campus life.

**Common features often include:**

Events, Leadership, Resources, Membership, Activities, Application, Requirements, etc.
In addition to this training you can download example URL paths for a range of site types that will showcase depth and URL naming best practices for a range of content types.
Planning your site depth and site architecture is an important first step in your success.

For questions and feedback please contact the Digital Experience Hub at cpadigit@yorku.ca
GOING DEEPER

KEY TERMS
KEY TERMINOLOGY
URL SLUG

The folder in a path or series of folders that represents the end of a URL path.

www.yorku.ca/slug/
www.yorku.ca/category/slug/

“We need to shorten the slug before we publish that new news article.”
URL PATH

The final address of a page including all previous content it’s nested within.

www.yorku.ca/department/program/courses/
www.yorku.ca/service/support/

“We’re trying to keep all our URL paths for all our library content under 6 layers of depth.”
SPECIAL CHARACTERS

Non-ascii and sentence punctuation, which are often used by browsers to perform special functions in a URL path.

!@#$%^&*()=+_.,`~

“URLs on the site should never contain special characters, so make sure to remove that ? In the slug before we publish the page.”
SITE MAP

A flow of all the content within a given site instance – also – a file that tells search engines what content we want to rank and how often it’s updated.

“We’re planning our site map to make sure it contains all our major content categories and key subcategories.”
SITE DEPTH

The amount of steps removed from the top level URL path yorku.ca

Each / after represents one additional layer of depth.

“Our course content needs to stay at 4 layers of site depth, following from our faculty, department, and program layers.”
ANCHOR LINKS

A process by which a link can be created to content within a page to a specific content section. Represented by a # in the URL path.

https://www.yorku.ca/foodservices/dining-directory/#schulich-dining

“The content we need is well managed by a different group, can we just anchor link to the relevant section.”
THANK YOU
CONTACT US WITH QUESTIONS!

If you have any additional feedback, questions or a thought crosses your mind, please contact; jmiller4@yorku.ca, akolade@yorku.ca or ryan@gosquabgo.com