

Ground rules and code of conduct for content providers

Introduction

The National Grid for Learning (NGfL) is both an **architecture** of educationally valuable content within the Internet, and a **programme** for the delivery of ICT infrastructure, services, support and training. Its purpose is to provide access to all sectors of education and lifelong learning. This appendix sets out the principles underlying the Grid, the ground rules for the acceptance of content, and a code of conduct for content providers. The Ground Rules and Code of Conduct apply to the main UK NGfL content hub which will be maintained and updated by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta). Separate conditions may apply to NGfL sites maintained by the UK home countries, and to the development of content funded from the New Opportunities Fund. The Ground Rules and Code of Conduct and Technical Annex will be revised in future editions in the light of developments.

Principles

The Grid should:

- Provide open and free access for all to a nucleus of central government, local government and public service content, linking to commercial content (for which there may be a charge), all of which contributes to the raising of standards of education and learning;
- Distinguish between content in such a way that users know what kind of material they are accessing at any time;
- Provide quality control and clear marking of content so that users understand what does and what does not carry endorsement as Grid content;
- Operate as a public/private partnership, as a way of giving the public sector access to private sector expertise and allowing economies of scale;
- Not unnecessarily duplicate areas of content which are already provided either as a public service or commercially, provided these are of good quality and are accessible free or at reasonable cost;
- Be accessible through as wide a range of technologies as possible (including types of computer and other devices, operating software and Internet tools);
- Provide no direct access to undesirable materials;
- Provide easily accessible guidance to users on ethical and legal issues and health and safety aspects of networked technologies;
- Operate against clearly articulated ground rules and a code of conduct (to be published and updated by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency - Becta).

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Ground rules for the acceptance of content

- 1 The content must have educational, learning or administrative purpose. Decisions on whether to include content in, or link to it from, the main NGfL hub will be made by Becta. In cases of doubt Becta will refer to relevant bodies, including Government Departments, for advice.
- 2 Content providers should make clear through which main category or categories of the Grid (the top level buttons for schools, further education, libraries, etc.) the content is intended to be linked. Final decisions will rest with Becta.
- 3 Content must not contain 'unsuitable' material (that is, material which is not suitable for Grid users because, for example, it is obscene, offensive, inaccurate, or encourages illegal or anti-social behaviour) or links to such material. Becta will have the right immediately to cut the link from the Grid to any sites or pages found to contain, or have direct links to, such material, and to report such material to the appropriate authorities.
- 4 Providers must develop their sites in conformity with the Becta NGfL design specification, which will evolve to reflect developments in the technologies used to access the Grid. The purpose of this is to strike a balance between technological advance in site design and tools on the one hand, and maximising accessibility to the user on the other.
- 5 Additional public sector (e.g. Government and agency) and public service (e.g. local authority) content should seek to complement and enhance what is already available on the Grid. Duplication of content coverage will be permitted where there is value added, or where competition is likely to lead to improvement in quality.
- 6 No content site should be named in such a way that users might confuse it with other sites already on the Grid. In cases of doubt content providers should refer to Becta.
- 7 Content must comply with the evolving design specifications agreed for the Grid ([see technical annex](#)), including the addition of a Grid home page return button (to function also a badge of NGfL quality), in addition to home site and top of page return buttons.
- 8 The NGfL-badged pages must contain no direct advertising of products or services, but links to pages with advertising may be included, provided the page includes the expression '(includes advertisement)' immediately adjacent to the link.
- 9 No direct selling will be permitted from any NGfL-badged page. Where there are links to order forms or other forms of transaction, the expression '(link to sales material)' should appear immediately adjacent to the link.

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- 10 Authority to use the Grid home page return button may be removed at any time by Becta, along with links from the Grid to the content site.
- 11 Sponsored material must not include sponsor-promotional material exceeding more than one quarter screen per item. Becta, in consultation with the Education Departments, will have the right to refuse or to disconnect sponsored material as necessary.
- 12 No content will be accepted unless it is accompanied by a satisfactorily completed Becta form which is returned via the Internet. Forms are available on the NGfL from the [Becta site](#).
- 13 Content made available by any institution, corporate body, or organisation will not be accepted without proper authorisation. In the case of a school this means the authorisation of the headteacher or chair of governors.

Code of Conduct for Content Providers

- 1 All providers of NGfL-linked sites for schools should have regard to the focus of the Grid on raising standards and ensure that, where appropriate, references and links to the Standards Site are in place.
- 2 All providers of NGfL-badged pages must undertake to maintain their material. Pages should indicate the date on which they were produced or revised.
- 3 Each NGfL-badged site or page will be the responsibility of the provider to maintain in an ethical and professional manner, having regard to the age of the intended users.
- 4 Content providers must undertake to co-operate fully with [GridWatch](#), to take prompt action to remedy or make good any or all deficiencies relating to their content which come to light as a result of GridWatch activities and to inform GridWatch of any breach of copyright or inappropriate material on their site which affect the Grid and its content.
- 5 Providers should ensure that their site specifies a route for feedback.
6. Providers of NGfL-badged sites or pages should seek Becta approval of any press releases which have a bearing on the Grid. Use of the NGfL badge is not permitted on any sponsor or advertising material which is not related to the badged site.

Technical annex

The Technical Annex will be updated from time to time to take account of developments in the technology. The latest version can be viewed on the NGfL [Challenge site](#).

The following points should be read in conjunction with the [Ground Rules](#) for content providers and with the core service requirements for public libraries, set out in 'Building the Public Libraries Network'. They are intended to ensure that NGfL content can be reached by the maximum possible number of NGfL users, and that they can easily distinguish NGfL content from other material on the Internet.

1 End-user equipment

Content providers should assume that users will be accessing content from the wide range of equipment currently in use in education.

Content should be viewable from equipment that, at a minimum, employs:

- a display system that supports 800x600 pixel resolution and 8-bit/256 colour
- a pointing device, such as a mouse or trackpad.

2 Browsers

Content providers should assume that users will be using a Level Three browser or later, e.g. a minimum of Netscape Navigator 3.0 or Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.04. All plugins for additional graphical or multimedia functionality should be compatible with the majority of browsers at this level.

3 Platforms

Providers should design sites to be viewable by the maximum number of NGfL users.

Content should be designed to be platform independent and should not include code or plugins that are particular to the content or the platform. Content should be viewable from browsers running on Windows (3.1, 95, 98, NT), MacOS (7.x and later), RISCOS and current mainstream UNIX platforms, e.g. Linux, Solaris.

4 Other considerations

Content providers should be aware that many users will access NGfL content via dial-up connection through 28.8 modems and should design their sites accordingly to ensure that content loads without long delays. To this end, graphics, scripts and tables should not be unduly large or require the downloading of excessive quantities of data.

Technical annex

Specification for NGfL Home Page return buttons

Examples of the logos, images and buttons for use by **approved** NGfL content providers can be found at <ftp://ftp.ngfl.gov.uk>, together with text files describing their correct use by content providers.

Technical Annex

The Technical Annex will be updated from time to time to take account of developments in the technology. The latest version can be viewed on the [NGfL Challenge site](#). This will give details of the latest browser and platform specifications that should be supported.