Editorial Style Guide

May 2015

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1. Introduction

This editorial style guide is intended to be a simple and informative guide that will support consistency across all communications materials in line with the Ulster University brand.

Any presentation, editorial, brochure or web content has the power to shape perceptions – we want to leave a positive and lasting impression of Ulster University with the stakeholder.

All editorial, regardless of its length, content or intended audience should be engaging and informative with a style and tone that says the University is approachable and relevant. Central to this is consistency across all editorial/copy, whether it is used in publications, advertising or online, so the University speaks with one clear voice and its editorial has clarity and consistency; is distinctive and recognisable.

Ulster University also supports the use of plain English to ensure our content is accessible and easily understood by a range of audiences. Unnecessary jargon or long sentences should be avoided, unless writing for academic journals or highly specialised sectoral publications where the use of such language is the norm and is understood.

This editorial style guide has been developed by the PR & Communications Team to help you with your communications and it will be updated on an on-going basis. We really hope you find it useful and thank you for your support in applying this guidance as we work together to build and reinforce a strong, positive brand image for Ulster University.

If you have any questions regarding the style guide, please contact:

PR & Communications

T: +44 (0)28 9036 6178

E: comms@ulster.ac.uk

2. Relevant, effective communications

At the very heart of any effective communications activity is knowing your audience and delivering content that speaks to them in an uncomplicated and engaging manner.

Any academic environment tends to use and understand academic jargon. In a piece of academic writing, words such as 'interdisciplinary', 'methodology', 'dichotomy', 'pedagogy', 'discursive' sit comfortably on the page, are understood and appropriate.

If, however, we are describing Ulster University to prospective students, parents, careers advisers and other interested parties, our choice of vocabulary should be less academic and more relevant to each specific audience.

Using plain English or language appropriate to your reader is not 'dumbing down', it is not patronising. It makes the writing, and the University's impact, accessible to a broad audience. It ensures that as many people as possible can understand what we deliver and what we aim to achieve, what our aspirations are and, how we can help the reader to realise theirs.

Here are some initial, general suggestions for making your writing clear, succinct and understandable to a wide range of readers:

- Use 'you' rather than 'the student' or 'applicant' – particularly relevant in marketing literature where you are speaking directly to students

- Change passive constructions to active, for example: 'Candidates with good honours degrees in other subjects will also be considered' to 'We will also consider candidates with good…'

- Use less formal vocabulary such as 'the programme starts' rather than 'the programme shall commence'

- Simplify sentences such as 'students who have not previously obtained an appropriate legal qualification' to 'students without an appropriate legal qualification.

Remember:

Incorrect content has the potential to undermine our credibility and affect perceptions.

Content owners are responsible for checking the factual accuracy of their editorial. If, over time, published content changes, then regular updates must be made. Proofreading - preferably by another member of your team - is a tool that can help you to spot inaccuracies, either factual or grammatical.

All places and names should be checked against a credible reference source and auto-spell checkers should be set to English (UK) as the default on your computer to prevent spelling errors caused by the US version.

3. Ulster University's style

- Ulster University is a singular noun so verbs and pronouns referring to it, or to individual faculties or schools, should be consistently singular:

    Ulster University **is** a modern, forward-looking institution with a reputation for excellence.

    Ulster University **has** a reputation for excellence in teaching and research.

    The University **aims** to provide a positive teaching and learning experience.

- University is always uppercase when referring to Ulster University but where university is used in a general context it should take lower case:

    The University welcomed the recent announcement.

    A university education can help you to realise your potential.

3.1 Hyperlinks

- When inserting the University web address, or any other url into your copy, it should simply appear as **ulster.ac.uk** with no underline. The http:// and www. should always be removed.

    The hyperlink can be removed by highlighting the url, right clicking, selecting hyperlink and clicking remove hyperlink.

3.2 Address style

As Ulster University is one, multi-campus institution, it should always be referred to as Ulster University, not by its campus reference. The University's full addresses should be given in all formal usage. There are very few occasions where the specific campus location needs to be used as the full address clarifies location.

Exceptions would be in relation to an event where the specific campus needs to be named on an invitation instead of the full address.

The University has four campuses in Northern Ireland: Belfast, Coleraine, Jordanstown and Magee; and two branch campuses in London and Birmingham, run in partnership with QA Higher Education.

The word campus is always lower case, eg: the Belfast campus, the Coleraine campus, the Jordanstown campus and the Magee campus.

Correct address styles - examples

Ulster University York Street Belfast County Antrim BT15 1ED	Ulster University Cromore Road Coleraine County Londonderry BT52 1SA
Ulster University Shore Road Newtownabbey County Antrim BT37 0QB	Ulster University Northland Road Derry~Londonderry County Londonderry BT48 7JL
Ulster University 5th Floor Centre City 5-7 Hill Street Birmingham B5 4UA	Ulster University St James' House 10 Rosebery Avenue Holborn London EC1R 4TF

Telephone and fax numbers should be given in international format in external publications, on the website and within email signatures: +44 (0)28 90XX XXXX

Check and re-check that addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and web addresses are correct.

3.3 Job titles

- The Ulster University style is for job titles to appear in copy or editorial as uppercase:
    - Lecturer
    - Senior Lecturer
    - Reader
    - Professor
    - Doctor

- It is acceptable to use Dr as a widely accepted abbreviated form of Doctor, e.g.:

    Dr Matt Paint, is a Lecturer in interactive multimedia design at Ulster University.

- Formal prefixes e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms are not required unless writing a formal letter.

3.4 Programme/course references

- If referencing a more general sector or area or study, then lowercase should be used

    e.g. a degree in physiotherapy, biology, physics, history, unless it is a language then it becomes uppercase e.g. a degree in English, Spanish.

- Where a specific degree is cited it should be uppercase, for example:

    BSc Hons Physiotherapy
    BA Hons History

    Hons should not be placed in brackets

3.5 Faculties

- Where reference is made to a faculty in a general sense it should be given lower case, for example:

    The University has six faculties.

- Where there is specific reference to one Faculty it should take uppercase for example:

    The Faculty of Computing and Engineering will have an advice day on 21 August.

- Faculty and school titles should be listed in full initially with 'the Faculty' or 'the School' used in subsequent references in the same piece of copy.

- Our six faculties are:

    - Faculty of Arts
    - Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment
    - Faculty of Computing and Engineering
    - Faculty of Life and Health Sciences
    - Faculty of Social Sciences
    - Ulster University Business School

Qualifications should be cited as follows:

- A masters degree
- A doctorate/doctoral study
- Applicants should have a first or second class honours degree

3.7 Geographical references

There are a number of terms in common usage and the following notes are offered as guidelines to avoid causing offence and to maintain the neutral stance of the organisation in political matters.

- **Northern Ireland**
  The correct name for Northern Ireland must always be used. An alternative to avoid repetition, particularly in larger publications, is 'the region' or 'this region'. If it must be used when referring to Northern Ireland the term 'province' not 'Province' should be used.

- **Ireland**
  The Republic of Ireland followed by RoI in subsequent references should be used. If referring to Ireland north and south, then island of Ireland should be used.

- **Derry~Londonderry**
  Derry~Londonderry is the official name of the city and is the preferred form of use for the University in all written materials.

  Where it is not practical to use the Derry~Londonderry form, e.g. on social media posts or in media interviews, a limited number of variations may be used.

4. Grammar

4.1 Abbreviations and acronyms

Ulster University **does not** have an abbreviated form.

The following acronyms or alternatives **must not be used** or appear in any literature: UU, UUB, UUC, UUJ, UUM, NUU, the Poly, the Ulster Poly, the New Ulster University, Belfast University, Coleraine University, Jordanstown University, Magee University, Magee College, Magee University College, the Art College, York Street Campus.

General points:

- If an acronym/abbreviation is used in text which may be read by people unfamiliar with their meaning, write the title out in full in the first instance, followed by the acronym / abbreviation in brackets. Then use the acronym in every subsequent reference e.g.:

    The award complies with current Teacher Training Agency (TTA) regulations. All students are required to pass the TTA tests in English and mathematics.

- The first time a university, college or body is mentioned, it should be written in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets, if applicable: Trinity College Dublin (TCD).

- Some acronyms which are commonly used as words should follow the first letter in uppercase e.g. Nato or Hefce, however there will always be exceptions (e.g. UNESCO) and so the form should be verified at source to ensure correct use.

- Weights and distances should be spelled fully (15 metres, 10 kilometres, two litres, five kilograms).

- Numbers one to nine should appear as text written in full. Numbers 10 and over should appear numerically.

- Do not abbreviate university to 'uni' unless it suits the style and tone of the text (such as social media), similarly favour postgraduate over postgrad and undergraduate over undergrad.

- Undergraduate degrees with honours can be written BSc Honours or abbreviated to BSc Hons.

- Words, such as television or compact disc, may be abbreviated to TV OR CD

- In text for publications and other literature, avoid the abbreviations e.g. and i.e. (instead use: for example, such as, like) to maintain the narrative style. In more practical guides like this style guide, e.g. and i.e. can however help to clearly set out examples.

4.2 Apostrophes, contractions and prepositions

- The apostrophe is used for contractions in less formal language, for example:

    'They're going to apply' (they are)
    'I can't apply' (cannot)

- Contractions should be avoided unless a more informal approach is being taken with an audience or channel e.g. targeting sixth form pupils as prospective students on social media

- The prepositions '**into**' vs '**in to**' frequently cause confusion. A simple reminder is that '**into**' is always followed by a noun or noun phrase.

  Into is a preposition that indicates that something is moving towards the inside of something e.g.: 'The aircraft moved **into** the hangar' or 'the dog ran **into** the house.'

  '**In to**' is also a prepostion but it tends to come before an action or verb e.g.: 'The doctor went **in to** treat the patient' or 'the teacher had gone **in to** prepare for class'

4.3 Possession

- Possession is a major source of grammatical errors and has the power to entirely change the context of a sentence if omitted.

  'The department's facilities' not 'the departments facilities'

  The former confirms and clarifies possession; the latter suggests multiple departments and doesn't address possession.

- There is always confusion on when to use 'its' or 'it's'. The general rule to remember is as follows:

  If you can replace 'it's' in your sentence with 'it is' or 'it has', you do need the apostrophe.

  o It is here = **It's** here – **correct**
    Its here – **incorrect**

  o The tree has lost **its** leaves – **correct possessive**
    The tree has lost **it's** leaves – **incorrect**. The **'it is'** comparison proves, if in any doubt, that this is not grammatically correct.

- For a name that ends with an s, add 's, as in James's book or Dickens's novel.

4.4 Brackets

- If a whole sentence is within brackets, put the full stop/question mark/exclamation mark inside, e.g:

> You will immediately get email details of possible car share contacts. (You can choose whether to confine your search to Ulster University community only.)

- If an incomplete sentence appears within brackets at the end of a sentence, punctuation goes outside the brackets:

    > Work periods normally link to semesters and last for either six or 12 months (but there are special arrangements for professional training programmes, for example teaching and nursing).

- Brackets can be used within brackets but are rather cumbersome so should be avoided where possible. When using brackets within brackets, both pairs should be round.

- Square brackets are only used to provide explanation or clarity and are mainly found in speeches so should rarely be needed in publications, advertising, leaflets etc.

4.5 Bullet points

- The use of bullet points should be restricted to emphasising specific, short points within text and are useful for breaking up chunks of text. They help readers skim read important information e.g.:

    > Join our six-week summer school and study in small, friendly classes with people from around the world:
    > - Full and part-time study
    > - Focused study, small groups, intensive learning
    > - Study for between one and five weeks
    > - One of the largest and most successful summer schools in Europe.

- Note use of colon before start of bulleted text, initial upper case letters at start of each bullet point text line and absence of punctuation at end of each text line, except final line, which finishes with a full stop.

- Text in each bullet point should flow naturally and in a grammatically correct fashion from the introductory sentence and from point to point.

4.6 Use of capital letters

Keep capitals to a minimum where possible. Overuse of capitals makes text difficult to read. If in doubt, use lowercase.

- Use upper case for ranks and titles when written in conjunction with a name but lower case on their own:

  > The prime minister is visiting the University.
  > vs
  > Prime Minister David Cameron is visiting the University.

- Course titles and departments are always uppercase, for example:

  > BA Honours Music or BA Hons Music
  > Department of Corporate Planning and Governance

- Modules are always listed in sentence case where the first letter is capitalised, with the rest being lower case, for example:

  > Strategic marketing modules are studied in first and second year

- When referring to generic institutions or positions it is lowercase e.g.: a government. When it is a specific it becomes uppercase e.g: 'the Government'.

- Lowercase should be used for the words internet, website, email and web.

4.7 Commas, colons and semicolons

- Use **commas** to guide readers through a sentence and help eliminate ambiguity. Poor punctuation can lead to confusion. For example compare:

  > Let's eat children.
  > vs
  > Let's eat, children.

- Names and necessary descriptions should be separated with **commas**, for example:

  > Cardiff hosted the World Cup at its new sports venue, the Millennium Stadium, now the focus of many international events.

- When listing items in a sentence, separate each item with a **semicolon** and introduce the list with a **colon** e.g.:

  > Subjects include: computer science; French; mathematics; engineering and English.

- When using a **colon** to introduce part of a sentence or a list, there is no need to capitalise the following word.

- **Semicolons** can also be used to join two short but relevant sentences or statements together, statements which essentially would still make sense as standalone separate sentences:

    Some people like science topics; others prefer the arts.

- **Commas** should also be used to break up sentences by providing a natural pause that allows emphasis in the correct place:

    We believe, as do many institutions, that innovation drives business and the economy, so it is vital that industry has access to the knowledge within this University.

4.8 Ampersands

Ampersands (&) should not be used unless short form is required for social media posts or unless is it part of an official name or title e.g. Marks & Spencer.

4.9 Date and time

- Dates should be written cleanly and succinctly as date, month, year:

    10 January 2016.
    No need to use 'st', 'nd', 'rd' or 'th' following the day.

- Months and days of the week should be spelt out in full in all instances.

- Do not use an apostrophe with decade designations: 1960s not 1960's.

- Lowercase should be used for am and pm and without full points, the number should not be followed by zeros e.g.:

    4pm not 4.00pm

- The word 'to' not a hyphen should be used to denote a range of times and years, for example:

    4pm to 6pm
    or
    1986 to 1990

4.10 Use of established non-English words

- There is no need to italicise, or place in inverted commas, non-English words, such as café, sauté, etc, which are now well established in the English language through frequent use.

4.11 Forward/back slash

- There should be no space preceding/following a forward or back slash.

- Square brackets should only be used to add comments/explanations by the writer/editor to direct a speech.

- When writing numbers where you need to use a forward slash the preferred format is for example: 2015/16 academic year.

4.12 Gender and inclusive language

- To avoid showing any gender bias, it is appropriate to substitute with third person plural e.g. instead of using 'his or her', reword the sentence to use 'their' or 'your' depending on the context and the audience e.g.:

    Incorrect:
    When the student submitted **his** completed UCAS form...

    Correct:
    When students submit their completed UCAS forms...
    or
    When you submit your completed UCAS form...

4.13 Headings and subheadings

- Headings and subheadings should be consistent in style throughout your editorial or literature.

    For example if you write 'How do I apply?' in one chapter/section, make sure it does not read differently elsewhere e.g. 'how should I apply' or 'How to apply'.

- Do try to make headings active and engaging e.g.:

    'How do I apply?' rather than 'Application procedures'.

Use hyphens for:

- Fractions (which should be written in full rather than using figures): two-thirds, three-quarters, one-half.

- Prefixes and suffixes:

  - Words with prefixes including: anti; non; neo or ex
  - Words with suffixes such as 'elect' e.g: mayor-elect
  - Letters and figures, for example T-shirt, mid-1970s
  - Nouns formed from prepositional verbs: bail-out, get-together, pay-off, round-up.

4.15 Numbers and measurements

- Do not abbreviate million to m or billion to bn.

- Phone numbers should not take hyphens, nor should they be preceded by a colon, for example: For further information please call +44 (0)28 XXXX XXXX

- Telephone and fax numbers should be given in international format in external publications, on the website and within email signatures.

5. Fonts and typefaces

To ensure consistency on all our materials (print and online) specific typefaces must be used. For all professionally designed publications the approved corporate font, **FS Matthew**, must be used. To obtain a licence for the FS Matthew suite of fonts please contact brand@ulster.ac.uk. For all day-to-day documents **Arial** should be used. No other fonts are permitted.

6. Brand guidelines

Guidance on Ulster University's new brand and downloadable templates are available to all staff from the brand guide website ulster.ac.uk/brand-guide/. Please contact the Brand team for any further advice by emailing brand@ulster.ac.uk.