

# UEA Communications Style Guide

## Summary

- Use plain language. Be clear, concise, factual and accurate. Answer the basic questions: who? what? where? when? Why? and how?
- Clarify and simplify the subject for readers. Third person reporting conveys authority; first person may be used for a more approachable tone of voice
- Be consistent
- Match the professional standards readers will see in external news media
- House style is a guide, exceptions may be made in the interests of clarity and common sense.

## Writing style

### Abbreviations and acronyms

- No full stops in abbreviations, eg Prof / Dr / WH Smith / BSc / ie / eg
- Abbreviations in which each letter is sounded should generally be upper case, eg UUK (but www / eg / ie / etc)
- Acronyms – never assume all readers will understand even common acronyms - spell out first use then show abbreviation in brackets, eg Universities UK (UUK), School of Art, Media and American Studies (AMA).

### Alumni

- Alumni Alumnus (male), alumna (female), alumni/ae (plural).

### Ampersands

- Don't use as an abbreviation for "and" unless it forms part of an existing title eg Marks & Spencer.

### Apostrophes

- 1960s not 1960's, it's (abbreviation for "it is").

### Bullets

- Bullets - long lists should be bulleted. Don't use commas or semi-colons after any of the points, begin each point with a capital letter and end the last point with a full stop.

### Colons

- Use to introduce lists, quotes, link contrasting statements, substitute for a conjunction.

### Contractions

- Write conversationally – use "don't", "wasn't" etc as appropriate.

## **Date and time**

- 9.30am, 4pm, 12 noon, 12 midnight
- Monday 3 December, 2017 (date before month / no "th", "st", "rd")
- The 1960s or the '60s or the Sixties.

## **Degrees**

- First, 2:1, 2:2, Third. Never use 1st. Use a capital when referring to a First, but lower case initial for first class degree. He was awarded a 2:1 in English.

## **Exclamation marks**

- Use very sparingly for exclamations or added emphasis, eg oh dear! / hold it! / that's remarkable! but avoid if needed to make a weak statement seem interesting or funny.

## **First person**

- We're all part of UEA so use the first person if the meaning is clear eg "At UEA, we are proud of our reputation" not "UEA is proud of its reputation"
- Always refer specifically to the team a message is coming from eg "The Sustainability team is holding a presentation" not "We are holding a presentation."

## **Hyperlinks**

- Use descriptive hyperlinks so it's clear what they are linking to and are accessible to people using screen readers eg "See more information" not "Click here".

## **Hyphens**

- Separate the same letters, eg co-operate / co-ordinate / re-engineer
- For sense, eg re-sign, resign / re-cover, recover
- Hyphenate compound adjectives eg "Her brother is a first-year undergraduate", "We are a world-class department"
- Do not use a hyphen when the combination of words includes an adverb (words ending in -ly), eg "a strongly worded letter".

## **Names and capital letters**

- Avoid indiscriminate use of initial capitals (inconsistent with plain English and external media)
- Use caps for job titles (Pro-Vice-Chancellor), specific teams or departments (Communications team (not Team) but not generic roles (she is a team leader)
- Generic types of organisation should be lower case (universities, companies) but when referring to UEA, "the University" should be used.
- Names of publications, TV/radio programmes, films etc in inverted commas eg "Great Expectations", "The Times"

- In headlines the first word should be upper case with remaining words capitalised only if a proper noun, name or if a specific title
- Use lower case for seasons and semesters
- Lower case when referring to a subject in a general way, eg “a good background in mathematics is essential”
- Faculties and Schools.

## Numbers

- One to nine as words; 10 and above as numbers but use numbers when linked to measures, eg 5cm / 70mph / 6 hours 17 minutes, or 6hr 17min / £4 billion, or £4bn / £9 million, or £9m
- % or per cent in text, % in tables and columns of figures eg 99.9% / 3.5 per cent / 3 per cent
- Commas to show thousands, millions eg 1,500 / 2,450,000.
- Hyphenate fractions, eg three-quarters, one-and-a-half
- Spell out any number that begins a sentence: “Five hundred students graduated this year”
- £100 million or £100m not £100 m
- Spell out ordinal numbers in text: first, second, third not 1st, 2nd, 3rd except for in a table.

## Percentage

- Use per cent in text; can be used in tables.

## Places

- Compass bearings lower case and hyphens, eg north, south-east, west-south-west but names of regions, if well-established and in common use, take initial caps, eg the South (of England), the West Country, the North East, the American Midwest, South East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe BUT continental Europe.

## Plurals

- Collective nouns take singular verbs, eg UEA has a world-class reputation / the department is new / the Government has announced a new initiative.

## Quotations

- Direct speech, use double quotation marks, introduced with a colon, eg Joe Bloggs said: "This is good news for UEA"
- Single quotes within double quote marks, eg "He told me it was a 'great result' for us"
- Single quotes in headlines, eg New results 'best ever' for UEA.

## Spacing

- Single space after full stop between sentences, single line between paragraphs.

## **Spelling**

- Use -ise not -ize endings, eg surprise, surprising, organise, organisation
- Avoid archaic-looking spellings, eg while not whilst, among not amongst, adviser not advisor
- Focused not focussed, targeted not targetted
- Email and email, not E-mail and e-mail
- Part-time degree programme. A computer program
- A levels not A-levels or 'A' levels.

## **UEA**

- "UEA" not "the UEA".