WRITING STYLE GUIDE

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Loughborough
University

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INTRODUCTION

The University's visual identity reflects the diversity, breadth and dynamism of our institution. Ensuring this is consistent throughout all materials and activity is essential to presenting a reputable and professional appearance.

The University's writing style should also reflect this – ensuring that we are engaging our readers, communicating key messages, and presenting the right impression of Loughborough University.

This guide has been created to support both experienced colleagues, and those with less confidence, when producing copy for the web and outward-facing documents on behalf of their school or department. It is not intended to replace any publisher or discipline-specific style sheets followed by academics, nor is it intended to dictate how you should write publications.

It offers advice and tips to help you create effective copy that is in line with the University's current identity and tone of voice. It should support you in creating publications that are easy to understand, accessible to all, and enjoyable to read. It is not intended to make publications simplistic or to stop individual writing styles.

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Further guidance
You will need your staff login details to access these resources
Copywriting 101 - How to craft compelling copy (Copyblogger)
Tips for Writers (CIPR)
Writing for online audiences (CIPR)

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TONE AND STYLE

The purpose of any publication is to engage and inform the reader. Keep your text clear and concise. As a general rule, sentences should be no more than 25 words long.

Don't over communicate. The reader should be able to understand a document at first reading, and in the same sense that you, as the writer, meant it to be understood.

Keep your writing style simple by using plain English. This will make your text more readable and ensure your message is delivered in the clearest manner, with the greatest impact.

For further advice and guidance see
www.plainenglish.co.uk

Avoid using bureaucratic language and jargon that individuals from outside a university environment may not understand. This does not include acronyms which are covered later in this guide.

Present your information in a logical and consistent way. When reading your text back, imagine it is the first time you're reading the information – would you understand what it was telling you?

Tip: Making a plan before you get started will make this easier - what topics will you cover and in what order? This will help you prioritise your main messages, and ensure the content is effective, logical and not repetitive.

Signpost information clearly rather than duplicating your copy on various pages across the publication. This includes directing the reader to different pages within the publication or providing website URLs to send the reader online.

Don't be afraid to use bullet points – they make information easier to consume. More guidelines on the use of bullet points can be found in the 'Formatting and design' section of this document. The tone should be professional, but not too formal. Use *you* and *we* to speak directly to the reader.

Where appropriate keep the tone conversational. Choose language that is polite, clear and suitable for face-to-face conversation.

Try not to use the same sentence structure throughout your copy. For example, if you are writing about a person or a group, refrain from starting every sentence with their name or the same personal pronoun (he, she, they).

Make it active! Passive verbs can prevent your copy from being engaging and cause confusion. Active verbs will grab the reader's attention, make the information clear and sound less pompous.

Example:
Active verb: Many students visit our open days.
Passive verb: Open days are visited by many students.

Contractions such as *you'll* and *we'll* can help establish a friendly, informal tone, and are useful when communicating with prospective students. However, as a general rule for publications, they should be used sparingly. The use of negative contractions such as *can't* and *won't* should be avoided where possible.

Keep styling consistent throughout your text. From the way you display quotes, to the words that you hyphenate; ensure all your style choices are consistent throughout.

AUDIENCE

ALWAYS think about your audience when creating copy - their age, nationality and circumstances. Consider the situation in which they will be consuming the information.

For example: If a reader is likely to be in the middle of their working day, the information needs to be short and snappy to share the key messages in minimal time. If the information is likely to be enjoyed by the reader at their leisure, the copy needs to be entertaining and engaging to keep them reading.

The key to creating great copy is to think about ALL the audiences that will read it, and make sure it is appropriate to them.

This doesn't mean you must use simple words either: just appropriate, everyday English. Put yourself in the reader's shoes – how would you feel in their position?

WRITING FOR THE WEB

Copy that is created for print should not be replicated online. Many web visitors are looking for information at speed, so you need to grab their attention as soon as they land on the page. Others may be browsing but will expect to be able to locate the information they need quickly, and copy that is longer than necessary can stop them from doing so.

Use shorter sentences and paragraphs (ideally no more than four sentences).

Where appropriate, break up long paragraphs into sections with headings/subheadings.
Make headings simple and concise to aid skim reading.

Each page has a purpose – get to the point as quickly as possible.

Use simple language and words that people are likely to look for.

By using keywords and phrases that people are looking for, there's also a good chance you'll be improving your search engine optimisation, and ultimately pushing your web pages further up the search results pages.

The most important points should always come first, before any detail and background information are provided.

People will land on your page from different routes so make sure your text makes sense as a single entity.

Try and include one clear call to action or incentive to keep your reader on the site, after they have read your content.

For example: If you are writing a page about course fees, include a link to your scholarships page. Put yourself in the position of the reader and think about their thought processes after reading your copy.

Be clear about what you want the reader to do next. Don't overwhelm readers with multiple hyperlinks to other sites, or lists of contact details.

Key questions to ask when reviewing your web copy:
• Does your headline communicate what you are talking about?
• Does your image communicate this message?
• Do your subheadings summarise your key points?

Further guidance
We are currently developing some broader guidance on writing for the web. When ready, this will be made available to all University staff.

For advice and guidance on writing for the web in the meantime, contact the Web and Digital team. E: digital@lboro.ac.uk

FAIRNESS AND INCLUSIVENESS

When creating your text, consider the impact that the words and language you are using could have. Use language sensitively and be mindful of the terms you use.

Disability
Avoid outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise.

Refer to disabled people, not the disabled; or somebody who is visually impaired, not blind.

The following government website is useful for suggested words and phrases when writing about disabilities.

Inclusive language:
Words to use and avoid when writing about disability (link)

If you need to refer to disability within your text, try to structure sentences in a positive way.

Example: John Smith, who is a wheelchair user, studies... (not wheelchair bound or in a wheelchair)

John Smith, who has muscular dystrophy, is a student... (not suffers from, or is a victim of)

Gender
Use the pronouns *they* or *them* where gender is not specified. Choose accurate words that are free from bias, such as people or humanity instead of man or mankind.

Age
Consider whether a term could be deemed as offensive (ie referring to someone as elderly or old).

Further guidance
All protected characteristics, which also include race, sexism and religion, must be treated with sensitivity when creating copy. If you are unsure of the correct terminology or expression to use, we recommend you contact the following department for advice:
Human Resources T: 01509 222169 E: hr@lboro.ac.uk

FORMATTING AND DESIGN

Formatting text

Following the guidelines below will ensure that your text is legible and consistent.

Text should be aligned to the left where possible. This is standard practice and ensures your text is legible. It also makes it easier for the reader to find the start and finish of each line. Left-alignment also makes the text easier to read for individuals with dyslexia and visual impairments.

Do not justify the text as this will make it harder to read.

For recommended font types and sizes for both print and web please refer to the Visual Identity guidelines.

Where necessary, include a statement to inform readers that alternative formats are available.

Alternative format statements should be clearly visible on either the back or front cover, and include full contact details.

Example: If you need a copy of this document in an alternative format (for example Braille, large print, audio or e-text) please email or telephone 01234 567890.

Highlighting and emphasising text

Avoid excessive use of bold and italic fonts. Italics can be used to flag text that is different from that surrounding it.

Example: Contractions such as *you'll* and *we'll* can help establish a friendly...

This also applies to titles of books, journals, plays, films and music, if they are a complete published works. If they are a single element within a larger publication, use single quotation marks.

Example: During chapter 1 'The Boy Who Lived' in the book *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*...

Words should only ever be underlined when they are a hyperlink.

Writing numbers

The general rule for writing numbers is to spell out from one to nine; then use numerals from 10 upwards. For numbers above 999, insert a comma.

Example: one five 10 34 2,000 238,000

Use a combination of a figure and a word for very large round numbers.

Example: 7 million NOT 7,000,000

In main copy write million, billion and trillion in full. These words can be shortened in headlines to m, bn or tn.

If you are quoting a range of figures (both above and below 10) within a paragraph, use numerals throughout the paragraph so that readers can easily compare the figures.

Any sum of money or units of measurements (centimetres, miles per hour) should always use numerals.

Example: 100 millimetres 4 miles 70 kilometres

Use the % sign rather than writing *per cent*.

If you need to quote a number at the start of a sentence, use the written form. If it is a larger number, try reordering the sentence and write the numerals.

If using a number at the start of a headline, use numerals instead of the word.

When referring to positions or placing (first, second, third etc) spell out the words in full up to ninth, and then use the necessary ordinal suffix (st/nd/rd/th).

However, when placing and positions are used in headlines, quotes and graphics, the numeric digits should be used.

Ensure suffixes are NOT superscript. This is a stylistic preference to make line spacing clearer.

Example: 1st NOT 1st

Spell out common fractions rather than using numerals.

Example: half or three-quarters NOT ½ or ¾

Subscript and superscript
A subscript or superscript is a number, figure, symbol or indicator that is smaller than their normal line of type and is set slightly below or above the line.

Subscripts appear at or below the baseline of the text.

These are commonly used for chemical compounds and formulae.

Where possible chemical formulae should be written using subscript.

Example: H_2O and CO_2

Not all digital platforms – particularly social media will not allow text to be subscript. In these cases CO_2 is an acceptable way to display formulas.

Superscripts appear above the baseline.

These are commonly used for ordinal figures.

Example: 1st 2nd 3rd

See note in previous section on how to write ordinals.

Writing the time
Using the 12-hour clock
- Use a full stop between the hours and minutes.
- Add am/pm to the end – with no space between the number and the suffix, and no full stops within the suffix.
- Do not use the additional .00 for times on the hour.
- Use noon and midnight to refer to 12pm and 12am.

Example: 9.45am 5pm 7.15pm 12 noon

Using the 24-hour clock
- Use a colon in between the hours and minutes.
- Omit the am/pm.

Example: 9:45 17:00 19:15

Writing dates
Always write the date before the month – ie 10 June.

Do not use th, nd, st, rd with dates, just the number.

Never write *the* before the date – ie the 10 June. Unless absolutely necessary, do not use days with dates to avoid confusion.

When referring to an academic year use the format *2014/15*.

Headings and subheadings
Main page headings and subheadings should use sentence case (capital letter at the start of a sentence and on names).

Example:
Our research and impact

Why choose design at Loughborough?

Some designers prefer capitals for styling purposes, so in some circumstances block capitals can be used for main headings only.

All headings should have minimal punctuation.

Ensure your styling and presentation of headings and subheadings is consistent throughout. Consider alignment, font size, and bold effects.

Course and module titles
As a general rule, *programme* should be used for postgraduate offerings and *course* for undergraduate. Both words can be used if needed, to improve the fluidity of the text, but you should ideally aim for consistency. Which word you use may also depend on how formal the document/audience is.

ie *Programme* would be used in official reports, *course* would be used in undergraduate student recruitment materials.

The words *programme* and *course* should never be capitalised unless they are used as part of an official course title.

Example: International Foundation Programme (IFP)

This programme offers a comprehensive understanding of...

Capitalise module titles.

Example: Modules include Introduction to Language, Introduction to Poetry, and Writing in History.

Do not capitalise disciplines of study.

Example: Areas studied include English language, poetry, English literature in its historical context, and literary and critical theories.

When writing honours as part of a degree title, it can be written as Hons or Honours, in round brackets, with a capital letter, alongside the qualification type.

Example: BA (Hons) BA (Honours)

Honours should be written in lower case if referred to within a general sentence.

Example: This honours degree is...

Do not use capitals when referring to degrees in general terms (bachelor's, master's, doctorate, associate degree) but always capitalise specific degrees (Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science).

When referring to a master's degree, use an apostrophe.

Below is a list of all abbreviated academic qualifications and the correct way to format them.

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEng	Bachelor of Engineering
BSc	Bachelor of Science
EngD	Engineering Doctorate
MA	Master of Arts
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MChem	Master of Chemistry
MEng	Master of Engineering
MMath	Master of Mathematics
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MPhys	Master of Physics
MRes	Master of Research
MSc	Master of Science
MSci	Master in Science
PGDip	Postgraduate Diploma
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy

Bullet points
Bullet points make information easier to understand and quicker to consume. They can be used in a number of ways, and punctuation rules vary for each.

Single word bullet points
The list of bullet points should be introduced by a heading followed by a colon.

Each point should have no initial capital letters and no other punctuation.

Example: Students should bring the following items with them:
- pen
- notebook
- calculator

Part sentences
When sentences have been broken down into a series of bullet points, the punctuation and structure follows the same format as above.

If the bulleted lines are particularly long, a semi colon can be added to the end of each line, apart from the last point which should finish with a full stop.

The preceding sentence to the bullet points must lead into each point.

Example: Students sitting the exam will need to:
- register online first
- arrive 10 minutes before the start of the exam
- bring their student ID card and number.

Full sentences
Bulleted lists that contain a series of complete sentences should start with a capital letter and finish with a full stop.

A colon is not needed at the end of the preceding sentence either.

Example: Students must adhere to the standard guidelines when sitting their exam.

- Register yourself online to take the exam at www.example.co.uk.

- On the day of the exam, arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the start time.

- Bring your student ID card and number – you will not be able to sit the exam without these.

Contact details
Where possible all publications should include a contact name (individual, team or department), telephone number, postal address, email address and website URL.

Telephone numbers should include both the area and international dialling codes. This also applies to mobile numbers.

Example:
+44 (0)1509 222222 (landline phone number)
+44 (0)7123 456789 (mobile phone number)

If the publication is for a UK audience the international dialling code can be removed. If it is for an internal audience only, both codes can be omitted.

Telephone numbers should have a space after +44 and the area code.

Example:
+44 (0)20 38180777 (two digit area code)
+44 (0)115 9234567 (three digit area code)
+44 (0)1509 222222 (four digit area code)

Where space allows, the postal address should be formatted on separate lines, with no punctuation at the end of each. The address should start with the named contact or department.

When an address is being provided for an event, an external audience require the full address. An internal audience only need a well-known building name and campus reference (Loughborough or London).

If your event promotion is online, add a hyperlink to the online campus map rather than providing a full address.

Email addresses should be written in lower case.

On the web, hyperlink the word 'email' rather than displaying the email address in full to avoid it being picked up by spammers.

Email addresses and telephone numbers should be identified with an initial.

Example:
T: +44 (0)1509 222222 E: email@email.com

Website URLs should be displayed underneath the address in a larger font.

Example contact details:
Admissions Office
Loughborough University
Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, UK
T: +44 (0)1509 223522
E: admissions@lboro.ac.uk

www.lboro.ac.uk

Websites and URLs
Never change the capitalisation within a URL as it may cease to work. Not all web browsers are case sensitive and will treat a URL with different capitalisation as a separate web page.

Example: www.lboro.ac.uk NOT www.Lboro.ac.uk

Omit http:// from all printed URLs. If the URL doesn't start with the standard sub domain prefix (www.) contact the Web and Digital Team, who will be able to set up a unique URL that can be used in print, and will direct traffic to the original URL.

Example:
http://arts.lboro.ac.uk becomes www.lboro.ac.uk/arts

Omit any trailing slashes at the end of the URL, but check first that the URL works without it.

If the copy is being used on the web and you are linking through to the referenced website, ensure that the whole URL is used within the hyperlink.

Example:
In your copy type www.lboro.ac.uk
In the hyperlink box use http://www.lboro.ac.uk

When using a URL in print, ideally it should be positioned underneath the copy, separate from the sentence/paragraph.

When a URL or email address is used as part of a sentence, punctuation should be used as normal.

Always test URLs before the content is printed or published online.

Avoid using lengthy, confusing URLs. Unique URLs

can also help here by providing a clear and easy to understand URL that directs traffic through to the original web address.

Example:
http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/a-z/family-leave-policy-and-procedure---page.html

would be presented in print as

www.lboro.ac.uk/familyleave

Using hyperlinks

Make your link words specific. The focus for the link should be to inform the reader of exactly what is going to happen next.

Avoid words such as *click* and *here*. These words are irrelevant to assistive technologies and not descriptive enough for screen readers – meaning they can cause major accessibility issues.

Labelling your links properly allows the user to access the information quicker as they don't necessarily have to read all the copy associated to the link.

This also makes it easier for the reader to identify and differentiate between multiple links on a page when returning to the content.

Where possible, place your hyperlinks at the end of a sentence – this will allow the reader to action it straight away, rather than having to go back and find the link once they have read the rest of the sentence.

Provide the user with as much information as possible:

what will they be doing...
watch/download/view

what is the object...
student handbook/highlights video/article

Example:
Download the student handbook

View the Highlights 2014/15 video

PUNCTUATION

General rules

Avoid double punctuation. Quotations that end with a question mark or exclamation mark should not be followed by a full stop outside the quotation marks.

If the sentence ends with a quotation that is a full sentence, the full stop should come before the closing quotation mark.

Avoid excessive use of exclamation marks.

When brackets are used in a sentence, the sentence has its own punctuation. This means that the sentence must end with a full stop or question mark, outside the brackets, even if the brackets come at the end of the sentence.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes have two uses:

1. They show that letters have been removed from a word to shorten it.

Example:
are not - aren't
they are - they're
we are - we're

2. They are used to show possession.

Example:
the lecturer's bag
the company's logo

When used to show possession, the apostrophe's position changes, depending on the word.

Apostrophes are not needed to show belonging when using possessive pronouns (his, hers, ours, yours, theirs) or determiners (his, her, its, our, your, their).

NOTE: *It's* and *its* are often confused, but have completely different meanings so it's important you get it right. *It's* is short for it is. *Its* without an apostrophe is used to demonstrate possession.

Example: The course has its own design studio.

Rule	Apostrophe position
Singular noun and most proper nouns including personal names	's We met at Ben**'s** party.
Personal names that end in -s and you would naturally pronounce an extra s if you said the word out loud	's Thomas**'s** brother was injured in the accident.
Personal names that end in -s but are not spoken with an extra s	s' Mr Connor**s'** finest performance was in 1991.
Plural noun that already ends in -s	s' The mansion was converted into a girl**s'** school.
Plural noun that doesn't end in -s	's The children**'s** father came round to see me.

Capital letters

Capital letters are overused on a regular basis. Not only is this grammatically incorrect, it also makes the text harder to read - particularly for individuals with dyslexia and visual impairments.

We recommend you use sentence case throughout your copy. Block capitals should only be used when required for stylistic purposes.

Below are some guidelines for using capitals that refer specifically to the work we do.

The University

Capital letters should be used when quoting the University's name in full.

Example: Loughborough University

University should be capitalised when referring directly to a university as the University.

Example: Thank you for your enquiry. The University will contact you shortly.

Lower case should be used when talking about universities in general.

Example: Your time at university should be the best years of your life.

Faculties, departments, institutes and schools

The full names of faculties, departments, institutes and schools should use capital letters.

Example: Loughborough Design School, the Department of Chemistry, School of the Arts, English and Drama

This rule only applies when the full name is being used. When you use something other than the official name, capital letters are not required.

Example: Employees from Marketing and Advancement vs. Employees working in the marketing team.

Subject and course/programme names

Course/programme names should be capitalised when referring specifically to the course/programme in full.

Example: Management Sciences is a flexible, broad-based course.

When a term is used to talk about a subject/discipline rather than a specific course, lower case letters should be used.

Example: You will cover various aspects of management sciences during your course.

Modules should also follow the same formula, using capitals when referring to a module title and lower case when referring to an area of learning.

Example:
Modules in your first year include:
• Construction and Engineering
• Materials
• Fluid Mechanics
• Structural Design
• Geotechnics

During your first year you will cover construction and engineering, materials, fluid mechanics, structural design and geotechnics.

Job titles

Job titles should only be capitalised when used as a formal title.

Example: Health and Safety Manager at Loughborough University.

A profession should never be capitalised when used in a description.

Example: The health and safety managers are meeting at 2pm tomorrow.

Building names

Building names should always be capitalised.

Example:
Herbert Manzoni Building
Hazlerigg Building
Clyde Williams Building

The word *building* should have a capital when used as part of the building title, but should be lower case when referring to the building generally.

Example: Marketing and Advancement is situated in the Hazlerigg Building. The building is also home to the Research Office.

Open days

Use upper case when writing the formal title of the open day.

Example: School of Business and Economics Open Day.

Lower case should be used when talking about an open day in general, without referencing the University or a school.

Example: Thanks for booking a place on our open day.

Lower case should also be used when talking about multiple open days.

Example: The School of Business and Economics open days are a great way to find out more about your course.

Colons, semicolons and commas

There are three main uses of the colon:
1. Between two clauses, in cases where the second clause explains or follows from the first.

Example:
Never forget this point: think before you speak.

2. To introduce a list.

3. Before a quotation and sometimes before direct speech.

The overall purpose of a semicolon is to connect closely related ideas. It has a number of uses:

1. A semicolon links two related parts of a sentence, neither of which depend logically on the other (they would make sense as stand-alone sentences). The semicolon emphasises the connection between the two clauses.

Example: I read the course book; it was not very helpful.

2. They can also be used to unite two clauses that are connected by a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase (eg otherwise, however, therefore, instead, hence).

Example: A portfolio is not required for entry to this course; however, you will need to sit an exam.

3. You can also use a semicolon as a stronger division in a complicated list to avoid confusion between the items listed.

Example: Key speakers at the event include: Mr A Example, Head of Services; Mrs B Example, Head of Marketing; and Miss C Example, Operations Manager.

4. In a similar way as above, a semicolon can also be used in lengthy sentences that already contain commas.

When a sentence has become long and full of commas, it can be difficult for the reader to follow the sentence. Even though the individual clauses aren't complete sentences, in these circumstances a semicolon can be used. It will mark the most important breaks in the sentence and help improve the clarity.

Example: It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time."
(Charles Dickens)

We recommend that this is only done when absolutely necessary. Where possible the copy should be rewritten.

Comma vs semicolon
Semicolons and commas can both be used to link two sentences or independent clauses. Providing you follow the correct grammatical rules then either is correct.

However, their similarity can cause confusion. They are also often overused – especially the comma. If you're not sure about your commas, you can check them by using these rules.

- Can the comma be replaced by *and* or *or*?

Example: My favourite places are Loughborough, London and Nottingham.

- Is it followed by a connecting word such as and, or, but, yet or while?

Example: I need to go to the Library, but I don't feel like going.

- Does it represent the absence of repetition?

Example: This year we came top of the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey; last year, we came second.

- Does it separate an interruption from the rest of the sentence which could be removed?

Example: The course, which is ranked top in the country, is closed to new applications.

If the answer to all these questions is `no', then there is a good chance the comma isn't needed.

The Oxford comma
It's not necessary for us to get into explanations of how, where and when a comma should be used. We did however want to touch on the use of the Oxford comma - also known as the Harvard or serial comma.

When following the rules of grammar, there is no comma between the penultimate and final items in a list.

Example: The University requests A level English, Maths and Science.

Sometimes a comma is needed between the two items though to prevent ambiguity. This is known as the Oxford comma. Not using the Oxford comma when needed can significantly alter the meaning of a sentence, as you will see with the examples below.

Without: Jamie found herself sharing a taxi with her ex-boyfriend, a doctor and a detective.

With: Jamie found herself sharing a taxi with her ex-boyfriend, a doctor, and a detective.

In the first sentence it is unclear if the doctor is also a detective, or if the doctor and the detective are separate people. The second sentence makes it clear that there are four people sharing the taxi.

Without: My heroes are my parents, Superman and Superwoman.

With: My heroes are my parents, Superman, and Superwoman.

Without the additional comma it is unclear whether the individual is thanking Superman and Superwoman in addition to their parents, or whether their parents are Superman and Superwoman. With the comma it makes it clear that they are thanking them in addition to their parents.

Without: John, Mike and I want to party.

With: John, Mike, and I want to party.

In the first part of this example it is unclear whether the speaker is telling John that he/she and Mike want to party. The second part of the example makes it clear that John, Mike and the individual speaking all want to party.

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Quotation marks

Double quotation marks should be used for direct reported speech.

Example: David Steel, Director of Finance said: "I am delighted with the outcome."

Single quotation marks (also known as inverted commas) should be used to show direct speech, a quote within a quote, or to denote the title of a single poem, chapter, essay, article, journal, newspaper or section of a larger book.

If a quote requires punctuation in its original form, place the punctuation inside the quotation marks.

Place any punctuation that does not belong to the quote outside of the quotation marks; except for the closing punctuation if the end of the quote is also the end of the sentence.

When a sentence starts and leads into a quote, ensure a colon is added before the double quotation marks.

Neither double nor single quotation marks should be used to suggest emphasis or colloquial speech. If emphasis is needed then italics should be used.

When dealing with quotations that extend over more than one paragraph quotation marks should be used at the beginning of each paragraph, but left open to indicate that the original speaker is still talking. The quote should be closed at the end of the final paragraph. Quotation marks are used at the beginning of each sentence to show that you are still dealing with quoted material.

Example:
"I am delighted that you are considering coming to Loughborough University.

"I often ask our students what it is that they get particularly love about the University and I get a number of different responses.

"But the one thing that all our students agree is great is the strong community feel at Loughborough."

Hyphens

There are few set rules to follow when it comes to using hyphens. Below are some guidelines that will help.

Hyphens can be used:

when an adjective modifies a noun	eg 18-year-old student
to unify two words	eg hot-water bottle
to add a prefix	eg re-read
to prevent confusion	eg re-cover/recover
to keep two vowels apart	eg co-ordinate
to stop a word from looking unwieldy	eg anti-establishment
to join a letter with a word	eg x-ray
when writing numbers in full	eg twenty-one

If there is chance for confusion or difficulty reading a word, a hyphen is needed.

When using an adjective to modify a noun: if the adjective comes after the noun, the hyphen is not needed.

Example:
The 18-year-old student
The student is 18 years old

Different vowels can double up.

Example: reactive, proactive

Most prefix words exist in both forms (with and without a hyphen). If you can avoid the hyphen then do.

If you are unsure about hyphenation of a word, we would recommend checking the Oxford English Dictionary.

Ensure that usage of hyphens is consistent throughout your text.

SPELLING AND WORD USAGE

Points of reference and top tips

When writing on a computer, ensure you are using the UK version of spell-check not the American version which is usually the default.

If you are unsure of a spelling, our recommended point of reference is the Oxford English Dictionary. However, please note that the site uses –ize for words such as categorise and organisation – a style we are not recommending.

Be aware of words that sound the same but have different spellings for alternative meanings.

Examples that often cause errors include: enquiry/inquiry; lead/led; effect/affect; there/their; hear/here; compliment/complement, and stationary/stationery.

Jargon

Always consider all audiences, not just your intended audience, when using jargon in publications. This includes business-speak and corporate buzzwords.

It's tempting to use a word because it sounds authoritative, but don't; you will risk losing your audience's attention.

Jargon, formal language and complex words can also be seen as patronising and talking down to your reader.

Ideally jargon should be avoided, but may be appropriate in certain circumstances (such as an internal publication).

Never use exaggerated marketing statements – key messages and statistics are available in abundance to use. You should avoid distorting information and presenting it in a way that is misleading.

Always check announcements facts and figures before publishing a document or webpage. Misquoting data, achievements or figures reflects poorly on the reputation of the University and the University may be liable for breach of the Consumer Rights Act if the publication has been written for recruitment purposes.

Abbreviations, acronyms and symbols

Abbreviations and acronyms should only be used when absolutely necessary in publications, as they can alienate readers who are not familiar with them.
The first time you use an abbreviation or acronym, write the name in full followed by the abbreviation or acronym in brackets.
After this you can refer to it using just the initials.

Example: The Politics, History and International Relations (PHIR) Department at Loughborough University aims to...

PHIR are passionate about the subjects they teach and...

Use *and* rather than & or + unless the symbol is used as part of a brand name.

Example: Marks & Spencer

When using brackets, there should be no spaces put between the bracket and the content

Example: (Loughborough) NOT (Loughborough)

When using the slash mark to separate two words no spaces should be added either side of the slash.

Example:
Student/graduate NOT student / graduate

Full stops should not be used in the abbreviations eg or ie to show an example.

Misused words and spelling mistakes
Below is a selection of words and terms that are often misused in speech and writing.

A level
Our style preference is that the word A level always be written without a hyphen, and a capital letter is only needed on the A.

Alumni – using the right word
There are several different words you can use when talking about our alumni. Depending on how many people you are referring to, and whether the individuals are male or female will dictate the word you should use.

Alumnus refers to a male graduate of the University.

Example: "My brother is an alumnus of Loughborough University."

Alumna is used to refer to a female graduate of the University.

Example: "My sister, Karen, is an alumna of Loughborough University."

Alumni is the plural form of 'alumnus' and is used when referring to male graduates of the University.

Example: "Loughborough alumni Paul and Joe won awards at last night's ceremony."

'Alumni' is also used when talking about groups that include both male and female graduates.

Examples: "My brother and sister are alumni of Loughborough University."

"Alumni from the Design School held a reunion in the town."

'Alumni' is also sometimes used when referring to an individual graduate when gender is not specified. Although it is used by some, this term is classed as grammatically incorrect. We recommend using another term, such as graduate.

Example: "As a graduate of the University you are entitled to a number of benefits and discounts."

Alumnae is the plural form of 'alumna', used when referring to female graduates of the University.

Example: "Loughborough University alumnae Sarah, Rachel and Laura all secured jobs in accountancy."

Graduand and graduate
Graduand means someone who is eligible to graduate but hasn't yet.

Example: "On Wednesday 13th July, graduands from the School of the Arts, English and Drama will receive their degrees in a ceremony in the Sir David Wallace Sports Hall."

"We have an impressive array of honorary graduands lined up for this summer's degree ceremonies."

Graduate is used to describe those who have been presented with their degree.

Example: "After the degree ceremony, the graduates joined their friends and family for a celebratory event in the Sir Denis Rooke Building."

Referring to a master's degree
When referring to programmes/degrees generally a capital letter is not needed. An apostrophe before the 's' is needed though.

Example: I have a master's degree.

When using as a plural, the adjective (master's) does not become plural just the noun (degrees).

Example: We offer a variety of master's programmes.

When referring to a specific programme or degree, a capital is needed, but no apostrophe.

Example: The student was awarded a Master of Arts in Industrial Design and Technology.

The word master's should always be followed by the word degree. The use of the word master's on its own that implies the degree, is not technically correct.

Students' Union
This term is frequently used in marketing materials relating to higher education, and is also frequently misspelled. It's usually the position of the apostrophe that causes confusion.

The apostrophe comes after the 's' as the Union belongs to a number of students. Placing it before the 's' (Student's Union) would mean that the Union belonged to one student.

Capital letters should be used when referring directly to our Students' Union. Lower case should be used when using the term as a general reference rather than a specific university's union.

Example: Loughborough Students' Union was voted the top students' union in the country.

Vice-Chancellor
Vice-Chancellor should always be hyphenated.

Further guidance
Advice about these guidelines and proof reading support can be requested from the Marketing and Advancement team.
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