



Swansea  
University  
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Abertawe

# Swansea University

## Editorial Guidelines

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# We are Swansea University

The Swansea University brand is our reputation, heritage and a reflection of the way we do things and everything we stand for.

## Representing our brand in written communication

The tone and style of our writing helps us communicate our brand and differentiate from our competition.

How we say things is just as important as what we say.

Communicating in the same style over time helps build familiarity and becomes a recognisable part of our identity.

### **Who is this guide for?**

This guide is for anyone who writes on behalf of Swansea University.

### **Why is this guide important?**

The guidelines provide the general principles to follow when writing about Swansea University. It is important that your marketing materials correctly and consistently follow these guidelines to ensure we communicate our messages effectively and that our excellent work continues to strengthen the Swansea University brand.

### **Who can I ask for help?**

If you are unsure of anything after reading the guidelines, please contact the brand marketing team: [l.vaughan@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:l.vaughan@swansea.ac.uk)

# Tone of voice

Tone of voice is the way we express our brand in writing – what we say, and more importantly, how we say it. Every time we write something, we are reinforcing our personality, much as we all do individually when we convey ourselves every day.

Swansea University is a confident, inclusive and forward-thinking university; to portray this, our writing should have:

## Clarity

Clarity helps portray confidence. It also ensures our audience understands our messages. For example:

- University jargon, acronyms and scientific/technical language are part of our everyday work life, but are not understood by many of our audiences. Be mindful of jargon and use plain English alternatives, or provide a simple explanation to help with your audience's understanding. 'SoM' should always be written School of Management, or 'SEA' should be written Swansea Employability Academy

## Warmth

We are a welcoming and collaborative community and our writing should embody this. Write to your audience not at them. For example:

- Rather than writing "we'll teach you", write "you'll learn".
- Talking about our achievements has its place, but to level with our audience, we need to emphasise what makes Swansea University stand out in relation to their needs: "Our Support Services promote wellbeing, and will help you manage your finances, and get through things when life throws you a curve ball. Our team of experts are on-hand to guide you through anything and everything, every step of the way."

## Conviction

To reflect our confidence and ambition our writing needs to have conviction.

For example:

- Words like "might", "could", "aim to" and "we think" do not inspire confidence in our audiences.
- Give concrete examples wherever possible: "Our Alumni now work at Sky, the BBC and The Guardian."
- Use a strong, active voice instead of the impersonal, passive voice: "Covering a range of disciplines these courses are accessible to organisations" is passive. "Contact us about our bespoke training, which covers a range of disciplines and is accessible to organisations all over the world" is active.
- Create a positive and decisive tone by always writing about what things are rather than what they are not. To help, try avoiding statements that start with "don't" or "not" and the words "just" and "only". For instance, write: 'apply by...' rather than 'applications close by...'.

## Context

While the tone of our writing should be consistent, it's important to tailor your writing to a specific audience and consider the context in which the message is being viewed. When planning your copy, consider who you are communicating with, and the effect you want to achieve. For example:

When writing for business/industry:

- Consider what your target business' unique needs, goals, and challenges are. What problems are they experiencing? Avoid hyperbole and embellished text. Businesses and industry are aware the University is doing great things; what they want to know, in simple terms, is how we can help them.

When writing for students:

- Put your reader first. Students are not interested in how our departments are structured, they just need information that is clear, concise and of direct interest to them. "Swansea University Medical School works closely with the NHS to achieve excellence in teaching, research and clinical service, and we are proud that 90% of our graduates are in graduate level employment or undertaking further study six months after completing their studies."

The more thought and research you invest in defining your target audience and how you can help them, the more powerful your written communications will become.

## Some general tips on tone of voice

- Always use inclusive language, avoiding stereotypical terms that unnecessarily categorise people by attributes such as race, gender or disability. For example, say "student" rather than "Asian student", "chairperson" in place of "chairman" and "person with a disability" instead of "disabled person". Swansea has an excellent reputation for its diversity and inclusivity – we want to reinforce this through the language we use.
- Using personal pronouns such as "you" and "we" will help you write in an active voice. For instance, "undergraduates are taught by lecturers with exceptional qualifications" is passive while: "you will learn from exceptionally qualified lecturers" is active.
- Using descriptive adjectives and verbs (sparingly!) is a simple technique for injecting richer meaning and greater energy into your writing. For example, "Swansea University has two campuses" can be changed to: "Swansea University has two campuses, each with outstanding sea views."
- The meaning of our communications should always be accessible by our audience. As your audience changes, so should your writing, but remember though the focus shifts, the values that define us should be reflected consistently throughout all our communications.
- Don't rely on on-screen editing. Print out your document and read it aloud. If you encounter any awkwardness in speech you need to rewrite your piece to make it more conversational and to flow better.
- By reading your document aloud, you will also be able to spot typos and errors that your computer spelling and grammar check program might not have detected, for example, 'echo-friendly' when you really meant 'eco-friendly'.

## Abbreviations, acronyms and names

- Undergraduate and postgraduate, not UG and PG (except when shortening Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate to PGDip or PGCert)
- Department, not Dept. (unless you absolutely have to, eg to fit neatly into a table)
- No full stops in abbreviations - USA, not U.S.A. Eg, not e.g. and ie, not i.e.
- Write names in full and include the acronym in brackets after the first mention eg Sustainable Product Engineering Centre for Innovation in Functional Coatings (SPECIFIC). You can then use the acronym for further mentions.
- If space is an issue in, for example, headlines, it is OK to use an acronym but be sure to write the name in full followed by the acronym the next time you use it.
- Well known acronyms such as the BBC or NUS should be used without the full name.
- Professor, not Prof.
- Dr, not Doctor
- Mr JH Smith, not Mr J.H. Smith
- Swansea University not University of Swansea. This can be shortened to just 'the University' or 'Swansea' but use the full name for the first reference on any page and be wary of situations where 'Swansea' might be misconstrued as referring to the city.

## Alumni

If you need to refer to alumni:

- 'alumnus' means a male in the singular
- 'alumna' means a female in the singular
- 'alumni' means a mixed or all-male group
- 'alumnae' means an all-female group

## Apostrophes

Use 's when something belongs to one person or thing: 'It was Lucy's idea'; and s' when referring to something belonging to more than one person or thing: 'the Students' Union'.

## Apostrophes for words ending in s

Add an apostrophe plus s ('s) to common nouns ending in s, but only a stand-alone apostrophe to proper nouns ending in s:

*The class's hours*

*Mr Davies' golf clubs*

*The canvas's size*

*Wales' weather*

## Capitalisation

Titles should all be capitalised: *Vice-Chancellor*, as should Colleges: *College of Human and Health Sciences* unless they are just nouns eg: 'The **college** where you will study **health science** is the **College of Human and Health Sciences**.' The first words in bold are just nouns, the third instance is a proper name ie a name or a title. Use lower case when talking about 'professional services' or 'professional service departments'.

Capitalise 'the University' or 'the Department/School/Centre' when referring specifically to Swansea University or a specific part thereof, but use lower case when just using the words generically eg 'studying at university'; 'contact your department'. An easy test is: if you can replace the word 'university' with 'Swansea University' then it should be capitalised.

Chemical elements are always in lower case: *hydrogen*, the same for animals unless preceded by a proper noun: *Bengal tiger*.

## Colons and semicolons

Use colons to:

- introduce a list:  
Swansea University has eight academic colleges:
  - College of Arts and Humanities
  - College of Engineering
  - College of Human and Health Sciences
  - Hillary Rodham Clinton School of Law
  - School of Management
  - Swansea University Medical School
  - College of Science
  - The College, Swansea University
- add to what's been said before:  
Research as art: submit your photo now.
- introduce other sentences or questions:  
Tackling Japanese knotweed: a scientific approach

## Using semicolons

Use semicolons when linking two separate ideas that are closely related. Also use them in complicated lists that already contain commas:

- All audiences should understand our content. This isn't 'dumbing down'; it is opening up our knowledge for all.
- On Harry's desk you will find: The Oxford English Dictionary, for his wordy needs; the remnants of a pot plant, long-since dead; and an empty mug, crying out to be filled up with tea (milk, no sugar).

## Ellipsis (dot dot dot)

An ellipsis only has three dots...

You can use ellipses to show that text is missing, usually from a quotation. If a quote is too long, an ellipsis can be used instead of unnecessary words.

Spaces or brackets either side of the ellipsis aren't needed, eg:

Professor Andreoli said: "Carbon dioxide is responsible for much of the damage caused to our environment...an alternative to expensive long-term storage is to use the captured CO<sub>2</sub> as a resource to make useful materials."

## Numbers

- One to ten in words, after this in numbers: 11, 12, 13...
- 1 June 2016, not 1st June 2016 or June 1st 2016 (and definitely not 01 June 16).
- A range of years is shown as 1939-1945, not 1939-45. Use the conventional AD and BC rather than CE and BCE.
- Refer to an academic year as 'academic year 2018/19'. Avoid just using '2018/19' as that could be misconstrued as referring to two consecutive years.
- 20th century rather than twentieth century (except at the start of a sentence).
- Numbers above 1,000 have a comma (except reference numbers).
- Write thousands as a number and millions in words: £35,000, 18 million years ago. Avoid abbreviating to K or M. Round numbers up to one decimal place unless there is a particular need to be more exact.

## People and job titles

Use capital letters when referring to a specific individual and lower case when generalising or describing a role, for example:

- the head of science (note that this is not a title, just a description)
- the group of vice-chancellors met Chancellor, Professor Dame Jean Thomas.
- Use 'Emeritus' before the title of a retired person who has been allowed to keep that title as an honour, for example, 'Jon Roper, Emeritus Professor in American Studies'.
- If you are not using the person's full title, you should use the lowercase, 'emeritus', for example, 'the emeritus professor Jon Roper'.
- Do not use 'Professor Emeritus' or 'professor emeritus'. You should use 'Emeritus' or 'emeritus' for men and women.



## Presentation

- Avoid writing headings as questions. People scan the left-hand end of headings so they want to see relevant words ('Apply...', 'Contact...') not a succession of 'How do I...?'s and 'What is the...?'s.
- Avoid using bold, italics or underlined text for headings, instead use the Heading styles.
- Beware of rogue Capitals. For example, the **department** where students study **chemistry** is the **Department of Chemistry**. The first two words in bold are just nouns; the third bold bit is a proper noun (ie a name or title).
- Headings are much easier to read if only the first word is capitalised. The same is true of titles of books, papers etc.
- Links to PDF, Word, PowerPoint etc should have the file type in bracket afterwards so that people know what they are going to get. Don't use little icons to indicate this. However, there is generally no need to indicate file size unless it's huge. (And if it is huge, try to make it smaller!)

## Punctuation

Some words are always hyphenated eg *state-of-the-art*; *Vice-Chancellor*; *Pro-Vice-Chancellor*. But there are other words that are now so familiar that a hyphen is unnecessary eg *twentieth century*. Any rare usages should be hyphenated to avoid confusion eg *eel-like*.

Generally, hyphenate two or more words when they come before a noun they modify: *an off-campus apartment*. Though when a compound adjective follows a noun, a hyphen may or may not be necessary: *the apartment is off campus*.

- The ampersand (&) is used for logos and abbreviations. Avoid its use in ordinary text, including headlines.
- Do not put spaces either side of a slash (/).
- Put spaces both sides of a dash - which separates phrases - but no spaces around a hyphen, which is a word-separator.
- Put a space after, but not before, a colon (:), and a semi-colon (;)
- Use a colon to introduce lists. If the list introduction is a heading, you don't need any punctuation. There is no such punctuation as ':-'
- Never use more than one exclamation mark!!!
- One space after full stops, not two.
- No full stops in degree types - BSc, MA, PhD.
- The correct way to spell Master's degree is with the apostrophe. The s in master's indicates a possessive (the degree of a master), not a plural.
- If you're speaking of a specific degree, you should capitalise master and avoid creating a possessive: Master of Science. The same rules apply to a bachelor's degree.
- There are no apostrophes in decades or plural abbreviations: CDs were introduced in the 1980s.

## Quotation marks

- Quotation marks should be used at the start of the initial paragraph/end of final paragraph and not at the beginning of paragraphs in between.
- In dialogue the British convention is that the punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks, not outside. Therefore: "Just give me a moment," he said, "and I'll come right over." Not: "Just give me a moment", he said, "and I'll come right over".
- "Double quotes for direct speech," but single quotes for 'other stuff'.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose quotes within another quotation. Professor Withers said: "I always remember my old lecturer saying: 'The Egyptians were able to build the Pyramids simply because they had the time to do it'".

## Titles

As mentioned above *Dr* and *Professor*, not *Dr.* or *Prof.* *Ms Wendy J Snow* not *Ms. Wendy J. Snow*. Titles should be in capitals but not occupations eg *The Lord Mayor*; *ornithologist Peter Bird*.

## Titles of books, papers etc.

When quoted in text or listed in a bibliography, titles of books, journals, plays, and other freestanding works are italicised; titles of articles, chapters, and other shorter works are set in single quotation marks.

## Writing email addresses

- Write email addresses in lower case.
- Don't put a full stop at the end of email addresses.

## Writing about courses and qualifications

The correct way to write a course title is 'BSc (Honours) Chemistry' or 'BSc (Hons) Chemistry'. Note there is a space between 'BSc' and '(Honours)'.

## Referring to different qualifications

- BA (Honours)
- BEng (Honours)
- DBA
- HND
- MA
- MPhil
- MRes
- MSc
- MSci
- PgCert
- PgDip
- PhD

## Referring to undergraduate degree classifications

- 1st
- 2:1
- 2:2
- 3rd

## Writing about Erasmus+ programmes

Use 'Erasmus+ programmes' in all instances, not 'Erasmus programmes' without the plus sign.

## Writing about higher education

Use lower case, so 'higher education', not 'Higher Education'. You can also abbreviate it to 'HE'.

## Writing about postdoctoral research

'Postdoctoral' is one word. It isn't 'post-doctoral' or 'post doctoral'.

## Writing about money

When writing about money in a sentence:

- Only include a pence value if it is something other than 0
- Write values under £1 in pence, for example 45p
- Write values of £1 or more which don't have additional pence as whole numbers with no decimal point eg '£1' '£10'.

## Writing times

Use the 12-hour clock followed by 'am' or 'pm' in lower case. Times should be written without spaces, using a full stop to separate the minutes and hours: '9.30am' - unless there is some over-riding reason to use another format (eg train times).

If you are writing a page aimed at an international audience, you will need to consider your audience's time zone, using the 24-hour clock in these instances, for example, 'You can visit our stand at the International Fair, University of Hawaii from 13.30 HST' (Hawaii Standard Time).

# Everyday language use

It is always better to use the simple everyday terms, words or phrases that any articulate person would use in conversation.

Avoid a longer, less conversational word when you could use a shorter and more casual one with the same meaning, but never use colloquial words that are inappropriate, particularly within the context of higher education.

Here are some examples:

Better	<b>Not</b>	Superior
Try	<b>Not</b>	Endeavour
Enough	<b>Not</b>	Sufficient
Use	<b>Not</b>	Utilise
Need	<b>Not</b>	Growing demand
We are pleased	<b>Not</b>	We are excited
Clear	<b>Not</b>	Undisputed
Excellent	<b>Not</b>	Fantastic/amazing
We would like/appreciate	<b>Not</b>	We would love
Our lecturers have	<b>Not</b>	Our lecturers possess
As well/in addition	<b>Not</b>	Additionally
Alongside	<b>Not</b>	In conjunction with
Also	<b>Not</b>	Furthermore
Find	<b>Not</b>	Access
On hand or here	<b>Not</b>	Are available
Help	<b>Not</b>	Assist
Support	<b>Not</b>	Aid

The world is reading less. With visual stimuli usurping tracts of text, it is important to be able to convey a message succinctly. So, basically, use fewer words and a punchier writing style. For example, instead of: 'If you would like to receive further information about this course, or have questions or concerns, please contact us by etc', consider: 'Get in touch to find out more'.

Note: this is fine for marketing communications but may not apply to more formal correspondence.

Adding words that mean the same thing and which tend to dilute impact and lengthen the sentence (tautologies) can often creep into communications too.

Some examples are:

- Our team is totally committed
- We are utterly and completely focused
- It is a sad misfortune
- A new innovation
- Today's modern technology
- Actively promoting
- A varied range
- Exciting whirlwind
- Planning in advance
- Different alternatives

## Engaging your audience

Engaging writers bring their readers into the conversation. They make their readers feel they understand them and are addressing their interests and concerns. As you write, question whether your listener will have glazed over if you were talking in person to them.

Useful phrases to involve readers include:

- Our students tell us ...
- We understand from ...
- Now that we know...

Questions can help too but don't have too many in one space:

- Think we could help your business?
- What happens next?
- Want to find out more?

Statistics are effective, particularly at the start of a communications piece, but make sure you can stand by them ie, that they are true, and again, don't use too many.

## Avoid repetition

Don't use the same words in the same paragraph or on the same page if possible. Think of a different word or one with a similar meaning.

If you can't think of one, refer to an online thesaurus, then change the structure of the sentence.

For example:

Join

Be part of

Get involved

Launch

First

Start

Top

Leading

World-class

## General tips

### Do

- Remove all double spacing at the start of sentences – this is now only used in formal letter writing.
- Use British spelling (specialise, centre, organise) rather than US (specialize, center, organize).
- Use italics for the titles of publications eg *The Telegraph 2017*.
- After the first mention of Swansea University, do use the pronouns 'we', 'our' or 'us' or simply say the University.
- Back up what you say – 'Swansea University is in the top 10 in the UK', the top 10 what? Make sure you say universities. And for what? Student experience? And always qualify the source eg *THE, Good University Guide, 2016*.
- Go over your copy several times to see if words can be cut out. It may surprise you how many aren't needed.

### Don't

- Don't say 'are'. All companies and organisations are singular, so 'Swansea University is in the top 10...' not 'Swansea University are in the top 10...'. Other key words that are singular are: college, team and group.
- Don't begin sentences with a number written as a digit e.g. '3 in 10 students'. Write the number out in full - 'Three in 10 students'.
- Avoid long lists of abbreviations as they often look messy.
- Don't abbreviate commonly used words (eg Monday, not Mon; hours, not hrs).

## Use of bullet points

Bullet points are a useful way to impart information in a way that is easy to process quickly.

Here's a guide to how copy should be laid out.

Where the bulleted items are complete sentences or long phrases, each bullet starts with an uppercase word and ends in a full stop:

- IBM visited Swansea University's School of Management this week as part of a series of events organised jointly with Swansea University's Business Society.

Where the bulleted items are short, the points start with an uppercase word but no full stop appears at the end:

- Top 10 of UK Universities for Student Experience
- Celebrating our centenary in 2020

For further guidance please contact the Brand Marketing Team:

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