



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY

Australia's  
Global  
University

December 2017  
**Writing Style Guide**

## About the style guide

Like all our communications, the writing we produce should reflect our brand personality and help form a consistent opinion in the minds of our target markets.

Everything, from everyday letters and emails to wide-reaching advertising campaigns, contributes to building a strong brand – one that is easily identifiable, is memorable and sets us apart from our competitors.

The language we use is the voice of our brand and it should reflect the philosophy, personality and values that underpin UNSW. 'Never Stand Still' is an expression of the philosophy shared by both students and staff. It sets us apart as an institution and reflects the fact that we are rigorous and relevant, while still being progressive and engaged.

To differentiate ourselves from our competitors, UNSW should assert a clear and identifiable voice. We need to maintain an intelligent, thought provoking and conversational dialogue with our consumers. We should have a single minded confidence in what we offer and what we do.

Sometimes there are several ways to acceptably write a particular piece of language. It is important that communications from UNSW are consistent in style and application. This guide provides a consistent approach to writing for everyone representing UNSW to adopt.

This document is to be used in conjunction with the *UNSW Branding Requirements*, *Social Media and Mobile Application Branding Requirements* and *Website Branding Guidelines*. Anyone writing or designing for UNSW needs to be familiar with this suite of reference guides.

If you are still in doubt after checking this guide, please refer to the Australian Government's *Style manual for authors, editors and printers (current edition)* or contact Marketing Services.

For further information regarding branding and this guide please contact Creative Services.

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## A

## Abbreviations

*See also Acronyms; Brand – the University; Days of the week; E.g. and i.e.; Months of the year; States and territories.*

The best rule when using abbreviations is to consider your reader. Keep track of the number of abbreviations you use. Too many abbreviations and acronyms can make a document difficult to read and understand.

Abbreviations should be simple and do not require full stops except 'e.g.' and 'i.e.':

e.g. PhD, etc, Mr

Common abbreviations:

*Days*

Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat Sun

*Months*

Jan Feb Mar Apr May June July Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec

It is preferable that months are written in full unless the format or available space requires the more colloquial abbreviation. June, July and Sept may be further shortened to Jun, Jul and Sep in extremely space poor formats.

*States and Territories*

ACT NSW NT Qld SA Vic Tas WA

## Acronyms

*See also Abbreviations, Social media, Tone, Website writing.*

Acronyms are written without full stops.

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Type out the full name the first time you use it, with the acronym in brackets.

E.g. UNSW Foundation Studies (UFS)  
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)

Plural acronyms do not contain an apostrophe and the 's' is always lower case.

E.g. UNSWILs students study at either Kensington or Randwick.

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## Active voice

We speak to our audiences in an active voice and write in the first person: 'we', 'our', 'us' or 'UNSW'.

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## Acts

When the word 'Act' (or 'Code') is used to describe legislation, it should always begin with a capital 'A' (or 'C'), whether used in the singular or plural.

When an Act is first mentioned, give its title in full. Use italics for the full title of the Act and include the date. Don't insert a comma between the name and the date:

e.g. *Copyright Act 1968*

As we have state and territory as well as Commonwealth legislation in Australia, it may be necessary to indicate the jurisdiction in abbreviated form. Write it in non-italic text and in parentheses (round brackets) following the date:

e.g. *Copyright Act 1968* (Cwlth)

In subsequent references, there's no need to refer to its jurisdiction or date. In such cases, no italics are required:

e.g. *Copyright Act*

However, the jurisdiction should be included if confusion may arise in the text (e.g. between State and Commonwealth Acts being discussed at the same time).

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## Addresses

Addresses should include commas only in cases where the address details would be confusing without them.

E.g. UNSW Sydney, NSW 2052  
Come to Level 1, Faculty of Law, UNSW Sydney

The University's address is always presented as:

UNSW SYDNEY NSW 2052 AUSTRALIA

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## Alignment

The University's preferred style is to left-align (not justify) text on a page.

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## Ampersands ( & )

*See also Names and titles*

An ampersand should not be used in general body copy or tables, unless space is at a premium. It's preferable to use the complete 'and' rather than the ampersand.

But there are some exceptions:

- headings or proper nouns, e.g. News & Media
- a company that chooses to have an ampersand, e.g. P&O
- job titles, e.g. Tony Smith, Manager, Communications & Public Affairs.

When citing authors, use 'and' in body text but an ampersand in parentheses:

e.g. Smith and Jones (2004) argue that financial reporting is becoming increasingly consistent globally.

Financial reporting is becoming increasing consistent globally (Smith & Jones 2004).

In the *Branding guidelines* (Typography – Best practice section) there is a note regarding use of the ampersand in the UNSW title font – Sommet. The Sommet ampersand has been modified from its original form to enhance legibility. The adapted version is available for designer use and downloadable from myUNSW. Please avoid using ampersands when and where possible within communications. Designers must use the adapted ampersand.

## Apostrophes ( ' )

Apostrophes are mostly used for contractions (e.g. that is = that's) and possession (e.g. Peter's car). Note that 'it's' with an apostrophe is a contraction for 'it is' or 'it has'. It is a mistake to use it's as a possessive:

e.g. Its tail is long. ✓ It's tail is long. ✗

It's common for the apostrophe to be dropped in certain titles and expressions:

e.g. Mothers Day

## B

## Bold or coloured type

*See also Italics.*

Don't use bold to emphasise words unless absolutely necessary. Bold font or coloured type is generally only used in headings and subheadings.

Bold can also be used, sparingly, to emphasise key points, words or phrases. Over-use will prevent the key points from standing out and thus defeat the purpose of using bold in the first place.

In printed marketing material, URLs should be written in bold.

## Brackets: ( ) or [ ]

Round brackets (parentheses) can be used to insert a comment or technical detail into text:

e.g. Most respondents (56%) approved the measure.

It is acceptable, though rather undesirable, to have round brackets within round brackets in certain circumstances:

e.g. Under the legislation (Copyright Act 1968 (Cwlth)) companies must ...

In quoted text, square brackets can be used for editorial clarifications or to fill a gap:

e.g. The student said, 'The course [i.e. History] sounds really interesting.'

If you use an ellipsis (three dots to indicate missing text) there is no need to put it in square brackets:

e.g. The Director said, 'The course will have an effect on ... the students.' ✓  
The Director said, 'The course will have an effect on [...] the students.' ✗

## Brand – the University

University (capital U for this university, lower case for others or general). The first mention of the University in any communication internationally must be 'UNSW Sydney'. If necessary to ensure recognition, this first mention may be 'UNSW Sydney (The University of New South Wales)'. Domestically, either 'UNSW Sydney' or 'UNSW' as the first mention will be acceptable and to ensure recognition the first mention may be followed by '(The University of New South Wales)'. Subsequent mentions both internationally and domestically must then be 'UNSW'.

## Bullet points and lists

Bullets are good for listing things and are generally preferable to numbers or letters because they're clearer. They are also ideal for web content because they're easy for the eye to scan.

As a rule, you shouldn't use more than nine items in a list, and the ideal number is three to five.

e.g. The following law degrees are offered at UNSW:

- Bachelor of Science (Advanced Science) / Bachelor of Laws
- Bachelor of Science (Advanced Maths) / Bachelor of Laws
- Bachelor of Fine Arts / Bachelor of Laws

Numbers or letters in lists should be kept for cases where you need to show an order or priority in a series or where individual items need to be referenced later.

e.g. Instructions for customising and uploading template:

1. Create your own UNSW broadcast email banner template (psd) and save.
2. Right click on template and 'Save Target As...' or 'Save link as...'.
3. On the Mailchimp dashboard select 'My Templates' (situated on the left hand side under 'Create Campaign').

Try to avoid using punctuation at the end of each bullet point item. Normally, there's no need to add 'and' or 'or' at the end of any dot points if a carefully worded lead-in precedes the list.

e.g. To be considered for an undergraduate degree you will be assessed on your performance in:

- Australian or New Zealand Senior Secondary studies
- university or other post-secondary qualifications
- equivalent overseas qualifications, or
- an alternative entry qualification.

Primary bullet point lists are always preceded by a colon, secondary bullet lists (i.e. bullet points that are a sub-point of an existing bullet point item) are marked not with a dot but an en dash and are not preceded by a colon.

e.g. Each of Australia's eight states and territories are divided into regions:

- New South Wales
  - Blue Mountains
  - Central Coast
- Queensland
  - Far North Queensland
  - Gulf Country
  - South East Queensland

Capitals – Capitalisation for dot-point series follows normal sentence rules. If all the dot points are full sentences, each should start with a capital. If each dot point consists of, or begins with, a sentence fragment, no initial capital is used.

In almost all cases, bullet points are defined as dot points.

## C

### Capital letters

*See also Degree, Faculties and schools, Names and titles.*

The trend in modern business writing is to reduce the number of capitals used and, as a result, words like 'report' and 'manager' are not capitalised.

Keep capitals to a minimum; they should only be used at the start of a sentence and for proper nouns.

The University's preferred style is not to capitalise where possible. So sentence case is used for most headings and page titles.

Avoid using fully capitalised titles, headings and sub headings. Capitals are difficult to read in large quantities and they make it seem as though you are shouting. It is also difficult to spot spelling errors. The Sommet font also doesn't adapt well to being fully capitalised.

e.g. Financial reporting web page

Within headings only capitalise proper nouns (names/titles):

e.g. An outline of Australian Tax Office standards

For book titles, use sentence case (only first word capitalised) and italics:

e.g. *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* ✓  
*Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* ✗

For journals, periodicals and legislation use title case (each significant word capitalised) and italics:

e.g. *Australian Journal of Financial Reporting*

Products and events are considered proper nouns and should also be written with capitals:

e.g. The Postgraduate Expo is to be held on Thursday. ✓  
36<sup>th</sup> Australian Conference on Industrial Relations and Social Policy ✗

Job titles are capitalised when they refer to a specific person:

e.g. John Smith, Financial Accountant, had this to say ...  
The Financial Accountant had this to say ...

But job titles are lower case if the reference is more general:

e.g. Being a financial accountant is not easy.

Institutional names should be capitalised when referring to specific bodies:

e.g. UNSW Sydney  
Faculty of Engineering  
Graduate Research School  
School of Philosophy

However, when referring to these institutions in general, use lower case:

e.g. Students attended from six universities, nine faculties and 21 departments.

Coursework related capitals:

e.g. Bachelor of Science  
Master of Arts  
Art (when the name of a major)

Terms that should appear as lower case:

#### *Areas of study*

e.g. geography, biology

#### *Non-award*

Bachelors e.g. he/she has a bachelors degree.  
Masters e.g. he/she has a masters degree.

## Colons ( : )

*See also Bullet points and lists.*

In a sentence or heading a colon can be used to show that examples or further information are about to come (note no capital letter after colon):

e.g. All the elements were on the page: logos, tables, copy and graphics.

In a book title, a colon can introduce the subtitle (note capital letter after colon):

e.g. *The definitive business plan: A fast-track to intelligent business planning for executives and entrepreneurs.*

In a bullet list the introductory statement should end with a colon:

e.g. Business executives should:  
• conduct regular audits ...

A colon can also be used for ratios:

e.g. 2:1

But for times of the day, use a full stop not a colon:

e.g. 2.30pm ✓ 2:30pm ✗

## Commas ( , )

Commas are crucial in lists (note no comma before 'and'):

e.g. Students can attend events, lectures, tutorials and study groups.

Occasionally a comma is needed before 'and' for clarity (e.g. after 'conveyancers' in the following):

e.g. We engage barristers, conveyancers, and copyright and intellectual property lawyers.

A comma can indicate an opening statement in a sentence, giving the reader a short pause for better readability:

e.g. Despite repeated efforts to contact the regulator, we have had no further information on this matter.

But if the opening statement is five words or less, the comma is usually optional (often comes down to personal taste):

e.g. On 24 June 2007 the matter was presented to Parliament.  
On 24 June 2007, the matter was presented to Parliament.

A pair of commas, not just one, should be used to separate a subordinate clause (the 'added' part of the sentence you would normally say in a lower voice):

e.g. The best way to see Sydney, unless you suffer from sea-sickness, is by ferry. ✓

The best way to see Sydney unless you suffer from sea-sickness, is by ferry. ✗

## Countries

Always give the names of countries in full, not shortened, in body text:

e.g. United Kingdom ✓    United States ✓    New Zealand ✓  
UK ✗                    US ✗                    NZ ✗

Shortened forms should be used only when space is at a premium (e.g. in tables, illustrations, notes, lists, overseas currency and social media):

e.g. US\$25.90

## D

### Dashes

*See also Hyphens.*

Dashes give impact or 'punch' to a sentence and hence should be used sparingly (overuse reduces their impact). Only use them when commas are not enough, as in the following examples.

A single dash allows you to add something with impact to the end of a sentence:

e.g. It was over – no doubt about it.

A pair of dashes can surround a statement that intrudes into a sentence (here they act like parentheses but with more impact):

e.g. The company – there's no need to say its name – was facing ruin.

Use an en dash (medium length, with space on either side), not an em dash (longer, with no spaces):

e.g. It was over – no doubt about it. ✓    It was over—no doubt about it. ✗

A hyphen should not be used in place of a dash:

e.g. It was over - no doubt about it.

To do an en dash and em dash in Word (insert > symbol > special character > insert).

An en dash can also be used for:

- a span of numbers: e.g. pages 24 – 32
- to show an association between words that retain their separate identities
- to link prefixes with what follows in specific circumstances
- to join some types of compound adjectives.



An em dash has three main uses:

- to signify an abrupt change
- to introduce an amplification or explanation replacing a colon or semicolon for more emphasis to the information following
- to isolate a parenthetical expression within a sentence.

An em dash should not be spaced.

## Dates

*See also Abbreviations; Times.*

The way to indicate a full date in body copy is day, date, month and year:

e.g. Monday, 20 March 2011

Do not include 'st', 'nd', 'rd' or 'th' after a date.

It is only necessary to include the day of the week if you think that information will be useful to the reader. Usually you would just write date, month and year:

e.g. 20 March 2011

If space is at a premium (e.g. within a table) or where there is character limitation in some online formats (e.g. Twitter) it is acceptable to abbreviate the month.

e.g. 20 Mar 2011

If you're stating a period of time that spans two years, the second year should be treated the same as the first:

e.g. 2007–2008

Our preferred format is 2007–2008, not 2007/2008 or 2007/08.

- 1990s (not 1990's)

## Days of the week

In body text, days of the week should be spelled in full, and always with a capital letter:

e.g. Monday

In tables or brackets, or other places where space is restricted, you can use the abbreviated forms – but don't use a full stop after them. Abbreviate as follows:

- M Tu W Th F Sa Su

## Defamation

A defamatory statement about a person or corporation is a statement that lowers the reputation of that individual or organisation. It is particularly important to consider this on social networking/community sites where any user can publish their opinions in forums or discussion groups. If you come across a defamatory statement, or are in any doubt about this, please notify the Marketing Services team immediately.

## Degrees

Titles and types of degrees should only be capitalised when referring to a specific course or awarded degree.

E.g. Rachel studied for a Master of Design.  
The Bachelor of Commerce program  
He graduated with a Bachelor of Mathematics and Economics (Honours).

but

- He decided to return to university for a master's degree.
- The Faculty of Law offers bachelor's and master's degrees.

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## Dictionary

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The *Macquarie dictionary* is the preferred dictionary of the University. You can also refer to the Australian Government's *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*. Marketing Services keep a copy of both these publications.

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## Disclaimers

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Disclaimers can be used to:

- warn about the general nature of the material (its accuracy or reliability)
- urge the user to seek professional advice.

In hard copy disclaimers are often included near the front of a document (e.g. on the inside cover). Online, disclaimers are best placed as a link. It's also useful to include a disclaimer in other channels of content publishing (e.g. at the beginning or end of a podcast).

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## E

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### -ed and -t

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When a word can end in either -ed or -t, choose -ed:

e.g. learned ✓ learnt ✗

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## E.g. and i.e.

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In body text it's best to use 'for example' and 'that is' in full. But it's common for 'e.g.' and 'i.e.' to be used where space is limited (e.g. tables, illustrations, notes, captions, parentheses):

e.g. Many companies (e.g. BHP, QBE) have opposed ...

While it's common to drop full stops for abbreviations these days, we still retain them for these terms:

e.g. i.e. ✓ eg eg. ie ie. ✗

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## Email addresses

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*See Web and email addresses.*

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## En rule/dash

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*See Dashes; Hyphens.*

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## Etc

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etc ✓ etc. ✗

Note: you should use 'etc' sparingly.

## F

## Faculties and schools

Faculty and school: capitalised where referring to a specific faculty and in lower case when referring to a non-specific faculty.

- E.g. The student wanted to go to the Faculty of Engineering.  
 The student wanted to go to a faculty of engineering.  
 The student is studying electronic engineering.  
 The student is studying at the School of Engineering.  
 The Engineering staff taught...  
 The engineering staff from four universities gathered for the conference.

## Font

Please follow the font use principles as specified in the *Brand requirements* document found on myUNSW.

## Full stops

Use full stops for ending a sentence. However do not use full stops for:

- headings
- short display lists
- page headers
- captions that are not complete sentences
- index entries
- symbols for units of measurement
- certain types of shortened forms (km, L, m, kg)
- after abbreviations: p 26, no 2, pp 2 – 20.

## H

## Headings and subheadings

As a general rule, headings should be no more than five words long and subheadings should be no more than eight. This isn't a hard-and-fast rule and may be influenced by the design or layout.

For headings use sentence case (only first word capitalised):

- e.g. Connecting employers and students ✓  
 Connecting Employers and Students ✗

But retain capitals for names or titles within headings:

- e.g. Contact between Optus and its customers.

When writing online, use clear, informative headings and subheadings that let your readers know immediately what the page is about. This will also help structure your ideas logically and allow readers to scan the page.

## Highlighting words

*See Bold or coloured type; Italics; Underlining.*

## Hyphens ( - )

*See also En rule, Spelling.*

Generally we don't use hyphens within words:

- e.g. email, coordinate, cooperate

But certain words still have a hyphen:

- e.g. re-sign (different meaning to 'resign'), re-evaluate (to separate one 'e' from the other) e-commerce (still the accepted spelling)

If in doubt, check the Macquarie dictionary.

Hyphens can also be used to link separate words in front of a noun:

e.g. I have a part-time job. ✓ I have a part time job. ✗

We have state-of-the-art equipment. ✓ We have state of the art equipment. ✗

We have up-to-date information. ✓ We have up to date information. ✗

Note that the hyphen is dropped when not in front of a noun:

e.g. I work part time. ✓ I work part-time. ✗

Our equipment is state of the art. ✓ Our equipment is state-of-the-art ✗

Our information is up to date. ✓ Our information is up-to-date. ✗

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I

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## Internet

the internet ✓ the Internet ✗

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## Italics

See also *Magazine titles*; *Quotation marks*.

Use italics for names of publications, magazine titles, legal citations, ordinances, standards and Acts (but not Bills), less common Latin terms, and unfamiliar foreign words:

e.g. *Sydney Morning Herald*

Italics can also be used when expressing thoughts:

e.g. I wondered, *what if we established a forum to address this?*

Italics can be used to emphasise words, but this should be done sparingly. An entire page littered with italics will fail to emphasise anything.

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J

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## Job titles

See *Names and titles*.

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L

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## Less or fewer

People often confuse 'less' and 'fewer'. The trick is to understand the difference between countable nouns (e.g. dog – as in 'five dogs') and non-countable nouns (e.g. health – you can't say 'five healths').

If you can count the noun, use 'fewer':

e.g. There were fewer than 30 people at the conference. ✓

There were less than 30 people at the conference. ✗

If you can't count the noun, use 'less':

e.g. Many people have less money available for luxury items.

To complicate matters, some nouns are both countable and non-countable, depending on meaning and context:

e.g. I called her at least five times. ('Time' is countable here).

We have less time than we thought. ('Time' is non-countable here)

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## Lists

See *Bullet points and lists*.

## M

## Magazine titles

*See also Italics.*

Always italicise and use title case (each significant word capitalised) for magazine, journal and newspaper titles:

e.g. *Wall Street Journal, The Economist*

## Measurements and money

All measurements should be metric. Always use contractions for 'km', 'kg' and 'g', and have them right against the number (no space):

e.g. 29km, 500kg, 20mm, 4.15pm

Within body copy, where sums of money are expressed in figures, do not use decimal points for whole dollar amounts:

e.g. \$45 ✓ \$45.00 ✗

But do use the decimal point if you need to include cents, or if writing a list where some figures require cents and some don't:

e.g. Tickets are still available for the event, priced at \$54.50, \$85.95 or \$170.00.

## Months of the year

*See also Abbreviations.*

In body text, months of the year should be spelt in full.

In tables or brackets, or other places where space is restricted. In these instances you can use:

- Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec

It is preferable that months are written in full unless the format or available space requires the more colloquial abbreviation. June, July and Sept may be further shortened to Jun, Jul and Sep if necessary.

## N

## Names and titles

*See also Capital letters.*

Job titles should appear in capitals when they refer to a person by name:

e.g. John Smith, Marketing Manager, said he approved of the ruling.

Use lower case when the person's name is not mentioned:

e.g. The manager of marketing said he approved of the ruling.

Except in letters or media releases do not use Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss before people's names but do use certain titles, such as Prof and Dr.

Don't use full stops after these titles (except for 'The Hon.').

Don't capital titles unless they are academic e.g. Professor.

## Numbers

Write numbers in full from one to nine, then use digits (10, 11 ...).

e.g. There were five students present.  
There were 20 students present.

Also, avoid '1st', '2nd', '3rd', etc. Instead, write 'first', 'second', 'third', etc. For dates simply use the numeral e.g. 1 March, 22 June.

However, there are some exceptions:

- in tables use digits
- for mathematical terms and figures use digits: e.g. 5%
- at the start of a sentence write all numbers in full: e.g. Forty-four years have passed since then
- when referring to decades use digits: e.g. Living in the 1970s
- for a span of numbers use digits: e.g. 1–17 not one–17
- on web pages and social media there is a trend to using digits for all numbers (even 1 to 9); this is acceptable but there are times when the whole word is still better, e.g. This is one problem we don't want.
- when referring to dollars the words 'million' and 'billion' should be spelled out, with a space: e.g. \$1 million \$1 billion
- if you are referring to academic terms or levels use numbers. Such as Level 1, 2, 3 or Semester 1, Semester 2.

Numbers of four digits or more require a comma and should not use spaces:

e.g. 1,000 34,546 ✓ 1000 34 546 ✗

## P

### Per cent or %

Write '%', even in body text:

e.g. A figure of 20% was suggested.

An exception is at the start of a sentence, where you would spell out the number as well:

e.g. Twenty-three per cent of respondents did not agree.

## Post-nominals

*See also Qualification, awards and honours.*

Post-nominals are written without punctuation or spacing:

e.g. BBus LLB DipEd AO

The order of appearance is: university degrees first, for instance PhD, MA, BA, then professional associations membership, then member of parliament).

## Pronouns (you, we ...)

Formal business style does not refer to customers/readers as 'you' or an organisation as 'us'. However, modern business style allows these terms, and the University follows this style in most communications:

e.g. We are pleased to offer you an exclusive offer through our Network Schools Program.

The exception to this is in our magazines and media releases, where a 'news style' is adopted:

e.g. The University's Network Schools Program has an exclusive offer for members.

## Punctuation

*See also Dashes; Full stops; Hyphens; Quotation marks; Spacing after full stop.*

- Use one space (not two) after a full stop.
- Use single quotation marks, not double. Use double quotation marks only for a quote within a quote.
- An ellipsis consists of three points with a space before and after:

e.g. What comes after ... is always more interesting.

## Q

## Qualifications, awards and honours

See also *Post-nominals*.

Academic honours are shown without punctuation or spaces:

e.g. BBus DipEd AO CA FCA

## Quotation marks

See also *Italics*.

Use single quotation marks for quoted text:

e.g. The Minister said, 'This is absolutely unacceptable behaviour'.

Use double quotation marks only for quotes within quotes:

e.g. 'He shouted "help" so I ran to help him', she said.

(But note that our magazines and our media releases use double quotation marks for quoted text, as per publishing conventions.)

Use quotation marks around titles of articles, essays, lectures, short poems, songs, radio and TV programs.

You can also use quotation marks to indicate ironic usage or slang:

e.g. It is not considered to be 'fair dinkum'.

Finally, note that the closing quotation mark should go 'inside' the full stop or comma except if the whole of the sentence is a quotation:

e.g. The Minister said, 'This is absolutely unacceptable behaviour'. ✓  
 The Minister said, 'This is absolutely unacceptable behaviour.' ✗  
 'We have successfully developed new treatment strategies.' ✓  
 'We have successfully developed new treatment strategies.' ✗

## S

## 's' and 'z'

Follow Australian not United States standard for words ending in '-isation' or '-ising':

e.g. organisation organising ✓ organization organizing ✗

## Salutations (Ms, Mr, Yours sincerely ...)

When using salutations such as Mr, Ms, Miss or Mrs do not add a comma after the salutation:

e.g. Dear Ms Collins ✓ Dear Ms Collins, ✗

If you know the name of the recipient sign off with 'Yours sincerely'.

If you don't know their name sign off with 'Yours faithfully'.

Do not insert a comma after either of these sign-offs.

## Semicolons ( ; )

See also *Bullet points and lists*.

A semicolon is a cross between a full stop and a comma (as the semicolon symbol suggests). Accordingly, it has two main uses.

Firstly, it can be used as a 'weak full stop', joining two sentences to emphasise their linked meaning:

e.g. Sport is full of upsets; that's why we love it.

Secondly, it can be used as a ‘strong comma’ to give structure to a long list-style sentence containing many commas:

e.g. We advise buying blue chip shares, particularly banks and insurance companies; property, though only in the major cities; and bonds, unless government regulations change dramatically before the end of the year.

Note: We do not use semicolons at the end of each item in a bullet list.

## Social media

See also *Active voice, Tone*.

Social media is a new and evolving environment and we have to adapt our writing to this. There are some important differences between how we present the University on Twitter compared to *Uniken magazine*, for example.

Our *Brand requirements* state that our tone of voice must be ‘confident, assured, imaginative, straightforward and secure’. Social media communication must adhere to this but there are some slight differences.

Traditional media, such as print, is often more formal than social media. Just as the formality of a letter’s ‘Dear Sir’ has become the introductory ‘Jim’ of email, so too must we adapt to the informality of social media. That means being a little more conversational and much less conservative.

So, for social media only, we have a more flexible approach to writing and it is acceptable to use more abbreviations (e.g. UK, US, EU) and to express numbers one to nine as digits (e.g. 1 – 9).

## Spacing after full stop

Use a single space (not double) after a full stop at the end of a sentence:

e.g. He stayed two weeks in Rome. After this he returned home. ✓  
He stayed two weeks in Rome. After this he returned home. ✗

In the days of typewriters, a double space was commonly used so there would be a clear gap between sentences. But these days there is no need for a double space as a full stop on a computer has some extra space automatically ‘built in’.

## Spelling, UNSW terminology and miscellaneous words

See also ‘s’ and ‘z’, *UNSW terminology*.

Some words change over time, so there may be more than one acceptable spelling:

e.g. child care, childcare

Where two spellings exist for the one word, check the Macquarie dictionary (which keeps close track of word changes in Australia) and choose the main one:

e.g. goodwill (main entry in Macquarie)  
good will (Macquarie notes ‘Also good will’ but it’s not the main entry)

Use Australian not American spellings:

e.g. organisation favour ✓ organization favor ✗

### UNSW terminology

- UNSW Student Services – do not abbreviate to SS
- Student Central
- myUNSW
- Commonwealth supported students rather than ‘HECS students’
- Local student rather than ‘domestic’
- International student rather than ‘overseas’
- Student contribution charge rather than ‘HECS liability’
- Student contribution band rather than ‘HECS band’
- UniMail
- UniPass
- IT Service Desk



**Miscellaneous words**

am / pm:	6.00am ✓	6 a.m. ✗
Among:	among ✓ (Exception: use 'amongst' in the expression 'get amongst it'.)	amongst ✗
chair:	chair ✓	Chairperson, Chairman ✗
FEE-HELP:	FEE-HELP ✓	PELS ✗
HECS-HELP:	HECS-HELP ✓	HECS ✗
HELP:	HELP debt ✓	HECS debt/PELS debt ✗
Units of credit:	units of credit, UOC ✓	Units of Credit, uoc, U.O.C ✗
While:	While ✓	whilst ✗

Correct spelling of particular words follow:

A	E	H
Aboriginal	e-commerce	handcrafted
ageing	email	healthcare (a) & (n)high-profile (a)
Alzheimer's disease	Emeriti professors	high-tech
antidepressant	Enquiry (not inquiry)	home-grown
arm's length	et al	
	ever-changing	I
<b>B</b>	extra-tropical (a)	Indigenous
board (not Board)		interdisciplinary
	F	
<b>C</b>	Facebook	K
centre	Federal Government	kick-start
child care (n)	Focused	
child-care (a)	Fowlers Gap Research Station	L
co-opt	full time	large-scale (a)
cooperate	fundraising	life saving
cooperative		life span
coordinate	G	lifestyle
corequisite	government-run (a)	lifetime
counterproductive	greenfield	LinkedIn
coursework	greenhouse gas emissions	long standing

M	R	U
master plan	prerequisite	trailblazer
mid-1990s	program	Twitter
multidisciplinary		21st century
multimedia	redevelop	
multiracial	redevelopment	underway
	re-examination	upside down
N	risk-taking	
nation-building	road trip	V
newly formed		verandah
no-one	S	vice versa
	semitrailer	video recording
O	sizeable	
one third	socioeconomic	W
online	Southern Hemisphere	webpage
onsite (a)	state	website (not Website)
over-represented	storm water	wellbeing
	subgroup	well-known
P	sub-specialty	Western
part time	surfboat	world-class (a)
per cent	T	world-leading
policy makers	targeted	
post-doctoral	timeline	
postgraduate		

**States and territories**

See also *Abbreviations*; *Capitals*, *Italics*.

Use initial capitals for full titles when referring to the Australian States and Territories, but not for general references:

e.g. The South Australian Government initiated the project.  
The state government initiated the project.

States and territories are best spelled in full, unless space is limited or if there is a common convention to abbreviate:

e.g. 10 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Abbreviate as follows:

ACT NT Qld NSW SA Tas Vic WA

## T

## Telephone and fax numbers

Telephone and fax numbers should use the area code with brackets. Only use the international code if your communication is likely to be read overseas.

E.g. (02) 9385 XXXX  
+61 2 9382 XXXX  
1800 333 444  
13 12 13

## Their

Strictly speaking, 'their' is the plural possessive pronoun. In other words, it means 'belonging to more than one person':

e.g. All students must be careful with their answers.

However, in most cases, 'their' is now acceptable for the singular as well:

e.g. Each student must be careful with their answers.

This neatly avoids the old-fashioned and awkward 'he/she' problem:

- Each contestant must be careful with his answers.
- Each contestant must be careful with his or her answers.
- Each contestant must be careful with his/her answers.

But using 'he' or 'she' is fine if you know the person's sex:

e.g. Every woman over 50 should see her doctor for a checkup.

## Times

*See also Abbreviations; Dates.*

A full stop should be used to separate the hours from the minutes. Two zeros may be used to indicate even hours but are not essential. It is at the discretion on the space and medium being used.

Under the twelve-hour system, practice differs on the presentation of noon and midnight. Where confusion could be caused by using 12am or 12pm, it is preferable to use the terms noon and midnight.

e.g. 9am, 9.00am

## Titles

*See Names and titles.*

## Tone

*See also Active voice, Social media.*

Our tone of voice should reflect a brand that is modern and contemporary. We are prestigious but we are not elitist. When writing copy you should ask yourself if it reflects the UNSW tone of voice, which is:

- progressive
- engaged
- contemporary
- intelligent but still approachable and friendly
- aspirational.

## U

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## Underline

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*See also Bold; Italics.*

Never use underlining even for emphasis. There are two good reasons for this:

- it affects legibility by covering the parts of letters that descend below the line
- it has become an established way of showing hyperlinks.

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## University

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University (capital U for this university, lower case for others or general). The first mention of the University in any communication internationally must be 'UNSW Sydney'. If necessary to ensure recognition, this first mention may be 'UNSW Sydney (The University of New South Wales)'. Domestically, either 'UNSW Sydney' or 'UNSW' as the first mention will be acceptable and to ensure recognition the first mention may be followed by '(The University of New South Wales)'. Subsequent mentions both internationally and domestically must then be 'UNSW'.

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## URLs

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*See also Web and email addresses.*

In printed material, the University's URL should be stated without 'www':

e.g. unsw.edu.au

This is also the case for hyperlinks on the University's websites.

The www element is not always necessary: it depends on how the URL has been registered. Ensure your web page works before printing any material.

However, in emails and electronic documents it is acceptable to include 'www' and also 'http://' because this allows the URL to be a hyperlink, which is therefore more useful to the reader.

External websites should always include 'www' at all times, whether in printed material, on the website or in an email.

When writing the word 'URL' in text, write as follows:

e.g. a URL ✓ an URL ✗

## W

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## web, the

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the web ✓ the Web ✗

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## Web and email addresses

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*See also URLs.*

Try not to place email and web addresses in a sentence; instead, show them as a separate contact block.

Ideally remove personal email addresses altogether. When staff are sick or on leave, the email may be unanswered. Instead, set up a team/group email address.

When writing online, it's advisable not to write email addresses or URLs in full. Instead, write the addressee's name and then insert a hyperlink for the reader to click on:

e.g. Jane Smith (i.e. a hyperlink) ✓ jane.smith@unsw.edu.au ✗

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## Website writing

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The general rule when preparing web copy is to think about the reader, particularly since 79% of readers scan a web page instead of reading word for word.

When writing for our website you can afford to be a little bit less formal than you would in a letter or a magazine article. Your writing should still reflect our brand (quality, professional writing is a must) but it is acceptable to use second person and third person pronouns such as 'we' and 'our' (when referring to the University) and 'you' (when referring to the reader). In most instances, you will find it helpful to use 'the University' early on in the article, before then using 'we' and 'our' thereafter.

Obviously common sense should always prevail. If you are writing a formal piece for the website then it may be necessary to write more formally (for example, it may be better to use the terms 'the University' and 'students' instead of 'we' and 'you').

When publishing content for the web use:

- short, informative headings
- familiar, everyday words
- precise language (no unnecessary words)
- links that clearly describe what users will be clicking to
- active voice rather than passive voice.

Contact Marketing Services for any  
branding queries.

[branding@unsw.edu.au](mailto:branding@unsw.edu.au)

UNSW adheres to best practice in sustainability of printing  
and uses sustainable paper. The UNSW community strives to  
live, learn and work sustainably.

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