UBC BRAND

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE FOR UBC COMMUNICATORS

2021 | VERSION 2.0

Dear Colleagues,

Communicators have important work to do on behalf of UBC. The speed at which communications now move means we must be highly effective at expressing the value we create in the world and delivering on that promise in all we communicate. The work of creating a world-renowned UBC brand depends upon a collective, tireless effort to communicate, engage and deliver exceptional experiences for all those we come into contact with each and every day.

Our goal is to ensure that UBC is well known, highly valued and deeply connected in British Columbia, Canada and around the world. Our identity is often the most immediate representation of our institution, people and brand to our many audiences. Having a strong brand guideline system allows us to tell our collective story with the power of one voice.

We appreciate your respect and collaboration in maintaining UBC's brand guidelines. We hope this site and guide are helpful for you. I thank all of you for your dedication to supporting UBC.

Rick Hart
Associate Vice-President
Communications

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Please note that the style guide will be updated as the need arises. Please check the UBC brand site regularly to ensure that you are following the latest guide.

Introduction

1.0

This editorial style guide offers a resource for writers and communicators at UBC. It can be used for print, online and digital publications by providing a consistent approach to how we write for our many external and internal audiences.

Uncertainty in writing creates uncertainty in the reader. Understanding the rules of writing allows you to write with more confidence and in turn, creates confidence and trust in your reader.

The guide is largely based on principles and technical guides published by the Canadian Press (CP) — Canada's national news agency. Other reference sources include *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CM).

In general, any material not covered in this edition can be referenced in *The Canadian Press Stylebook* and its companion *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling*.

The style guide is meant for general use and not for specialized writing, such as medical or scientific journals or thesis presentations. Writing in professional communications must be accessible to a wide audience and as such, this guide seeks to make it easier for you to meaningfully connect with your audience.

UNIVERSITY TERMS

2.0

2.1 UNIVERSITY NAME

FORMAL NAME
- The University of British Columbia

FORMAL NAME WITH SPECIFIC LOCATION
- The University of British Columbia Vancouver campus

- The University of British Columbia Okanagan campus

LESS FORMAL NAMES
For internal audiences, or on second reference for external audiences:
- UBC

- UBC Vancouver

- UBC Okanagan

and in some abbreviated references for internal audiences:
- UBCV

- UBCO

- the university (lowercase)

FACULTY, UNIT OR DEPARTMENT LEVEL
- UBC Faculty of Education

- UBC education faculty

- education faculty

The formal names of UBC Faculties and their respective departments and institutes can be found at: www.ubc.ca/our-campuses/vancouver/ directories/faculties-schools.html

USE IN A STORY, ARTICLE OR NEWS RELEASE
For external audiences, spell out "University of British Columbia" in its first reference. In following references, UBC is acceptable except in very formal instances. For internal audiences, leading with UBC or the university is fine.

Remember: Never use periods when writing UBC. Write it out as UBC, not U.B.C.

USE OF "UNIVERSITY"

In certain circumstances and when referring to UBC as a specific formal/legal entity, the stand-alone word "university" may be capitalized but do so sparingly. Capitalizing "University" puts a distance between ourselves and our students, faculty, alumni and partners.

Formal/ceremonial usage:
- *The UBC Ceremonies and Events Office coordinates the formal installations of the University's president and chancellor.*

Regular usage:
- *The students met over lunch at the university.*

Suggestion: use "UBC" instead of "University".
- *UBC will implement the bylaw in September.*

In all other occasions and especially where "university" is used as an adjective or modifier, use lowercase:
- *university-level*

- *university-wide*

- *our university*

When referring to the University of British Columbia in the middle of a sentence, do not capitalize "the".
- *She attends the University of British Columbia.*

USE OF "CAMPUS"

The word "campus" should not be capitalized, unless used in a headline or title.

In body text, please refer to the campuses as "Vancouver campus" or "Okanagan campus".
- *UBC Campus Security supports the university community to ensure the Okanagan campus is a safe place to work, study and reside.*

Please note that there are only two official campuses; other learning sites, such as UBC Robson Square or the UBC Learning Exchange, are treated as locations.

2.2 PEOPLE

THE UBC COMMUNITY

The UBC community is comprised of students, faculty, staff and alumni (listed in that order when grouped). UBC wouldn't exist without our students. Whether directly or indirectly, almost all other members of the UBC community — administration, faculty members, staff, alumni — are dedicated to serving our students. When referring to our community, students come first.

When appropriate to the message, include or reference all or some of the above groups (in order). For example:

- *Students, faculty, staff and alumni are invited to attend Imagine Day.*

- *Faculty and staff can try a variety of instructor-led classes at no cost during UBC Recreation's Free Week.*

- *Students and alumni are eligible to sign up for a UBC email forwarding address.*

NAMES AND TITLES

It's important to not assume titles or the correct spelling of names. If at all unsure or unfamiliar, check the UBC website or contact the individual's department directly for the correct spelling and formal titles.

In the first written reference, use the person's full name and academic title. Subsequent references to the person should be by surname or given name, depending on audience.

For example, in media relations and eternal-facing communications to government and the general public, use surname on second reference. If writing for an internal, community-driven or more informal audience, use given name. The key is to be consistent within the piece and publication.

- External facing: *It's ideal to combine physical activity with social engagement, says UBC's Dr. John Doe. According to Dr. Doe, it's not just seniors living in long-term care facilities who are at risk of social isolation.*

- Internal facing: *Marcia Buchholz was appointed UBC's Vice-President, Human Resources in April 2020. Prior to joining UBC, Marcia held various senior administrative roles.*

Capitalize the proper names of professorships and chairs. Canada Research Chair positions are always capitalized:

- *Canada Research Chair in Public Opinion, Elections and Representation*

If you need to add the particular tier (there are two), specify it in brackets:

- *Canada Research Chair (Tier 1)*

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Use lowercase for job descriptions and "unofficial" or occupational titles preceding a name:

- *arbitrator John Smith*

- *criminal lawyer Jane Doe*

Avoid the use of courtesy titles such as Mr., Ms. and the like.

Write "doctorate" or "doctoral student" and not "PhD student".

TITLE CAPITALIZATION

Capitalize an academic or formal title when it precedes or follows a person's name.

- *UBC Professor John Doe*

- *John Doe, UBC Professor*

Capitalize occupational titles if they are related to a specific person. If the title is hyphenated, both parts are capitalized.

For example:

- *UBC Events Manager John Doe*

- *Santa J. Ono, President & Vice-Chancellor*

Don't capitalize generic titles of roles. For example, "He was a communications manager in the Department of Engineering." However, specific roles, such as those advertised in a job description, are capitalized. For example, "The Manager, Internal Communications, will perform a range of functions."

On second reference, when referring to a person by their title only, capitalize that title. For example:

- *President Santa J. Ono attended the dinner. The President made the opening remarks.*

TITLE ABBREVIATIONS

- Professor
  Prof.
  Example: Prof. Jane Doe

- Associate Professor
  Assoc. Prof.
  Example: Assoc. Prof. John Doe

- Assistant Professor
  Asst. Prof.
  Example: Asst. Prof. Jane Doe

- Professor Emeritus
  Prof. Emer.
  Example: Prof. Emer. John Doe

Remember to use periods in the abbreviation.

THE VICES OF TITLES

The titles "Vice-Chancellor" and "Vice-President" and titles of similar administrative officers are hyphenated with areas of responsibility.

- *Vice-President, Development*

- *Vice-President, Finance*

However, when referring to two similar positions at UBC, use specific campuses in parentheses:

- *Associate Vice-Provost (UBC Okanagan)*

In a sentence, use this:

⊘ *Professor John Doe, Vice-President, Finance, was appointed to the Board.*

Not this:

⊗ *Professor Jane Doe, vice-president Finance, was appointed to the board.*

When the title precedes the name, or when it is a stand-alone title referring to an office, it is capitalized:

- *Vice-Provost John Doe is leading a new international strategy.*

- *The Office of the Vice-President, Students (VPS) is responsible for shaping the experience and learning environment for UBC undergraduate and graduate students.*

DOCTORAL TITLES

We use the title Dr. in front of the names of any faculty, staff member or postdoctoral scholar who has been awarded a doctoral degree from the University of British Columbia or other post-secondary institution.

We avoid degree abbreviations, if possible. If degree information is pertinent to the story, we include a description of the degree in the text:
- *"Dr. Jane Smith, who holds a doctorate in education…"*

The title Dr. will be used on first reference and all additional references in the text.

However, we avoid the repetition of using Dr. in headlines or photo captions for ease of readability.

Note: If the person wishes to use their UBC title rather than the title Dr., we defer to their preference. Example: "Prof. John Smith, who teaches in the Faculty of Dentistry…"

Exceptions

Executives: When referring to members of the Executive, confirm with the person how they wish to be described in print, guided by the following two options:
- Option 1: Use the title Dr. in front of their name, and their position behind the name: *Dr. Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President, Academic*

- Option 2: Use the position in front of the name: *Provost and Vice-President, Academic, Dr. Andrew Szeri*

Doctoral and academic titles are not typically used in signatures of members of the Executive. However, they are more frequently used when referring to the person in written text.

Signatories at the end of *UBC Broadcast* and *UBC Bulletin* messages do not use professional or academic titles before names.

2.3 UBC DEGREES

In formal, academic context (e.g., degree lists in graduation programs and campus calendars) UBC Vancouver and UBC Okanagan use periods in the abbreviations of academic degrees: Bachelor of Arts, B.A.; Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D. and so forth.

However, in public and internal communications UBC favours the more modern, informal and accessible trend to eliminate the periods and otherwise unnecessary punctuation as per *The Canadian Press Stylebook*: Bachelor of Arts, BA; Doctor of Philosophy, PhD.

The following pages contain examples for a variety of familiar abbreviations for UBC degrees. While not exhaustive, it will provide a point of reference when abbreviating various levels of degrees and titles.

Note that UBC offers dozens of different courses of study and degree programs. Within each program, successful graduates are awarded specific degrees and academic designations, each with its own proper abbreviation ranging from the relatively simple and familiar to the more complex: e.g., Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Arts Asia Pacific Policy Studies with Master of Business Administration (MAAPPS/MBA).

If uncertain of a degree and its abbreviation, always check and depending on the context, opt for either the formal (with periods) or informal abbreviation.

When referencing a person's specialization, lowercase the words "major" and "minor" but capitalize the subject matter.
• *He earned a Bachelor of Arts, Political Science major, History minor*

Visit the Vancouver Academic Calendar for the complete list of UBC Vancouver faculties, schools and their degrees, postdoctoral graduate studies, diploma and certificate studies and formal abbreviations.

Information for UBC Okanagan can be found in the Okanagan Academic Calendar.

EXAMPLES OF DEGREES AT UBC AND THEIR (INFORMAL) ABBREVIATIONS

- Bachelor of Applied Science
  BASc

- Bachelor of Arts
  BA

- Bachelor of Business in Real Estate
  BBRE

- Bachelor of Commerce
  BCom

- Bachelor of Computer Science
  BCS

- Bachelor of Environmental Design
  BEnD

- Bachelor of Dental Science
  BDSc

- Bachelor of Education
  BEd

- Bachelor of Fine Arts
  BFA

- Bachelor of Human Kinetics
  BHK

- Bachelor of International Economics
  BIE

- Bachelor of Kinesiology
  BKin

- Bachelor of Management
  BMgt

- Bachelor of Media Studies
  BMS

- Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science
  BMLSc

- Bachelor of Midwifery
  BMw

- Bachelor of Music
  BMus

- Bachelor of Science
  BSc

- Bachelor of Science in Forestry
  BSF

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing
  BSN

- Bachelor of Social Work
  BSW

- Doctor of Dental Science
  DMD

- Doctor of Education
  EdD

- Doctor of Medicine
  MD

- Doctor of Pharmacy
  PharmD

- Doctor of Philosophy
  PhD

- Executive Master of Business Administration
  EMBA

- Juris Doctor
  JD

- Master of Advanced Studies in Architecture
  MASA

- Master of Applied Science
  MASc

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- Master of Architecture
  MArch

- Master of Archival Studies
  MAS

- Master of Arts
  MA

- Master of Arts in Planning
  MAP

- Master of Business Administration
  MBA

- Master of Education
  MEd

- Master of Engineering
  MEng

- Master of Engineering Leadership
  MEL

- Master of Food and Resource Economics
  MFRE

- Master of Food Science
  MFS

- Master of Forestry
  MF

- Master of Health Administration
  MHA

- Master of Health Leadership and Policy
  MHLP

- Master of Journalism
  MJ

- Master of Land and Water Systems
  MLWS

- Master of Landscape Architecture
  MLA

- Master of Laws
  LLM

- Master of Laws (Common Law)
  LLM(CL)

- Master of Management
  MM

- Master of Music
  MMus

- Master of Nursing (Nurse Practitioner)
  MN-NP

- Master of Occupational Therapy
  MOT

- Master of Physical Therapy
  MPT

- Master of Public Health
  MPH

- Master of Science
  MSc

- Master of Science in Nursing
  MSN

- Master of Social Work
  MSW

- Master of Software Systems
  MSS

- Master of Urban Design
  MUD

2.4 FACULTIES, DEPARTMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS AND BUILDINGS

FACULTIES, DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Capitalize the name of a Faculty, department or unit. When referring to Faculties as an entity, always capitalize, unless you are referring to a person or people.

Example: *the Faculty of Arts at UBC.*
Please share this information in your Faculty, department or unit.

Example: *She is a faculty member at the university.*
We work closely with students, faculty and staff.

Example: *the Department of Applied Chemistry*
She worked at the Department of Applied Chemistry.

BUILDINGS AND VENUES

Refer to buildings and other university venues named after people using either the family name or the person's full name, but use one or the other convention consistently within the text. Once the formal name is established and assuming there is no ambiguity, the informal usage is allowed.

- *St. John's College*
  St. John's
  the College

- *the Alma Mater Society Student Nest*
  the AMS Student Nest
  the Nest

- *the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre*
  the Barber Learning Centre
  the Centre

- *Graduate and Non-Traditional Students Collegium*
  the Graduate Collegium
  the Collegium

CAMPUS NAMES

- UBC Vancouver campus
  (*not* UBC Point Grey campus)

- UBC Okanagan campus

Please visit Know My Campus *for the formal, official names of university buildings and venues.*

2.5 OTHER TERMS FOUND AT UBC

THE UBC MOTTO: *TUUM EST*

In UBC's first year, Dr. Henry E. Young, then BC Minister of Education, and Dr. Frank F. Wesbrook chose our motto: *Tuum Est* meaning "It is Yours".

The spirit of this motto held tremendous promise for the university. It continues to do so for each new generation of students who arrive at UBC to pursue their educations. As such, *Tuum Est* is always italicized to show emphasis and respect.

We do not shorten, abbreviate, alter or create conjunctions out of our motto. It is never "It's Yours".

UBC THUNDERBIRDS

UBC Thunderbirds is the formal title of the varsity athletics program at UBC Vancouver, and is capitalized. After the first reference, it can be shortened to just Thunderbirds.

Note that Thunderbirds is always plural when in reference to the varsity athletics program.

Use this:
- *In all, 241 UBC Thunderbirds athletes have competed at the Olympics.*

Not this:
- *In all, 241 UBC Thunderbird athletes have competed at the Olympics.*

UBC HEAT

UBC Okanagan Heat is the formal title of the varsity athletics program at UBC Okanagan, and is capitalized. In the first reference use the full title and "the Heat" thereafter.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- the University of British Columbia Board of Governors

- the UBC Board of Governors

- the Board

ALUMNUS, ALUMNA AND ALUMNI

- alumnus
  Individual male

- alumna
  Individual female

- alum
  Non-gender-specific individual (preferred individual term)

- alumni
  Group/plural

- *alumni UBC*
  The official name of the organization is lowercased and italicized

When an alumnus or alumna is mentioned, follow his or her name on the first or second reference with her or his degree in brackets.

- *UBC alumna Rika Wright, born October 9, 1911 (BA 1933 and Diploma in Social Work 1935)*

GRADUAND, GRADUATE AND GRADUATION

- graduand
  a person about to receive an academic degree

- graduate
  a person who has been awarded an academic degree

Note: UBC Vancouver uses the term "graduand" while UBC Okanagan does not. Prior to the UBC Vancouver ceremony, individuals are referred to as graduands. After the ceremony, they are graduates. For ceremonies in which degrees have already been technically awarded, such as virtual ceremonies, the word graduate is appropriate for all circumstances.

The noun graduate should always be lowercase.
- *He is a graduate of UBC's Sauder School of Business.*

- *Dozens of graduates crossed the stage.*

The noun "graduation" is the catchall to refer to the ceremony at which degrees are conferred. This should be written lowercase.
- *UBC's spring graduation is on June 20.*

- *UBC's virtual graduation ceremonies will take place on June 20.*

CONGREGATION AND CONVOCATION

- congregation
  The term used by UBC Vancouver to refer to its graduation event

- convocation
  The terms used by UBC Okanagan to refer to its graduation event

Congregation and convocation should be uppercased only when part of a specific event title.
- *Thank you for attending UBC's Spring Congregation 2021 at the Chan Centre.*

- *Download the congregation program.*

OTHER CEREMONIAL TERMS

Do not capitalize ceremonial items such as the university mace, academic regalia, the grad class tree and the grad class gift.

Class of 2021 is uppercased.
- *She is part of the Class of 2021.*

Ceremonial titles such as the Macebearer and the Platform Party should be uppercased.

References to the Chancellor and the President can be uppercased when referring to a specific named person. They should be lowercased when referencing a general position.
- *The university mace is a symbol of the authority of the Chancellor. It is displayed on ceremonial occasions, such as the installation of a president or chancellor.*

The term "installation" is lowercased when used as a verb and an adjective.
- *UBC is installing a new chancellor in November. Jane Doe's installation ceremony will take place on November 20.*

WRITING STYLE GUIDE
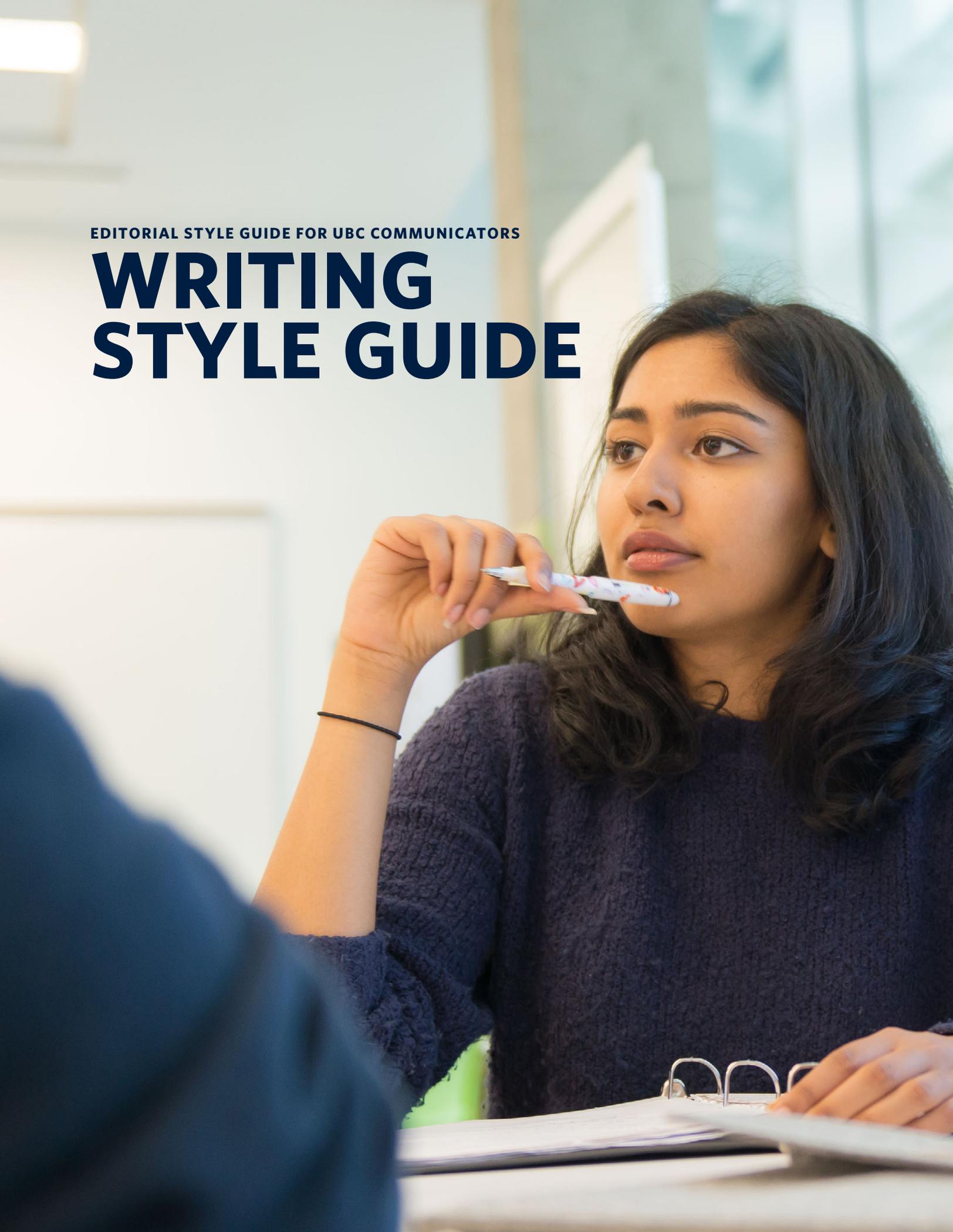
3.0

3.1 ACRONYMS

To ensure your writing is clear and easy to understand, avoid using acronyms whenever possible. Use only when necessary to clarify multiple references or if the organization/department/program etcetera is commonly known by its acronym.

In general, try to avoid introducing an unfamiliar acronym if it is used only once or twice in the copy.

When using an acronym, spell it out in the first citation and place the acronym in parentheses immediately or shortly after. For example:
- *It was named TRI University Meson Facility (TRIUMF) when founded in 1968.*

Remember to avoid using periods within well-known acronyms:
- *RCMP; CPR; CBC; GPA*

3.2 AMPERSANDS

Use only when part of a formal name.
- *Tiffany & Co.*

- *Technology & Science Quarterly*

Otherwise, spell it out.
- *Calvin and Hobbs*

- *The Globe and Mail*

Some UBC unit names use ampersands in their formal titles. Others do not. If in doubt, contact the specific unit for the correct punctuation.

In graphs, tables, charts and more visual mediums such as ads, social media or other "tight" communications (e.g., headlines) where space is limited, "space savers" such as the ampersand are allowed.

3.3 APOSTROPHES

Use an apostrophe in plurals of lowercase letters:
- *mind your p's and q's*

In general, plurals of capital letters or numbers do not take an apostrophe:
- *the ABCs*

- *Canada's CF-18s*

Exception: To avoid confusion, use an apostrophe with plurals of single capital letters (straight A's) but not with multiple capital letters (URLs).

PLURAL USE

Know the correct use of apostrophes to indicate a plural acronym or decade.

Use this:
- ⊘ *URLs and the 1930s*

Not this:
- ⊗ *URL's and the 1930's*

If the apostrophe is used, it indicates the possessive.

- *Point out the URL's location in the text document.*

3.4 CAPITALIZATION

In recent years there is a growing trend to move away from more formal styles heavy in capitalization and punctuation, and toward greater informality and inclusiveness involving less capitalization and "looser" punctuation. UBC favours the "lowercase style" as it improves readability and increases the prominence of the words that do warrant capitalization. The use of lowercase does not reduce the importance or credibility of a department or an individual's position or reputation.

Rather than weigh the writing down with unnecessary and excessive capitalization (which quickly wearies the reader's eye and attention), the adept use of white space, em-dashes, typestyle and typeface can — and will — achieve a more modern, lighter style that works well across print and digital mediums.

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: GENERAL RULES

Capitalize all proper nouns, government and university departments, trade names, formal titles when preceding a person's name, names of associations, clubs, companies, religions, languages, nations, races, addresses and places.

Do not capitalize proper nouns that have entered the popular vernacular such as: brussels sprouts, french fries, portland cement, manila paper, scotch whiskey.

Capitalize formal and widely accepted acronyms such as: AIDS, HIV, NASA, CSIS.

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: AT THE UNIVERSITY

Capitalize the proper names of university Faculties, schools, departments, units, associations and clubs.

Do not capitalize the program when referring to a student studying a particular program/field:
- *The nursing students studied with the journalism students.*

Only capitalize the proper names of courses, not the description of them:
- *Chemistry 202*
  The 200-level chemistry course

Do not capitalize academic subjects. Exception: when the subject is also a proper noun:
- *He studies history, biology, physics and law. She studies English, French, Spanish and Latin.*

Capitalize honours, awards and decorations:
- *Governor General's Award, Order of Canada*

Use lowercase common-noun references when the reference stands alone:
- *the award, the prize*

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WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: HEADLINES AND TITLES

Write headlines in sentence case, capitalizing the first word, first word of a subtitle and all proper nouns.

- *Attend UBC's virtual Remembrance Day ceremony*

- *Addressing equity, diversity and inclusion at UBC*

If there is a colon in the headline, capitalize the first word after the colon.

- *Top ways to reduce your carbon footprint: They're not what you might think*

Unless producing print communication, write for a digital audience. Digital headlines often stand alone, removed from the story on a social media feed or as a search result. Readers are much more likely to click on a story if they can tell at a glance what's in it for them. In conjunction with their subheads, headlines should answer the questions, "What is this story about and why should I read it?"

Use simple words. Make headlines easy to read and understand with a quick scan.

- *Update on annual merit program for eligible staff*

- *New Indigenous Strategic Plan establishes UBC's role in upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples*

- *The science of why we forget what we just learned*
  Psychology professors explain how memory works

- *Saving the honey bee*
  UBC researchers are looking at ways to improve bee health

WHEN TO CAPITALIZE: GEOGRAPHY

Capitalize widely recognized descriptive geographic/political regions:

- *the West Coast, Eastern Europe*

More generalized locations, use lowercase:

- *southern Ontario, northern British Columbia*

Capitalize common nouns when they are part of a complete formal name and use lowercase in subsequent informal or partial forms:

- *the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean*

- *the Atlantic and Pacific oceans*

Note the difference between a formal entity and its informal counterpart:

- *the Government of Canada*
  the Canadian government

- *the Government of British Columbia*
  the BC government

Note: Do not confuse the formal entity (capitalized), with lowercase physical entity: the "City of Vancouver" (the abstract, represented by the civic government), as opposed to "the city of Vancouver" (the physical streets, buildings, people).

3.5 COLONS AND SEMICOLONS

COLON

Rather than a comma, use a colon to preface a complete direct quotation or a complete, full sentence. The colon also introduces lists, formal quotations, summations or ideas that complete an introductory sentence.

- *UBC Imagine Week is full of activities: tours, workshops, orientations and fun.*

Note: Except for headlines, do not capitalize the first letter of the sentence that follows a colon: it's unnecessary.

A colon signals to the reader that something important is coming. It brings the writing to a halt and introduces a new idea. There must be a complete sentence before a colon. However, you can bend this rule a bit for headlines. For example:

- *Synapse and memory: Not a simple case of neurons*

SEMICOLON

Use a semicolon to link two "buttressing" statements (clauses) or ideas that are too closely related to stand on their own yet shouldn't be connected by a simple comma. Avoid the overuse of the semicolon; it can affect the rhythm of a piece and on the web page, when there is limited space, it can feel clunky and tiresome to read.

3.6 COMMAS AND SERIAL COMMAS

COMMAS

Commas provide the brakes for your writing; think of them as polite police officers directing traffic in order to keep the speed of your writing sane, legible and easy to consume. Read your writing out loud and you will immediately hear where to pause (add a comma) or remove one to prevent the copy from lurching, stumbling and pausing unnecessarily.

Use a comma when introducing a time or place.

- *In the first 100 years of its history, UBC showed itself to be an entrepreneurial powerhouse.*

- *At the end of University Boulevard, you'll find a great place to eat sushi at lunch.*

Always use a comma after adverbs such as recently, previously, accordingly. If the adverb ends in an *ly* and you're starting a sentence with it, use a comma.

- *Recently, it came to light that the owls behind the Museum of Anthropology were sleeping for most of the day.*

SERIAL COMMAS

UBC does not use the serial comma, also called the "Oxford" or "Harvard" comma. A serial comma is a comma placed immediately before the coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor) in a series of three or more terms.

Do not place a comma after a conjunctive in a simple series of nouns or phrases.
- *The UBC Farm sells kale, carrots and cabbage.*

- *Find the latest news, updates and events from across UBC.*

Add a serial comma only if it is necessary to add clarity of meaning.

Clear:
⊘ *The awards were presented by the President and Vice-Chancellor, and Vice-President.*

Rather than:
⊗ *The awards were presented by the President and Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President.*

3.7 DATES AND TIMES

DATES

Use the month-day-year format in formal writing:
- *The event will be held on June 25, 2022.*

In instances where numeric date forms are preferred (e.g., charts with space limitations or where storing data is important), use ISO style with full numbers to represent the year, the month and the day. Separate each number with a hyphen:
- *2022-6-25*

Do not use ordinal suffixes: st, nd, rd, th.

Use this:
⊘ *July 14, 2022*

Not this:
⊗ *July 14th, 2022*

When indicating month and year only, do not use commas or other punctuation.

Use this:
⊘ *August 2022*

Not this:
⊗ *August, 2022*

TIMES

Use lowercase and no periods for the abbreviated Latin modifiers *ante meridiem* and *post meridiem* or am and pm:

- *Classes start at 8 am and will end at 6 pm.*

Although wordy, the term "o'clock" is allowed.

- *3 pm or three o'clock in the afternoon*

To avoid ambiguity, "noon" and "midnight" are allowed.

Do not use the 24-hour "military" clock.

ACADEMIC YEAR

Indicate the academic year by the initial full year, backslash, last two digits of the following "partial" year:

- *2022/23*

MONTHS

Where space restrictions apply, certain months can be abbreviated:

- *Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.*

Do not abbreviate the following:

- *March, April, May, June, July*

DECADES

When written in numerals, decades have no possessive apostrophe before the "s":

- *the 1990s (not the 1990's)*

Where the century is clearly understood, specific decades may be spelled out or written in numerals:

- *the "Roaring Twenties"*

- *the "Dirty Thirties"*

In this allowed shortened numerical form, an apostrophe precedes the form:

- *the '90s*

CENTURIES

When denoting centuries, spell out the first nine centuries as words; use digits and superscript for 10 and above.

- *the sixth century*

- *the 20th century*

SEASONS

Seasons are always lowercase:

- *During the fall, we saw an increase in student activities.*

- *In the autumn, hardwood trees begin their "hibernation".*

3.8 ELLIPSES

Use three periods (with spaces before and after) … to indicate a deliberate omission or excised text within the sentence or quotation.

Avoid beginning or ending a quotation with ellipses, even when the quotation is a fragment.

When a quotation is included within a larger sentence, do not use ellipsis points at the beginning or end of the quoted material, even if the beginning or end of the original sentence has been omitted.

Use this:

✓ *When Henri Matisse said that "creativity takes courage", he introduces an idea that writers often forget in their pursuit of the path with the least resistance.*

Not this:

✗ *When Henri Matisse said that "… creativity takes courage", he introduces an idea that writers often forget in their pursuit of the path with the least resistance.*

3.9 EMPHASIS

Use quotation marks, italics or bold text or switch fonts when referencing the title of a web page, menu items, buttons and so forth sparingly.

• *Click* UBC Scholarships & Bursaries *to find out more.*

In running or body text and unless it's a recognized legal acronym (e.g., NASA, CSIS, RCMP etcetera) NEVER USE FULL CAPS; UBC does not shout at our audience.

Use exclamation marks sparingly, if at all.

Sentence structure, pacing, creative language— all of these do far more to engage a reader than leaning on exclamation marks or caps for emphasis.

In general, refrain from using italics to sway your reader to a particular point of view. Instead, be creative and inventive and write clearly to engage their hearts through storytelling.

Use this:

✓ It is a transatlantic learning journey that will leave its international cartography on their lives, forever.

Not this:

✗ It is a transatlantic learning journey that will leave its international cartography on their lives, *forever.*

3.10 HYPHENS AND DASHES

To the reader's eye, hyphens and dashes make for easier reading. They're less pretentious, more inviting and active than having to work through a thicket of colons, semicolons and ellipses or a jarring stumble of commas.

HYPHENS

The hyphen (-) joins words to create adjectival modifiers. Hyphens help avoid ambiguity. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective modifying a noun.

- *The multi-million-dollar building houses a five-ton sculpture in the foyer.*

Two-word nouns are not hyphenated when by themselves but in general, when they become descriptive, hyphenate:

- *By itself:*
  machine diagnostics

- *Descriptive:*
  machine-diagnostics systems

Use hyphens with ex-, self-, all-, post- and -elect. Some words that begin with co- also take a hyphen, such as *co-respondent*, or when a hyphen avoids doubling a vowel, such as *co-operate* and *co-ordinate*.

The hyphen also creates "full" words: *co-worker*, *co-design* and *co-development*.

Where the last letter of a prefix is the same as the first letter of the second word, use the hyphen to improve readability. Thus: *anti-intellectual* and not *antiintellectual*, *pre-existing* and not *preexisting*.

To avoid confusion and for easier reading, separate double vowels with a hyphen. Thus: *co-exist* and not *coexist*.

Hyphenate compound adjectives to avoid confusion or ambiguity: *first-year student, two-year program* and *per-credit basis*.

Do not use a hyphen with words ending in -ly; the -ly suffix is adequate notice that the next word is being modified: *fully involved team* and *utterly banal meeting*.

Where the second part of a hyphenated expression is omitted, drop the hyphen and follow it by a space.

Use this:
- ⊘ *The 200 and 300-level courses will be taught over several two to four-hour sessions.*

Not this:
- ⊗ *The 200- and 300-level courses will be taught over several two- to four-hour sessions.*

To indicate joint titles, use the hyphen and not the backslash. Thus: *writer-researcher* and not *writer/researcher*.

EN-DASH

The en-dash or "short" dash (–) is typically used to indicate numerical sequences, times or dates and to connect associated years, and adjectival phrases holding two-word concepts.

- *Read chapters 15–20.*

- *the 2015–2016 school year*

- *the Vancouver–Toronto flight*

To get an en-dash, type "option" + "-" (hyphen) on a Mac keyboard, or "Ctrl" + "-" (minus key in numeric key pad) on a PC keyboard.

Note: Do not use a space before or after the en-dash. Close it up.

In running text and when specifying ranges of number or dates, do not use dashes. Instead, use "between/and" or "from/to".

- *They attended classes between 2019 and 2021.*

Indicate the academic year by using a backslash rather than an en-dash.

- *The professor was hired in the 2021/22 academic year.*

EM-DASH

The em-dash or "long" dash (—) is often used around modifying clauses — a useful way to avoid using brackets or semicolons — or to set off a subsequent "orphan clause" or a non-essential element that warrants special emphasis, or to indicate an abrupt change or a parenthetical thought or ellipsis. Use em-dashes without spaces between words.

- *UBC researchers developed solar-powered robotic sailboats — which were quickly dubbed "sailbots" — to cross the Atlantic Ocean.*

When used for emphasis, the em-dash is a powerful tool. But when overused, it quickly becomes an affront to the reader. Use the "long" dash sparingly — and judiciously — to avoid lessening its effect.

To get an em-dash, type "option" + "shift" + "-" (hyphen) on a Mac keyboard, or "Ctrl" + "Alt" + "-" (minus key in numeric key pad) on a PC keyboard.

3.11 ITALICS

You can italicize the titles of books, magazines, songs, musical compositions, movies, computer games and similar art and literary works.

- *Vogue*

- *McLean's*

- *The Godfather*

- *The Simpsons*

- *Waiting for Godot*

In the first usage within the text, you can italicize unfamiliar foreign words or phrases. In all subsequent references, then use regular font.

If there is an exclamation mark or question mark that is part of the italicized phrase, put it in italics.

- My favourite movie is *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Many previously "foreign" words and phrases are now commonplace. As such, don't italicize or otherwise highlight them. Stick to the running font in all instances. Examples: de facto, QED, et al, raison d'être, tsunami.

3.12 LISTS

Where the list is short and simple, write it out in sentence form and especially so where the introduction and items listed form complete and proper grammatical sentences.

Otherwise, use vertical lists. To avoid long, dangling, "skinny" lists, short items may be arranged in two or more columns.

Any list should be introduced by a complete grammatical sentence followed by a full colon. All items or elements in the list must be constructed similarly (e.g., single words, all noun forms or phrases, etcetera).

Unless letters or numbers serve a purpose (e.g., indicate task order or chronology) they should be omitted.

If the items are not complete sentences or are phrases without internal punctuation, begin each item with a lowercase letter. Do not use capitals or "ending" punctuation such as periods at the end of each item; let them sit "naked".

USE OF BULLETS

If the bulleted items are complete sentences, use normal and full punctuation.

In a bullet vertical list that completes the introductory sentence or sentence that begins with an introductory element and consists of sentences or phrases with internal punctuation, semicolons may be used to end the items but with a period to end the final item and complete the list. In such a list, each item should begin with a lowercase letter.

3.13 NUMBERS

Spell out whole numbers zero, one through nine.

- *Although only five people attended the meeting, nine proposals were carried.*

Use numerals for 10 and above and when referring to ages, when preceding a unit of measurement, monetary amounts and academic courses.

- *the 18-year-old building*

- *the 15-metre jump*

- *Chemistry 101*

- *the $3-million donation*

Exception: spell out causal expressions.

- *The face that launched a thousand ships.*

- *A picture is worth a thousand words.*

Where a sentence starts with a number, spell it out (or rework the sentence so it doesn't begin with a number).

- *Three hundred students crammed into the professor's inaugural lecture.*

Page numbers, dates, numbers, percentage numbers, part numbers and chapter numbers are in numerals.

Numerals with four or more digits should use commas to separate groups of three digits. Large numbers can use a mixture of numerals and spelled out numbers.

- *More than 1,200 students attended the lecture.*

- *The country's population is 11.6 million.*

NUMBERED VERTICAL LISTS

Begin with the numeral (in sequence), followed by a period. Each item begins with a capital letter.

Where the vertical numbered list completes a sentence begun as the introductory element and where the items consist of phrases or sentences without internal punctuation, do not use periods or closing punctuation marks after each item.

Where the vertical numbered list consists of phrases or sentences with internal punctuation, semicolons may be used to "isolate" each item, with a period used on the final item to close off the list. As before, each item begins with a lowercase letter.

FRACTIONS

Spell out simple fractions that are not mixed numbers.

- *Only two-thirds of the six groups attended the 11 sessions during the first quarter of the year.*

When a fraction is seen as a single quantity, it is hyphenated.

- *He read three-quarters of the manual.*

However, when the individual parts of a quantity are unclear, spell out the fraction without the hyphen.

- *The pizza was cut into four quarters.*

To avoid readers' confusion when denoting fractions, avoid the use of full-size numerals separated by a backslash and whenever possible, use fraction characters (or superscript/subscript).

- *Letter-size paper is 8½ inches wide, not 8 1/2 inches wide.*

DECIMALS

If a numeral is less than one, use a zero before the decimal point.

- *The weight of the substance is 0.55 grams.*

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

To be consistent with UBC stationery standards, telephone numbers should be separated by single spaces instead of hyphens or periods. Do not use parentheses around area codes.

- 604 822 2211

- 1 877 807 8521 (toll free)

CURRENCY AND FRACTIONAL NUMBERS

When denoting Canadian money, use the $ symbol.

- *the $250-million grant*

If denoting foreign dollar currencies (e.g., American, Australian) use the appropriate symbol (e.g., US$, A$) and convert to Canadian dollars in brackets.

Informal context: when referring to denominations smaller than a dollar, it makes sense to write cents.

- *They were selling hamburgers for 99 cents.*

Formal context: Fractional amounts of more than one dollar are expressed in numerals plus decimal point.

- *$3.39 for postage*

- *the $5.7-million donation*

3.14 PARENTHESES

Use parentheses to enclose faculty pedigrees, sections and subsections.

Use this:
⊘ *Section 15(2)(a)(ix)*

Not this:
⊗ *Section 15 2a, ix*

3.15 PER CENT

The American "percent" (one word) is the version used most frequently in media. However, the English version is "per cent" (two words) and as such, is preferable for a Canadian university.

However, use this:
⊘ *percentage, percentile*

Not this:
⊗ *per centage, per centile*

In text, use numerals and write "per cent" and avoid the % sign.
• *More than 65 per cent of alumni responded.*

Exception: In graphs, tables, charts and more visual mediums such as ads, social media or other "tight" communications (e.g., headlines) where space is limited, the per cent sign and other "space savers" such as the ampersand are allowed. There is no space between the numeral and the % symbol.

3.16 PERIODS AND PLACES

According to *The Canadian Press Stylebook*, geographical/national abbreviations should receive periods. For example, U.S.A. is the abbreviation for the United States of America and B.C. denotes the province of British Columbia. So when writing for media, use the periods.

However, modern, everyday usage increasingly does away with the periods and the abbreviations are simply USA, US, BC and the like. Standard UBC style omits the periods on BC and USA.

Note: In general, avoid abbreviating the name of a country, nation, province and the like where the name is used in a stand-alone context or adjectivally. Write it out.

Use this:
⊘ *the United States elections, the Newfoundland oil patch*

Not this:
⊗ *the US elections, the Nfld. oil patch*

Official names: As with UBC, most business and similar entities in B.C. do not use periods in their names: BC Ferries, BC Transit, BC Hydro.

Do not use periods in certain abbreviations or acronyms. Thus: UBC and not U.B.C.

3.17 POSSESSIVES

Singular and plural nouns not ending in "s" take an apostrophe and "s" to form the possessive.

- *the people's university*

Plural nouns ending in "s" take an apostrophe alone.

- *the students' meeting*

Where the singular noun ends in a single or double "s", the apostrophe precedes the possessive "s".

- *the mistress's denouncement*

Where the usage is more descriptive than possessive, omit the "s".

- *The Board of Governors meeting is being held at the Student Union Building.*

3.18 QUOTATIONS

Direct quotes add colour and life to a story. However, the quotations must be exacting, the "on record" rendition of someone's spoken or written words. To ensure you don't misquote someone, use a recording device (there are many good apps on your smartphone for this purpose).

If the grammar is questionable and/or the clarity is obscured, it's allowable to "clean up" the quote but do so judiciously. If in doubt, paraphrase the content and avoid the problematic quote.

Unless absolutely necessary or to protect a vulnerable source, all quotations must be attributed. Typically, you would run the piece by the person quoted to ensure that they acknowledge the end result.

FORMATTING LARGE AND SMALL QUOTES

Quotations of fewer than 100 words should be inserted into the text and contained by double apostrophes.

For quotations of 100 plus words from a single source, set it up in complete paragraphs.

First, break the copy block into suitable paragraphs for easier reading. Use double apostrophe marks at the start of each successive paragraph but keep its "tail" free.

At the end of the final paragraph, close it off with a double apostrophe mark to delineate the complete multi-paragraph quotation.

3.19 QUOTATION MARKS

Use double quotation marks to contain a direct, attributable quote.

- *"We need to use land more efficiently," Steven Yard said.*

Use single quotes to set off a quote within a quote.

- *"The boss told me, in her own words, 'You can slip away early this Friday.'"*

In full and complete sentences, punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks.

Use double quotation marks to indicate words or phrases set off for emphasis in text.

Double quotation marks act as a "container" for the text in question.

In full and complete sentences, punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks.

In unattributed stand-alone words or short phrases singled out within a sentence, the punctuation marks go outside quotation/ apostrophe marks.

- *At the culmination of "the Great Trek", one student said: "The enthusiasm was really unbelievable."*

Note for designers: The Canadian Press Stylebook *dictates that unless punctuation is within a full and complete quote, punctuation marks go outside the quotation marks. Please follow these rules for web typography and programs such as Word or PowerPoint. However, in programs such as InDesign, Quark or Illustrator, you may kern the punctuation marks so they are directly underneath the quotation marks.*

Do not place quote marks (single or double) around letter grades and admissions/ regulations terminology.

- *failed standing* and not *"failed" standing*

- *B grade* and not *'B' grade*

3.20 SINGULAR VERSUS PLURAL

Collective "stand-alone" entities such as a group, corporation, business, association, school, university and the like are singular.

Use this:
- ⊘ *The union said it will address the issue.*

- ⊘ *StatsCan presented its latest data.*

Not this:
- ⊗ *The union said they will address the issue.*

- ⊗ *StatsCan presented their latest data.*

3.21 TENSES AND PERSONS

Nothing is more confusing to a reader than when a writer switches in and out of tenses for no apparent reason.

TENSES: GENERAL RULES

In storytelling, we generally use past tense.

- *Once upon a time, there was a group of students who decided to trek to Vancouver.*

TENSES: RESEARCH STORIES

We frequently discuss research findings at UBC but careful attention should be paid as to whether the research findings are in the past or are positioned to be discovered in the future.

- Past: *In 1982, Professor Galady discovered a cell that had long-term implications for cancer research.*

- Present: *According to Professor Galady, the cell he has discovered has long-term implications for cancer research.*

In general, if you are discussing the potential of something, use future tense. If writing about the past as in findings, data collected, quotes or events, use past tense.

PERSONS

How we use personal pronouns dictates our "point of view" in a story. In most cases, we would use the third person because we are writing on behalf of UBC and not representing our personal point of view (first person). Note that we write in third person not to be "stiff" or distant in our writing—but rather to be professional as befitting to a global university.

FIRST PERSON

This point of view uses "I" as the singular and "we" as the plural.

- *I joined the team on October 20th.*

SECOND PERSON

This uses "you" and can be singular or plural, just depending on how many people are being addressed. This tense may be used for a particular narrative purpose such as putting the reader into a particular experience or when you're aiming to connect casually with a particular audience.

- *You don't realize how big the Pep Rally is until you're in it.*

- *What do you do when physical distancing has thrown a wrench in your social routines?*

THIRD PERSON

This is our preferred pronoun when writing at UBC. It demonstrates objectivity and professionalism and avoids any confusion for the reader as to whether the writer is expressing a personal bias or opinion.

Third person employs the following pronouns: he, she, it, him, her, himself, herself, himself, his, her, hers, its, they, them, themselves, their, and theirs.

- *Their dedication, talent and commitment to academic standards was impressive.*

3.22 THE WEB

GRAMMAR AND SPELLING

If you are using the word "Internet", capitalize the word when referring to the global system, and use lowercase when referring to an internal system.

- *We use our new internet-capable devices to access the Internet.*

Word Wide Web or the Web are proper names and capitalized. Use lowercase for website, webcast, podcast, webmaster and web page.

E-MAIL OR EMAIL?

The term e-mail is abbreviated from "electronic mail" and technically e-mail is the correct form. However, email is now so commonly known and used that we can now refer to electronic mail more simply as email and do away with the hyphen.

However, use this:

⊘ *e-business, e-transfer, e-banking, e-library, e-services, e-book etcetera*

Not this:

⊗ *ebusiness, etransfer, ebanking, elibrary, eservices, ebook e-tcetera (sic)*

WEB ADDRESSES

When denoting web addresses in text for printed communication pieces, do not include "http://" or "https://" or the backslash at the end of the URL.

For text that will be displayed online, "http://" or "https://" may be required for the link to function, and it is recommended that the notation is left in.

Where the URLs or email addresses appear in printed text, use a bold font for easier spotting. For web documents, include the full URL or hyperlink an appropriate term that makes it "live". Do not waste space by including a "click here" URL.

In general, unless deliberately meant to inform the reader, do not include a website address within the text for printed material.

LINKS

Be cautious when inserting links in web copy; you may run the risk of unintentionally promoting websites involving special-interest groups, political entities and/or commercial products. This could be potentially damaging to your own site's reputation and UBC's credibility.

Always check the source to which you are linking before publishing in any digital medium.
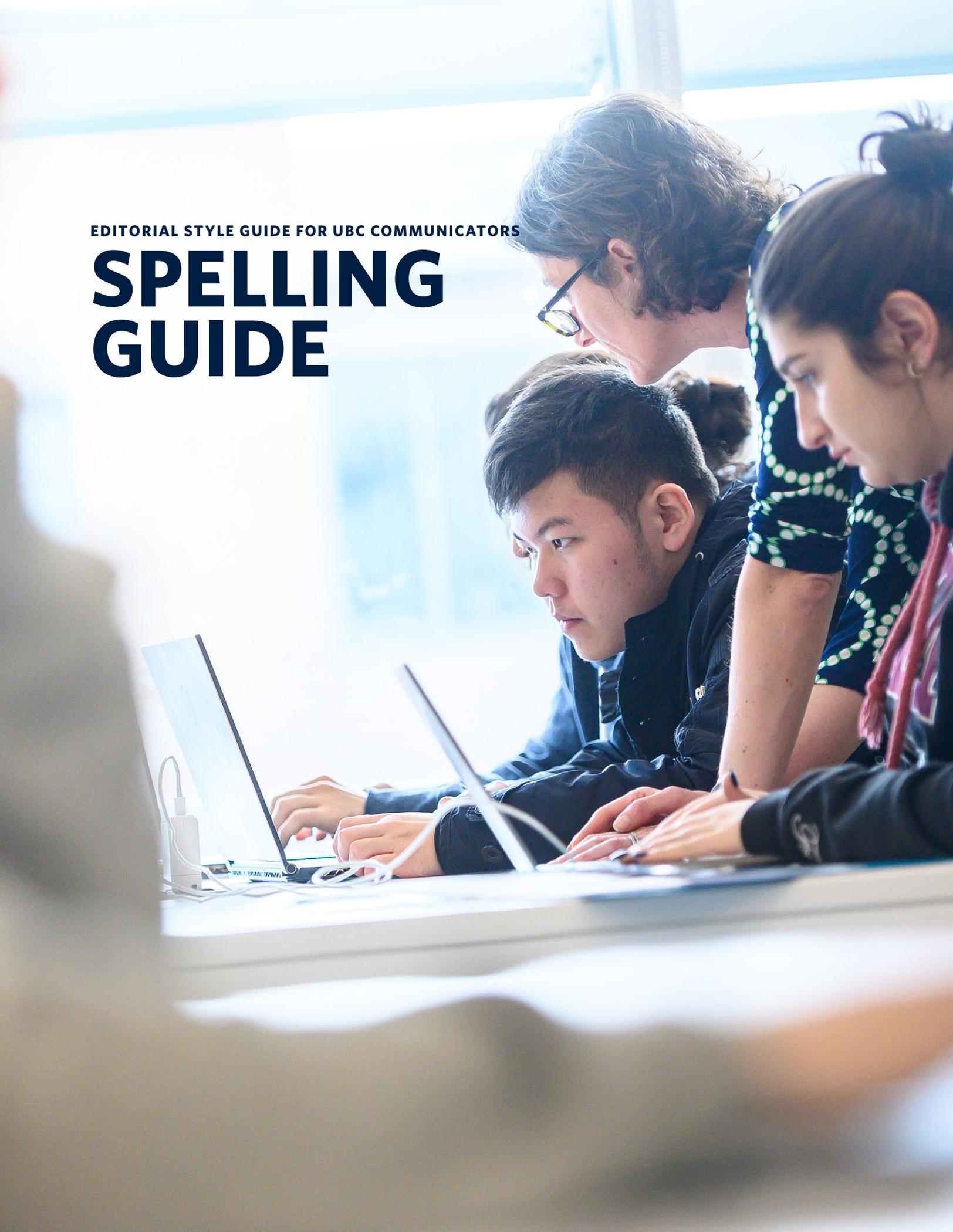
EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE FOR UBC COMMUNICATORS

SPELLING GUIDE

4.0

4.1 SPELLING PREFERENCES

Canadian English is based on the Queen's English but with certain exceptions, it borrows from American English.

If in doubt, follow the rules and principles set forth in *The Canadian Press Stylebook* and its companion *Caps and Spelling* guide. Or, use the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

Although UBC follows *The Canadian Press Stylebook* in general, UBC has preferred spelling for certain words and phrases.

Some UBC preferences include:
- acknowledgement
- advisor
- analyze (not analyse)
- appendices
- artifacts (not artefacts)
- cancel and cancelled (not cancell and canceled)
- centre (place, building)
- center (equidistant mid-point)
- cheque (monetary)
- check (mark, evaluate)
- co-efficient
- co-operation
- co-ordination
- co-author, co-edit
- co-found
- co-worker

- colour (not color)
- data (always plural)
- defence (not defense) but defensive
- e-business (not ebusiness)
- email (not e-mail)
- enrol, enrolled, enrolment (not enroll, enroled, enrollment)
- ensure (make sure of)
- focuses, focussed, focussing
- fulfill
- government (note the lowercase; not the Federal Government)
- governor general, lieutenant governor
- Gray (the surname)
- grey (the colour)
- harbour (not harbor, unless denoting an American port by its formal name e.g., San Francisco Harbor)
- honour and honourable (not honor and honorable) but honorary (not honourary)
- inquire, inquiry
- jewellery (not jewelery)
- labour (not labor)
- manoeuvre
- mold (to shape, form)
- mould (the fungus)

>

- Native (when referencing First Nations) and as an adjective (Native cultural artifacts)

- organization (not organisation)

- program (not programme)

- photoshoot (one word)

- realize (not realise)

- sceptical

- signal, signalled, signaller

- theatre (not theater, unless in a formal name)

- toward, backward, forward (not towards, backwards, forwards)

- travel, travelling, traveller (not travell, traveling, traveler)

- wellbeing (noun, not well-being)

- The First World War or the Great War, the Second World War (not World War I, World War II)

4.2 CANADIAN AND AMERICAN SPELLING

There are certain words that are considered interchangeable across borders that are, in fact, not interchangeable.

CENTRE AND CENTER

"Centre" denotes a building, mall, place or similar structure. "Center" is the equidistant mid-point.
- *The office is near the center of the sports centre.*

CHEQUE AND CHECK

"Cheque" denotes the bank document to transfer a specific amount of money.

Whereas "check" is a sudden stoppage of forward motion, an attack on the king in chess, or the act of evaluating or inspection.

PRACTICE AND PRACTISE

In the many countries in the English-speaking world (Canada, the UK, Australia, South Africa), "practice" is the noun and "practise" is the verb. In the USA, the spelling "practice" is used as both noun and verb.
- *The doctor is practising her administrative skills prior to opening her new practice.*

**4.3 SPELLING AND USAGE OF
AMBIGUOUS WORDS**

IT'S AND ITS

"It's" is the correct spelling for the contraction for "it is"; "its" is the possessive singular.

• *Our mascot? It's high time that its cage was cleaned.*

E.G., AND I.E.,

As abbreviations for the Latin terms exempli gratia ("for the sake of example") and id est ("that is"), the correct usage of e.g.,and i.e., are often confused.

i.e., is a short form of "in other words" and specifics or makes more clear.

• *At the UBC gala, gentlemen should dress in formal attire (i.e., white shirt, tie, tuxedo and black leather shoes).*

e.g., is short form of "for example" and sets up an abbreviated list.

• *Each month UBC holds a number of professional development workshops (e.g., Writing Professional Minutes).*

Never omit the two periods in the abbreviation, and in text usage, a comma must follow: "e.g.," and "i.e.,".

FARTHER AND FURTHER

"Farther" denotes physical distance.

• *How much farther is it to the bus loop?*

"Further" denotes metaphorical or figurative distance.

• *How much further along is the business relationship?*

MOMENTARILY

Momentarily means "only for a moment". The word is synonymous with "briefly", not with "soon" or "shortly".

• *When the airline pilot cheerfully announced that "We'll be taking off momentarily", the teacher fainted.*

IMPACT

Unless referring to a physical blow, avoid the word "impact" and its derivatives such as "impactful", "impacting" and the like. Instead, use "effect", "consequence", "result" or similar words.

EFFECT AND AFFECT

"Effect" is a noun; "affect" is a verb.

• *What sort of an effect did the impact of the giant meteorite have on the city?*

• *How does this catastrophe personally affect you?*

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE: BEST PRACTICES

Inclusive language:
Best practices

5.0

In any text or usage, where it's necessary to reference a person's race, age, gender, religion, appearance, disability or any other aspect of their identity that may be important to them or make them feel adversely singled out, take the time to thoughtfully and carefully find language that is inclusive and respectful. Ensure authenticity, mindfulness, and that the engagement with diverse students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners is meaningful and respectful of individual preferences.

Inclusive language best practices are continually evolving. In general, UBC follows _The Canadian Press Stylebook_ guidelines for inclusive language. The following guidelines are not exhaustive; they are simply guidelines to help ensure your writing is inclusive. There is not always one single, agreed-upon way of expression. Inclusive language is language that respects an individual's preference and is used in a caring way.

If you have further questions regarding inclusive language practices, please contact the UBC Equity & Inclusion Office.

5.0

5.1 RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIONALITY AND RELIGION

Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, peoples and races. For example:

- *Aboriginal*

- *Amish*

- *Arab*

- *Caucasian*

- *First Nations*

- *Inuit*

- *Indigenous*

- *Latin*

- *Asian*

Capitalize Black when referring to Black people or Black culture. Black is not a replacement for Black-Canadian or African-American. When possible, ask sources how they prefer to be identified and avoid using Black as a noun. Refer to race or ethnicity only when it is relevant to a story. "White" is always written in lowercase.

BIPOC is the preferred term for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, but IBPOC is also acceptable. Use BIPOC except when referencing the name of groups that prefer the term IBPOC, such as UBC's IBPOC Connections program for faculty and staff.

In general, hyphenated descriptions such as German-Canadian or Jamaican-Canadian should be avoided as they may put an inappropriate emphasis on the person's ethnic background. However, if the individual prefers to be identified by a hyphenated description, and it is relevant to the piece, it may be used.

Again, unless it's critical to the story, avoid any descriptor of a person's race, skin colour, religion, ethnicity and identifiable "racial" background.

5.2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

UBC Brand and Marketing has worked with the UBC First Nations House of Learning to create the *Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines*.

Please download and refer to this separate guide on brand.ubc.ca.

5.3 GENDER

Unless it's truly necessary and germane to the story, avoid language that signals gender. Also, especially in such a diverse place as UBC, never assume gender from a person's first or given name. Always ask people what pronouns you should use when writing about them.

When writing in general terms, be non-specific in terms of gender.

Use these:

✓ *police officer; fire fighter; mail carrier; flight attendant*

Not these:

✗ *policeman; fireman; mailman; stewardess*

If uncertain, use common sense, keep an eye open for evolving common usages (e.g., spokesperson). Use the nonspecific "chair" to refer to the head of a committee.

Do not use "he" (him, his) as a word of indeterminate gender. It is important that we recognize the existence of non-binary people, so avoid using "her or his" and "he and she" as an alternative, as this can be awkward and overlooks non-binary people who do not use these pronouns. To avoid this, reword the sentence if possible or use the gender-neutral "they".

The nonspecific word "they"(them, their) can be used as an alternative to the use of "he" (him, his) as a word of indeterminate gender when referring to generic situations.

- *If your child is thinking about university, they can get started early by coming to summer camps at UBC.*

- *A researcher has to be completely committed to their field of study.*

"They" is also increasingly being used by people whose gender identity does not fall under the binary of man/woman. In these cases, "they" can be used to refer to a specific singular subject.

- *Quinn is a Computer Science student. This will be their first time participating in a hackathon.*

- *Hikaru heard that they had been accepted to the Arts One program while on a family trip.*

5.4 GENDER IDENTITY

In general, the adjective "trans" or "transgender" is the preferred term to use for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. For those whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth, the correct term is "cisgender". Always use these terms as adjectives, as in "transgender woman" or "cisgender man". Only use these adjectives if they are explicitly relevant to the story, and never ask a trans person to identify their previous name or share other private details about their history.

The term "transsexual" has a complex and controversial history. Do not use it unless the person has specifically requested that you use it to describe them, and clarify you are using someone's own language in your copy.

- *Grace, who identifies as a transsexual woman, returned to school at UBC to upgrade her credentials.*

It's important to ask people what pronouns they use to avoid making assumptions based on name, appearance or voice. Make sure the right pronouns are used consistently.

The pan-Indigenous term "Two-Spirit" describes non-heterosexual or gender-diverse Indigenous people. It specifically distinguishes the experiences of Indigenous people from non-Indigenous people and is sometimes written as "2S"as part of an acronym. For consistency, upper case and hyphenate Two-Spirit and use it as an adjective, with the person's correct pronouns.

- *He identifies as a Two-Spirit person.*

Traditionally in some communities, Two-Spirit peoples were considered to be visionaries and healers.

5.5 SEXUALITY

Avoid language that signals sexuality. If it must be used, ask the person what terms they use to define themselves and defer to the person's preference.

Avoid the blanket use of "gay" or "gays" as a singular or plural noun. Instead, be specific and put the person ahead of the label. For example, "One person in the group identifies as gay" rather than "There's a gay man in the group."

2SLGBTQIA+ is an acronym for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans (transgender), Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual. The plus sign (+) is added to the end in respect of the infinite variety of identities outside of, or not represented by, this acronym. Different groups use different variations of this acronym; some use shorter versions such as LGBTQ. If you're writing about a specific group, ask what acronym they use.

For additional resources, please visit the Equity & Inclusion Office's Positive Space Language glossary.

5.6 ABILITY AND DISABILITY

Put the person ahead of the disability. In most instances, it's unnecessary to refer to the disability. If it's crucial to the story, never assume; ask and defer to the person's preferences.

Avoid defining or depersonalizing people by their disabilities and avoid turning the descriptors into overall catch-all dismissive nouns, e.g., "the blind", "paraplegics", "the disabled" and so forth.

The more sensitive "is", "with" and "has" phrases help put the person ahead of the disability.

- *Joe has vision loss.*

Avoid loaded and judgmental terms as "victim", "suffer", "sufferer" and the like. That person with that certain condition might not see him or herself as either a victim or a sufferer. Rather than use others' value-laden or negative references, defer to the factual.

Acceptance is growing and norms are slowly changing but mental illnesses or disabilities can, to some, carry a social stigma. Rather than using any terms that either cast the person as a victim or as a medical case and a specific condition, use more neutral terms such as "mental health difficulties" or "mental health conditions".

Special thanks to the UBC Equity & Inclusion Office for updates to this guide. See their website for more resources, including an Equity & Inclusion Glossary of Terms.

RESOURCES

6.0

RESOURCES

- *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*

- The Canadian Press: For additional writing resources, you can purchase *The Canadian Press Stylebook* or pay a small monthly fee and have online access year-round to the latest style-guide information.
The Canadian Press Stylebook
The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling

- UBC Brand: For other helpful guides, such as the *Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines* or the *Social Media Best Practice Guide*, visit this site.
UBC Brand

WRITING COURSES

Did you know there are excellent writing courses available through UBC Extended Learning? Search the options here.