# St George's, University of London, Writing Style Guide

## Version number and renewal

The style guide is produced by the St George's, University of London Communications and Institutional Events team and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

If you would like to suggest a change, please email hblackha@sgul.ac.uk.

## Writing principles

### Why is there a Written Style Guide for St George's?

The aim of this guide is to help you to write engaging and accurate content for St George's audiences. It should help with clear and consistent writing, and to help our audiences connect with our work.

Our EDI guidelines aim to make our communications more equitable and inclusive with the aim of ensuring access for all.

With every piece of content we publish, we aim to:

### Attract and engage the reader

Each day, we are exposed to hundreds of pieces of content via social media, public transport and TV and radio advertising.

We should not assume that our audience is automatically interested in what we are writing for them, just because they study or work here, or because they're familiar with our name. We need to engage them each and every time we put pen to paper.

### Build the reputation of St George's

We are all custodians of St George's reputation. Each of us has a responsibility to ensure it is maintained.

We are the UK's specialist health University and as such we have a clear role to play in presenting accurate, evidence-based communications:

- We make use of trusted sources
- We do not contribute towards the spread of misinformation
- We back up our assertions with evidence

### Positively influence the perception people have of St George's

How we communicate to our audiences, how we convey the work we do and more importantly, why we do it influences the perception that others have of us.

Over time, these perceptions shape our reputation, so it's vital we carefully consider the words we use when describing who we are and what we do.

To achieve the above, our content should be:

- Clear – use simple words and sentences. No jargon. Spell out acronyms the first time you use them, don't expect your reader to understand them. For example, the Office for Students (OfS).
- Useful – Always think about who the information is for and what they need to know, now.
- Friendly – Write in a manner that is human, personal and uses the active voice (this is explained in the 'Tone of voice' section).
- Inspiring – Content should excite our readers and inspire our community
- Impactful – Demonstrates the change brought about by our work

## Before putting pen to paper

Before starting to write a new piece of content, take the time to consider the purpose of the writing.

- Why is this piece of content being written?
- Who is the audience? What do they need to know, how do they think and feel? What do they know already?
- Does this content already exist anywhere?
- Is this the right format for the information?
- What platform are we writing for?
- Tailor the language accordingly
- What do we want the audience to think, feel and do after reading this piece of content? What is the call to action?

## Consistency

Universities communicate with a variety of audiences. These groups may gather on different platforms, and require different information.

However, it is vital that audiences always feel that they are talking with St George's, University of London. While there may be subtle shifts in language and approach, all content that carries the University's name should maintain a consistent voice.

From email correspondence to public facing webpages and social media, we should have the same language, tone of voice and style.

The situation will dictate language tone of voice and style to some extent but the underpinning structure is to ensure consistency across the University.

## Language

Being clear and concise. Don't assume knowledge.

We are part of the international community, remember that English may be readers' second, third or fourth language.

## Tone of voice

We're a passionate, values-driven community of experts and specialists, grounded in real life health issues, working together to make a difference to people's lives.

Our voice is friendly, confident, inspiring and proud of our University and our community of staff and students.

We take pride in the importance of our position as the UK's specialist health University.

Tone may vary depending on who and where the content will appear. For example, a prospective student should find clear information that also excites and inspires them.

Sometimes we might write in a tone that is passionate, other times we may need to be more formal.

Whatever the context, our tone is always positive, personal, jargon-free and uses the active voice.

- Positive – information should explain the value of the proposition, not what people will miss out on if they don't sign up
- Personal – write as if talking to a reader directly
  - 'You can use the Library in the evenings' rather than 'Students can use the Library in the evenings'
  - Be warm, personal and conversational. Say, 'please submit your form in good time' rather than 'applicants must submit their forms punctually.'
  - Avoid essay style conjunctions like 'moreover' or 'in addition to'.
  - Don't use formal or long words when easy or short ones will do.
  - E.g. 'Buy' not 'purchase', 'to' not 'in order to' and 'many' not 'plethora'.
- Jargon-free – only use scientific jargon if your readers will understand it. For example, if the piece is intended for A-level students, keep the language simple. Choose familiar words whenever possible.
- Active – in the active voice, the agent becomes the verb - 'I have submitted your paper', rather than, 'your paper has been submitted by the communications officer.' Passive verbs make writing seem colder than active verbs.

## Style
- Friendly
- Supportive/Nurturing
- Inspiring
- Compassionate
- Hands-on

# Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) guidelines
The aim of the addition of EDI guidelines is to make our communications more equitable and inclusive. Using the right language shows respect for all those engaging with our communications and is pivotal to achieving the inclusive and equitable community we strive to be.

Overall rules

- Remember to always ask what an individual or group prefers in terms of terminology and vocabulary. Do not identify an individual's identity without asking for their permission.
- Only include information about someone's identity if it's relevant to the content.
- Be respectful and inclusive in all forms of communication. Remember that any written or visual communication could be read or seen by the public.
- Consider all aspects of your communication such as subject lines, titles, captions, graphics, and images. Add alternative text to help people using screen readers and those who cannot view images.
- Be flexible and stay up to date on current recommendations for inclusive communications, inclusive language evolves over time.

## Race and ethnicity

St George's, University of London is committed to providing and supporting a work and study environment that:

- is inclusive of staff and students from different ethnicities, which include not only their background but also family, culture, history and beliefs;
- recognises and embraces the value and benefits of cultural diversity;
- promotes respect and fair and equitable treatment for all staff, students and others associated with the University; and
- is free from unlawful discrimination.

Recommendations

1. Where possible, use specific labels that identify a person or group's nation or region of origin.
2. Capitalise the proper names of nationalities when terms are derived from country names. Polish, American, Asian and European take capitals because they are derived from the names of continents.
3. Capitalise "Black" when referring to an individual's culture or race. "Black" is capitalised as it reflects a shared sense of identity and community.
4. Use "white" rather than "Caucasian." Leave "white" lower case, as it does not refer to a shared culture.
5. Do not use 'non-white' or 'non-black'. Defining a group by what it is not is confusing, and defining a group in relation to the white majority centres the white majority.
6. Avoid BAME and BME. These acronyms exclude certain groups (e.g. white minorities, people of a mixed ethnicity) and erase separate identities.
7. Terms such as "multiracial," "biracial," "multi-ethnic," and so on are lower case. Do not use, "mixed race people", use "people of a mixed ethnicity" instead.
8. Ensure that headlines, images, captions, and graphics used in communications and messaging are depicting people in a fair and responsible way, avoiding tokenism.
9. Be careful with images accompanying pieces on diversity. Who appears in the image and would this person or people be happy to represent the issue under discussion?
10. Avoid singling out specific cultures or drawing undue attention to ethnic or racial background. When references are relevant and necessary, find the appropriate, accepted terminology and use the language the individual or group prefers.

## Religious identity

Capitalise a religious title when it precedes a name. Use lowercase for a religious title when it stands alone, when it follows the name or when it is used as a job description. For example:

- While enjoying their weekly 18 holes, Father Santos, Rabbi Gottesman and Imam Abdullah discussed the fact that, together, they were the setup for a joke.
- A priest, a rabbi and an imam were playing golf …

## Gender Identity and Expression

*Adapted from Queen's University style guide*

Sex refers to a set of biological attributes associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy.

Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse people. It impacts how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources.

Gender identity is a component of gender that describes a person's psychological sense of their gender and applies to all individuals. It is not confined to a binary (girl/woman, boy/man), nor is it static. It is not limited to transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex.

Gender expression is how a person expresses or presents their gender, which can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, makeup, body language, and voice. Common ways of expressing gender are a person's selected name and pronoun.

Transgender people's gender and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex and/or the societal and cultural expectation of their assigned sex at birth: male, female, or intersex. Transgender is sometimes shortened to "trans" (e.g., "trans man," "trans woman").

Gender nonconforming refers to an individual's behaviour and/or appearance not conforming to prevailing gender social and cultural behaviours.

Cisgender refers to a person whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

<u>Recommendations</u>

    i.    Use a person's chosen name and pronouns when referring to them. This can include she/her/hers, he/him/his, or they/them/their.
    ii.    Use inclusive, gender-neutral terms wherever possible. When communicating with larger audiences, use "people", "colleagues" or "students," instead of "ladies and gentlemen."
    iii.    Most occupations/roles need not be gender-defined.
        a.  Use:
            i.    Chair, not chairman/chairwoman
            ii.    Spokesperson, not spokesman/spokeswoman
            iii.    Rephrase sentences that use the masculine pronoun as a generic pronoun, for example, 'when a professor accepts his position' could be rephrased, 'when a professor accepts their position'.

## Sexual Orientation

LGBTQ+ is a respectful and collective term to refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. Do not use queer unless reporting the way that an individual/community self-identifies.

<u>Recommendations</u>

Be as specific as possible when referring to an individual's sexual orientation. For example, someone who is attracted to men, women, or people of any gender may self-identify as

"queer", "pansexual" or "bisexual." If in doubt, use the umbrella term LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more).

## Abilities/Disabilities and inclusive language

*From the St George's digital accessibility training course*

We use the term 'disabled people' rather than 'people with disabilities' as this highlights that it is the person who is being disabled by their environment.

A wheelchair user accessing a building via a ramp is no more disabled than a person doing so on foot. Gov.uk has produced [further guidance on inclusive language](#).

### Terminology

According to the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if:

a) they have a physical or mental impairment, and

b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Vision:

- A person with complete or near-complete vision loss is referred to as blind or legally blind.
- A person with partial vision loss is referred to as a person who is visually impaired, or a person with low vision or limited vision.

Deaf:

- deaf (lower case "d") is a medical term referring to people with little or no functional hearing.
- Deaf (upper case "D") is a sociological term that refers to individual(s) who are medically deaf or hard of hearing who identify with and participate in the culture, society, and language of the Deaf community.
- A person with total hearing loss is deaf.
- A person with partial hearing loss is hard of hearing.

Neurodiversity:

- This term refers to the idea that each person's brain operates differently.
- It promotes the idea that there is not one "normal" or "healthy" type of brain or mind, or one "right" style of neurocognitive functioning.
- For example, "neurodivergent person" can be used as a way of describing people on the autism spectrum, with ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia etc...

Recommendations

Refer to a disability only when it's relevant to a story or when the diagnosis comes from a reputable source such as a healthcare professional.

When referring to an individual's disability, always ask for their preference. Only make mention of the individual's disability when relevant and necessary.

Capitalise a group name when stressing the fact that they are a cultural community (e.g., Deaf culture); however, when referring only to the disability itself, lower case should be used (eg, a person who is deaf).

Emphasis can either be put on 'person first' e.g., 'staff with disabilities' or 'identity first', e.g. 'disabled members of staff.' It is best to check with the individuals or groups where possible to find out their preference as there are no hard and fast rules here.

## Mental Health

Terminology

*People with mental health issues* emphasises a person-centred approach and acknowledges that a person is not defined by their psychiatric diagnosis.

*People with a mental illness* is a term referring to individuals who require medical treatment.

Recommendations

Mental illnesses can often be a taboo subject in our society. We must make a concerted effort to minimise the stigma associated with mental health issues with the language we use.

Mental health/illness is a broad term and does not reflect what an individual is dealing with. When possible, be specific or use the term "mental illnesses" or "mental health issues."

A mental health diagnosis should not be considered negative, and there is a need to stay hopeful and empathetic.

When describing certain individuals or populations, use concepts such as "living with a mental illness," "person with a mental illness," or "person living with a mental health issue." Use "person first-" and person-centred language.

Ensure that when referring to mental health issues, diagnosis does not equate to someone's identity. For example, state "they have schizophrenia," rather than "they are schizophrenic."

When possible, use descriptive language and set the context. Rather than "Mary is a schizophrenic," use "Mary is a person with schizophrenia. Mary's experience includes hearing voices. She also sometimes has fears that make her reluctant to join groups of people."

## Age

Ageism is discrimination against older people that results in negative and inaccurate stereotypes. Ageism is a combination of three elements: (1) prejudicial attitudes towards older people, old age, and the ageing process; (2) discriminatory practices against older people; and (3) institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older people.

Recommendations

Employ more neutral (older people or older adults) and inclusive ("we" and "us") terms.

Talk affirmatively about changing demographics: "As people live longer and healthier lives ...."

Provide a specific age range (e.g., older adults aged 70 to 80) when describing a population.

# Writing about people

## Abbreviations and contractions

An abbreviation omits letters from the end of a word and a contraction omits letters from the middle of a word. In general, the letters in abbreviations and contractions should not be separated by full stops or spaces. When abbreviating the names of degrees awarded, only the first letter should be capitalised.

Degree titles: BSc, MSc, PhD, DipHE, MBBS, BA, FdSc

## Initials in personal names

For names, where possible use the full name. If this is not feasible (for example, if an individual prefers to use his or her initials only), a person's initials should be followed by a full stop. If there is more than one initial, there should be no spaces between the full stop and the next letter.

For example:

- GL Brown, not G L Brown or G.L. Brown

## Post nominals

Postnominals should be used the first time someone is referred to. Other postnominals should be included only on a discretionary basis, and/or if requested by the individual.

The list below reflects the order in which postnominals should appear. Each postnominal should be separated by a space, without a comma.

- Civil honours (for example, Knight, Dame, CBE, OBE, MBE)
- Military honours (for example, VC, GC, GBE(Mil))
- Fellowship of the Royal Society (FRS)
- Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences (FMedSci)

## Pronouns

The pronouns we use indicate how we identify, they are part of who we are. Therefore, it is essential that we respect and understand one another's pronouns. This is part of building an inclusive environment across St George's.

Ask people for their pronouns if possible. It's important to remember that you should not assume people's pronouns based on their gender expression. Furthermore, it is not appropriate to only ask those who you might assume to use gender-neutral pronouns as this can be offensive or create an uncomfortable environment for the individual.

Some individuals may indicate their pronouns in their email signature or when they introduce themselves. Pay attention to this and ensure you follow their lead.

Once you are informed about someone's pronouns, it is important that you use these. Intentionally and/or repeatedly using the wrong pronouns for someone can constitute harassment. See our [Dignity at Work](#) and [Dignity at Study](#) policies.

Please note that the phrase 'preferred pronouns' is no longer used because the terms suggests someone's gender is up for debate.

The more that we normalise talking about pronouns, the more comfortable we will be to ask one another this important question.

## Titles

Professor should not be abbreviated to 'Prof' in written communication, unless space is limited, such as for a social post.

Contracted titles such as Dr, Mr and Mrs should not be followed by a full stop.

Given regional differences in academic titles (e.g., the US vs UK system of 'assistant professors') it is important to confirm which title an academic uses.

A knighted academic should be referred to with academic title first, e.g. Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell.

The Debretts website (www.debretts.com) is a useful resource for guidance on addressing members of the peerage.

After the first reference, use just the title and surname of the individual (e.g. Professor Higham said that she agreed on the matter.)

# Our staff

## Professional services

Use upper case for specific titles, e.g. Head of Design and Digital

Use lower case when referring to roles within a sentence e.g. advisor, counsellor

Use a comma between a person's name and job title.

e.g. Professor Jenny Higham, Vice-Chancellor.

Team names: use upper case for name of team and lower case for the word 'team'. e.g. Communications team.

## Academic

The first time a member of academic staff is mentioned, their title, forename and surname should be used. Thereafter, title and surname only should generally be used.

Forename only may be used in certain less formal contexts, as long as the full title and name is used in the first instance, and use of the forename only is consistent throughout the piece of writing.

For example:

(External-facing news item) Professor Jenny Higham became Principal in 2015. Professor Higham is a practising clinician in gynaecology.

(Current staff - or student-oriented news item) Professor Jenny Higham is the Principal of St George's, University of London. In October 2021, Jenny toured the Radiotherapy & Oncology VERT as part of Allied Health Professions Day.

## Our students

'Students' Union', not 'Student's Union' or 'Student Union'. Add (SU) in brackets after the initial use of Students' Union in an article if using 'SU' thereafter.

Please note that 'enrol' has one l in British English, two in American English.

## Our alumni

- Alumni is the plural noun for a group of male graduates or male and female graduates.
- An alumnus is one male graduate.
- An alumna is one female graduate.
- For a group of female graduates, you can use the plural alumnae.
- Increasingly, alum is used as a short, unisex form
- Alums is the plural of alum
- But watch out: alum is also used as a shortcut for referencing aluminium. Don't get your graduates mixed up with your chemical elements.

When referring to an alumnus of St George's, the year of graduation should be included in brackets after the individual's full name, unless they are deceased, in which case the year of their birth followed by the year of their death is added in brackets after their name.

Individual alumni are always referred to as an 'alumnus', regardless of gender.

For example:

- Professor Mike Stroud OBE FRCP (1955)
- Arthur Hamilton Crisp MRCP (1930-2006)

# Writing about places

## Our name

St George's, University of London

Not 'St George's Medical School', 'St George's University' 'St George's Hospital Medical School'. After introducing the full title, it is fine to use just 'St George's.'

Do not use SGUL as this acronym is not recognised externally. It may hinder our brand awareness to use an acronym that readers will stumble over.

Do not use:

- St George's University of London
- St George's University
- St Georges

# Our Institutes and departments

## List of Institutes

- Institute for Infection and Immunity (II&I)

- Population Health Research Institute (PHRI)
- Molecular and Clinical Sciences Research Institute (MCS)
- Institute for Medical and Biomedical Allied Education (IMBAE)

Only use acronyms internally after using full name and stating in brackets. Ampersands should only be used when short on space.

## On campus
Write locations as follows:

H0.1 Teaching (Hunter Wing, Level 0)

H2.2 Meeting (Hunter Wing, Level 2)

H2.5 Board Room (Hunter Wing, Level 2)

JB.1 Teaching (Jenner Wing, Basement, Corridor 1)

Lecture Theatre A (Hunter Wing, Level 0)

Curve Lecture Theatre (Hunter Wing, Level 0)

Computer room (Hunter Wing, Level 1)

## SGUHFT
This refers to St George's Hospital, full name is St George's University Hospital Foundation Trust. Often this is shortened to The Trust, or The Hospital, depending on the audience.

## Centre for Allied Health
Please use the full name in the first instance, followed by St George's. After this, it can be referred to as 'The Centre'

## Our website
sgul.ac.uk - do not include http://www.

# Writing about programmes, courses and qualifications
## Our programmes and courses
Use 'course' for all undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees.

Use 'programme' for postgraduate research programmes. If talking about a group of postgraduate qualifications that includes both research and taught degrees use 'programmes.'

'Master's', not 'Masters'

## Our qualifications
### BSc
BSc - Bachelor of Science, Bachelor's e.g. Helen is studying for a BSc in Civil Engineering.

Malone earned a Bachelor's degree.

### MSc
MSc - Master of Science, Master's e.g. To apply for a Master's course, please fill out the attached form.

Lauren graduated with an MSc in Innovation Design Engineering in 2018.

Degree titles go after the subject e.g. Physiotherapy BSc not BSc Physiotherapy

## PhD

Doctor of Philosophy, doctorate/doctoral degree, e.g the department admits about 40 PhD students each year.

Many doctoral students across the College are involved in teaching.

# Grammar and mechanics

## Abbreviations and acronyms

### Latin abbreviations

Latin abbreviations should be written in lower case, not italicised and written without full stops.

- eg [exempli gratia] means 'for example'. It should be used for lists that are not exhaustive and is followed by a comma.
- ie [id est] means 'that is to say' or 'in essence'. It should be used for definitions or lists that are exhaustive and is followed by a comma.
- etc [et cetera] means 'and the rest' and indicates the continuation of a list.

For example:

- The use of online or cloud applications eg, Eventbrite, Wufoo and Doodle, to organise events and gather opinions has increased in recent years.
- By proceeding with enrolment, ie, payment for a course, you agree to our Terms & Conditions.
- The University considers mitigating circumstances affecting academic performance in relation to examinations, coursework, attendance, etc.

### Acronyms and initialisms

An acronym is an abbreviation formed of the initial letters of words in a set phrase or series of words, and pronounced as a single word, for example, OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries). An initialism consists of the first letters of words and which are pronounced as separate letters when they are spoken, for example, BBC.

In general, acronyms and initialisms should be spelt out in full the first time they are used, with the abbreviation following in brackets if the term will be used again in the piece. Subsequently, the abbreviation can be used alone. This may not be necessary for acronyms and initialisms that will be widely recognised by your readers (for example, CV, BBC, UN, PDF, NHS, NASA, AIDS).

For example:

- The Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) works to eliminate the effects of schistosomiasis and intestinal worms among the world's poorest populations. Hundreds of St George's alumni have donated money to support current students.
- Professor Friedland was interviewed recently by CNN.
- Applicants should submit their CVs and covering letters by 17 June.

Do not use full stops after common abbreviations, for example eg, am, pm, no, ie, etc or after Mr, Mrs, Prof or Dr.

## Ampersands

Ampersands should only be used when they form an official title or name. In all other instances, 'and' should be spelt out.

For example:

- Dr Lindsay has acted as an advisor to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.
- Abby is studying for an MSc in Advanced Materials Science and Engineering.
- The Institute for Infection and Immunity

## Apostrophes

Possessive apostrophes after St George's look problematic:

Example: St George's' clinicians and scientists

Try to re-write the sentence to avoid this: Clinicians and scientists, working at St George's

## Bullet points

A list of information can be neatly organised using bullet points. How a list is punctuated depends on the sort of information that is being presented.

For a list of short items, there is no need to punctuate each point. A colon should be used to introduce the list, and the first letter of each point should be capitalised.

For example:

- Departments in Professional Services
- Institute of Medical and Biomedical Sciences
- Institute of Molecular and Clinical Sciences
- Institute of Infection and Immunity

Communications and Engagement can help with:

- Internal and external communications
- Promoting internal events
- Additions to the staff newsletter

For a list of longer items or sentences, which follow on from an introductory sentence, each item should end with a semi colon and the final item should end with a full stop. Ensure that the tense and structure of each item work with the introductory sentence. The first letter of each point should not be capitalised (unless it is a proper noun).
For example:

If you are struggling with any aspect of life at University, remember that you can ask for help from:

- your Personal Tutor, for advice on study techniques, time management, career planning and many other issues;
- support staff, for guidance on everything from accommodation to library resources;

- the Student Life Centre;
- your friends and family.

If a complete sentence introduces the bulleted list, each item in the list should end with a full stop, not a colon, and each point should begin with a capital letter.

For example:

The 'For students' section of St George's website includes quick links for students.

- The Student Life Centre is open throughout the week to help with queries and problems.
- The Students' Union is home to the SU bar, shop, music room and dance studios, as well as over 100 other clubs and societies.
- The St George's Reporting Tool is available to report a case of bullying or harassment at St George's.

## Capitalisation, job titles, titles, peerages/national honours

Use lower case letters as often as possible. It is often tempting for people to capitalise words unnecessarily just because they are 'important.' Do not do this!

Use initial capitals when writing a job title in full, e.g. 'Herbert McTavish, Professor of Molecular Medicine', 'Chief Operating Officer Paul Ratcliffe'. However, if you are referring to a position rather than someone's official title, lower case, e.g., 'he is a professor at St George's.' Drop the initial capitals if referring to more than one person with the same job title, et, 'The Institute directors.'

If the title of an organisation or department is given in full, use initial capitalisation. For example, 'the Division of Basic Medical Sciences.' If you are referring to the organisation or department without using its full title, use lower case, e.g. 'the division.'

When referring to structures within St George's, it may be appropriate to capitalise the first letter, for example, 'students needing access to the Library' as this is a short form of 'St George's, University of London Library.' However, when referring to libraries in general, the L is not capitalised.

Capitalise well known structures within St George's such as 'Student Life Centre' and 'Dissecting Room'.

Degree titles are capitalised when writing the title in full. However, if referring to the academic subject in general, begin with a lower-case letter. For example: 'If you are interested in studying biomedical informatics at St George's...' For initials around masters or postgraduate courses, please use the following format: PgCert, PgDip, MSc.

Use lower case 'u' when referring to St George's unless writing it as part of our title, 'St George's, University of London.'

Use capitals when writing 'Higher Education Institution'

Follow a colon in headlines with a lower case, not capital, letter.

## Dates and times

Dates should be written as day of the week / number / month / year. For example, Thursday 6 April 2021. Do not use ordinals (st, rd, th etc...)

Time should use 24hr clock and BST/GMT as people may be viewing our content from different time zones, particularly when content is hosted online. Do not use BST/GMT for internal posters/digital screens.

Use a full stop rather than a colon (used in American English) in times to separate numbers. For example, 17.30 - 18.30 GMT

## Full stops
Use single spacing after a full stop.

## Headings
Headings should be sentence rather than title case. For example, 'St George's netball team wins national league', not 'St George's netball Team Wins National League.'

## Hyphens

There are two situations where you're likely to need a hyphen.

**When an adjective's made up of more than one word**

We call these compound adjectives. This is how they work:

An adjective describes a noun, like 'the written word'.

A compound adjective does the same thing, but it's made up of more than one word, like 'round-the-clock support'.

A compound adjective usually gets a hyphen when it comes before a noun, like in 'a well-honed piece of writing'.

But if the first word ends in 'ly', like in 'a specially designed workshop', you don't need a hyphen.

When it comes after the noun, the compound adjective usually doesn't get a hyphen. So we say an easy-to-remember number, but the number is easy to remember. Same goes for up to date – if it's before a noun it needs a hyphen. A document is up to date but it's an up-to-date document.

**After a prefix**

If you're adding a prefix like 'pre', 'un', 'non' or 'anti' to a proper adjective (that's an adjective made from a proper noun [one with a capital letter] like American, Japanese, Victorian), use a hyphen: un-American, non-EC countries. Long-established words like 'preamble' and 'degrade' don't need a hyphen as the prefix is seen as fully fused.

Use a hyphen with prefixes or suffixes (such as '-like') when you've repeated letters in a word, but you pronounce them separately, as in shell-like or anti-inflammatory. Because shelllike looks weird.

Also use a hyphen if there's a risk of mispronouncing a word. So, you'd hyphenate co-worker, for example, to stop people tripping up over 'cow' when they read it. But coordinator doesn't need one.

And we hyphenate words that are spelt the same but can have very different meanings or different pronunciations (called homographs, fact-fans) like 'recreation' (fun) and 're-creation' (creating again).

**Some examples of the difference a hyphen can make:**

A man-eating chicken – a chicken that eats humans.
A man eating chicken – a man who's eating chicken.
She re-covered the sofa – she put a new cover on the sofa.
She recovered the sofa – from where?

Still confused? Follow these two rules.

If you can avoid using a hyphen, do.
If you think there's any risk of ambiguity, stick one in.

More interesting hyphen stuff: The hyphen is an endangered species in English. In 2007, the sixth edition of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary removed the hyphens from 16,000 entries including 'figleaf', 'potbelly' and 'pigeonhole'.

The Oxford University Press style manual points out that 'If you take hyphens seriously, you will surely go mad'. So don't sweat it too much.

Words we don't hyphenate

- cooperate
- coordinate
- email
- online
- rewrite
- subtotal
- website

# Italics

## Words in a foreign language

Words in a foreign language that are not in wide general use in English should be italicised. Words that are widely used, such as 'ad hoc', 'café', and 'vice versa', should not be italicised.

## Scientific Latin names for animals, plants etc.

For all creatures higher than viruses, write the full name in italics giving an initial capital to the first word, which indicates the genus, for example, *Turdus philomelos* (song thrush). On second mention, the genus may be abbreviated, for example, *T. philomelos*. In some species, such as dinosaurs, the genus alone is used in lieu of a common name, such as *Diplodocus* and *Tyrannosaurus*.  However, the bacterium *Escherichia coli* is known universally as *E. coli*, even on its first mention.

For example:

- *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd) is a deadly fungus that has ravaged frog populations around the world.
- The committee is responsible for determining whether *prima facie* evidence of research misconduct exists.
- Food poisoning from *E. coli* is commonly associated with eating contaminated beef or chicken products.

## Quotation marks

**Reported speech**

A colon should be used to introduce a quote.  Double quotation marks should be used for direct quotes. If a quote appears within a quote, single quotation marks should be used within double quotation marks.

Punctuation marks at the end of quotes should appear within the quotation marks. For example:

- One researcher who exhibited her research at the Festival recalled her experience: "The best part for me was seeing members of the public understand what I do. I heard one child say 'I want to be a biologist!' as he left our stand: that was hugely rewarding."

If you break a quote into two paragraphs, omit the closing speech marks at the end of the first paragraph and start the second paragraph with opening speech marks. For example:

- Dr O'Brien said: "Student welfare is our highest priority.

    "At St George's, we are doing everything we can to enable our students to thrive."

**Unfamiliar words and phrases**

Single quotes signify unfamiliar words or phrases. For example:

- Approximately 1 in 1,000 people suffer from 'pathological health anxiety'.

## Titles

Italics should be used when referring to the titles of books, plays, journals, newspapers and periodicals, films, musical compositions and works of art.

Where a title includes 'The' or 'A', those words should also be Italicised.

For example:

- In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, Professor Rachel Allen talked about the need to inspire the next generation of scientists.
- Research by St George's academics into biodiversity was recently published in *Nature*.
- Join us for a firm favourite, a book club, for an informal discussion about this year's Big Read book *The Private Joys of Nnenna Maloney*, the debut novel of Okechukwu Nzelu.

Single quotation marks should be used for articles in a journal or periodical, chapter titles and the titles of stories or short poems.

For example:

- The article, entitled 'Herbivores and nutrients control grassland plant diversity via light limitation', examines how rabbits, deer and kangaroos can offset nitrogen pollution and reduce biodiversity loss in grassland areas.

Title case should be used for titles of conferences and lectures.

For example:

- Professor Ma's Spotlight on Science lecture.
- The professor's Inaugural Lecture.

## Medical terms and conditions

Do not assume your audience has had medical or scientific training. Explain the term / condition the first time you mention it.

A couple of lines' summary using information provided by the researcher or via the NHS website should suffice. For example, "I am studying hereditary childhood ataxia, which is a term for a group of disorders that affect co-ordination, balance and speech."

## Money

Use British sterling as currency where possible and use the £ symbol. When referring to a grant or funding, use 'k' for thousands, 'm' for billions and 'bn' for billions. For example, £36m grant.

Round up – say "St George's has been awarded nearly £70k for its brand-new Turing scheme" rather than, "St George's has been awarded £67,543.50 for its brand-new Turing scheme."

## Numbers

Spell out numbers up to and including nine (except when in ranges of numbers, dates or page numbers.) Use figures for numbers over and including 10 (except when at the start of a sentence.) This includes ordinal numbers, e.g. First, ninth, 10th, 20th, etc...

21st century – lower case 'c'

Thousands – add commas to show thousands, eg 1,000; 20,000; 300,000; etc.

For guidelines on thousands, millions and billions in currency terms, see 'Money'.

## Paragraphs

Leave one line space between paragraphs. Do not indent the start of a paragraph.

Aim to keep paragraphs short, particularly when writing for websites – dense chunks of text can put readers off.

## Images

## Captions and alternative text

Captions and alternative text should describe what is shown so that people using screen readers and who cannot view images can understand what is presented.

## Copyright

Best practice for web content is to use creative commons images, with acknowledgement or material copyright St George's.

If you must use copyright material, obtain permission to use any material (images, words, charts, etc) that you have not created.

Permission should be obtained in writing. Once you have been granted permission to use the material, include a credit to the copyright holder: Reproduced by permission of XX or © Originator's name.

## Photo captions

List subjects from left to right, using each person's full name and title, for example:

Back row, from left: Professor Deborah Baines; Professor Julian Ma; Dr Rosena Allen-Khan MP

Front row, from left: Professor Jane Saffell; Professor Jenny Higham; Professor Jon Friedland

If the front row is seated it should be noted as: Seated, from left.