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Tone of voice guidelines April 2016 v.1.0

**UWE
Bristol** | University
of the
West of
England

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The words we use matter

The way we express ourselves through our written communications says a lot about the way we do things at UWE Bristol.

The words we use determine, in part, how people think about us as a university. They can affect how engaged people feel in our activities. More importantly, they can also be a factor in attracting people to want to study or work with us.

In short, the way we write is an important expression of our brand. So it's worth giving some proper thought to how we go about it.

These guidelines are for anyone who writes for UWE Bristol – either internally or externally. They're here to help us all write in a way which reflects what we're about as a university – and also to create some consistency in our written communications. We hope you find them useful.

How our values define our voice

If we think of our 'values' as encapsulating the things we stand for as an institution, our tone of voice is really the translation of those values in written form.

We are ambitious...

We're not afraid to shape, challenge and tackle the big issues, to take the initiative and pave the way. To set our sights high for ourselves and our students

...so our writing needs to feel **confident**.

We are innovative...

We create new opportunities for the people who work and study with us. We embrace different ideas and pioneer new and better ways of doing things

...so our writing needs to be **vibrant**.

We are connected...

We have strong connections, both close to home and around the world. Networks and communities feed into, and enhance, everything we do as a university

...so our writing needs to be **outward-facing**.

We are enabling...

We instil a thirst for new knowledge, its creation and application, and help people and organisations to be the best they can be

...so our writing needs to be **inspiring**.

We are inclusive...

We invest in making UWE Bristol a supportive and inspiring place to learn and work – somewhere where diversity of experience and perspective is encouraged, and learning and research is accessible to as many people as possible

...so our writing needs to be **straight-forward**.

Five words to remember

The UWE Bristol tone of voice:

- Confident.
- Vibrant.
- Outward-facing.
- Inspiring.
- Straight-forward.

Make it tangible

Use facts, quotes and examples to make your writing tangible and specific, rather than making general claims that are difficult for people to quantify.

Rather than saying: UWE Bristol has an impressive track record in relation to graduate employment.



Say: 95.5% of UWE Bristol graduates are in work or further study six months after graduating.



Rather than saying: We've invested significantly in infrastructure and state-of-the-art facilities.



Say: We've recently added nursing simulation suites and a vehicle simulator where you can test drive at Silverstone while on Frenchay Campus.



Making your writing vibrant

Writing with vibrancy is about making sure our words flow in a lively way, so that we grab and hold onto people's interest. We can add vibrancy by mixing up the way we use language; by showcasing what we do with examples; and most importantly, by steering clear of jargon, clichés and sector speak.

Mix it up

Varying the length of your sentences will add pace to what you write, and make it feel more natural. Mix in some shorter sentences with longer ones. Use fragments of sentences. And don't be afraid to occasionally start sentences with 'And' or 'But' if it helps with the flow of what you're saying.

For example: We believe that coming to university is about much more than simply arming you with qualifications. It's a time to find out more about yourself and your capabilities. To expand your mind and your horizons. And to get yourself fully equipped for the next stage.

Avoid tired language

Steer clear of jargon, clichés and sector speak. Nothing turns off a reader more than a communication littered with 'world-class' this and 'high-quality' that. It's also the kind of language you'll find in most university communications, so it won't do much to differentiate us.

Some words to avoid (or use with extreme caution): leading-edge, cutting-edge, unique, up-to-the-minute.

Show rather than tell

Using the kind of words mentioned above often means you're not being specific enough, in any case. Instead of telling someone you're 'cutting-edge', show them you are with an example.

Rather than saying: UWE Bristol has a long-standing reputation for undertaking cutting-edge research.



Say: Research isn't about what happens behind closed doors. We're committed to ensuring our research has an impact on society and the economy – and that the new knowledge that comes out of it feeds directly into your learning.

