Introduction

Why do we need a style guide? A style guide provides consistency across all of the university’s communications, including correspondence, newsletters, and magazines.

This style guide applies to written material in print or online that is likely to be seen by external audiences. It supplements the recommended style guides used by communicators on campus: The Canadian Press Stylebook for news-related material and The Chicago Manual of Style for everything else. This guide is not meant to replace these published style guides; rather, it is meant to provide U of A-specific examples, particularly where they deviate from CP or Chicago style.

The main differences between the Chicago and CP styles are the use of serial commas [Chicago uses them, CP does not] and the writing out of numbers [Chicago style recommends writing out numbers under 100; CP style calls for writing out numbers under 10]. Their common purpose is to ensure consistency—one style from start to finish.

These style guides and other resources are available at the campus bookstore; every department or service should have a copy of at least one of these reference books. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary is the recommended dictionary. For questions of grammar or punctuation, Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style is recommended, as is Barron’s Pocket Guide to Correct Grammar.

References


Online Q&A: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html

Abbreviations and acronyms

When writing news copy, do not use acronyms after spelling out the name of an organization on first reference. For example, when referring to the Kule Institute for Advanced Study, do not include “(KIAS).” For ease of reading or variety, a general term is often preferable to an acronym (the institute, not KIAS).

**Example:** Spell out Canada Research Chairs, instead of writing CRCs, because external audiences may be unfamiliar with the acronym.

NOTE: When writing, the key is to know the audience. If, for example, a document is intended only for an internal audience, using acronyms may be appropriate.

**Example:** Funding available from NSERC has been a boon to the research opportunities on campus.

Months to abbreviate (when used with a specific date): Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Spell out the remaining months in all cases (March, April, May, June, July).

Use periods in lowercase or mixed abbreviations, such as e.g., i.e., B.Sc., etc.

Periods go at the end of abbreviations like B.Sc., Aug., Wed., but not abbreviations that begin and end with capitals (e.g., PhD).

NOTE: With the abbreviations B.Comm. or B.Com., use sparingly because of the potential for ambiguity. Instead, write business degree for external audiences.

Metric symbols are not abbreviations and are followed by a period only when they are at the end of a sentence [e.g., km]—singular or plural.

Some common academic degree abbreviations and what they mean:

- **PhD** *Philosophiae Doctor* Doctor of Philosophy
- **LLD** *Legum Doctor* Doctor of Laws
- **D.Litt.** *Doctor Litterarum* Doctor of Letters (or Literature)

Aboriginal

Although CP style suggests that “aboriginal” as a general term is not capitalized, the University of Alberta capitalizes all references to Aboriginal.

NOTE: See “ethnic groups/nationalities” in this document for more information.

Academic degrees

Do not capitalize names of degrees in narrative text.

**Example:** bachelor’s degree in psychology; bachelor of arts in journalism; a master’s in sociology; master of fine arts.

Academic titles

Titles are capitalized when they appear before the individual’s name, but not after the name.

**Example:** Joseph Doucet, dean of business; Dean Joseph Doucet

NOTE: See also “Capitalization” in *CP Stylebook*.

Note: Aim to put the title behind the name so there is no ambiguity about capitalization.

**Exception:** Functional titles [e.g., professor] are not capitalized even when preceding the name.
Academic year
Do not capitalize junior or senior. For gender-neutral reference, or for students attending the U of A for the first time, use “first-year.” Be consistent. When referencing alumni, graduation year/class should be written as follows: Jane Doe, ’73; John Doe, ’99, joined the University of Alberta Board of Governors.

Put a space between the person’s last name and the year; do not spell out full year unless written, for example, as: John Doe, who graduated from the University of Alberta in 1999, works in finance.

Alumni/alums
Alumni is the plural common gender-neutral reference to graduates of the U of A. Alum is singular, alums or alumni plural. Be consistent; do not vacillate from alums to alumni.

These gender-specific variations are also correct:
Alumnus: singular, male
Alumni: plural, male/female
Alumna: singular, female
Alumnae: plural, female

a.m./p.m.
When denoting a time, it should be a.m. (lowercase) and p.m. (lowercase), with no spaces between periods.
Example: (correct) 3 a.m., 6 p.m., 3:15 p.m.
(incorrect) 3:00 p.m.; 3 o’clock.

Ampersand (&)
Avoid using the ampersand (&) in narrative copy. Instead, use “and.” it is OK to use the ampersand if it is the preferred usage for a name.
Example: The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry uses an ampersand in its name.

 Authored
This is not a verb; it is a noun, author. Use “written” or “is the author of” instead.

B

Baccalaureate
Baccalaureate is an undergraduate degree given to a student upon successful completion of four years of university (also known as a bachelor’s degree).

Bachelor
Do not capitalize as a bachelor’s degree.
NOTE: LLB is recommended, or law degree, rather than “bachelor of laws degree.”
NOTE 2: bachelor of laws, not singular law

Board of Governors
Capitalize board of governors when referring to the U of A’s board when it includes the full title of the institution. Lowercase when used independent of a formal reference.
Example: The University of Alberta Board of Governors meets Tuesday. The board will have a full agenda.
C

Capitalization
Capitalize the proper names of universities.

Example: University of Alberta, University of Waterloo, Oxford University
Lowercase university when it stands alone.

Example: The university was host to the prime minister yesterday.

In general, capitalize faculties, schools, and some departments if used as a proper noun [e.g., Faculty of Arts, School of Law, Department of Art and Design].

Lowercase the names of programs and courses [e.g., political science program, philosophy course] and when referring to more than one department.

Example: The history department had a wild year-end party.

The departments of philosophy and classics are on the other side of campus.

Faculties: Capitalize when using the proper name of academic divisions [e.g., the Faculty of Arts]. However, lowercase when referring to the academic staff.

Example: The faculty appealed the pension decision.

Many faculty positions will be available in the next several months.

Exception: In internal documents, the U of A capitalizes the entity [the Faculty [of Arts]], not the people [the faculty had a year-end celebration that encompassed thousands].

Centres
Unless it is used as part of a formal name, do not capitalize centre in reference to a centre on campus.

Example: [correct] The Student Resource Centre is being refurbished. [incorrect] The event will take place at the Centre on Tuesday evening.

NOTE: If centre is part of a proper noun and appears as center, do not change to Canadian spelling.

Canadian spelling
If the proper name of something uses non-Canadian spelling, do not change it to Canadian spelling.

Example: United Nations World Food Programme; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Chair/chairman/chairwoman
Use chair to describe a head of a department, board, or organization, regardless of gender.

Commas
Put commas between the elements of a series but not before the final and, per CP style.

Example: I like peas, carrots and corn.

Breakfast consisted of oatmeal, fried eggs, and bread and butter.

Use commas before clauses introduced by conjunctions and, but, or, for, nor or yet if the subject changes.

Example: I like peas, carrots and corn, but John does not.

Exception: When writing documents for non-Canadian audiences or for non-news-related materials, the recommended usage is Chicago Manual of Style, which uses serial commas.

Example: I like peas, carrots, and corn.
Coursework

Coursework is one word.

Dashes

There are two types of dashes: the em-dash (—) and the en-dash (–).

The em-dash is used to create a strong break within a sentence. If you type two hyphens and don’t include a space before the hyphens, Microsoft Word automatically creates an em-dash. There is no space between the word(s) and the em-dash.

The shortcut in Word for the em-dash is Ctrl/Alt/- (minus sign on the numeric keyboard).

Example: John likes a good book and a good meal—and the companionship of good friends. The en-dash is used to denote “through,” and is used mostly with dates and pages.

An en-dash is created (in Word) when you type a space and one or two hyphens between text.

The shortcut in Word is Ctrl/- (minus sign on the numeric keyboard).

Example: Aug. 18–Sept. 5, 2005; today’s homework is to read pages 15–30.

The hyphen is used to combine or connect words (e.g., well-being, hard-knock life) or to separate numbers such as a phone number.

Dare to Deliver

The University of Alberta’s academic plan, which supports the university’s vision document, Dare to Discover.

The title of the document is italicized.

Dare to Discover

The University of Alberta’s “blueprint for greatness.” It includes the university’s mission and vision statements. The title of the document is italicized.

Dates

When indicating date, month, and year, place a comma after the date, before the year. If indicating a month and year only (e.g., September 2005), spell out the month and do not use a comma.

Example: Spring convocation will be held June 10, 2012. The next convocation will be in November 2012.

Spell out days of the week.

Do not use st, nd, rd or th with numbers in dates: Jan. 1, not Jan. 1st.

Abbreviate only the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Nov., and Dec. But spell out when standing alone or alone with year.

Example: September was a great month for me, but not as fantastic as what happened on Sept. 17, 1993.

Departments

Proper names of departments and faculties should be capitalized.

Example: The Faculty of Science is pleased to appoint Jane Doe as its new communications manager.

Do not capitalize the word program or department when not part of the proper name. Always identify the full name first. Subsequent mentions should use department, program, service, school, conservatory, university, division, etc.
Example:  the Department of Dentistry is one of Canada’s best. The department regularly recruits world-renowned professors and instructors.

Dependant/dependent
Dependant (n)
Dependent (v)
Example:  Her dependant is very dependent on her.

dean, dean of arts
Per CP style, do not capitalize occupational titles after the individual’s name or as an indirect reference. Capitalize if used as a formal title preceding the name.
Example:  Katy Campbell, dean of the Faculty of Extension, won an award this week. Today, Dean Joseph Doucet appointed a new chair of the Alberta MBA program.

Degrees
Lowercase university and other degrees unless abbreviated.

Directions
Do not capitalize north, south, east, or west unless part of a street address or as part of a proper name. Capitalize regions.
Example:  The University of Alberta’s downtown campus is located north of the North Saskatchewan River. The South Campus is located north of Whitemud Drive. It is important that prospective students, faculty, and staff recognize the merit of the U of A being in the North.

Doctor
For news-related materials such as news releases, notes to media, and stories in campus news outlets, CP style permits the use of Dr. only for medical professionals. However, at the U of A, most faculty members are a doctor of some kind, whether by virtue of PhD or medical degree, so our preference is to avoid use of Dr. altogether by using a descriptor.
Example:  The cardiologist John Smith is one of the world’s best.
John Smith, MD, is one of the world’s best cardiologists.
Jane Doe, professor of biological science, recently made an important discovery.

For non-news institutional print materials that are intended for an academic audience, the preference is for Chicago style.
With respect to titles, the preference is for degree set off by commas after the name, but Dr. is permissible (though not preferred) for medical professionals.
Example:  John Smith, PhD, will join Trapper John, MD, for a presentation on the comedy of medicine.

E
Enrol
Per CP style, enrol and enrolment have one L. “enrolled” has two Ls.
Ethnic groups/nationalities
Use uppercase for Aboriginal groups, which includes all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada. First Nation(s) is also capitalized.

Faculty
The word faculty may refer to a group of people who are educators—plural, collective noun—or to a unit within the university. Neither, unless used as part of a proper name, is capitalized. To avoid confusion, try not to use both references simultaneously.
Exception: In internal documents, the U of A capitalizes the entity [the Faculty [of Arts]], not the people [the faculty had a year-end celebration that encompasses thousands.]

Faculties at the U of A
Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (ALES)
Alberta School of Business
Augustana Campus
Arts
Campus Saint-Jean
Education
Engineering
Extension
Graduate Studies and Research
Law
Medicine & Dentistry
Native Studies
Nursing
Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Physical Education and Recreation
Rehabilitation Medicine
School of Public Health
Science

Fractions
Use figures for all numbers with fractions.
NOTE: Spell out and hyphenate common fractions used alone.
Example: three-quarters
NOTE: See also "Fractions" in CP Stylebook.

Fundraiser/fundraising/fundraise
One word, not hyphenated
**G**

**Grade**
Capitalize grade and use numbers; do not spell out. Lowercase grade when referring to more than one grade.

*Example:* The Grade 6 students attended the WISEST event.
   Students in grades 6 and 7 visited the U of A.

**Graduation year**
When including graduation year with the name of a current student, graduate or alumnus, set off the expected or actual graduation year with commas (not parentheses).

*Example:* John Smith, ’85, is an Edmonton-based teacher.
   John Smith, BEd ’85, is an Edmonton-based teacher.

**H**

**H (silent)**
Four words and their derivatives begin with a silent H—heir, honest, honour, and hour—and, thus, require “an.”

**Health care**
Per CP style, health care as a noun is two words with no hyphen. However, it is hyphenated when used as an adjective.

*Example:* He believes that more funding must be available for health-care research.
   The University of Alberta Hospital has an excellent reputation concerning its health care.

**Honour/honourable/honorary**
Honour is spelled with “ou,” but honorary is not.

**Honours program**
Per CP style, capitalize Honours, lowercase program. Do not use an apostrophe.

*Example:* The Honours English program in the Faculty of Arts is full of talented students.

**I**

**Indira V. Samarasekera, OC**
President and Vice-chancellor, University of Alberta

NOTE: When writing for non-Canadian audiences, use the following: Indira V. Samarasekera, PhD

**Initials**
Do not put spaces between initials.

*Example:* J.D. Jones is a new student at the U of A.

NOTE: See U of A for information on spacing with the abbreviation.

**Italics**
Italicize titles of books, magazines, newspapers, movies, TV shows, plays, operas, songs, computer games, works of art.
Use quotation marks for titles of lectures, speeches, essays, papers, single episodes of TV shows.

Use title case but no italics or quotation marks for names of conferences, exhibits, book series, lecture series.

NOTE: Don’t italicize newspaper or periodical names that are part of the full name of a building, organization, award, etc.: the Los Angeles Times Book Award, Tribune Tower

L

Lists
Include periods in a bulleted list or vertical numbered list if the individual items are complete sentences. Commas, semicolons or other punctuation are not needed.

The first letter should be capitalized if the list item is a complete sentence and lowercased if not.

Be consistent: use either all words or complete sentences, not a combination of both in the same list. Items in lists should adhere to parallel structure.

M

Midterm
One word; do not hyphenate.

Me, myself, I
As a rule of thumb, use myself only when you are both the subject and the object of a sentence.

Example: (correct) I see myself as a contributing member of the campus communicators’ network.

[incorrect] Please contact the researcher or myself if you are interested in an interview. (By taking out the other noun, you can see that the sentence reads poorly: “Please contact myself if you are interested in an interview.”)

Money
Omit unnecessary zeros. Use the dollar sign and numerals if less than $1 million.

Example: The purchase price jumped by $125,000.

For round numbers more than $1 million, use the dollar sign and spell out million, billion, etc.

Example: $1 million; $3.5 billion; a $5-billion project. Do not include the word dollars.

Lowercase the words dollars and cents when they are spelled out.

NOTE: When using Chicago style, refer to Canadian currency as follows: three hundred Canadian dollars, C$300.

More than/over
More than: refers to quantity.

Over: refers to spatial relationships, above.

Example: More than 3,000 prospective applicants attended the open house last week. Anyone over the age of 18 may legally drink in Alberta.
N

Numbers
Spell out numbers from zero to nine, and use figures for 10 and above.

Exceptions: When writing for a non-news-related publication and using Chicago style, write out numbers below 100.

When a number begins a sentence, spell it out; but try to avoid starting a sentence with a number.

Spell out very large figures, rounding up, such as “a million” and use numerals when specific (e.g., $1 million.)

Exceptions: For percentages, use numerals (10 per cent, 25 per cent, etc.; for amounts less than one per cent, spell out); for ages, use figures/numerals.

For ordinal numbers, spell out first through ninth, and use numerals for 10th and above.

When used in sequence or as a military or political designation, use numerals to designate 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and so on.

O

OC
Order of Canada. The order has three ranks: member, officer, and companion. Per CP style, abbreviations used after recipients’ names are CM (member), OC (officer), and CC (companion).

Example: (correct) University of Alberta President Indira Samarasekera, OC, spoke at convocation.

P

Per cent/percentage
Per cent is two words, not hyphenated. Percentage is one word.

Phone numbers
Use the area code and hyphens when writing out phone numbers: 780-555-5555.

Post-
Use a hyphen to join post to a noun.

Example: post-doctoral fellow; post-secondary

President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Alberta
Indira V. Samarasekera, OC

NOTE: When writing for non-Canadian audiences, use the following: Indira V. Samarasekera, PhD
Q

Quotations (punctuation)
In a quotation, commas should be inside the quotation marks. Colons and semicolons should be outside the quotation marks.

Example: “This is going to be a great year for baseball,” Jim told his buddies. Smith said of the charge “bigot”: “It’s a lie.”

NOTE: see also “Quotation marks” in CP Stylebook.

R

Regions
Capitalize geographic regions: Northwest, South, East Coast, Western Canada. Lowercase directions: north, south, east, west.

Residence halls
Refers to on-campus living. Lowercase when referring to them generally; when using the proper noun, spell out residence hall, such as Lister Centre.

Room
Lowercase, unless the room is part of an official name.

Example: The Stimson Room is in the Lemieux Library; the Lucey Conference Room is located in the Casey Building.

S

Schools
Lowercase in general use, as in law school. Capitalize in official use and on first reference.

Example: U of A School of Law/law school
Alberta School of Business/business school

Seasons
Do not capitalize seasons [spring, summer, fall, winter] unless they are in a formal reference, such as the “Spring 2008 Faculty of Arts Handbook.”

Spaces (after punctuation)
CP and Chicago style recommend using one space—not two—after punctuation marks, including sentence-closing punctuation in news materials.

Syllabus/syllabuses
CP style recommends syllabuses as the plural of syllabus, not syllabi.
Technology terminology

CP style standards apply to technological terms used in news materials and should be written as follows:
cyberspace; database; dot-com; email; home page; hypertext; internet; intranet; login; logoff; logon; online;
website; webmaster; web page; web; World Wide Web.

Exceptions: Chicago style recommends different spellings and spacing for some technology terms used in
non-news materials.

That/which

Use that to introduce essential clauses not set off by commas. Use which to introduce non-essential clauses
set off by commas. Do not use commas to separate clauses when using that.

Example: She closed the door, which was made of steel. She closed the door that led to her office.

Time

Do not include zeros when writing out time. Lowercase a.m. and p.m. with no spaces.

Example: (correct) The meeting is at 8 a.m. in Jim’s office. The conference is from 8 a.m. to noon.
(incorrect) Everyone will gather at the conference room at 3:00 p.m. for cake. (incorrect) The
noise woke me up at 2 a.m. in the morning.

NOTE: For information on Canadian time zones, see ”Time zones” in CP Stylebook.

U

U of A

Abbreviation for University of Alberta. Use only after first reference to full proper name. There is one space
between each letter in the abbreviations “U of A.” Refrain from breaking the abbreviation on two lines.

UAlberta

Alternative abbreviation for University of Alberta, preferred for use online and in print publications intended
mainly for international audiences. Use only after first reference to full proper name.

NOTE: This abbreviation is preferred in online use because it’s clearer for a global audience that may not
associate “U of A” with Alberta, and it improves our search standings. Searching for
U of A yields many other institutions, but searching for UAlberta always brings us to the top.

Unique

Definition: one of a kind. Therefore, something cannot be very, really or fairly unique. It does not mean
unusual. Refer to synonyms for proper usage.

University

Capitalize the proper names of universities.

Example: University of Alberta, Oxford University

Lowercase university when it stands alone in news materials.

Example: The university was awarded significant funding from the federal government.
University degrees
Lowercase except when abbreviated: bachelor of arts (BA), a bachelor’s degree
NOTE: See also “academic degrees and honours” in CP Stylebook.