

**Imperial College  
London**



# **Writing Style Guide**

For professional and support staff

2019

*Please note, the Writing Style Guide is intended primarily for professional staff at the College. Academic staff preparing written material for publication should consult their publishers' style guides.*

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This guide is maintained by Communications and Public Affairs. We are pleased to receive comments and suggestions, and to help with writing and editorial queries.

Please email [style.guide@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:style.guide@imperial.ac.uk)  
or call +44 (0)20 7594 6134.

# Introduction

## **Every day, staff across Imperial write and edit on behalf of the College.**

Through webpages, print publications, letters, emails and posters, we communicate with a range of audiences that includes students and prospective students, colleagues, partner organisations, our alumni community and a global network of people interested in our work in the fields of science, engineering, business and medicine.

Clarity and consistency in writing style leads to engaging and credible communication. The Imperial College London Writing Style Guide supports writers and editors by providing a set of guidelines and suggestions, so that all material written on behalf of the College reflects our high standards and communicates our mission and identity effectively.

The Guide is not exhaustive. If you have a question or query that isn't covered by the guide, contact us at [style.guide@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:style.guide@imperial.ac.uk).

## **Who this guide is for**

The Writing Style Guide is intended primarily for professional staff at Imperial. Academic staff preparing written material for publication should consult their publishers' style guides. Students looking for support with academic writing skills and reference management can find resources and guidance on the Library Services website at: [www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support).

Communications and Public Affairs maintains the Guide. We are pleased to receive comments and suggestions, and to help with writing and editorial queries. Please email [style.guide@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:style.guide@imperial.ac.uk) or call +44 (0)20 7594 6134.

## **Using the Guide**

This interactive PDF is fully searchable and contains links in its contents and throughout the text, which allow users to jump to a different section of the publication. It is also suitable for printing.

## **Additional resources**

For printed material, such as publications, leaflets, posters and banners, the Writing Style Guide should be used in conjunction with the College's Brand and Style Guide, available to view at [www.imperial.ac.uk/brand-style-guide](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/brand-style-guide).

## **Writing for the web**

Many of the guidelines and suggestions here apply equally to writing for the web and writing for print. However, there is an additional set of guidelines tailored to those writing and editing in Imperial's Content Management System, available here: [www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/web-guide/training-and-events/materials/writing-for-web](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/web-guide/training-and-events/materials/writing-for-web).

# Writing about Imperial College London

## Imperial College London

Not 'ICL', 'Imperial College', 'The Imperial College' or 'Imperial College, London'.

Always use 'Imperial College London' the first time you refer to the College in a piece of writing. Thereafter, our name can be shortened to 'Imperial' or 'the College'.

## The President

The President of Imperial is Professor Alice P. Gast.

On first mention of the President in a piece of writing, use the President's full name and title: 'Professor Alice P. Gast, President of Imperial College London'

Subsequent mentions can be abbreviated to 'President Gast' or 'the President'.

## The Provost

Professor Ian Walmsley is Imperial's Provost.

On first mention of the Provost in a piece of writing, use the Provost's full name and title: 'Professor Ian Walmsley, Provost of Imperial College London'

Subsequent mentions can be abbreviated to 'Professor Walmsley' or 'the Provost'.

*Please note, Professor should not be abbreviated to 'Prof' or 'Prof.'.*

### FIND OUT MORE

- Read more about the President and Provost on the Imperial website at: [www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy)
- See [People and titles](#) for more information about writing about job and formal titles.

## Faculties

Imperial comprises three faculties and Imperial College Business School. Within faculties, there are departments, schools, institutes and centres. When using these words as part of a title or to refer to a particular unit, capitalise the first letter. Elsewhere, do not capitalise.

For example:

- The Faculty of Engineering at Imperial College London supports world class research across the full range of engineering disciplines. Academics from the Faculty frequently collaborate with colleagues from other faculties at the College.
- The Head of the Department of Chemistry is responsible for all areas of departmental business.
- The National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI) carries out research, development and education in cardiovascular and respiratory science.

## Campuses

Imperial has nine campuses. When referring to a specific campus, the first letter of each word should be capitalised, including 'Campus'. Elsewhere, sentence case should be used.

For example:

- Most undergraduate and postgraduate activity at Imperial takes place at the South Kensington Campus, but students can travel easily to our campuses in West London using the Campus Shuttle Bus.

***Please note: Imperial's new campus at White City is called White City Campus. It should not be referred to as 'Imperial West'.***

### FIND OUT MORE

- **See Appendix 1** for a full list of faculties, schools, departments, institutes and centres.
- **See Appendix 2** for a list of Imperial's campuses.
- **See the section on capitalisation** for more information about when you should use title case.

# Writing about what we do

## Education

Imperial has some 17,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. It is one of the world's leading universities, offering degrees in the fields of science, engineering, medicine and business.

### FIND OUT MORE

- To find out more about education at Imperial, visit [www.imperial.ac.uk/study](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study).
- For information on how to refer to each of the qualifications that can be gained at Imperial, and how to abbreviate these, [see Appendix 3](#).
- For the approved spelling of some terms relating to education, [see Appendix 4](#).

## Research

In 2014, the UK Research Excellence Framework found 91 per cent of research at Imperial to be of a 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent' standard. Imperial's research was also ranked as first in the country for its impact.

### FIND OUT MORE

- To find out more about research at Imperial and its impact, visit [www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation). You can also read about recent research stories on the College's news site: [www.imperial.ac.uk/news](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/news).
- For the approved spelling of some terms relating to research, [see Appendix 4](#).

## Translation, partnership, consultancy and commercialisation

Partnership with business, academia, non-profit and healthcare organisations and government is a key priority for the College.

- 'Translation' is a term used to describe the conversion of research outcomes into significant technologies.
- A 'corporate partnership' is any relationship between an academic or an academic team and an industry partner, established to further research or education aims and to benefit wider society.
- 'Consultancy' allows external parties to access the expertise, facilities and/or equipment available at Imperial.
- 'Commercialisation' refers to the process by which successful businesses emerge out of academic research, often through technology transfer, intellectual property licensing and protection, company incubation and investment.

### FIND OUT MORE

- For the approved spelling of some terms relating to translation, [see Appendix 4](#).
- Read about corporate partnerships here: [www.imperial.ac.uk/corporate-partnerships](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/corporate-partnerships).
- Imperial Innovations is a subsidiary of the College which focuses on the commercialisation of research from Imperial, the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge: [www.imperialinnovations.co.uk](http://www.imperialinnovations.co.uk).
- Imperial Consultants works to establish consultancy arrangements between the College and external parties: [www.imperial-consultants.co.uk](http://www.imperial-consultants.co.uk).

# Abbreviations, contractions, acronyms and ampersands

## 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.

## Personal Titles

Professor should not be abbreviated to 'Prof' in written communication.

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

For example:

- Dr Cristina Lo Celso has been named as the winner of the Foulkes Foundation Medal 2017.

## Latin abbreviations

If possible, avoid using Latin abbreviations 'eg', 'etc' and 'ie' in prose. If you do need to use a Latin abbreviation, be sure you know what it means and when to use it. Latin abbreviations should be written in lower case and not italicised.

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 and Conditions.
- The College 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, such as 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. Generally, the letters in the abbreviation should all be capitalised and should not be separated by full stops or spaces. 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 Imperial alumni have donated money to support the SCI.
- Professor Dallman was interviewed recently by CNN.
- Applicants should submit their CVs and covering letters by 17 June.

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:

- Professor Alice P. Gast became President of Imperial College London in 2014.
- C.V. Boys was a British physicist who taught at the Royal College of Science (now part of Imperial) at the end of the nineteenth century.

## Ampersands

Ampersands should only be used when they form part of a title or name. In all other instances 'and' should be spelt out.

### For example:

- Dr Smith 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 Translation & Innovation Hub at the White City Campus opened in 2016.

### FIND OUT MORE:

- See the sections on **People and titles**, **Punctuation** and **Italics**.
- For abbreviations related to weights, measures and currency, see the section of **Numbers**.

# Capitalisation

For title of webpages, articles and sections within an article, sentence case should be used. This means that only the first letter of the title and proper nouns are capitalised.

For example:

- (on a webpage) Support for partners and business
- (in a publication) Find out more

## Council, Court, Senate

Imperial's main governance bodies – the Council, the Court and the Senate – should always be capitalised.

## Faculties, departments, schools, institutes, centres and groups

The formal name of a unit within the College should be capitalised. For general use, or when talking about more than one unit, do not capitalise.

For example:

- The Applied Modelling and Computation Group is based within the Department of Earth Science and Engineering.
- There are over 100 research centres and groups at Imperial.
- The Department of Chemistry is at the forefront of modern chemistry research. The department has over 50 members of academic staff.

## Divisions

Imperial's professional and support services are organised into divisions. The name of the division should be capitalised, the word 'division' should generally not be used in communication for an external audience. A division is generally singular.

For example:

- Communications and Public Affairs includes Communications, Public Affairs, and Digital and Creative Media.
- Estates Facilities manages the College's land and buildings.
- The Student Hub team provide information and support for students.

## Buildings and places

Imperial's building names should generally be capitalised and used in full. Acronyms used internally (for example, SAF, RSM) should not be used in written communication that is likely to be read by an external audience.

For example:

- Beit Hall is one of Imperial's 14 halls of residence.
- The Sir Alexander Fleming Building is located at South Kensington Campus.
- A public lecture held in the Commonwealth Building was well attended.

## Seasons

Winter, spring, summer and autumn should not be capitalised, including when used in relation to the academic year.

For example:

- The summer term runs from 25 April to 26 June 2015.

## Titles

For books, films, songs, games, television programmes etc, capitalise the first word of the title and all other words except articles, prepositions and conjunctions.

For example:

- The Theory of Everything
- A Brief History of Time
- The Sky at Night

## Headlines, articles, chapters and lectures

Sentence case should be used for headlines and the titles of articles, chapters and lectures.

For example:

- (Advertisement for lecture) Dennis Anderson Lecture this Friday: UK energy policy – full steam ahead, but to where?
- (News article) Professor Mary Morrell recently published an article entitled 'The impact of sleep and hypoxia on the brain: potential mechanisms for the effects of obstructive sleep apnea'.
- (News headline) New app developed at Imperial helps sickle cell anaemia patients keep medical records

## Conferences and events

When referring to the names of conferences or lecture series, title case should be used.

For example:

- The Our Common Future under Climate Change conference took place in April 2015 in Paris.
- The Grantham Annual Lecture took place in June.

### FIND OUT MORE:

- See the sections on **People and titles**, **Punctuation** and **Italics**.

# 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:

- Academic supervisors can offer guidance on preparing for the viva voce examination.
- *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.

## 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 capitalised.

### For example:

- In an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, Professor Maggie Dallman talked about the need to inspire the next generation of scientists.
- As part of the 2015 Imperial ArtsFest, the Imperial College Symphony Orchestra performed Rachmaninov’s *Isle of the Dead*.
- Research by Imperial academics into biodiversity was recently published in *Nature*.

Italics should not be used when referring to the titles of articles from journals or periodicals, chapters, short stories or short poems. These titles should be enclosed in single quotation marks.

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.

Italics should not be used when referring to the names of conferences or lecture series.

For example:

- The Our Common Future under Climate Change conference took place in April 2015 in Paris.
- The Grantham Annual Lecture took place in June.

**FIND OUT MORE:**

- See **Appendix 4** for the spelling of some commonly used scientific terms.

# Numbers

Numbers up to and including ten should be spelled out in full. Numbers after and including 11 should be written using numerals.

Very large numbers should be written by combining a figure and a word such as million or billion.

Fractions should generally be written in full and hyphenated in prose. In a table or list, numerals should be used.

If a sentence begins with a number, it is preferable to spell that number out, even if it is a number above 11.

Within a single sentence, when talking about the same unit, consistency in use of written versus numerals is preferred, even if this means disregarding the house style.

## For example:

- Imperial awarded honorary degrees to two individuals in May 2015; Professor Frank Kelly and Professor Elizabeth Simpson.
- Schistosomiasis affects 240 million people, and each year an estimated 280,000 people die from the disease.
- In 2014, approximately 12,000 people visited the Imperial Festival.
- Of 50 students surveyed, just 4 reported dissatisfaction with the service provided.
- Fifteen Imperial students participated in the competition.
- Two-thirds of participants in the study reported reduced side effects.

## Percentages

Both 'per cent' and '%' are acceptable, providing use is consistent throughout a piece of writing. In general, 'per cent' is preferable in prose, and '%' is preferable in tables or lists.

## For example:

- In total, 60 per cent of Imperial responded to the 2014 staff survey.
- The survey asked staff whether they had experienced an unreasonable level of pressure at work. Results were as follows:
  - Never: 24%
  - Infrequently: 30%
  - Some of the time: 34%
  - A lot of the time: 12%

## Times

The 24 hour clock should be used, with the hour separated from the minutes by a full stop. The abbreviations ‘am’ and ‘pm’ should not be used with the 24 hour clock.

For example:

- The event begins at 11.00 and finishes at 15.00.
- From 18.00 to 20.30, a drinks reception will be held in the Queen’s Tower Rooms.

## Dates

Dates should appear before the month, and ordinals (st, nd, rd, th) should not be used.

There is no need to precede a date with the word ‘the’.

Days are generally not included in written dates and the year should only be included when necessary for clarity or to avoid ambiguity.

For example:

- Professor Terry Rudolph’s inaugural lecture was held on 29 October 2014.
- The 2017 Imperial Festival will take place on 6 and 7 May.

## Spans of numbers, years and time

To describe a period of time in prose, ‘from’ and ‘to’ should generally be used, with no dash. ‘Starts/begins at’ and ‘ends/finishes at’ can also be used in this context, as can ‘between’ and ‘and’.

In an advertisement, list, or where space is limited, start and end times for a period of time can be separated by an en dash (–).

To refer to an academic or financial year, separate the two years using an en dash.

To refer to a span of years, an en dash or the words ‘from’ and ‘to’ are acceptable.

When referring to centuries, it is preferable to spell out the word. When referring to decades, numerals or the spelled word can be used, as long as there is consistency throughout a piece of writing. Note that an apostrophe should not be used when referring to a decade using numerals (for example: 1980’s)

For example:

- Imperial’s June Open Day begins at 10.00 and finishes at 16.30.
- Careers advisors are on hand to offer guidance between 10.30 and 12.30 every Tuesday.
- The College’s 2013–14 Annual Report and Accounts was published in December 2014.
- During the war of 1914–18, many of the College’s buildings in South Kensington were used for war billeting of soldiers and military work.
- (Poster) Inaugural lecture: Tuesday 7 April, 18.00–20.00.
- Imperial’s South Kensington Campus has its origins in Prince Albert’s nineteenth-century vision of a quarter dedicated to education and culture.
- At the end of the 1980s, the College’s merger with St Mary’s Hospital Medical School led to the formation of the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine.

## Money and currencies

Full and abbreviated terms for money are acceptable, provided that they are used consistently. Full versions are recommended in prose, while abbreviated versions are suitable for tables and captions.

In text, use the ‘£’ symbol when figures are used, for example, ‘Fees are set to remain at £9,250 for 2018–19.’

For sums not including pence, do not use decimal points, for example ‘£6’, not ‘£6.00’. Do not use ‘k’ to abbreviate thousands; write the full figure instead, for example, ‘£100,000’.

When describing British currency, use ‘pound’, for example, ‘The pound fell against the euro today’. Do not use ‘GBP’ in prose.

Full Version	Abbreviation
One penny	1p
two pence (up to 99 pence)	2p (up to 99p)
£5 billion	£5bn
\$10 million	\$10m
£1 trillion	£1trn

## Writing about other currencies

When writing about other currencies, the name of the currency should be in lowercase.

For euros, use the symbol ‘€’ followed by the figure. This practice is used for the following other European currencies:

Full Version	Abbreviation
Danish krone (plural kroner)	DKr
Norwegian krone (plural kroner)	NKr
Swiss franc	SFr
Swedish krona (plural kronor)	SKr

For US dollars, the symbol ‘\$’ is sufficient abbreviation, unless there is a mixture of dollar currencies in the text. For other dollar currencies, ‘\$’ should be prefixed with the country abbreviation.

Full Version	Abbreviation
Australian dollars	A\$
Canadian dollars	C\$
Hong Kong dollars	HK\$
Malaysian dollars	M\$
Taiwanese dollars	NT\$
New Zealand dollars	NZ\$
Singaporean dollars	S\$

For all other currencies, write the figure first followed by the currency name, for example, ‘100 million yuan’.

### FIND OUT MORE:

- A list of global currencies and their symbols is available on the XE website at [www.xe.com/symbols.php](http://www.xe.com/symbols.php).

## Weights and measurements

As with money and currencies, full and abbreviated terms for distances and measurements are acceptable, provided they are used consistently. Full versions are recommended in prose, while abbreviated versions are suitable for tables and captions.

With weights and measurements, use metric units by default. Do not include a space between the figure and the abbreviated unit. All units of weight above ton should be written in full and not abbreviated.

Full Version	Abbreviation
50 square metres	50sqm
5 metres	5m
5 kilogram or kilo (not kilogramme)	5kg
BUT always abbreviate metres squared	50m <sup>2</sup>

## File size measurements

Data storage capacities and file sizes are measured in 'bits'. Their abbreviations are always written in capitals with the exception of bits, which uses a lowercase 'b'.

Full Version	Abbreviation
Bit	b
Byte	B
Kilobyte	KB
Megabyte	MB
Gigabyte	GB
Terabyte	TB

## Telephone numbers

In printed material, telephone numbers should include the international code. For UK numbers, the first number should appear in brackets (as it is only used when a number is dialled within the UK), and spaces should be included after the area code and after the fourth number.

For example:

- To find out more, please call +44 (0)20 7589 5111.

In online material, do not use brackets around the first number, use brackets around the international code.

For example:

- To find out more, please call (+44) 020 7589 5111.

# People and titles

## General titles

Specific job titles should be capitalised, but generic job titles do not require capitalisation.

### For example:

- In his research, Professor Kim Christensen, Professor of Theoretical Physics at Imperial, explores why we are more likely to develop an abnormal heartbeat with age.
- As Head of the Dyson School of Design Engineering, Professor Peter Childs has overall responsibility for the discipline of Engineering Design at Imperial.
- Students who register with the Careers Service can meet careers advisors to discuss their applications.
- The College's research media officers can help you communicate your research more effectively.

## Academic titles

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 Chris Toumazou was awarded the Regius Professorship in October 2013. Professor Toumazou is a pioneer in the field of biomedical engineering.
- (Current staff- or student-oriented news item) Professor Maggie Dallman is one of the leaders of the Reach Out CPD programme. In 2014, Maggie returned to her former primary school to see the initiative in action.

## Students and professional staff

When referring to a student or a member of professional staff (without an academic title), forename and surname should be used at the first mention, and generally forename only thereafter. In a formal context, title, forename and surname should be used at first mention, with title and surname used thereafter.

### For example:

- (General use) Tom Wheeler was elected President of the Students' Union in 2014. Tom holds a BSc in Physics from Imperial.
- (Award citation) Mrs Karen Tweddle was recognised for her work to enhance teaching quality in the Business School. Mrs Tweddle is Head of Teaching and Quality at the School.

## The President

The President of Imperial is Professor Alice P. Gast.

On first mention of the President in a piece of writing, use the President's full name and title: 'Professor Alice P. Gast, President of Imperial College London'

Subsequent mentions can be abbreviated to 'President Gast' or 'the President'.

## The Provost

Professor Ian Walmsley is Imperial's Provost.

On first mention of the Provost in a piece of writing, use the Provost's full name and title: 'Professor Ian Walmsley, Provost of Imperial College London'

Subsequent mentions can be abbreviated to 'Professor Walmsley' or 'the Provost'.

## Senior officers

Some senior officers use Imperial-specific titles:

- Vice-President
- Vice-Provost
- Associate Provost
- Assistant Provost

The title should be followed by the area that the member of staff is responsible for in brackets.

For example:

- Professor David Gann, Vice-President (Innovation)

### FIND OUT MORE

- A full list of senior officers and their job titles is available on the College website: [www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/information-for-staff/college-contact-lists/principal-officers-and-their-assistants](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/information-for-staff/college-contact-lists/principal-officers-and-their-assistants).

## Formal titles

When addressing or referring to a person holding the title of Lord, Lady, Sir, Dame etc, it is advisable in the first instance to try and ascertain how he or she prefers to be addressed, and to follow that convention.

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

Below are some general notes and examples of common titles and forms of address.

## Knights and Dames

Use title, forename and surname at first mention, and title and forename thereafter.

For example:

- Sir Philip Dilley is Chair of Imperial's Council. Sir Philip graduated from Imperial with a First in Civil Engineering in 1976.
- Dame Ellen MacArthur visited Imperial in 2013 to discuss how civil and environmental engineering can contribute to the circular economy. Dame Ellen is renowned for her sailing accomplishments and her work with business and education.

## Lords and Ladies

The title of 'Lord' or 'Lady' may be used by many types of peer (for example, Earl, Baron, Baroness), so check the status of the person you wish to address.

Generally, the title and surname should be used. For a life peer, forename and surname should be followed by the name they chose when ennobled.

For example:

- Ernst Ronald Oxburgh, Baron Oxburgh of Liverpool, is a former Rector of Imperial College London. During his time at the College, Lord Oxburgh oversaw the mergers that created the Faculty of Medicine.
- Eliza Manningham-Buller, Baroness Manningham-Buller of Northampton, was Chair of Council at Imperial between 2009 and 2015. Baroness Manningham-Buller moved to a new position as Chair of the Wellcome Trust in 2015.

## Combining titles

For a person with an academic title and another title, the academic title should generally precede the other title and thereafter replaces other titles.

For example:

- Professor Sir John Pendry (subsequent mentions: Professor Pendry)
- Professor The Lord Darzi of Denham (subsequent mentions: Professor Darzi)

## Postnominals

In general, if an individual holds the memberships, awards, or honours listed below, the corresponding postnominals should be used the first time he or she is referred to. Other postnominals should be included only on a discretionary basis, and/or if requested by the individual.

An exception to this rule is in press releases and news stories, when postnominals should generally not be used.

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 Royal Academy of Engineering (FREng); Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences (FMedSci)

### For example:

- Professor David Philips CBE
- Professor Molly Stevens FREng

## Alumni

When referring to an alumnus of Imperial College London, the degree award, degree name and year of graduation should be included in brackets after the individual's full name, with each element separated by a space. This information can also be conveyed in prose where appropriate.

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

### For example:

- Kathryn Campbell (MSc Environmental Technology 1982)
- Dr Matt Taylor (PhD Space Plasma Physics 2000)
- Tony Hollingsworth, who graduated from Imperial in 1980 with an MSc in Management Science, played a key role in establishing Glastonbury as the globally-renowned music festival we know today.

# Punctuation

## Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used to indicate possession or contraction.

### Possession

After singular nouns, plural nouns which do not end in s and indefinite pronouns, use **'s**.

For example:

- I have found Rachel's laptop.
- It is everyone's responsibility.

With personal names that end in s, use **'s** if you would normally pronounce an extra s in speech.

For example:

- Dr Edwards's research
- Thomas's camera
- St James's Park

*Note, there are some exceptions to this rule, especially in the names of places or organisations, eg, St Thomas' Hospital.*

After plural nouns ending in s, use **'**.

For example:

- Academics' workload (the workload of several academics)
- Volunteers' t-shirts

For compound nouns, and when multiple nouns are linked to make one concept, the apostrophe should be placed at the end of the final part.

For example:

- the Mayor of London's proposal

## Contraction

Apostrophes are used to indicate where letters have been omitted. The apostrophe comes in the position where the letters have been omitted, not where the space was between the original words.

For example:

- Don't be afraid of Open Source.
- I'll think about it.

## Common mistakes with apostrophes

Apostrophes are often misused. Below are some common mistakes to avoid:

Apostrophes should never be used for a plural noun (unless it is to indicate possession: see above).

For example:

- The spring flower's were in bloom.
- Student's should arrive 20 minutes before the examination begins.

It's should only be used to signify 'it is'.

For example:

- **Correct:** it's a beautiful day
- **Incorrect:** The fossilised creature carried it's young in pouches tethered to it's body

Who's (meaning 'who is') should not be used to mean 'whose' (indicating possession).

For example:

- **Correct** (informal): Who's attending the dinner?
- **Incorrect:** The student, who's dissertation won an award, graduated in May 2015.

## 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 the Faculty of Natural Sciences:

- Department of Chemistry
- Department of Life Sciences
- Department of Mathematics
- Department of Physics

The Research Office can help with:

- Preparing a proposal
- Costing and pricing
- Managing projects
- Contracts

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 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 advice centre run by Imperial College Union;
- 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 'Study' section of Imperial's website suggests free activities in London for students on a budget.

- Free walking tours are available catering to a range of interests.
- Free museums include the Science Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, Natural History Museum, Tate Modern, National Portrait Gallery, British Museum and the Hunterian Museum.
- Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens are two of the largest parks in London.

## Colons and semi colons

### Colons

Use a colon to introduce lists, presented either in prose or using bullet points. In prose, the colon should be followed by a single space. The first word after the colon should not be capitalised unless it is a proper noun.

For example:

- The Outreach office organises mentoring and tutoring for secondary school pupils, including: the INSPIRE teacher training scheme; Schools Plus tutoring; Outreach Postgraduate Ambassadors; and IntoUniversity mentoring.
- Your Human Resources contact can help with queries relating to:
  - Professional development
  - Equality and diversity initiatives
  - Pay and benefits

### Semi colons

A semi colon can be used to link two related parts of a sentence, as long as those parts could stand alone as a complete sentence.

For example:

- The Imperial Festival returns this year on 7 May; last year the College welcomed over 12,000 visitors to the event.

Semi colons should also be used instead of commas in a complicated list or sentence, to improve clarity and understanding.

For example:

- Imperial’s Strategy 2015–2020 outlines how the College intends to achieve its mission. It emphasises the importance of maintaining world class core academic disciplines; encouraging multidisciplinary research, especially that which addresses global challenges; and embedding the educational experience of students in a vibrant, research-led, entrepreneurial environment.

## Commas

Pairs of commas should be used to surround non-defining words, phrases or clauses (which add descriptive information, but can be removed without losing the meaning of the sentence).

For example:

- The car, which was built in France in 1900, formed part of the Transport Zone at the 2016 Imperial Festival.
- Imperial’s President, Professor Alice P. Gast, welcomed former students to the Alumni Weekend.
- It was, however, too late to register.

Commas should not be used when defining information appears at the start of a sentence.

For example:

- **Incorrect:** Vice-President (Innovation), Professor David Gann attended the event.
- **Correct:** Vice-President (Innovation) Professor David Gann attended the event.

Commas should not be used to join two main clauses: either a semi colon or a coordinating conjunction (such as and, but, or so) should be used instead.

For example:

- **Incorrect:** Bioengineering graduates are highly sought after, they go on to careers in the industrial, commercial and consulting sectors.
- **Correct:** Bioengineering graduates are highly sought after, and they go on to careers in the industrial, commercial and consulting sectors.

Do not include a comma before the last item in a series of items (sometimes known as an Oxford comma), unless it aids comprehension.

For example:

- South Kensington accommodation for students includes Southside Halls, Eastside Halls and Beit Hall. (No comma needed before the last item in the list).
- Research themes include Structural biology, Environment and the microbiome, and intelligent use of data. (Comma used before last item in list to avoid ambiguity).

## Dashes and hyphens

There are three commonly-used dashes, which are distinguishable by their length:

- The hyphen: -
- The en dash: –
- The em dash: —

The em dash should not be used.

The en dash should be used in place of brackets or commas to add supplementary information to a sentence. It should be surrounded by spaces.

For example:

- The Royal School of Mines – which became part of Imperial College London in 1907 – was established in 1851.

The en dash should also be used for years, to join terms of equal weight, or to represent a pause in the text.

For example:

- 2015–16 academic year
- Myers–Briggs profile
- In May 1851 Hyde Park hosted The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations (or ‘The Great Exhibition’) – the first event of its kind in the world.

A hyphen should be used to join two word adjectives together, and for some words beginning with prefixes such as co, de, pre or re.

For example:

- First-year students
- Third- and fourth-year students
- 19th-century history

#### FIND OUT MORE:

For preferred spelling of many commonly hyphenated words, [see Appendix 4](#).

## Slash (/)

Avoid using the slash in prose, such as ‘he/she’ or ‘from/to’ and instead rewrite the text to render it unnecessary.

For example:

- Departments will also look at your son/daughter’s interest in their subject.
- Departments will also look at your child’s interest in their subject.

## Ellipses

Ellipses should be used to show that there is some text is missing, for example from a quotation. Ellipses should be surrounded by single spaces. Sentences should not usually finish with an ellipsis.

For example:

- Dr Paolo Taticchi said: “Imperial College Business School champions the use of innovation and entrepreneurship to address the major challenges facing society ... All the students came up with proposals that demonstrate key business skills together with an awareness of the issues facing deprived communities around the world.”

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 Kovac said: “Drones get a bad press but they can improve our lives.  
“Aerial robots can help us to monitor pollution and protect wildlife. At Imperial we are working on swarms of aerial robots for future cities.”

Single quotes signify unfamiliar words or phrases.

For example:

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

## Brackets

### Round brackets

Use round brackets to denote a phrase which adds extra information, a translation, dates, an explanation or definition.

Include full stops, exclamation marks, question marks or quotation marks before the closing bracket only if the complete sentence or quote is in brackets; otherwise, punctuate after the closing bracket.

For example:

- The show features nearly 50 different devices developed by students on the Innovation Design Engineering (IDE) and Global Innovation Design (GID) courses.
- Each fellowship will provide up to US\$119,000 in support, with an additional supplemental family allowance (approximately \$55,000 for partner and two children up to age 18).
- Taste Imperial is highly committed to sustainable catering. We are proud to support a variety of sustainability pledges and activities. (Please see our sustainable food policy for more information.)

### Square brackets

Use square brackets to enclose comments, corrections, references or translations made by a subsequent author or editor.

For example:

- “If we used all of the 200 million tons [of agricultural waste] available in surplus annually in India, we could meet 17 per cent of the country’s energy needs.”

## **Exclamation marks**

Exclamation marks should generally only be used in quotes when writing on behalf of the College. Do not use an exclamation mark coupled with another punctuation mark (for example, do not use !! or !?).

## **Quotation marks**

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.

# Web and email

## Referring to webpages

When writing about a webpage in print, only the first word (and any proper nouns) should be capitalised. Consider using the URL, rather than the name of the page, for greater clarity.

For example:

- For a complete list of undergraduate courses at Imperial, visit [www.imperial.ac.uk/study](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study).

When writing about a webpage online, the descriptive text can be hyperlinked.

For example:

- A complete list of undergraduate courses offered at Imperial can be found in the [Study](#) pages of the College's website.

Do not use `http://` before a web address unless it is necessary to the functionality of the address (this is the case for certain secure websites, when `https://` may be required for the web address to be accessible).

Note that popular social media websites should generally be capitalised.

For example:

- Follow Imperial on Twitter: @imperialcollege
- Imperial is on Facebook: @imperialcollegelondon
- Share photos of Imperial with us on Instagram: @imperialcollege

## Email addresses

When referring to an email address in print, the full name of the individual or team which owns the account should be included alongside the address.

When referring to an email address online, the individual or team name should be hyperlinked with the email address.

For example:

- **In print:** To find out more, contact the Style Guide at [style.guide@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:style.guide@imperial.ac.uk)
- **Online:** To find out more, contact the **Style Guide**.

#### FIND OUT MORE:

Many of the guidelines and suggestions in this guide apply equally to writing for the web and writing for print. However, there is an additional set of guidelines tailored to those writing and editing content for the Imperial website in the College's Web Guide at: [www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/web-guide/training-and-events/materials](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/tools-and-reference/web-guide/training-and-events/materials).

# Appendix 1: Imperial's faculties, schools, departments and centres

*Ensure you use the full and correct name of the department in question – for example 'the Department of Mathematics' not 'the Maths Department'.*

## Faculty of Engineering

- Department of Aeronautics
- Department of Bioengineering
- Department of Chemical Engineering
- Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Department of Computing
- Dyson School of Design Engineering
- Department of Earth Science and Engineering
- Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Department of Materials
- Department of Mechanical Engineering

*Note that the Dyson School of Design Engineering is based in the Dyson Building of Design Engineering, formerly known as the Post Office Building.*

## Faculty of Medicine

- Institute of Clinical Sciences
- Department of Medicine
- National Heart and Lung Institute
- School of Public Health
- Department of Surgery and Cancer
- Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine – London Office (LKCmedicine)
- Imperial College Academic Health Science Centre
- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

## **Faculty of Natural Sciences**

- Department of Chemistry
- Department of Mathematics
- Department of Physics
- Department of Life Sciences
- Centre for Environmental Policy

## **Imperial College Business School**

- Department of Finance
- Department of Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Department of Management

# Appendix 2: Imperial's campuses

- Charing Cross Campus
- Chelsea and Westminster Campus
- Hammersmith Campus
- North West London Hospitals Campus
- Royal Brompton Campus
- Silwood Park Campus
- South Kensington Campus
- St Mary's Campus
- White City Campus (not Imperial West)
  - The Invention Rooms (note the capital 'T' on 'The')
  - Molecular Sciences Research Hub
  - Michael Uren Biomedical Engineering Research Hub
  - Translation & Innovation Hub (I-HUB)

## Appendix 3: Degrees awarded at Imperial

Abbreviation	Degree type	Examples in use
BSc, BEng	Bachelor's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helen is studying for a BSc in Civil Engineering.</li><li>• He earned a Bachelor's degree.</li></ul>
MSc, MRes, MBA, MPH, MSci, MEng, MEd, MPH	Master's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To apply for a Master's course, please fill out the attached form.</li></ul>
PhD, EngD	doctorate/doctoral degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The department admits about 40 PhD students each year.</li><li>• Many doctoral students across the College are involved in teaching.</li></ul>
PG Cert, PG Dip	postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A PG Cert is required to qualify for the course.</li></ul>

## Appendix 4: Spelling

This list is not exhaustive: if you are unsure about the correct spelling for a term not listed here, please contact [style.guide@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:style.guide@imperial.ac.uk).

For scientific terms or terms specific to an academic discipline, please exercise judgment, taking guidance from academic colleagues where possible.

Be sure to retain consistency throughout a piece of writing.

### British and US spelling

British spelling should be used when writing on behalf of the College, unless quoting a piece of text originally written using US spelling. Some examples of common differences are listed here:

Prefer -ise/-yse/-isation to -ize/-yze/-ization. For example: organisation; rationalise; contextualise.

Prefer -our to -or. For example: colour; armour. Prefer -re to -er. For example: centre; metre.

Prefer -lling to ling; -lled to -led; and -llers to -lers. For example: travelling, travelled and traveller; modelling, modelled and modeller.

## Plural or singular

Collective nouns such as group, team, department, faculty or staff, use singular verbs.

For example:

- The team has done great work this term.
- Next week, staff at Imperial celebrate Black History Month.

Foreign plural forms should be used where still in common use. Some examples are listed here:

Analyses

Bases

Nuclei

Bacteria

Crises

Phenomena

## Commonly misspelled words

accommodate, accommodation

ensure (make certain),  
insure (against risks)

inoculate

adviser (advisor is correct,  
but more common in US English)

entrepreneurial

install, instalment, installation

affect (verb – to act upon  
/influence),  
effect (noun – result)

entrepreneurship

liaise, liaison

practice (noun),  
practise (verb)

ageing

farther (distance),  
further (additional)

program (only in software context,  
otherwise programme)

alternative (another option),  
alternate (to take turns)

focuses

queuing

commemorate, commemoration

foetus, foetal

rhythm

dependant (noun),  
dependent (adjective)

fulfil, fulfilling

judgment

stationary (not moving),  
stationery (pens and paper)

innocuous

## Style preferences: education terms

alumnus, alumni (note that we do not use the terms alumna or alumnae to refer to female students)	A-level	Bachelor's (not 'bachelors' or 'bachelor's')
degree course (not 'degree programme')	Diploma of the Imperial College	postdoctoral
doctoral, doctorate	First (not '1st')	postgraduate
coursework	2:1, 2:2, Third	undergraduate
fieldwork	Honours (not 'honours')	Imperial College Union
PhD	Joint Honours	Students' Union (not 'Student Union')
	MBBS	
	Master's (not 'Masters' or 'masters')	

## Style preferences: hyphenation, no hyphenation, one word or two words

3D printing	en suite	large scale
antimicrobial	every day (frequency), everyday (habitual)	log in, log out
award-winning	evidence-based	manmade
computer-generated	extracurricular	microorganism
co-operation	field station	multidisciplinary
co-operative	field trip	multimedia
co-ordinate	field work	multinational
cross disciplinary	full-time (not full time)	multilingual
cross-reference	fundraising, fundraiser	multi-storey
crowdsourcing	hands-on	multi-user
crowdfunding	high-tech	nanotechnology
decision-making	interdisciplinary	non-linear
decommissioning	healthcare (not health care)	no-one
electromagnetic	infra-red	one-of-a-kind
email		out-of-hours

part-time	spinout	website
policy making, policy makers	startup	weekday
postholder (no hyphen and lower case)	state-of-the-art	wellbeing
research-intensive	textbook	Wi-Fi
seed funding	third party	world class
sign in, sign out	thought-leader	world leading
spin-in	ultra-violet	worldwide
	webpage	