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Editorial Style Guide

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One of the most important impressions a university can make is in how its information is presented. If one department treats the English language differently than another, it conveys an institution that is disjointed.

For that reason, this guide is intended to bring stylistic uniformity, professionalism and clarity to all written communications, in print and online, generated by faculty and staff of California State University, Dominguez Hills. It is a truncated version of the style guide created by the California State University Office of the Chancellor, but also includes preferences specific to Dominguez Hills.

For grammar and style issues not covered in this guide, refer to the *Associated Press Stylebook*, which is the book this guide most closely follows. *The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed.* is also useful. For proper spelling, hyphenation and word usage, we suggest using *Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* or *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed.*

Note: This guide does not apply to scholarly and academic work, which should comply with its publisher's specified style manuals.

Thank you for your cooperation in using this style guide. University-wide consistency builds credibility and greatly enhances our audiences' understanding of CSU Dominguez Hills.

Arranged alphabetically

(A separate section is devoted to capitalization)

— A —

abbreviations—Avoid using abbreviate words unless the abbreviated form is generally accepted, such as for courtesy, legislative, military, academic and religious titles used before a person’s name (*Mr. John Smith, Dr. Barry Jones, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sen. Dianne Feinstein*), or for such abbreviations as Jr., Sr., a.m. p.m., etc., and so on.

abbreviations, academic degrees—When abbreviated, academic degrees are separated by periods, with no spaces in between (B.A., B.S., M.B.A., M.A., M.F.A., M.S., Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., etc.). However, avoid using these abbreviations in running text. Instead of *John Smith, who has an M.A. in English*, write *John Smith, who has a master’s degree in English*. Abbreviations are acceptable in listings in which many people have degrees or after a person’s full name, set off by commas. (*Mary Smith, Ph.D., spoke*.) (See **CAPITALIZATION, academic degrees**.)

acronyms —Use acronyms only when an organization, university or program commonly uses one to identify itself. If so, spell out the full name in first reference, followed by the acronym in parentheses. (If the organization will not be referred to again in the text, there is no need to reference the acronym at all.) If referring to an organization several paragraphs removed from its first reference, it is advised not to use the acronym but rather the full name of the organization again to avoid confusion.

In some cases, the acronym is known and recognized more so than the full name of an organization. These could be used on first and subsequent reference. Examples include AARP (this, in fact, is the official name of the American Association of Retired Persons), SAT (the college aptitude test whose acronym is also its official name and no longer stands for anything), NASA, NATO, CIA, FBI, HTML, even UFO.

When in doubt, *AP Stylebook* lists a number of acronyms that are commonly used in first reference.

acronyms, campus buildings—Spell out campus building names in running text; do not use the acronyms. Such acronyms are only acceptable in class schedules, maps or in other formats where space is limited. When writing about a location on campus, use the full name in first reference; it is acceptable to use a shortened version in second reference.

Example: Donald B. and Katherine P. Loker University Student Union, first reference. Loker University Student Union, Loker Student Union, or just student union, subsequent references. Note that “student union” is lowercased. (see **CAPITALIZATION, place names**)

acting, interim—Someone filling in for an administrator temporarily on leave is *acting*. When someone is filling in while a permanent replacement is being sought for a position, they are

considered *interim*. Neither term is capitalized as part of the title (e.g. interim President Boice Bowman)

adviser—Not *advisor*

affect/effect—*Affect* as a verb means to influence. (*How do you think that will affect us?*) *Effect* as a verb means to cause. (*The new budget effected many changes on campus.*) As a noun, *effect* means result. (*The effect of all these changes will become apparent.*) *Affect* as a noun should be avoided (although it is often used in the field of psychology).

a lot—Two words. A more specific term or quantity is preferred.

all right—Not alright.

alumna, alumnus, alumnae, alumni—Use *alumna* for a female who attended or graduated from a university and use *alumnae* in the plural form. The male form of the word is *alumnus*; *alumni*, the plural. Use *alumni* when referring to a combination of male and female graduates. Use of *alum* should be avoided.

a.m., p.m.—Lowercase with periods after each letter.

ampersand—Do not substitute & for *and* in running text unless part of a formal name (AT&T).

annual—An event cannot be consider annual until it has been taken place at least two consecutive years. It is incorrect to say “first annual.”

apostrophe, usage— Add ’s to possessive singular nouns (even those nouns that end in s). Examples: *the boy’s* (singular) *hat*; *the campus’s* (singular) *gymnasium* However, only add an apostrophe to nouns ending in s when the next word begins in s (*the campus’ spring semester.*) Also only add an apostrophe after plural nouns (*the boys’ baseball team*) This style follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For more on apostrophe usages, consult that book.

assure/ensure/insure—*Assure* is a verb meaning to convey a sense of reassurance used in reference to a person; you can assure someone that something will be done, but you cannot assure that something will be done. In the latter, *ensure*, meaning to guarantee, would be the correct verb. *Insure* is a verb reserved for the insurance industry. *I assured her that we would ensure that she was insured by our company policy.*

— B —

biannual/biennial—*Biannual* means twice a year; *biennial* means every two years.

— C —

California State University, Dominguez Hills—When referring to this university, include the entire name in first reference. Acceptable subsequent references are *CSU Dominguez Hills* (preferred), *Cal State Dominguez Hills*, or *Dominguez Hills*.

Avoid using *CSUDH* or *the university*. Use of *university* is acceptable when it is clear you are referring to Dominguez Hills. Note: university is not capitalized (See **CAPITALIZATION, university**).

campuswide—Not hyphenated

co—Most *co-* prefix words are not hyphenated, unless when forming nouns, adjectives or verbs that designate occupation or status. (e.g. *cocurricular, coexist, but co-host, co-worker*).

collective noun—(faculty, staff, board, committee etc.) A noun that appears singular in form but denotes a group of individuals or objects. The collective noun takes a singular verb when the group in question acts as one unit. (*The committee is meeting to set its agenda.*)

compare to/compare with—*Compare to* is used to liken two things or to note similarities. (*Her sense of style was compared to Martha Stewart's.*) *Compare with* is used to note similarities and differences. (*He arrived at the seminar at 3:45 p.m., which was early compared with those attendees who arrived at 4:10 p.m.*)

comprise/compose/constitute—*Comprise* means to include all of, contain all of, be made up of, whereas *compose* and *constitute* mean to make up. Remember this distinction: *The whole comprises* (is made up of/contains all of) *the parts*; *The parts compose* (make up) *the whole*. Sentences that use *is comprised of* are incorrect. *Comprise* should be used as an active verb only; use in the passive implies the meaning of *compose* or *constitute*: *The CSU system comprises 23 campuses* (active verb/whole-parts construction) not *The CSU system is comprised of 23 campuses* (passive verb and if reworded to be active would read: *Twenty-three campuses comprise the CSU system*, and in this sentence, *compose/constitute* would be the correct term to use (part-whole construction).

courtesy titles—In text, avoid the use of courtesy titles (*Mr., Mrs. Miss*) with full or partial names. (see **CAPITALIZATION, titles**)

— D —

days of the week—Do not abbreviate in text. Days of the week are always capitalized, even when plural.

decades—Preference is to spell out the decade: the eighties, the nineties, etc., or to use the full four-digit number (1900s). Do not include an apostrophe (i.e. 1990's is wrong; 1990s is correct). It is acceptable to use the abbreviated two-digit form (the '60s) when the century is clear. Include the apostrophe before the first digit. However, use the full four digits when using *mid* (the mid-1960s). When indicating a span of time between two decades (or centuries) use four digits for both of the defining years (1989-1990; 1999-2000). Using just the last two digits of the second defining date if both dates are within the same decade is correct (2007-08).

dimensions—Use figures and spell out *inches, millimeters, etc.* in text. (*He was five feet, nine inches tall.*)

doctoral/doctorate—*Doctoral* is an adjective; *doctorate* is the degree received.

Dr.—The title *Dr.* before someone’s name should be used to refer to a person with a medical or veterinary degree. Use of the title for a person with a Ph.D. is optional. For clarity, if *Dr.* is used to refer to someone with a Ph.D., qualify in first reference what kind of doctor the person is (e.g. *Dr. Jane Doe, professor of chemistry*). Do not use both *Dr.* and *Ph.D.* in the same reference. (wrong: *Dr. Charles Jones, Ph.D.*) (See **CAPITALIZATION, titles**)

— E —

e.g., i.e.—*E.g.* means for example; *i.e.* means in other words, or that is. Use periods after each letter and set off with commas when used in running text. Example: *We are working on several projects, e.g., the annual report, the conference and the program for teachers.* Use *i.e.* when rephrasing a statement to make it more understandable. *The Executive Council, i.e., the chancellor, vice chancellors, and other system administrator, met Tuesday morning.*

e-mail—Hyphenate. Lowercase unless at the start of a sentence, in a title or as part of an address.

emerita, emeritus, emeriti—*Emerita* refers to a woman, *emeritus* to a man, and *emeriti* in the plural form. The designation follows the main title and is capitalized with the main title if it precedes the name: *Professor Emeritus Bob Wilson.* (see **CAPITALIZATION, titles**)

ensure—see **assure/ensure/insure**

ethnicity and race—Current preference for the names of non-European ethnic groups is without hyphens (*African American, Asian American, Mexican American*).

ex officio—The term, meaning *by virtue of office or position*, is two words, not hyphenated or italicized or capitalized. However, if used with a person’s name in a list, do capitalize both words. (see **CAPITALIZATION, titles**)

— F —

faculty/faculty member—*Faculty* refers to an institution’s entire instructional staff and takes singular verbs. (*The CSU Dominguez Hills faculty is dedicated.*) Its plural is *faculties*. In referring to an individual, use *faculty member*. For a group of individuals numbering less than the entire faculty, use *faculty members*. If referring to a distinct group, use the plural: *The anthropology faculty are conducting a dig.*

FAQ—Do not add an *s*; FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) already implies multiple questions.

fewer/less—*Fewer* refers to number; *less* refers to quantity. *Fewer* is used when for individual things that can be counted (*We invited six fewer people this year.*) *Less* is used when talking about quantities that are not counted individually. (*I have less money than you.*) *Less* also can be used for degree, quantity or extent when countable items are not being considered individually. (*We have less than 10 miles to go.*)

flier/flyer—*Flier* is a handbill or an aviator; *flyer* is a fast bus or train or stock market gamble.

freshman/freshmen—Use *freshman* instead of *freshmen* as a modifier; it is not the freshmen class anymore than it is the juniors class.

full-time/full time—Hyphenate when used as an adjective preceding a noun. Do not hyphenate when following a noun. (*She has a full-time job. He attends school full time.*)

— G —

GPA—Preference is to spell out grade point average in first reference and the acronym for further references. Use two digits after the decimal when expressing grade point average (3.50 GPA).

grade letters—Do not use quotation marks or italics. Do capitalize. For plurals, add an s without the apostrophe (As and Bs)

graduate (verb)—Students graduate *from* Cal State Dominguez Hills; they do not graduate Cal State Dominguez Hills.

— H —

historic/historical—*Historic* means important within the framework of history; *historical* concerns something that happened in the past. Both are preceded by the article *a*, not *an*.

— I —

i.e., e.g.— see **e.g., i.e.**

insure—see **assure/ensure/insure**

— L —

-ly adverbs, hyphenating— Do not use a hyphen between adverbs ending in *-ly* and the adjectives they modify. Example: *fully vested employee*.

— M —

multi—Most *multi-* prefix words are not hyphenated: *multicultural, multidisciplinary, multitask*.

— N —

non—Most *non-* prefix words are not hyphenated unless confusion in reading might result (*non-native*) or if used before a proper noun (*non-English*).

not only...but also—IF you use *not only*, also use *but also*; a comma is not necessary between phrases. (*She not only wrote the book but also drew the illustrations.*)

numerals—Numbers from one to nine, including ordinals (from first to ninth) should be spelled out; the rest should be figures. Spell out all numerals that begin a sentence, except years. Use figures for course numbers, grade point averages, credit hours, scores, percentages, decimals, book sections, page numbers, sizes, ages, dimensions and times. (Consult *AP Stylebook* for more on numerals.)

— P —

part time/part-time— Hyphenate when used as an adjective preceding a noun. Do not hyphenate when following a noun. (She has a part-time job. He attends school part time.)

percent—Always spell out *percent* in text and use figures (*5 percent*). Percent takes a singular verb if used alone (*A 10 percent return is good.*) or if a singular word is the object of *of* (*Exactly 78 percent of the product is needed.*). It take a plural verb if a plural word is the object of *of*.

post- — Most *post-* prefix words are not hyphenated (*postbaccalaureate*); an exception is *post-master's*.

pre- — Most *pre-* prefix words are not hyphenated.

— R —

re- — Use a hyphen if the word that follows *re* starts with an *e*, such as *re-elect*, *re-examine*; or if it could be confused with another meaning, as in *re-cover/recover*; *re-create/recreate*.

— S —

SAT—The SAT no longer stands for anything. In the mid-1990s the College Board dropped the then full name of the test, Scholastic Assessment Test. Today there are two tests, SAT I: Reasoning Test and SAT II: Subject Test.

Staff—*Staff*, like *faculty*, refers to a body of people and takes a singular verb. (*Our staff is here to help.*) Use *staff member* (singular) or *staff members* (plural) to refer to individuals, and the verb should agree with the singular or plural *member*.

statewide—Not hyphenated

systemwide—Not hyphenated

— T —

time of day—Use figures, except for noon and midnight. Do not use :00 to indicate the top of the hour. (*We will meet at 1 p.m.* (not 1:00 p.m.) *to discuss the program.*) Include *a.m.* or *p.m.* to indicate morning or afternoon times. However, avoid redundancies such as *We will meet at 10 a.m. this morning.* Instead say *We will meet at 10 a.m. today.* In running text, do not use a dash to indicate a duration of time (Not *The class went from 2:15-2:45 p.m.* Rather *The class went from 2:15 to 2:45 p.m.*) Dashes are acceptable in other forms to show duration.

theater—Use this spelling unless a proper name, program or department uses *Theatre* (as in the *Department of Theatre Arts*).

— U —

United States/U.S.—Spell out when used as a noun; *U.S.* (periods, no spaces) is acceptable as an adjective or as part of an organization’s name.

university-wide—Hyphenate

— V —

vice president, vice chancellor—Not hyphenated

— W —

-wide—Hyphenated suffix when the base word is three or more syllables (*university-wide*, but not *campuswide, systemwide, statewide, worldwide*).

CAPITALIZATION

A note: This style guide follows a mostly lowercase approach, also known as down-style, that favors lowercasing when the question of whether to capitalize or not arises. We follow this style for several reasons, primarily because avoiding unnecessary capitalization is the standard of most stylebooks (*AP Stylebook*, *The Little, Brown Handbook*, *Chicago Manual of Style*) and it is the preferred but by no means definitive style in the business and professional world and in the media. Given that we want to communicate our story outside the walls of this university, adopting a style that is more or less consistent with that outside world is essential. While the down-style/up-style debate is still unresolved, with even universities split, it does appear more and more institutions of higher learning are adopting the down-style, as well. Because capitalization/lowercasing is key to a style, the category takes up the bulk of this style guide.

The following guidelines on capitalization apply mainly to running text. Exceptions are when writing lists, outlines, table of contents, programs, etc. where the graphic appearance of a piece is a major consideration. Use best judgment.

— A —

abbreviations/acronyms—Most abbreviations/acronyms are in all caps and usually not separated with periods or spaces. Some exceptions where periods are used include abbreviated two-named cities (*Los Angeles* is *L.A.*), states (*North Dakota* is *N.D.*—see **states**), nations (*United States* is *U.S.*), initials as names (*H.L. Mencken*), and academic degrees (see **abbreviations, academic degrees**).

academic degrees—When spelling out a degree, do not capitalize it when used in a generic sense; capitalize only when referring to a specific degree. Examples: *The university offers bachelor's and master's degrees* (generic) *in a number of disciplines*. *The university offers a Bachelor of Arts in Communications* (specific). *She received her bachelor's degree* (generic) *in political science and she is working towards a Master of Arts in History* (specific), *with hopes of one day obtaining her doctorate*. Academic degrees are capitalized when following a person's name and either the full name of the degree or the abbreviation is acceptable. (*Mary Smith, Doctor of Philosophy*; *Mary Smith, Ph.D.*)

assembly—Not capitalized. Lowercase when part of the name for the lower house of a legislature (e.g. *the California assembly* or *the state assembly*).

assembly member—Two words; capitalized only when preceding an individual's name. (*Assembly Member John Smith attended the ceremony*. But: *John Smith, assembly member, attended the ceremony*.) Preferred to assemblyman and assemblywoman. (See **CAPITALIZATION, titles**)

awards—Check with the organization issuing the award, grant, fellowship or scholarship to determine capitalization. Some capitalize the common noun (award, grant, etc) while others do not. (Examples: *Guggenheim Fellowship*, but *Guggenheim grant*; *National Merit Scholarship awards*; *Nobel Prize in physics*; *Nobel laureate*; *Nobel Prize winner*)

— B —

bachelor's degree—Do not capitalize; use apostrophe *s* (the term is *bachelor's degree* not *bachelors degree*). The plural is *bachelor's degrees*, not *bachelors' degrees*.

board of trustees—Capitalize *Board of Trustees* when referring to the board of the CSU system, and use the official name in first reference, *California State University Board of Trustees*. Note: This rule deviates from the lowercase style but is the preference of the Chancellor's Office. Lowercase *board of trustees* when used for other boards or when either word, *board* or *trustee*, is used alone, even when referring to the CSU board. (*The board met last month. The trustees will be meeting this week.* But: *The Board of Trustees will vote on fee hikes later this month.*) The terms *board of trustees* and *board* take singular verbs; *trustees* takes a plural verb.

— C —

The California State University—*The* is part of the official name of this system and should be included and capitalized on covers, title pages, contents, headings, official proclamations or resolutions, and the like. However, lowercase *the* before *the California State University* or *the CSU* in all other writings. The word *system* is often used in conjunction with *the CSU*, but it is not part of the official name and is not capitalized.

capital/capitol—Capital is the seat of government (*The capital of California is Sacramento.*) and is lowercased. Capitol is a building. Lowercase when it is used to refer to state government buildings. Capitalize when referring to the government building in Washington D.C. (*the Capitol of the United States is in Washington D.C.*, or *The U.S. Capitol is a magnificent building*)

centuries—Capitalize only when used as part of the name of a company. Lowercase and spell out if less than 10 (the second century; the 21st century).

Chancellor's Office—Capitalize when referring to the systemwide office, or the building that houses the administrative offices of the CSU system. Example: *The Chancellor's Office announced plans for a new campus today;* or *The Board of Trustees meets at the Chancellor's Office.* Lowercase when referring to the physical office of the incumbent chancellor. Example: *I went into the chancellor's office to get his signature.*

colleges, academic or administrative departments, divisions, programs—If the official and complete name is used, it should be capitalized: *College of Health and Human Services, College of Education, Department of Anthropology, Division of Kinesiology and Recreation, Division of University Advancement, Theater Arts Program, Negotiation, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Program, Office of Development, Division of Academic Affairs.* Lowercase when used informally (hint: often when the words *a* or *the* precede the name): *the sociology department, the history department, academic affairs, the program in negotiation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding,* etc. (see also **CAPITALIZATION, majors/minors**)

courses—Capitalize specific names of courses: *Freshman Composition I, History 101, Africana Studies 200/Intro to Africana Studies*, etc. (See also **CAPITALIZATION, majors/minors**)

— G —

geographic regions—Capitalize only when referring to a specific region: *Southern California, the West Coast, the West, the Midwest, the East, the South, the Far East*. Do not capitalize compass direction (*north, south, east, west*)

— H —

home page—Two words, not capitalized.

House of Representatives—Use uppercase when referring to the lower house of Congress, even when shorted to *House*.

— I —

Internet—Capital *I*.

— L —

legislature—Lowercase in all uses (*the California legislature, the state legislature, the legislature*).

— M —

master's degree—Do not capitalize; use apostrophe *s* (the term is *master's degree* not *masters degree*). The plural is *master's degrees*, not *masters' degrees*.

majors/minors—Majors and minors and fields of study, except those containing proper nouns, are not capitalized (e.g. *marketing, communications, English, Asian studies, economics, Africana studies, earth science*, etc.) (See **CAPITALIZATION, courses** and **capitalization, colleges, academic or administrative departments, divisions, programs**)

— P —

place names—Informal names of buildings and places should not be capitalized. Example: *Leo F. Cain Library* referred to as *library*, lowercase, in subsequent references; or Student Health Center shortened to *health center*; or California State University, Dominguez Hills referred to as *the university*. (See **CAPITALIZATION, university**)

— S —

seasons and semesters—Do not capitalize spring, summer, winter, fall or semesters.

senate—Capitalize when referring to the U.S. Senate; lowercase when referring to the state senate.

states—The word *state* is lowercased (e.g. the state of California), unless part of a proper name. Spell out, do not abbreviate, a state name when it stands alone in a text. In conjunction with a city, abbreviate using the *AP Stylebook* abbreviations (for California, Calif., not the postal abbreviation, CA). Eight states are not abbreviated: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah. Use postal abbreviations for mailing addresses.

— T —

titles—Capitalize formal titles when they are used immediately before one or more names: *Chancellor Charles Reed, Deans Mitchell Maki and Laura Robles, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, Professor Emeritus Bob Wilson.* But do not capitalize before a name if *the* precedes the title: *The governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, visited campus.*

Note: Formal titles are usually ones that denote a scope of authority, professional activity or academic accomplishment, as opposed to an occupation. *Dean, professor, director* would be capitalized before a person's name, but *teacher, librarian or coordinator* would not.

Titles used in lieu of a person's name in running text (*The chancellor will be visiting the campus today.*) or titles following a name (*Mildred Garcia, president of CSU Dominguez Hills, addressed the students*) should not be capitalized. The latter should be set off by commas. Lowercasing a title does not diminish the rank or credibility of the person or position; for example, it is the universally accepted style that president, queen, pope are not capitalized when used in lieu of the person's name in those positions, or when the title follows their name. If those high-ranking titles aren't capitalized, why should others be?

As noted at the beginning of this section, in such usages as programs, official lists, or in addresses, or outlines, it is acceptable to capitalize a title following a person's name.

— U —

university— Do not capitalize *university* as a marker of this university, except when included in the full title, California State University, Dominguez Hills.

It has been more or less customary at CSU Dominguez Hills to capitalize *university* when referring to the university. However, we strongly recommend that writers switch to using a lowercase *u*, or avoid using the term alone when referring to this campus, for these reasons:

- Doing so eliminates any confusion about when and when not to capitalize the word.

- Non-university preference (in publishing, the news media, and the nonacademic business world) is to lowercase *university*, even when it refers to a specific institution.
- In almost all cases, context will clearly indicate when *university* refers to California State University, Dominguez Hills. In cases where there may be ambiguity, writers can easily substitute *our university* or one of the other acceptable abbreviations or acronyms for the campus.

— W —

Web—Capitalized when used alone to refer to the World Wide Web

Web page—capitalize, two words.

Web site—capitalize, two words. Although *website* is becoming conventional, most formal style guides still prefer two words with *Web* remaining capitalized, as in the type of site is a World Wide Web site.

World Wide Web—Capitalize.