Writing for the OIA
A to Z Style Guide

Abbreviations

To ensure your reader understands what your abbreviation means:
- write full name first (afterwards, abbreviations can be used)
- in longer pages, try to repeat the full name from time to time (because many web users do not start reading from the top)
- make sure the page can be read and **understood on its own**, without reading any other page of the website (because many web users land on the page directly from Google, via keywords).

In a table, you can use more abbreviations than in normal sentences, e.g. you can abbreviate *International* to *Int'l*.
You can abbreviate *approximately* to *approx.* (even in a sentence) if it is followed by Arabic numerals.

Address

If the address is on one line, use commas:
National Taiwan University, No 1, Sec 4, Roosevelt Rd, Taipei 10617, Taiwan

If it is on several lines, omit commas:
National Taiwan University
No 1, Sec 4, Roosevelt Rd
Taipei 10617, Taiwan

Alumni

Peter is an **alumnus.**
Peter and Paul are **alumni.**
Victoria is an **alumna.**
Victoria and Alexandra are **alumnae.**

Victoria, Alexandra and Peter are all **alumni.**

Ampersand (&)

Avoid & except where it is part of the official name

Apostrophe

the results gained by the student = *the student's results*
the results gained by the students = *the students' results*

Apostrophes can help to make your sentences lighter:
NTU's Office of International Affairs rather than ~~the NTU Office of International Affairs~~

Application documents

Prefer *application documents* over *application materials*

two 2x2-inch photographs (not *photos*)
one photocopy (not *one copy*)

Bulleted lists

Bullets are a useful way of breaking up your writing and clearly showing a list. They are much easier to read than a list incorporated into general text. There are three main styles of bulleted lists:

- Short items
- Longer items but not complete sentences
- Complete sentences

Start each bullet point with a capital letter, unless it is a list that carries on from the introductory text. Only use full stops at the end of complete sentences.

Short items

The whole life cost of a lighting scheme includes:

- *Installation*
- *Operation*
- *Maintenance*
- *Removal*

Lists that follow on from the introductory text

Before driving in winter, you should:

- *check the anti-freeze in your radiator*
- *make sure your lights are clean and working properly*
- *ensure your windscreen is clean*
- *replace the battery if it's not reliable.*

Complete sentences

Our vision to be the world's leading road operator comprises five goals:

- *We provide a service that our customers can trust.*
- *We set the standard for delivery.*
- *We deliver sustainable solutions.*
- *Our roads are the safest in the world.*
- *Our network is a dynamic and resilient asset.*

Campus and other locations

Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport
Taipei International Airport (Songshan)
Chunghwa Post (not *Taiwan Post*)
Chunghwa Telecom (not *Chunghua*, not *Chung-Hua*)
7-Eleven
convenience store
the Gongguan area
Gongguan MRT Station (no *the*)
Gongguan MRT Station exit 3
Xinsheng South Rd

Zhoushan Rd
the main campus
Fu Bell
NTU's Main Gate (e.g. *Please stand by at NTU's Main Gate until the guests arrive*)
Royal Palm Avenue
the College of Bioresources and Agriculture (not ~~*Bio-Resources*~~)
fourth floor or *4th floor* (not ~~*4F*~~, not ~~*4ᵗʰ floor*~~, not ~~*4th Floor*~~)
Room 418, 4th floor, 2nd Administration Building (*Bldg* only where space is restricted)

Capitals

As a general rule, use capitals for proper nouns only.
Do not write long blocks of capital letters: ~~*IN AN ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT THIS IS INTERPRETED AS SHOUTING*~~

Use capitals for official or specific names:
- job titles, e.g. *the President, the Dean for International Affairs, Student Ambassador*
- our main official categories: International Scholar, International Degree Student, Exchange Student, Visiting Student
- degrees and academic subjects, e.g. *MA in Oriental Philosophy*
- colleges, departments and institutes, e.g. *College of Public Health, Department of International Business*
- publications, e.g. *Read the **Study Abroad Programs** brochure*
- the University (only when referring to NTU), e.g. *the University has 11 colleges and 2 professional schools*
- *Visitor Visa, Resident Visa, National Health Insurance*

Also use capitals for:
- days of the week, e.g. *Wednesday*
- months, e.g. *April*

Do not capitalize general terms:
- *NTU has produced more than 40 university presidents*
- *Presidents from eight Asian universities participated in the meeting*
- *We offer five programs in… We offer 30 courses in…*
- *a college, a department, an institute, a school*
- *new students, returning students*
- *higher education*
- *a transcript, a photocopy of your passport, a passport-sized photograph in electronic format*
- *an email*
- *a visa, visa-exempted entry*

Do not capitalize:
- *fall, winter, spring, summer*

Generally, use lower case wherever possible, including in headings (but upper case for names of colleges, proper names for buildings, etc).

Dashes

You can use a dash when you are expressing a range in a table:
2015–2020 (Ctrl + Minus)

It is preferable to avoid dashes if you have enough space:

This scheme will run from 2015 to 2020 (not ~~*This scheme will run from 2015–2020*~~)

For academic years, financial years: *2015/2016* (note: no space next to */*)

Dates

➔ see **Numbers**

Deadlines

As long as your message remains clear, adopting a positive viewpoint is encouraged.
In most cases, ~~*your application should be submitted no later than by the deadline of July 20*~~ can be rewritten as **apply by July 20**.
Instead of ~~*applications will close on July 20*~~, you can write **applications are open until July 20**.
~~*Application deadlines*~~ can be written as *Application dates* or *When to apply*

Email

email (not ~~*e-mail*~~)

Erasmus

Erasmus Mundus can be shortened to *Erasmus*, e.g. *Incoming Erasmus Students* (rather than ~~*Incoming Erasmus Mundus Students*~~)

Fax

Fax (not ~~*FAX*~~)
+886 (0)2 2362 0096

Formatting text

➔ see **Italics**
➔ see **Text alignment**
➔ see **Underline**

Geographical names

In a sentence, some countries take 'the', such as:
- *the USA* (e.g. *Exchange Students from **the USA***)
- *the UK* (e.g. *Partner institutions in **the UK***)
- *the Netherlands*
- *the Czech Republic*
- *the Philippines*
- *the Gambia*
- *the Republic of China (Taiwan)*, *the ROC (Taiwan)*

In an alphabetical list, place the Netherlands under N, the UK under U, etc.
In a table, you may omit 'the'.

Please note:
the USA (not ~~U.S.A.~~, not ~~America~~)
the UK (not ~~U.K.~~)
the Netherlands (not ~~Netherland~~, not ~~Holland~~)
Korea (not ~~South Korea~~)
Mainland China
Macau (note: *the University of Macau* but *Macao Polytechnic Institute*)
the Philippines; a citizen of the Philippines is *Filipino* (male) or *Filipina* (female)
Sao Tome and Principe
the Americas = South America + North America

Headings and subheadings

Keep headings simple

Avoid unnecessary capitals: *How to find us* not ~~How to Find Us.~~
Avoid end punctuation
Avoid unnecessary words such as *information*:
> *Contact* or *Contact us* not ~~Contact information~~
> *Visa* not ~~Visa information~~
> ~~Useful information~~

Keep headings consistent

All verbs with same subject, or all nouns, all adjectives, etc; if possible, try to prevent a mix:
> *Who can apply, When to apply, How to apply*
> *Eligibility, Application deadline, Application guide*

Hyphens

Do not use a hyphen in:
email (not ~~e-mail~~)
online (not ~~on-line~~)
worldwide (not ~~world-wide~~)

Italics

While italics may be used to highlight *words* or *short phrases*, try to avoid using them to highlight whole sentences, as they make text more difficult to read (especially if your text will be **read on a computer screen**).

NTU

NTU, not ~~the NTU~~

Numbers

Writing out numbers

Spell out *one* to *ten* included.
11, 12, 13…
Use commas to group thousands: *8,000,000*

Telephone numbers

+886 (0)2 3366 2007 ext 260
If your text will not be read from overseas: *02 3366 2007 ext 260*

Dates

Month, day, year: *April 05, 2012*
If helpful: *Thursday, April 05, 2012*
In a table or where space is restricted, you can use the first three letters of every month:
Apr 05, 2012
Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec (without a dot)

Avoid *~~5/4~~*, *~~4/5~~*, *~~05/04~~* and *~~04/05~~* as these forms can be ambiguous.
~~April 5th, 2012~~
~~April 5th, 2012~~
~~April 05 2012~~
~~April, 05, 2012~~
~~2012/04/05~~

Days can be abbreviated to *Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun* (without a dot) in a table or where space is restricted, but it is better to write days in full if you can.

the 2012/2013 academic year

Times

9am
5pm
5.30pm
noon
midnight
9am–6pm
between 9am and 5.50pm
from noon to 1pm
noon–1pm (dash: Ctrl + Minus)

~~5 pm~~
~~5 PM~~
~~PM 5~~
~~05pm~~
~~5:30pm~~
~~17:30~~
~~12pm~~
~~0am~~
~~12am~~
~~9am~5.30pm~~
Do not use ~ when you write in English

Money

Write currency first, then a space, then figure: *TWD 1,500*
~~TWD1,500~~
~~TW$ 1,500~~
~~1,500 TWD~~
TWD (not *~~NT$~~*, not *~~NTD~~*)
USD (not *~~US$~~*)

Note:
Our brochures contain many occurrences of the letters 'NT', since we often write 'NTU'. Preferring *TWD* over *~~NTD~~* will help us to save a few 'NT'.

For an overseas audience, *TWD* is better known than *~~NTD~~*. *TWD* is the norm in banking, for example when prospective students convert currency.

Percentage

20 % (in a table)
20 percent (in a sentence)

Ages

Use Arabic numerals
Ages as adjectives are hyphenated: *18-year-old students*

Floors

3rd floor, e.g. in addresses: *Location: 3rd floor, Main Library*
the third floor, e.g. *Student dorms occupy the third and fourth floors.*

Fractions

a two-thirds increase (hyphen)
an increase of two thirds (no hyphen)
Avoid combining figures and words: *two-thirds completed*, not *~~2/3 completed~~*

Distance

2km (no spacing)

Parentheses (括號)

No space right after an opening parenthesis

foreign faculty (Professor, Visiting Professor, Lecturer)
~~foreign faculty (Professor, Visiting Professor, Lecturer)~~
~~foreign faculty(Professor, Visiting Professor, Lecturer)~~

When you end a sentence with a parenthesis, remember the period

The fare is TWD 150 (approx. USD 5).
~~The fare is TWD 150. (approx. USD 5)~~

Plurals

alumnus, alumna → alumni, alumnae
bureau → bureaux
criterion → criteria
curriculum → curricula
syllabus → syllabi
symposium → symposia

Telephone

As part of contact details: *Tel* (not *~~Tel.~~*, not *~~TEL~~*)
Elsewhere: *telephone* (not *~~phone~~*)

Text alignment

As a general rule, align left but not right, unless there is a picture on the right.

Underline

Do not underline unless it is a link.

University or university?

the University (only when referring to NTU), e.g. *the **University** has 11 colleges and 2 professional schools*

*NTU has produced more than 40 **university** presidents.*
*Presidents from eight Asian **universities** participated in the meeting.*

URLs

Keep URLs short.
If the address starts with *www*, omit ~~*http://*~~
Do not write the last slash: *www.ntu.edu.tw* not ~~*www.ntu.edu.tw/*~~

Printed communication: if your URL is exceedingly long, consider using http://tinyurl.com

Visa

a visa (singular)
visas (plural)
Visitor Visas, a Visitor Visa
Resident Visas, a Resident Visa

~~*a Visa*~~
~~*VISA*~~