Guidance on LSE House Style and Best Communications Practice

Introduction

1.   LSE is a global leader with many and diverse audiences. It spans a wide range of activities within the social sciences. As a diverse and complex organisation we need to be clear communicators.

2.   This document sets out some basic principles for clear communication and a house style for LSE. It is meant primarily for those writing on behalf of LSE as an institution. This means, for example, those producing "corporate" publications such as booklets about LSE, prospectuses or even signage for buildings. Most provisions apply just as much to web and other online channels as to hard copy, though there is some web-specific guidance. This document is **not** intended to cover academic or other specialist writing. Academics will wish to judge style for themselves; for example some academic journals may have their own distinctive house styles, and some academic disciplines demand a certain mode of expression. That said, the principles of clear communication should be of general application.

3.   This document does not duplicate other policies or guidance which may need to be read alongside it: see paragraph 7.

4.   The house style itself has been updated, as the School has now decided to adopt *The Economist*'s style guide, with only a few modifications. This differs very little from the previous house style, is easy to use and is backed by an extensive website.

5.   These simple rules will ensure that our material looks professional, can be understood by its target audience and is consistent.

6.   The guidance covers the following areas:

- best practice in general communication
- LSE house style
- writing for the web
- preparing copy for printing
- plasma or large TV screens
- PowerPoint presentation templates
- stationery
- signage

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- other communications resources
- contacts

7. This document refers to the following related documents:

- policy and guidance on the use of social media
- policy on business cards

8. It also refers to a number of more detailed materials covering specific points.

Detailed technical guidance supporting these documents is available on the web, and referred to as necessary.

9. LSE Logo: Please note that the LSE logo, which is produced in various forms, is a registered trademark and a key part of the School's identity. As such, its use is tightly constrained. For any requests about the logo, contact designunit@lse.ac.uk.

Best practice in general communication

8. Not every piece of communication you undertake needs to have a lengthy strategy but good planning will help you:

- achieve your aim
- use resources efficiently
- prioritise

9. Decide your objectives. Communication is not an end in itself. It is a tool to help you achieve goals. In setting those goals, consider whether you can make them measurable, and if so whether it might help you later to do so.

10. Choose the audiences who can help you achieve your objectives. Think broadly – the people that you always communicate with might not be the best audience in every case. Audiences could be students, potential students, academics (in or outside LSE), support staff, policymakers (UK and abroad), NGOs and so on. Be as specific as you can and prioritise.

11. What do you want to say? Summarise it into a few key points or messages, which can be repeated across different communications

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materials. This helps emphasis and consistency. The classic ideal is three points.

12. Tailor messages for different audiences and for different media. Even plain text can be used in many different ways. Apart from the obvious such as books and static websites, consider staff or student newsletters, brochures, Facebook pages, Twitter, group emails and press releases. Sometimes the best use of ephemeral media like Twitter is to point readers to substantive texts elsewhere.

13. You don't have to stick to the written word. Videos and podcasts are enormously popular with many audiences. Also consider communicating, or reinforcing your communications, through events. These could range from plain meetings through to seminars, coffee mornings, lunches and major set-piece conferences.

14. Be realistic and tailor your tools and activities to the resources you have available. Remember that there are resources and help you can draw on within the School – for example, the Design Unit, the Conference and Events Office, the Press and Information Office, Web Services and online video production.

15. Draw up a timeline for implementing your plan that is realistic given your resources. Alert staff in other units who will be helping you disseminate your message, such as the Press and Information Office or Web Services, as early as you can.

16. Build in some simple evaluation measures from the outset as a means to check that you are achieving or have achieved your objectives.

LSE house style

17. Like almost all major institutions, LSE has a house style to help ensure that we communicate clearly and consistently. It should be used in all relevant circumstances for communications which are on behalf of LSE as an institution – see paragraph 2 above. To repeat, we are **not** trying to tell academics, or indeed specialists on the academic support side, how they should write, for academic or other non-general purposes.

18. Our house style is based on *The Economist Style Guide* (Profile Books Ltd 2010); or there is a freely-accessible online version at http://www.economist.com/styleguide/introduction). This guide is well

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regarded and used by a number of higher education bodies, including research councils.

19. Our house style however has the following seven differences from that of *The Economist*:

- *The Economist* uses lower case for most job titles, such as the prime minister. We use initial capitals for specific titles such as the Prime Minister, the LSE Director, the Director of Finance and Facilities, Professor of Economics and so on. However, we follow *The Economist* for all other commonly used, general titles such as chief executive, managing director, chair, fellow, governor.

- *The Economist* uses points between initials on people's and companies' names eg A.N. Wilson. We simply use spaces, eg R H Tawney.

- *The Economist* puts dates in the American style: August 9th 2011. We write 9 August 2011.

- *The Economist* uses e-mail, and e-business. We have long dropped the hyphen.

- *The Economist* uses %. We spell out per cent unless in graphs or we need to save space.

- *The Economist* puts books, journals, pamphlets, plays, operas, ballets, radio and television programmes in quotation marks. We use italics, with an initial capital letter for each main word. Books and journals with subtitles have a colon followed by all lower case letters. Academic papers will stay in inverted commas, with the first letter in capitals and all lower case thereafter. Blogs are treated in a similar way to journals – the official name of the blog is in italics with initial capitals for each main word; individual blog post titles are in inverted commas, with an initial capital for the first word only.

- *The Economist* uses Dr only for medical people and not on the first mention. We use Dr for academics. The title may be used on first mention and thereafter.

20. *The Economist* does not offer any guidance on style for bulleted lists. LSE house style is for the text introducing the list of bullet points to end with a colon. If each point is not a complete sentence:

  • put the first letter of each point in lower case
  • normally omit punctuation at the end of each point (although a question mark may sometimes be required)

If each point in the list is a complete sentence, it should begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, for example:

  • A complete sentence used as a bullet point ends with a full stop.

21. The following are some specific examples of the application of the house style within LSE:

- Do not use full points in abbreviations such as Dr or BA or BSc.

- Use capitals for specific job titles such as I G Patel Professor of Economics, and for titles used in conjunction with the name such as Professor Smith, but not for more generic usage such as in "we have several hundred professors".

- Write Pro-Director (Teaching and Learning) or Pro-Director for Teaching and Learning; not pro-director or pro director or Pro Director.

- Use master's, with an apostrophe and lower case, for singular and plural use; eg master's programmes, a master's course.
- When referring to one particular department, use Department of Geography, but not when referring to departments generally, as in there are 23 departments at LSE.

- Use capitals for titles of LSE programmes, such as MSc Economics; and of courses, such as AC100 Elements of Accounting and Finance.

- Write LSE for You and not LSE for you or LSE for YOU or any other version.

Writing for the web

22. LSE offers extensive guidance on writing for the web at http://lse.ac.uk/writingForTheLSEWebsite. The key elements are summarised below.

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23. The main point is that writing for the web is not the same as writing for print. People who use the web do not behave like people reading a book. They are usually looking for specific information. Web authors must make it easy for them to find what they want.

24. Studies show that people read online text a lot slower than printed text. Reading from a screen for an extended period of time is generally an unpleasant experience for most users. Web authors can make the experience easier by adhering to a few simple rules. These are set out below:

- Write for your audience. Are you providing them with the information they need? Are you allowing them to complete the tasks they want to achieve?

- Use your readers' language, not your own. Try to use the words people are likely to search for.

- Put important information at the top of the page. The reader needs to know at a glance what the page is about and whether it will interest them. Make sure your first heading and paragraph make this clear.

- Be relevant. Is there any content on your page that might make someone say, "So what?" If so, get rid of it. Don't provide information they already know, such as "This is the Department of X" when the title already makes that clear.

- Think globally. Remember that your website can be accessed by anyone in the world who is online, so choose both appropriate content and words.

- Be concise. Make your sentences short and to the point. Start with clear information on what the page is about. Once a user has established that the page contains information that interests them, they are more likely to read the text properly.

- Make sure your pages are "scannable" – particularly through the use of appropriate headlines, by "frontloading" your paragraphs with keywords and ensuring links are in the correct style.

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Preparing copy for printing

25.   The preferred typeface for text in externally facing publications (such as the prospectuses, *LSE Connect* and the LSE Events leaflet) is Frutiger. However, Frutiger is not available on most LSE PCs so Arial or Helvetica are similar-looking alternatives for drafting and internal purposes. All text put through the Design Unit can easily be converted to Frutiger there.

26.   The School has clear guidelines on copy preparation and proofreading. These are used in producing its corporate publications. If you have not produced many publications before, the guidelines will help you. They cover the sort of checks the Design Unit have found most helpful to clients and – from bitter experience – some of the pitfalls to be avoided. Much is standard proofreading practice and, although time-consuming at first, should actually save time later and avoid costly corrections at the printers. See http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/news/informationForStaff/CopyPreparationProofReading.aspx

27.   There are five particularly important points to remember:

- The address of the School should appear in full, normally on the back cover, together with direct contact details. These should generally be web and email addresses and telephone and fax numbers.

- To protect the School's legal position, the following phrase should appear on publications: "The London School of Economics and Political Science holds the dual status of an exempt charity under Section 2 of the Charities Act 1993 (as a constituent part of the University of London), and a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act 1985 (Registration no. 70527)."

- The following statement should appear on publications: "Freedom of thought and expression is essential to the pursuit, advancement and dissemination of knowledge. LSE seeks to ensure that intellectual freedom and freedom of expression within the law is secured for all our members and those we invite to the School."

- Ideally, the School's equality statement should be incorporated in all publications: "The School seeks to ensure that people are treated equitably, regardless of age, disability, race, nationality, ethnic or

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national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation or personal circumstances. Equality and diversity are integral to the School's priorities and objectives. We will support inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue and understanding and engage all students in playing a full and active role in wider engagement with society." However, if this is not possible (on a small brochure for example) it is acceptable to omit, or to stop after the word "objectives".

- All publications must be made available in other formats if requested, and should include the phrase: "This information can be made available in alternative formats, on request. Please contact: [contact name, telephone number, email of person/office responsible for the publication]".

Plasma or large TV screens

28.   Material can be displayed on the plasma/LCD screens at a number of locations on campus. This is a service run by IT Services and more information can be found at http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/itservices/facilities/avServices/displayScreens/display-screens.aspx

29.   The material must meet certain specifications set out on the Design Unit website. Please contact the Design Unit for details.

30.   Material will most likely be shown concurrently with LSE's daily signage (booking information, events, PC availability screens etc) and only acceptable LSE-related content will be displayed.

PowerPoint presentation templates

31.   The Design Unit have a range of templates designed to ensure that LSE presentations have a consistent look and feel. See http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/ERD/designUnit/templates.aspx

Stationery

32.   Artwork for all LSE stationery, including headed paper, compliments slips and business cards and envelopes, is prepared by the Design Unit and printed by Reprographics.

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33.   The Design Unit provide templates for standard stationery items such as posters, memos and invitations. These can be found at http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/ERD/designUnit/templates.aspx

34.   The policy on business card usage can be found here [Link pending]

Signage

35.   A Sign Manual is available with information relating to the graphics and manufacture of the LSE sign system. It incorporates detailed guidelines for laying out the sign graphics and reproducing the maps, plus lift and building diagrams. See http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/divisionsAndDepartments/estatesDivision/pdf/old_building_renumbering/sign_manual.pdf

       All queries and requests should go through the Estates Division: Phil Newsham, email p.newsham@lse.ac.uk.

Other communications resources

36.   For information on social media and rich media (such as videos and podcasts) please refer to the policy and guidance on the use of social media.

37.   The LSE Image Bank contains over 4,000 pictures by School photographer Nigel Stead. They range from LSE buildings and landmarks, to students, staff and LSE's highly popular public events programme. They also include a growing range of "generic" or "conceptual" photographs, illustrating broad concepts such as health, retail or the environment. The Image Bank is available at https://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/staff/webSupport/internal/imageBank/Home.aspx

Contacts

Robin Hoggard, Director of External Relations. To contact Robin, please contact Barbara Gilbert on b.gilbert1@lse.ac.uk in the first instance, or ring Barbara on 020 7107 5273.

Claire Sanders, Head of Communications: email c.e.sanders@lse.ac.uk; telephone 020 7955 7053

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Web Services: email webeditors.enquiries@lse.ac.uk

Design Unit: email designunit@lse.ac.uk; telephone 020 7955 7904

Reprographics: email repro.admin@lse.ac.uk, telephone +44 (0)20 7955 7986

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ANNEX A: About this document

Version
Version 1.0 issued on __ June 2012

Changes from previous version(s)
Replaces hard-copy *LSE Style Guide* and all other previous guidance on style
Adopts *The Economist Style Guide,* with minor derogations, as LSE house style

Target audience(s)
LSE staff, especially academic support staff

Process
This document was developed by the External Relations Division

Goals
1. To help staff communicate in a clear and consistent style
2. To protect the School, its staff and students from the risks of poor and inconsistent communications

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