Our origins are in New York City, and more than any other university, our future lies in other great cities across the globe.
NYU has evolved into a premier global university. As we become larger, more diversified, and more active around the world, our challenge is to look and sound like a unified institution.

Those of us who speak and write on behalf of New York University take pride in our responsibility. Our role is to inform, express, and motivate. We serve different needs, use many media, and reach audiences nearby and a world away.

Our task is not easy: We need to achieve factual consistency and also to strive for a distinctive and engaging NYU voice that reflects and reinforces everything we do. We have to avoid sounding disjointed, bureaucratic, or parochial.

The pages of these guidelines represent a step forward on all of these fronts. A key goal is to move toward greater unity, which is not the same as conformity. As NYU communicators, we should seek to use a common vocabulary, project a common vision, and show the world that we’re all on the same page.

Sincerely,

Lynne P. Brown
Senior Vice President, University Relations and Public Affairs
Who We Are

REFLECT OUR CULTURE IN STYLISTIC TRAITS.

How do we capture our spirit of “academic excellence”? What does “urban” sound like? What words best convey a “global perspective”? How does “caring for social good” influence our style? Here are suggestions for making our culture come to life through our style of communicating:

DISTILL THE ESSENCE OF NYU AND AMPLIFY IT.

We met with staff members from 15 divisions, ranging from admissions to student affairs, alumni to HR, and Abu Dhabi to Shanghai, as well as several schools, to understand the communications challenges faced by those in the field, and then work on a set of helpful guidelines to address those challenges.

SMART URBAN GLOBAL AMBITIOUS COMMITTED

We strive for academic excellence.
We believe in great cities.
We are diverse.
We are driven.
We confront the world’s problems.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSENCE</th>
<th>IMPLICATION FOR STYLE</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **SMART.** We strive for academic excellence.  
The NYU community is dynamic, creative, and entrepreneurial. They are on the move, following a steep upward trajectory of academic progress. | **Academic excellence does not mean stodginess or arrogance. Academic excellence suggests confidence, curiosity, and assertions based on evidence.** |
| **URBAN.** We believe in great cities.  
Great cities are the engines of NYU’s creativity. The University lives within New York City and other great cities—from Abu Dhabi to Shanghai, Paris to Prague, and Sydney to Buenos Aires—all magnets for talented, ambitious people. | **Cities are hubs of energy and social power. Urban writing is fast-paced and vigorous, using strong verbs and avoiding ponderous nouns.** |
| **GLOBAL.** We are diverse.  
NYU thrives beyond borders and across academic disciplines. NYU has emerged as an integrated, richly diverse worldwide platform for learning, teaching, researching, and building knowledge to meet humanity’s needs. | **People with a global perspective tend to be open, tolerant, and eager to share ideas. Global writing requires clarity, a welcoming tone, and respect for other views.** |
| **AMBITIOUS.** We are driven.  
NYU faculty and students are driven to achieve. They are curious and innovative and strive to gain knowledge and experience that advance their academic and professional careers. | **People who are ambitious tend to be in a hurry, and that suggests brevity. Let’s get to the point.** |
| **COMMITTED.** We confront the world’s problems.  
NYU’s culture is about having a responsibility not only to its students but also to the cities it resides in. NYU is constantly looking at its impact on the world and finding ways to improve it. | **People who care about their social impact are responsible and willing to sacrifice. This suggests warmth and inclusion—less ego, more empathy.** |
Global Vision

CHOOSE THE PHRASES, WORDS, AND TERMINOLOGY THAT BEST CONVEY WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE OFFER.

Writing and speaking effectively about our evolving university is a day-to-day challenge. We often scratch our heads and ask the following:

Should we call NYU the “Global Network University”? Are those words capitalized? Should we use the initials “GNU”?

What terms should we use to write about our various campuses and locations? When referring to NYU in Abu Dhabi, is “NYUAD” acceptable?

What about “study abroad”? How can you “study abroad” if the University’s home base is the entire world? Is “study away” better?

Now that we have two degree-granting campuses outside of New York, how do we refer to the New York campus of NYU?

In this section, you will find guidance for avoiding verbal minefields and achieving consistency and clarity worldwide.

“It’s frustrating. I’m not always sure where and how to use the latest NYU terminology.”

—NYU communications professional interviewed for these guidelines
USE “GLOBAL NETWORK UNIVERSITY” WITH PRECISION.

The “Global Network University” is not a place. The term describes our strategy for creating a seamless, enriching global educational experience.

It is best to use “Global Network University” (capitalized) only when referring to NYU’s strategy—or vision—since this is our blueprint for the future.

EXAMPLE

NYU is building a new paradigm in higher education, which we call the Global Network University. Designed to draw talented, creative students, scholars, and teachers from around the world, our global network enables people to circulate freely without leaving NYU’s intellectual community and resources.

In other instances, such as when discussing NYU’s structure, use simple descriptive terms that suit your purpose and are most likely to be understood. Do not use “Global Network University” when referring to the structure of the University. Instead, use phrases like “NYU’s global network.”

EXAMPLE

NYU is creating a premier global university. Through interconnected campuses, programs, and people, we are building a network that welcomes students to outstanding educational opportunities across the world.

NEVER USE “GNU.”

If you are explaining the “Global Network University” vision in a document, use terms such as “our global vision” or “this global strategy” in second references.

Let’s not let our University become “NYU the GNU” or have students mistakenly telling their friends, “I’m part of the GNU program at NYU.”

FEATURE THE NYU NAME WHILE PROJECTING OUR GLOBAL PRESENCE.

A global university, like other global brands, goes by one name regardless of where it operates. Thus, we should use terms that reinforce the broad scope of NYU, rather than limit it to functioning as a “campus” or “program.”

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, NYU COMES ACROSS AS A UNIFIED GLOBAL INSTITUTION:

In Abu Dhabi, NYU offers students an opportunity to earn a four-year degree in a range of liberal arts and science disciplines.

NYU Shanghai lets students pursue specific areas of study in one of the world’s most dynamic urban centers.

In Paris, NYU students enjoy a focused curriculum that incorporates the unique features of the city into their learning experience.

The takeaway: In these examples, it’s NYU—one unified entity worldwide—that offers diverse educational experiences in cities across the globe.

NYUAD? NYET!

NYU Abu Dhabi is an appropriate term, but when abbreviated further—to NYUAD—it fragments our global university and suggests an outlying entity. Avoid such abbreviations.

NYUAD NYUSH NYUNY

Guidelines for NYU Communicators 7
USE THE DRAWING POWER OF NEW YORK CITY WITHOUT SEEMING TOO PROVINCIAL.

As we highlight the benefits of our global network, we must not lose sight of what defines and differentiates NYU as an institution: our enduring roots in New York City, arguably the most storied and fascinating city in the world.

We underplay this competitive advantage when we say, “NYU has three degree-granting campuses in New York City, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai,” and mark these three locations with equal-size symbols on a map.

LET’S NOT BE AFRAID TO CAPITALIZE ON THE BRAND IMAGE OF NEW YORK CITY! TRY PHRASES LIKE THESE WHEN REFERRING TO OUR NEW YORK PRESENCE:

- Our founding campus in New York City (or our original campus in New York City)
- Our largest concentration of programs and students is in New York City.
- Our home base is New York City, which is culturally diverse and a global capital for finance, media, business, and the arts.

SAVE YOUR AUDIENCE FROM INSTITUTION-SPEAK.

According to many NYU professionals (in admissions, recruitment, alumni relations, student services), describing NYU is fiendishly tricky because of our complex global structure and inward-turning terminology.

This passage sounds like bureaucrats talking among themselves, not people of a great institution of learning seeking new members. We need to project urbanity, not insularity.

NYC IS WORLDWIDE.

From Shanghai to Buenos Aires, our worldwide presence of programs and people enhances the name of our University. That NYU flourishes in so many urban centers reflects the worldwide appeal of New York City—and enhances and enriches it.

Note how many institutional-speak phrases are used in the passage above. Use a more confident, clear, and conversational tone—not stiff and bureaucratic language.
EXPLAIN OUR CAMPUSES, CENTERS, AND LOCATIONS IN PLAIN LANGUAGE.

People respond favorably to simple, clear facts, not jargon. The way to engage people in dialogue with NYU is by communicating academic excellence, not forcing them to learn new terms.

But what about the difference between degree-granting vs. non-degree-granting campuses?

To explain our variety of programs and campuses, use this framework:

GUIDELINES

Use “campus” only if a student can earn a degree there (currently this covers New York City, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai).

Use “centers” or “global academic centers” to describe NYU’s 11 non-degree-granting locations:

- Accra, Ghana
- Berlin, Germany
- Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Florence, Italy
- London, England
- Madrid, Spain
- Paris, France
- Prague, Czech Republic
- Sydney, Australia
- Tel Aviv, Israel
- Washington, DC, US

Use “locations” or “global locations” to describe the three degree-granting campuses and locations that do not grant degrees.

AVOID BAFFLING METAPHORICAL TERMS.

This may cause outsiders to ask: “Are you a collection of campuses, portals, and degree-granting entities? Or are degree-granting sites—or campuses—the same as portals?”

Our job is to simplify it as much as possible so that students, parents, and others can understand it.

WE ADD TO THE COMPLEXITY BY RESORTING TO BAFFLING METAPHORS SUCH AS THESE:

NYU students get the experience of attending a Global Network University, anchored in New York City but with nodes throughout the world.

One application process gives access to the entire global network: three comprehensive campuses; 11 fully connected study away sites; partner institutions...

The fundamental organizational element of the GNU is the portal campus... [these] anchor campuses grant NYU degrees...
If we remove terms such as “nodes” and “hubs” from our vocabulary, we lose nothing—but we gain opportunities to describe the NYU experience more precisely.

The path to compelling messages lies in detailed descriptions, not jargon or metaphors. The way to attract others to NYU is to describe the elements of our network in fresh, vibrant language.

For example: When highlighting programs in a specific location, we can use on-the-ground details to bring readers closer to the experience of living and learning there.

Note this hierarchy of messages for describing NYU’s offer in Florence:

SHORTHAND

NYU offers students an exciting focused curriculum in Florence.

MORE DETAILED

NYU’s 57-acre estate, comprising olive groves and gardens, contains five villas that provide a home to NYU Florence.

RICH EXPRESSION

At NYU Florence, you will walk in the footsteps of Dante and feel the reverberations of the Renaissance, even as you experience the vibrancy of a modern city. NYU’s program is an extension of the city—and of NYU worldwide—with an inspiring Italy-oriented curriculum.

After reading these descriptions, how many 17-year-olds will care whether our Florence studies take place in a hub, spoke, or node?

**VARY THE DETAILS ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE SPACE, FORMAT, AND AUDIENCE NEED.**
USE “STUDY ABROAD”—THEN EXPLAIN “STUDY AWAY.”

NYU’s global network strategy is a challenge to the traditional paradigm of “studying abroad,” which refers to a sojourn from one’s native country.

The problem is that the vast majority of students and parents who are searching for information are still locked into the “study abroad” terminology. We cannot miss the opportunity to earn the consideration of these prospects, so we must use a two-phased approach:

Engage people with “study abroad,” then enlighten them about “study away.”

In practice, use the optimal terms to attract prospects, whether in brochures or on the web. But also include language near your introductory section (or landing page) that explains our new global network paradigm.

STUDY AWAY? STUDY ABROAD?

NYU is the world’s most far-flung yet integrated global university, giving you the ability to study at any one of our locations worldwide and still be at NYU—physically, intellectually, and academically.

In a true global university, the traditional reference points for “abroad” or “away” are irrelevant. Wherever NYU is in the world, we are ready to welcome you to explore opportunities for academic achievement and personal growth.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Use “study abroad” for audiences external to NYU. Using “study abroad” helps SEO.

Use “study away” for internal NYU audiences. The term is used to include situations such as when an NYU student in New York goes to study in Washington, DC.

CAUTION

As we strive to proclaim our global ideal, let’s not simplistically slip the word “global” into every sentence.

Instead, find ways to make “global” relevant to existing events and practices.

USE EXAMPLES LIKE

Statistics that show the diversity of our applicants

Information about NYU locations around the world

Projects or initiatives that are cross-location collaborations

SEARCH GAP

A recent Google search returned 15 million results for “study abroad” and a mere 200,000 for “study away.”

We need to stay in the game using terms the public recognizes and uses.
BRING OUR EMERGING STORY TO LIFE.

Talking about being global is not as effective as showing people what it’s like to be global. Here are suggestions for vibrantly describing our worldwide breadth:

**Breathe life into the global story.**

Feature the benefits of our global network via the experiences of students and faculty, either in text or video. A recent presentation about the Abu Dhabi student experience featured this moving comment from a Chinese student: “I have found people of my own kind: builders, adventurers, and thinkers who appreciate the differences between cultures and who are willing to lead.”

**Build global associations into everyday programs.**

Use local events and programs to build awareness of NYU’s global reach.

Here’s a creative example: Our HR team integrated the global message into its program name and communications for a local New York fitness event. Its annual Global Walking Challenge motivates walkers to travel a distance equal to that between New York City and Abu Dhabi, “plus an additional 7,000 miles, the approximate distance from New York City to NYU’s newest global campus in Shanghai.”

HIGHLIGHT THE FACTS.

Numbers can be powerful communication tools. When a new study, ranking, or statistic reinforces our global story, just tell it straight.

A press release in late 2012 explained that New York University was listed among the top American universities in attracting international students and having American students who study abroad.

This statement, in the body of the release, could have been our headline:

**More NYU students studied abroad in the 2010–11 academic year than any other university.**

Or you could say

**NYU is No. 1 for the number of students who study internationally.**

Now, that says “global”!
## GLOBAL GLOSSARY

### CAMPUS

“Campus” refers to any one of NYU’s three four-year degree-granting locations, which include:

- New York
- Abu Dhabi
- Shanghai

### CENTER

“Center” ("global academic center") refers to any one of our 11 non-degree-granting locations, including:

- Accra
- Berlin
- Buenos Aires
- Florence
- London
- Madrid
- Paris
- Sydney
- Tel Aviv
- Washington, DC
- Florence
- Prague

Global academic centers are made up of full-service buildings owned by NYU. Centers have classrooms and faculty and staff offices, and some centers have residences.

### LOCATION

“Location” can be used to refer to both a campus and a center.

### NYU’S GLOBAL NETWORK

“NYU’s global network” (lowercased) and other descriptive phrases are used to describe the structure of the University, which includes our 14 global locations.

### STUDY ABROAD

“Study abroad” is used for audiences external to NYU. Using “study abroad” helps SEO.

### STUDY AWAY

“Study away” is used for internal NYU audiences. The term is used to include such situations as when an NYU student in New York goes away to study in Washington, DC.

Do not use the following words when describing NYU:

- GNU
- NODES
- SPOKE
- HUB
- PORTALS
FIRST, IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE.

It is often said, “You can never overcommunicate.” Actually, you can. Too much information, too many words, too long a speech—these defeat the purpose of communicating.

No one pays attention to a repetitive monologue.

When an in-box becomes crammed with messages from one source, the recipient may skim over key news. When a brochure is packed with tedious sentences, readers may get tired and miss the point.

A recent 32-page NYU brochure managed to recite the same information about its curriculum and campus options four times in six pages. Let’s avoid wasting trees, money, and the reader’s time in this way.

Before writing, always step back, reflect, and make sure you understand what your audience needs and wants to know! Then consider how you can deliver that information in as few words as possible.

NO PURPOSE? NO PUBLISH!

Sometimes a communication comes out that seems to have no purpose at all.
Always ask the following:
What is the purpose of this communication?
Who is the audience?
How will we tell if this communication achieved its goals?
LET THE PURPOSE DRIVE YOUR CHOICES.

When explaining strict policies, remember the audience’s takeaway.

When communicating a policy, strike a balance between preserving legal intent and meeting audience expectations.

The office below has lost sight of the big picture—safety and convenience—while focusing on a physical apparatus.

POLICY

Guest Policies for Residence Halls

Turnstile Access for Current Residents of NYU Housing

In this case, a reader (parent, friend, or student) may visit the web page expecting reassurance that the campus is safe and that students can live amicably together. Instead, the reader receives a lesson on turnstiles.

CURRENT EXAMPLE FROM WEBSITE

Most residence halls have turnstiles located at the entry of the building near the public safety station. These turnstiles allow students that currently reside in NYU housing to visit another residence hall by swiping their University ID upon entry and exit. While the turnstiles provide a convenient means for allowing access, visitors are still expected to respect the time and frequency limitations as established below for nonresidents. Failure to respect the policy may result in restriction of a resident’s privilege to use turnstile access.

The message should focus not on NYU’s technology but on our attention to people living together securely and amicably.
ADJUST YOUR TONE FOR THE OCCASION.

HR letter warms to the task.

Human resources messages are often dry, boring, and bogged down in stilted language. But the NYU HR team is on it. On the left is their first draft, and at the right is their own improved version, which is warmer and more human.

BEFORE

Subject: Service Award Gift Brochures from O.C. Tanner

As part of our ongoing commitment to recognition for employees, NYU administers several programs, inclusive of a long-service award. This year, we are pleased to inform you that you have reached a milestone service year, and as such, we will be acknowledging your service, for which we are extremely grateful.

Notice the self-referential, noun-heavy prose. Distant third-person construction. “As part of our ongoing commitment to recognition...NYU administers several programs...”

AFTER

Subject: Your University Service Milestone and Selection of Anniversary Gift

Congratulations! This academic year marks a milestone anniversary in your long and important service to New York University.

NYU is proud of and grateful for your service and pleased to acknowledge and present you with the service award. A University tradition reflective of its commitment to service recognition, the award represents your significant time and contributions and includes a commemorative gift.

Notice the warm, direct message focused on the recipient, not the institution. It immediately uses the second person—you, your. “Congratulations! This academic year marks a milestone in your long and important service to New York University.”
HR letter achieves an even warmer tone!

While the rewrite was friendlier up front, it reverted to the old form in the final paragraph. By revising this final paragraph, we can sustain the warmer tone of the first part of the letter and also inject some gentle humor.

**BEFORE**

Note: Service awardees who do not make an award selection through O.C. Tanner by June 30 will, by default, automatically receive the NYU pin associated with their milestone year of service (see awards website for images). Upon receipt of the default gift, awardees have the option to return the pin in exchange for another gift item.

*Office of Compensation,*
*NYU Human Resources, Division of Operations*

**AFTER**

Note: When you get your service award catalog, don’t toss it aside: Choose your gift right away. If you wait, and O.C. Tanner doesn’t hear from you by June 30, you’ll automatically receive the default gift, a standard NYU pin, which may only gather dust atop your dresser. So choose your gift from O.C. Tanner (888-246-0180 or at envisionorders@octanner.com) by the deadline and get a gift that you’ll really want.

*Andrew Gordon*
*Vice President, NYU Human Resources*

Again, in the improved version, warm, direct, idiomatic language replaces cold, bureaucratic references such as “awardees.”

Finally, we let the valued employee know that a person, not an office, is doing the congratulating—and sign the message from a human being.

Having a person sign any communication allows the writer to take a less institutional, more personal tone.
FRAME POLICIES IN HUMAN TERMS.

Follow Apple’s example.
Every organization needs lawyers. Even the famously user-friendly Apple has to declare and enforce policies. In doing so, though, Apple sustains its friendly conversation with customers.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Thanks for shopping at Apple. We appreciate the fact that you like to buy the cool stuff we build. We also want to make sure you have a rewarding experience while you’re exploring, evaluating, and purchasing our products, whether you’re at the Apple Online Store for Education, in an Apple Retail Store, or on the phone with the Apple Contact Center. (To make it visually easier on both of us, we’ll refer to these entities as the “Apple Store” in this policy.)

As with any shopping experience, there are terms and conditions that apply to transactions at an Apple Store. We’ll be as brief as our attorneys will allow. The main thing to remember is that by placing an order or making a purchase at an Apple Store, you agree to the terms set forth below along with Apple’s Privacy Policy and Terms of Use.

RETURNS

We fundamentally believe you will be thrilled with the products you purchase from the Apple Store. That’s because we go out of our way to ensure that they’re designed and built to be just what you need. We understand, however, that sometimes a product may not be what you expected it to be. In that unlikely event, we invite you to review the following terms related to returning a product.

Source: apple.com/legal/sales-support/sales-policies/retail_us.html

LESSONS FOR NYU COMMUNICATORS FROM APPLE’S STATEMENT OF POLICIES

1. Signal that you side with your audience, not your lawyers.

“As with any shopping experience, there are terms and conditions. We’ll be as brief as our attorneys will allow.”


“We understand that sometimes a product may not be what you expected it to be. In that unlikely event, we invite you to review the following terms related to returning a product.”
TRYING TO ATTRACT A SPECIFIC GROUP OF STUDENTS? SPEAK PLAINLY AND PROUDLY!

NYU strives to attract students from an array of backgrounds. As we reach out, we must send an unambiguous message of welcome. A recent website message for veterans falls short of this test. Here are the original message and a simple recasting of the message in clear, enthusiastic language:

BEFORE

Welcome!

New York University is committed to providing an environment that helps veterans pursue their academic and personal goals, explore different learning experiences, and be involved in campus life.

"Committed to providing an environment that helps..."? Sounds overly qualified. Can such language reassure veterans that the University will actually provide support?

AFTER

Welcome!

NYU helps veterans get involved in campus life and pursue their academic and personal goals.

By eliminating such passive, qualified phrasing, we communicate with clarity and impact.
STRIVE FOR EDITORIAL VIGOR.

Strong verbs build confidence.

Prospective students want to feel welcome, and this *Business at New York University* brochure adopts a tone that is warm and inviting while providing precise details about how students will benefit from the course of study.

This combination of directness and warmth can make readers more confident about the value of an NYU education.

Notice, in particular, how strong verbs drive the following narrative.

**EXAMPLE**

*You learn your profession in world capitals of finance, commerce, and culture...*

*Your courses are taught by professors with professional connections, who tap into their own networks to bring case studies... into the classroom.*

*You will take what you learned and apply it...*

*Industries and corporations maintain their headquarters in New York...*

*...offering you unsurpassed opportunities for experience and jobs.*

---

Source: *Business at New York University* brochure
STRONG VERBS BUILD CONFIDENCE.

A perfect communication does its job—which is to engage other people, convey important information, and stimulate a favorable response.

BEWARE OF THESE PITFALLS:

Laziness. An earlier version seems good enough: “Let’s just paste in this stuff from an earlier version and then go to lunch.”

Meddling. Your boss steps in and messes up the elegant flow: “Hey, put this key fact in your first sentence.”

Bureaucracy. A lawyer feels the need to protect us: “We have to add three paragraphs on food-handling procedures to your lunch menu.”

Political Correctness. “Please add our usual language about respect, diversity, humanity, humility, integrity, globality, courtesy, and respect for animals... to your lunch menu.”

Timidity. You and your colleagues are too deferential to step forward and say, “This piece of communication is wordy, expensive, boring, and unnecessary.”
REACH STUDENTS WHERE THEY LIVE.

The rapid advance of social media and other web-based communications demands that we rethink how we reach our audiences, particularly students. We can no longer assume that they will look for us in the traditional channels of communication. It’s our job to find out where our audiences are congregating digitally and get our messages to them—briefly, clearly, and with punch.

TIPS FOR SELECTING CHANNELS

The objectives and audience for every communication should determine the channel, not what might have been done in the past or what is in the budget.

Email is still important but must be focused and brief—and be used in conjunction with new media.

Social, targeted, and mobile approaches should be a top priority—that’s where many audiences quickly consume information that shapes decisions.

If you are using print media, consider using fewer bolder, graphically rich pieces designed for maximum impact. Use these to drive traffic toward the web and social media.

Strive to engage your audience members in a two-way conversation.

E-COMMUNICATION RULES!

According to an April 2012 study of high school seniors and college students by AWeber Communications, 93 percent of students use email and phones (includes voice and texting) to communicate. Ninety percent use Facebook to keep up with friends and family, and 74 percent use YouTube.
CREATE A TWO-WAY CONVERSATION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA.

Use social media to connect.

Facebook postings are a great method for sharing news and information with our audiences. Just as important, Facebook lets other people get involved, make comments, and easily share information with others.

Note, however, that Facebook pages are like gardens: You must tend to them, or they will wither. Ensure that someone is responsible for posting items and joining in conversations—ideally every day.

SUSTAINABLE SPIRIT

The example from the sustainability team’s Facebook page demonstrates how well this medium captures the spirit of the team’s important mission.

ALUMNI SHOWING THEIR PRIDE

The invitation “show your violet pride” drew alumni responses with images ranging from babies to puppies. Such interactions build relationships with those who might not otherwise have regular contact with NYU.
TRANSLATE OUR CULTURE INTO A DISTINCTIVE NYU VOICE.

What makes us sound urban, global, ambitious, and socially conscious? Here are some ideas. Make sure your writing and speaking incorporate these qualities:

**Spontaneous** as our eager young students in Shanghai or Abu Dhabi

**Sociable** like a New York City cabbie

**Expressive** like a fashion show in Paris or art film festival in Berlin

**Professional** as our students and instructors in our specialized schools and colleges

**Wired** like educated people in the world’s most dynamic cities

**Responsible** as is anyone who has a passion for a better world

**Ambitious** like our leading lights in fields from dance to law to engineering to finance

**THESE ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR PROGRAMS—WHICH SHOULD BE CONVEYED IN OUR WRITING AND SPEECH.**

**VOICE: EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS.**

An institution’s voice is expressed and experienced in every interaction.

There’s no such thing as unimportant communications. Every time you connect with an audience you contribute to the NYU voice—whether you’re announcing a new program, reacting to a crisis, or changing the menu in the cafeteria.
**BREAK IT DOWN INTO FINER POINTS.**

1. We aspire to be plainspoken and engaging, not bureaucratic.

Big universities are notoriously complex and officious. As communicators, we cannot inform and motivate people when we use office-speak and dense jargon.

2. We can communicate consistently as a university—while allowing for local nuance.

To have a “global perspective” means directing local communications (e.g., about transit schedules) toward local audiences and global issues (e.g., about the opening of a new campus) toward all.

It is irrelevant—and annoying—for an NYU student in Buenos Aires to open an email that says “Manhattan buses are running late today.”

**MOVE TOWARD AN ENGAGING, PERSONAL TONE OF VOICE.**

NYU communicators cannot be clear and student-friendly if we write like bureaucrats. Whatever our message, whatever the occasion, we must avoid bureaucratic prose and move toward a style that invites respectful engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUR CONTENT</th>
<th>VARIATIONS OF TONE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>AVOID THIS!</strong> (Bureaucratic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing a New Rule</td>
<td>Do this, not that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing a New Program</td>
<td>This is what we have created. Now pay attention to these details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving a Warning</td>
<td>When there is an unpredictable danger, our office continually monitors the situation to make sure that our responsibilities are met and that...</td>
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### STRIVE FOR BREVITY AND WARMTH IN ACTION.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent description of NYU...</strong></td>
<td>...made clearer—and briefer</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYU’s global network is a circulatory system of places and people,</td>
<td>NYU is a global network of places and people, academic resources and</td>
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<tr>
<td>academic resources and research initiatives, and real-life intellectual,</td>
<td>research projects, offering real-life professional and personal</td>
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<td>professional, and personal experiences in the world’s most dynamic</td>
<td>experiences in the world’s most dynamic cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban environments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent sustainability statement...</strong></td>
<td>...not briefer—but warmer!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a private university in the public service, NYU has a responsibility</td>
<td>At NYU, we bring together students, families, staff, and neighbors to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to embed environmental values at the core of its administrative</td>
<td>live our lives without harming the planet we share. We try to use less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operations and academic mission.</td>
<td>energy, take steps to ensure cleaner air and water, and use our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>resources carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Going green is a personal commitment for many of us—and becoming a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>campus-wide movement for us all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**NYU/We/Our**

When writing on behalf of the entire University—as in recruitment materials—it is best to stay in the third person and refer to us as “NYU.” Individual units and service lines, however, may find this too formal for their formats and audiences. They may need to use a “we/our” approach. Use your best judgment to adopt a tone that most effectively engages your audience while supporting the University's overall agenda.
GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS POINTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand the purpose of the proposed communication—the job it’s meant to do.</td>
<td>Let brochures or any print material be the automatic go-to option. We are a university that seeks to be efficient and environmentally conscious, and we live in a world where students rarely look beyond electronic devices for information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think of ways to achieve this purpose while also building NYU’s standing worldwide—by connecting your messages with those of the larger entity.</td>
<td>Simply update an existing communication because you have the budget or “have always done it.” Think about each communication anew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify your audiences, their biases, and what matters most to them.</td>
<td>Turn communication into an exercise in group-think: Sometimes a memo about a storm closing is only that—and not a discourse on the challenges of campus safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select media to reach your audiences with the greatest impact for the dollar spent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Think and Execute.

There is never a 100 percent correct strategy for communicating, but in the next two pages, we offer advice and encouragement as you reach out to the many audiences who make NYU the great institution it is.
ASK THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER YOU DRAFT YOUR COMMUNICATIONS.

Ask these questions before and after you tackle your communications task. They will help you sharpen your focus and avoid creating dull, disposable messages.

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN, ASK THE FOLLOWING:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I understand the purpose of this communication?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I know what I need to do?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I understand the main job of this piece?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I understand this audience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I anticipate audience members’ reasons for skepticism?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have I nailed down what we need to get across?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I state this in a sentence or phrase?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I know which nuance of tone is best for this format?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have I thought about how I will motivate my audience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there something new I can write to achieve more impact?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ONCE YOUR DRAFT IS COMPLETED, ASK THE FOLLOWING:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this piece as brief and economical as it can be?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I cut or compress anything else?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does this sound right when I read it aloud?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might others stumble over certain ill-chosen words?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could this be grasped quickly, without a reread?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I remove all the unnecessary adjectives and nouns?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this piece verb-driven?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I put in enough substance—with solid evidence and examples—to persuade or educate skeptics?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would a really cool but busy person get it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When faced with a particularly tough communications assignment, remember these words of wisdom...

“There are many ways in which the thing I am trying in vain to say may be tried in vain to be said.”

—Samuel Beckett

“The most essential gift for a good writer is a built-in, shockproof sh** detector.”

—Ernest Hemingway

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

—Mark Twain
CAPITALIZATION

Capitalize University when referring to NYU in running copy, except when referring to a general university service.

Professional, religious, civil, and military titles are capitalized when they immediately precede a personal name, as part of the name (President Marie Bienen, Professor Omar Nassar).

But are lowercased when

• They follow the name or are used in place of a name (Omar Nassar, professor of politics; the president’s office, she’s the dean of our law school)
• They are used in apposition to the name and are therefore not part of the name
  - NYU president John Sexton, but NYU’s President John Sexton
  - economics professor John Doe, but Professor John Doe
  - former senator James Frank, but Senator James Frank

Titles of persons in lists are usually capitalized (e.g., in board of trustees lists where company titles and company names are given) when the name and title are not in running body copy.

Named professorships are capitalized wherever they appear (Mary Smith is the Carroll and Milton Petrie Professor of Fine Arts). University Professor is always capitalized; it’s a special university-wide title and in addition to the departmental title.

For named academic awards and honors, capitalize the full proper name (Nobel Prize, Guggenheim Fellowship).

Formal names of an institution's departments or divisions are capitalized; informal references are lowercased (the Office of Financial Aid, but the financial aid office, the Department of History, but the history department).

Programs and courses have title caps; majors do not. Capitalize program in the names of official programs (Liberal Studies Program, Core Program, the Honors Program), but lowercase the names of majors (global liberal studies).

THE COMMA

Use the serial comma.

In general, introductory time and place phrases of fewer than five words do not take a comma.

NUMBERS

Spell out numbers nine and under. But percentages, ages, ratios, and floor numbers are always expressed in figures. (The word percent is spelled out in running text.)

Ratios: 2-to-1 in running copy, 2:1 in display copy; Student-to-faculty ratio in running copy; student-faculty ratio, not student/faculty ratio in display copy

Spell out any number that begins a sentence.
Telephone numbers:
Eliminate the “1” one has to dial before any area code.
Use hyphens between area code and number
(periods may replace hyphens if preferred by the designer), e.g., 212-998-1234.

SPELLING
Use Merriam-Webster Online’s first-listed form.

ABBREVIATIONS
Acronyms and abbreviations using capital letters are spelled without periods.

COMPANIES
Generally, write out the name of a company the way the company does it (usually found at the bottom of the home page of the company’s website). Use an ampersand if the company’s official name includes an ampersand. No need to include Inc., LLC, etc.

WEBSITES
Italicize or boldface web addresses.

TRICKY WORDS
actor-director, artist-scholars
adviser
African American (adjective or noun)
bestseller, bestselling
cd, c.d., c.d.
course work
editor in chief (no hyphens)
e-mail
eurozone
fieldwork
first-come, first-served [basis]
fundraising (noun and adjective)
healthcare (noun and adjective)
16 mm
NYU’s campus in New York, not NYU New York
NYU’s expansive global network or a university with an expansive global network; not Global Network University or GNU
NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering (if in a list with all other schools, NYU can be omitted) on first reference; School of Engineering on second reference; never Polytechnic Institute of NYU or NYU Poly
policymaker, policymaking
premedical
preprofessional
reservation payment, not housing deposit
risk-taker
theatre
United States (noun), US (adjective)
GOT QUESTIONS?

urpa.styleguide@nyu.edu
nyu.edu/styleguide