Guidelines for writing a news item for myUCL

These guidelines are for anyone at UCL who would like to submit an article for inclusion in myUCL the weekly e-newsletter issued to current students during term-time.

Background

Writing for the web requires a different approach to that used in print publications. This is because people navigate website writing differently to print. They are easily distracted, skip long text chunks and leave quickly if they don’t get what they want.

A large proportion of myUCL readers view the newsletter via smartphones and tablets. Typically, these devices restrict the amount of content that can be viewed in one go, which makes it even more important that you keep your language brief, simple and direct.

This guide will give practical tips on how to adjust your writing style and ensure that you communicate concisely and effectively.

Hints and Tips:

- Any piece of writing for the web should have a clear audience in mind and avoid jargon and acronyms
- Headings/headlines should be short, specific and in most cases, use a verb
- The main content should be concise and written in the active voice eg. “Ben loves carrot cake” rather than “Carrot cake is loved by Ben”.
- It should be made scannable by prioritising key information and using short paragraphs and subheadings
- Use an inverse pyramid structure:
  - The most important information goes at the top of the page
  - Key ideas go at the beginning of each paragraph
  - The main point goes at the beginning of each sentence
  - The priority keyword goes at the beginning of each heading.
- Create bulleted lists for key links and information. Make them descriptive and self-explanatory – i.e. “Event programme” not “click here for event programme”.
- Before any web content is uploaded, ensure that it is checked by a colleague, proofread it using a printed copy and check all the links.
Photo submissions for myUCL:

- Please submit electronic photos. Electronic photos can be submitted in colour or in black and white. They must be submitted saved at a high resolution and formatted in JPEG format.
- Photos submitted should be accompanied by a short caption explaining the context of the photo. This text is subject to revision by the UCL Student Communications Manager.
- CAM reserves the right to use, edit, or crop photos. Not all photos may be published.

Photo submissions should be sent electronically as an attachment to UCL Student Communications Manager at: r.heatley@ucl.ac.uk

UCL resources

- UCL house style guide
- UCL Communications blogging tips