Style Guide
2022
Towards a bolder and more impactful brand.

Introduction
Brand matters

As one of the world’s top-ranked universities, UCL must constantly strive to behave like the powerbrand that we have become.

Our stage is global, our home is London and our brand is one of our most powerful assets. A strong brand is instantly recognisable and helps foster feelings of loyalty and trust. To achieve this, consistency is critical - across communications, at every point where our audience interacts with us.

In a world full of noise and no shortage of universities vying for attention, UCL communications must be as disruptive as our thinking, as impactful as our ideas, and as world-class as our reputation.
Every UCL communication must reflect our brand with:

Action
Accessibility
Bravery
Confidence
Relevance
Strategic intent
Empathy
Consistency
Impact
Our audience is:

- Bold
- Audacious
- Diverse
- Idealistic
- Creative
- Independent
- Adventurous
- Unafraid
- Altruistic
- Academically accomplished
- Intellectually curious
- Ambitious
- Idealistic
- Purpose-driven
- Mature
Tone and voice

The UCL brand personality is woven into every aspect of every touchpoint.
As a university that’s been diverse and inclusive since our founding, we speak with an open and welcoming voice. Disrupting the status quo, yes, intimidating or stuffy, never.

As London’s Global University, our tone should reflect the vibrancy and cosmopolitan energy of London in 2022 and beyond.

Positive, provocative and impactful – think short headlines, questions and witty statements. More BBC or Guardian than ivory tower academic.

Ask yourself, are we speaking the same language as Generation Z and our other target audiences, or are we just talking to ourselves? With shorter and shorter attention spans, less is often more. Say it with clarity, consistency and intent.

Let’s be boldly, uniquely and distinctly UCL.

For more detailed direction, reference the Tone of Voice section of the UCL Brand Guidelines: ucl.ac.uk/cam/brand/guidelines/tone-of-voice
Behaving like a modern global powerbrand means not always being so “academic” in how we communicate UCL to the world. We are here to make headlines.

More 2022, less 1826, with:

The confidence of 8th in the world*

The relevance of a brand that shares the same values as our students and community

The empathy of understanding needs

The impact of a provocative question

The action of real world examples

The brevity of precise and concise language

*QS World University Rankings 2022
An adventurous education
for curious minds

Learn what how to think

The home of disruptive thinking

UCL’s values continue to inspire, impact and move the world forward

5th in Europe. 8th in the world.*

*QS World University Rankings 2022
Our message must be as inclusive as our community.
Accessibility
Open to all
Accessibility

UCL's goal is to ensure accessibility for all members of the UCL community. As such it is important that accessibility is built into our communications, marketing, and brand assets from point of conception, rather than retrofitted onto assets late in the design stage. There are tools available to all UCL students and staff members to aid with ensuring designs are accessible, and we expect all agencies working with UCL to be aware of these.

Below are some of the key things to consider in order to maximise accessibility in design, particularly within a digital context:

- **UCL abides by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. (AA standard)**
- **Use single-colour backgrounds rather than patterns (of particular importance when text is placed directly over the background)**
- **Use bold images rather than those with complex or distracting surrounds and when placing text over images, ensure sufficient contrast**
- **Dark coloured text on a light background can be easier to read**
- **Use high-resolution, properly-sized images to avoid aliasing and blurring**
- **Low contrast rates can make images difficult to understand**
- **Alt-text should be used to convey the meaning at all times, conventional or not, especially for those viewers who have difficulty perceiving the image at all and will rely on the text. The only exception is if the image is purely decorative**
- **Avoid images of text**
- **Ensure content is logically structured. Use headings to organise content for easy navigation and interpretation**
- **Give your links unique and descriptive names**

**MORE INFORMATION**

For more information on accessibility, refer to: [ucl.ac.uk/accessibility](http://ucl.ac.uk/accessibility)
UCL’s banner and logo are the most powerful and memorable symbols of the brand.
Identity

Banner: primary use
• Banner runs all the way across the top of communications
• Portico icon sits to the left of the letter U
• UCL letters are cut out, revealing the background
• Default strapline is ‘LONDON’S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY’ but can use the name of a faculty, department or project

Logo: secondary use
• Preferred placement of logo is top right corner of communication
• Logo can be any solid colour from the palette, but never a tint transparency or pattern
• Make sure there is enough contrast between the background colour and the logo

MORE INFORMATION
For more guidance on our identity, refer to the brand guide: ucl.ac.uk/cam/brand/guidelines
We recommend always using the WebAIM tool to test the accessibility of your design: webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker
UCL colours convey emotions, feelings and experiences.

Colour
Our colour palette is vibrant, bold and progressive — just like our campus culture.
Colour use

In most cases, imagery should be the primary source of colour. An image can fill the background entirely or you can arrange a grouping of images against a white or coloured background. We typically use white space and black typography to balance the image.

The bold colour palette can be employed to bring attention to specific messaging, as a background colour, or even as a colour-coding tool in longer format communications.

**Colour guidelines**

- Colour should be used strategically, based on context.
- Colour can be used in typography.
- The colour in use should always serve a purpose, above visual appeal.
- In some instances, no colour is used. In other instances, colour is the main focus.
- Solid colour elements and shapes should be used at 100% opacity, and never as a tint.
# Colour palette

The bold colour palette is in an abridged version of the original brand colours.

Accessibility is an important consideration in all digital communications. We recommend always using the WebAIM tool to test the accessibility in regards to the colour contrast of the text in your design. To test and adjust the colours use this tool: [webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker](http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker)

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</tbody>
</table>
Accessibility
colour palette

To pass WCAG Level AA requirements, please use only the successful colour combinations shown here for digital assets.

**Normal text** contrast ratio is 4:5:1

**Large text** contrast ratio is 3:1 with 14pt + bold (typically 18.66px) or 18pt (typically 24px) or larger
Helvetica – simple, distinctive, international – a font that stands the test of time.
Typography

Typography is one of the foundational elements of all UCL communications.
Helvetica

Helvetica is a common typeface that we use in uncommon ways.
Typeface

When available, Helvetica should be used for all external and internal creative assets. As a classic and commonly used sans-serif typeface, it is easy to read at both large and small point sizes.

Secondary typeface

When Helvetica is unavailable, use Arial.
Disruptive headlines

1. Scale
   The scale of the headline should be balanced with the imagery. To create visual interest when the headline is longer than a few words, the scale of the headline can change from word to word.

2. Working with imagery
   There is flexibility to have the headline partially overlap imagery, be on top of imagery, or not touch imagery at all. If text is used with an image, the image must be simple, it cannot have a busy pattern. When possible, use empty spaces in images to overlap text. Accessibility is an important consideration in all digital communications. We recommend downloading this tool to test the accessibility of text over images in your design: tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker

3. Kerning
   The kerning of the letters should be set to “optical” and be tightly kerned – not so tight that the letters touch, but tighter than 0.
Disruptive headlines (continued)

4. Word orientation

The orientation of headline typography should be horizontal. Disruptive word orientation (where the headline is oriented in different directions) can be used on web assets only, and only when it’s possible to address accessibility issues through alt text or if audio will accompany the design (for example, presentations where a speaker will deliver the key message).

For more detailed direction on accessibility, reference UCL’s Accessibility Guidelines:

ucl.ac.uk/sd/services/websites-apps/creating-accessible-content

1. Taken out of the context of the info session (without the audio component of the presentation), this slide would fail accessibility requirements.

2. This ad fails accessibility requirements.

3. Here, we’ve updated the ad to meet accessibility requirements by repeating the key message horizontally. The vertically displayed words, “open days”, are now being used as a graphic element, and not part of the key message.

4. This example passes accessibility requirements. The vertical text, “London’s global university”, is not the key message.
UCL photography is distinctive to the brand – unmistakably UCL.
Photography plays an outsized role in conveying the modernity, diversity and dynamism of life at UCL. Photography is our calling card, and should always capture the spirit of our brand, our community, and London.

Our photographic style is as unconventional and provocative as our thinking: Journalistic, never staged or cliched, unexpected angles and perspectives. Vibrant colour, architecture and action, a diversity of people, places, and ideas that are literally changing the world.

With close-ups, photography may approach abstract art. With wider angles, can capture the scale and diversity of our campus in the heart of one of the world’s great global cities.

Consider a casting of unexpected locations, scenarios and people that depict modern cosmopolitan London - not the London for tourists.

Between historic Bloomsbury and the newly emerging UCL East London campus, there are countless opportunities for UCL to “own London.” By crafting arresting photographic storytelling, we can pull the viewer deeper into the iconic world of UCL.
People

• People should be captured candidly, in authentic settings and scenarios. For example, look for students collaborating, in motion, contemplative, or actively engaged.

• Diversity is at the heart of the UCL campus life and should be authentically reflected in all images.

• Try to seek out unexpected perspectives, such as having the person as the focus of the image, but not necessarily central to the image.

• With close-up imagery, avoid distracting objects in the foreground. For images that are taken from further away, avoid distracting backgrounds to ensure that the background doesn’t draw attention away from the people.
UCL’s distinctive architecture is one of the most identifiable aspects of campus.

When capturing an entire building, look for symmetry or overall balance.

Unexpected angles work well for details and interiors.

Imagery should be evocative and impressive, honouring the historical architecture of older buildings or showcasing modern features of new buildings.
Cut-outs

- Cutting out images can create interesting visual relationships between the typography and the image.
- Cut-outs are most striking and effective when the subject matter is a singular object or building.
All UCL brand elements working in concert amplify every message.

Communications
Presentation slides // Info session

An Adventurous Education For Curious Minds

Why UCL?

Carbon Neutral by 2024

Learn What How to Think

Meet Your New Friends

Be part of something bigger than yourself

Are You the Right Fit?

- Are you a brave thinker?
- Do you have a global world view?
- Intellectually & culturally adventurous?
- Open-minded?
- Independent & resilient?

If UCL is for you, it's the only one for you.
Video frames // “Why UCL?” awareness
Digital creative // Postgraduate campaign 2022

WEBSITE HERO IMAGE

EMAIL HEADER IMAGE

SOCIAL AD

DISPLAY AD

WEBSITE IMAGE
Print // Undergraduate prospectus 2021

Our Nobel laureates

Learn how to think – not what to think

Our sustainable university

Our world-leading faculties

Architecture, Construction and Planning
Arts and Sciences / Biological and Life Sciences / Business and Management Studies / Computer Science /
Economics, Politics, Geography and Social Sciences / Education / Engineering /
English and Comparative Literature / Fine Art and Art History / Historical and Philisophical Studies / Languages and Cultural Studies / Law / Mathematics and Statistics / Media / Medicine and Allied Subjects / Physical Sciences / Psychology and Language Sciences

Our sustainable university

Your future career
Consistent usage protects the integrity of the UCL brand.
Checking your work

It wouldn’t be on brand for UCL to have hard and fast rules, or a restrictive template to blindly follow. When creating and evaluating work, exercise your judgement as expert members of the UCL community.

Ask yourself:

☐ Is it obviously UCL?
☐ Is it accessible?
☐ Bold, striking and attention grabbing?
☐ Is it simple, direct and to the point?
☐ Powerful typography and imagery?
☐ Is the photography unexpected?
☐ Does the message fit the medium?
☐ How will it connect with our audience?
☐ Does it say what it needs to say?
☐ Does it pay off on your brief?
☐ Are we advancing our brand forward?
Questions?

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