The University of Bristol is a complex organisation. It comprises six faculties, 24 schools, nearly 19,000 students, 5,500 staff and 300 programmes. Most schools, faculties and administrative divisions publish information in print or online. There are on average 112,000 external visitors to our website each week. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world interact with our online and offline materials and form an opinion about us.

Our overall message to all stakeholders is broadly consistent: the University is a world-renowned research and educational institution offering an exciting opportunity for individuals to study and to research alongside internationally respected academics and talented fellow students.

However, the environment in which we operate is becoming ever more complex and competitive. That means our stakeholders need a clear articulation of what makes the University of Bristol special.

We operate and compete globally. How we present ourselves to the world has to become more sophisticated. What we present to the world has to be more consistent. And why we present ourselves to the world has to be more considered.

These identity guidelines support that process.
It is said that on average an individual will come into contact with over 1,000 brand messages in any one day. Many of these connections will be with nothing more than a logo, and perhaps a tag-line. In some cases, just this fleeting contact with a brand will be sufficient to prompt emotion, understanding and even action.

An individual’s response is likely to be governed by the perceptions they have accumulated about a brand via hundreds of messages and a range of media over a period of time. Often, with only seconds in which to make an impression, a strong brand will convey a sense of what an organisation stands for, its qualities and its personality.

The importance of identity and the consistency of its application are such that, in the commercial world, brands are given a hard cash value. For example, up to 50 per cent of the market capitalisation of some of the world’s leading companies is attributed to ‘brand’.

We are not, of course, the same as a commercial organisation and in many ways are more complex. However, we will benefit from a more consistent and clear external presentation of our identity.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide us all with a framework within which we can reinforce our world-leading position in a consistent manner, while enabling individuals and groups to express themselves and contribute to the overall University of Bristol identity – through words, colours, graphics and images.
Every organisation needs to project a distinct personality and voice. This should be the sum of its history, its people past and present, its place and its vision for the future. It is important that we nurture and protect our identity and manage its evolution carefully and proactively.

“Our voice
Personality

Rigorous
Challenging
Creative
Entrepreneurial
Unconventional
Innovative
Knowledgeable
Global
World-leading
Research-intensive
Collaborative
Engaged
Unorthodox

“It is striking how many of our graduates are intellectually rigorous, challenging, creative and entrepreneurial in every sense. They are prepared to tackle problems from different and unconventional angles. Maybe this is a result of the influences that the University and the city exert on people during their formative years. Intellectual risk-taking is not just allowed, but positively welcomed here.

Our work stretches right across the horizon from the fundamentals of passing on knowledge to the biggest possible picture. We address global problems through our world-leading research, working in a collaborative, interdisciplinary way that has long been a feature of this University.

Bristol is a wonderful, exciting and sometimes surprising place to live. Our location helps us attract the very best staff and students, and they in turn are fully engaged with the community and the broader issues of the city in which they live.

University of Bristol people instinctively understand that being a good citizen starts locally. We do not take these privileges for granted.”

Professor Eric Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol
Our audiences vary in their priorities, their knowledge of the University of Bristol and their expectations. The basic principles of our written communications, however, are universal.

1. Keep the messages simple and consistent
2. Make the evidence that supports the messages compelling
3. As far as possible, make the messages unique to the University

Our written content and tone should be true to our vision and values, and reflect our personality as described on pages 6 and 7. Wherever possible, we should use specific evidence (see pages 106-131) to support what we are saying. This makes our overall message more compelling and more memorable – for example, to show how engaged our students are in the local community, we may want to include the fact that ‘every year University of Bristol students contribute more than 100,000 hours of volunteering in the community’.
Our voice

Key messages

We have a bank of key messages and supporting evidence which is available at the back of this book, and which will be updated regularly. It is available to anyone who may need to contribute to University literature or the website, compile presentations or build relationships with strategic business or academic partners or colleagues.

On the following pages, you will see a number of key messages which support the University’s values and personality. Wherever possible, these messages should be substantiated by evidence. Otherwise, let the message speak for itself. The messages are there to provide a framework for communications, not as a mantra to be repeated.

+ Please see the Evidence section on pages 106-131 for examples of facts that can be used to reinforce the key messages.
World-renowned

Operating at the cutting edge of research – we address the world’s key challenges and enhance understanding of the world around us.
Truly international

We believe that being part of a global academic community is important for both personal and academic growth and achievement.
Making a difference

We attract people who want to contribute and make a difference through their learning, their research and their teaching, both during and after their time at Bristol.
Challenging

We challenge ourselves to push the boundaries of knowledge through our research and we challenge our students to realise their full potential.
Educating tomorrow’s leaders

We aim to develop outstanding leaders and citizens who make a major contribution to life.
An excellent location

Bristol is an exciting and beautiful city, helping us attract the very best staff and students who truly engage with the community in which they live.
Great past –
greater future

We are proud of our history, but refuse to stand still. We are confident that our future will be even more impressive than our past.