

Lesley University Editorial Style Guide – Updated as of 3/5

The Lesley University Style Guide serves as a resource for maintaining consistency across the university's programs and academic areas. It also addresses frequently asked questions about academic titles, grammar rules, and terminology specific to Lesley.

For comprehensive information on capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviation, you may refer to the **Associated Press Style Guide**, the university's standard reference. For grammar, spelling, and usage notes, see **The American Heritage Dictionary**.

University Naming Conventions

Lesley University

After the first mention of "Lesley University," you may use "Lesley" informally. Keep these rules in mind:

- Write out "university" in lowercase unless it is part of a proper name (e.g., *Lesley University*, *Harvard University*)
- Do not use "LU" or any other abbreviations in external communications

University Pillars

Lesley University is one university with five distinct academic areas, known as academic pillars. The five pillars are:

1. Education
2. Mental Health & Well-Being
3. Art & Design
4. Liberal Arts & Business
5. Threshold Programs

When referring to all five pillars together, always list them in the order shown above.

Referring to Individual Pillars

When referring to an individual academic pillar, use the full name of the university followed by the pillar name and the word "Program." For example: *Lesley University's Education Program* or *Lesley University's Liberal Arts & Business Program*. The one exception to this convention is Art & Design, which may alternatively be referred to as the *College of Art & Design*.

Institutes and Centers

- **Capitalize** the full proper name of an institute or center (e.g., *Center for Literacy Teaching and Instructional Leadership*)
- **Lowercase** "center" or "institute" in informal subsequent references (e.g., *Research at the center is supported by a grant*)

Campuses

Capitalize the proper names of campuses, but lowercase "campus" when used on its own. Examples: Doble Campus, Porter Campus, South Campus, but the campus is located nearby.

Lesley-Specific Terminology

This section outlines the correct usage of terms, names, and programs unique to Lesley University. When in doubt, refer here before using these terms in any internal or external communications.

Threshold Programs

Always write as "Threshold Programs" — the name is always plural and should never appear without the "s."

- **Correct:** Threshold Programs
- **Incorrect:** Threshold Program

Scholar Partner Program

The Scholar Partner Program refers to Lesley's relationships with professional organizations that provide students with hands-on field experience as part of their Lesley curriculum.

When writing about this program, use the following terms consistently:

- A **student** participating in the program is referred to simply as a "student"
- An **organization** participating in the program is referred to as a "Scholar Partner"

Administration and Faculty Titles

Capitalization

The basic rule: **capitalize a title before a name, lowercase it everywhere else.**

- We invited **President** Janet Steinmayer to the dinner.
- Janet Steinmayer is **president** of Lesley University.
- Send your request to the **director** of the program.

Always capitalize titles in display type, such as event programs, signature blocks, or formatted lists.

When listing multiple people, keep the format consistent — either all titles before names or all titles after names. Don't mix the two styles in the same sentence or paragraph. Avoid social titles (Mr., Mrs.) and honorifics (Hon.).

Gender-Neutral Language

Use "**chair**" rather than "chairman" or "chairwoman" when referring to a department chair.

Commonly Used Terms

Interim — written in lowercase roman type, no comma, following the title: *interim provost*

Emeritus / Emerita / Emeriti / Emeritae — follow normal capitalization rules and place the word at the end of the full title with no comma: *President Emeritus, Professor Emerita, Trustees Emeriti*. Use "Emeriti" for mixed groups and "Emeritae" for groups of all women.

Faculty — can take a singular or plural verb depending on meaning. When referring to professional staff as a whole, use a singular verb (*The faculty is committed to excellence*). When referring to individual members, use a plural verb (*Three faculty were present*).

Academic Degrees

Capitalization

Capitalize a degree when written in full, lowercase when used informally. Note that "bachelor's" and "master's" become possessive in informal use.

Full (capitalize): *Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration, , Master's in Counseling and Psychology, Doctor of Education*

Informal (lowercase): *bachelor's degree in education, master's degree in psychology, doctorate in counseling*

Abbreviations

Write degree abbreviations without periods.

Examples: BA, MA, MFA, PhD, EdD

The one exception is M.Ed., which retains periods by convention.

Alumni

Class and Year of Graduation

Show a graduate's year using an apostrophe and two-digit year directly after their name — no comma needed.

Example: *Jane Doe '14 is using her master's in creative writing to open channels of expression in the elderly.*

Capitalize "Class" when referencing a specific graduating class: *The Class of 2014.*

Commonly Used Terms

Alumnus/Alumna/Alumni/Alumnae — use based on gender and number. "Alumnus" is one man, "alumna" is one woman, "alumni" is a mixed or all-male group, and "alumnae" is an all-female group.

When gender is unknown or unspecified, the informal "**alum**" (singular) and "**alums**" (plural) are acceptable alternatives.

Alma mater — always lowercase.

Events

Capitalize the names of specific Lesley University events.

Examples: *Commencement, Strauch-Mosse Visiting Artist Lecture Series, Community of Scholars Day*

Gender-Neutral Language

Neutral Terms

Where possible, choose gender-neutral alternatives — for example, "chair" instead of "chairman" or "chairwoman," and "letter carrier" instead of "mailman."

Possessive Pronouns

Avoid the awkward "his or her" by rephrasing with a plural subject when possible.

Instead of: *Each student received his or her diploma.* **Use:** *All students received their diplomas.*

When a plural rewrite isn't possible, using "their" in a singular context is acceptable. Webster's dictionary recognizes this usage when gender is unspecified.

Dates, Times, Phone Numbers, and Addresses

Academic Years

Write academic years in full with an en dash: *2026–2027*. Avoid formats like *2026/27* or *2026–27*.

Dates

For programs and invitations, use numerals: *May 16, 2026, at 3:00 pm*. For very formal invitations, dates and times may be written in words: *May Sixteenth at Three O'clock*.

Months and Seasons

No comma is needed between a month or season and the year. Lowercase seasons in general use, but capitalize them when referring to an academic semester.

- *The visiting scholars are expected in January 2027.*
- *The students will graduate in spring.*
- *The course will run in Fall 2026.*

Times of Day

Use numerals for times, with lowercase "am" and "pm" and no periods: *8:00 pm*. Use an en dash — not a hyphen — for time ranges: *10–11:30 am*. Use "12:00 pm" and "12:00 am" instead of noon or midnight.

When expressing a range, use either "from/to" or an en dash, but not both: *from 9 to 10:30 am* or *9–10:30 am*.

Phone Numbers

Display phone numbers as 10 digits with hyphens: *617-349-8300*. In calls to action or display text, use bold to draw attention.

- **Correct:** XXX-XXX-XXXX
- **Incorrect:** XXX.XXX.XXXX or (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Street Names

Write street names in full whenever possible. Abbreviations like *Mass. Ave.*, *Rd.*, and *St.* are acceptable in informal text, quotations, or space-limited lists.

States and Mailing Addresses

Write out full state names in running text and on the web. Well-known cities like Boston may appear without a state, but if you include a state for one city, be consistent and include it for all.

Use standard two-digit postal abbreviations when space is limited or in mailing addresses:

Cambridge, MA 02138.

Numbers

Spelling Out vs. Numerals

Spell out numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above. For web content, technical writing, or statistics-heavy text, use numerals throughout.

Always spell out:

- Numbers below 10
- Round numbers or approximations
- Any number that begins a sentence

Always use numerals for:

- Numbers 10 and above
- Ages, dates, times, page numbers, course credits, decimals, and percentages
- Lists, display, or web text

A few additional rules:

- When numbers above and below 10 appear in the same sentence, use numerals for both for consistency: *There are 6 professors and 47 students.*
- Never start a sentence with a numeral — spell it out or restructure the sentence.
- When two numbers appear side by side, spell one out: *There are three 4-credit courses.*
- Use hyphens when age or time functions as an adjective: *an 18-year-old student, a two-hour movie.*

Percentages

In technical or space-limited writing, use the % symbol with no space: *14%*. In humanities or nontechnical text, spell out "percent": *8 percent of faculty attended.*

Dates, Decades, and Centuries

Use cardinal numbers for dates — no "rd," "th," or "st": *May 3, May 12, May 21.*

Decades can be written as *1920s*, *'20s*, or *twenties* — but never *1920's*. Spell out centuries: *sixteenth century, twentieth century.*

Money

Use only necessary digits: *\$60*, not *\$60.00*. Write *\$60 million*, not *\$60 million dollars*.

Four or More Digits

Use a comma in numbers with four or more digits — except in test scores.

Capitalization

Report Titles

Capitalize the first word and all major words. Do not capitalize conjunctions, articles, or short prepositions (fewer than five letters) — unless the preposition is essential to the verb. Always capitalize short verbs like "Is" and "Be."

Examples: *Speeding Up the Process, Born to Be a Scholar, Where Is Lesley University?*

For hyphenated compound words in titles, capitalize both parts: *Long-Term Investment Strategies, Ready-Made Savings Plans.*

Seasons and Semesters

Lowercase the four seasons in general text. Capitalize when referring specifically to an academic semester or term.

General: *winter, spring, summer, fall* **Academic:** *Fall Semester, Spring Semester, Summer Term*

Directions and Locations

Capitalize important words in directions. In addresses, invitations, and posters, capitalize words like "Floor" and "Room" when followed by a number.

Examples: *First Floor Auditorium, Exit 4 on Route 2, Seventh Floor, Room 701*

Punctuation, Spacing, and Formatting

Commas

Lesley uses serial commas (the comma before "and" in a list) for clarity: *she had eaten breakfast, showered, and dressed.*

Use commas to separate independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction: *Most mammals are land dwellers, but whales live in the sea.*

Use commas around phrases that could be removed without changing the sentence's meaning: *Michelle Gaff, biology student, interned at a marine science laboratory.*

No comma is needed when joining compound elements that aren't independent clauses: *The ambassadors greeted freshmen and made them feel at home.*

Colons

Use a colon to introduce a list or series, but never after phrases like "such as" or "including." Don't capitalize the first word after a colon unless it's a proper noun or a complete sentence.

- *Lesley's Style Guide covers: naming conventions, academic titles, and problematic terms.*
- *Brian had one dream: He was determined to graduate from college.*

Semicolons

Use semicolons to join two closely related independent clauses, or to separate list items that already contain commas.

- *Writing is a challenging profession; one must have patience for such solitary work.*
- *The team is Anya Woods, creative director; Michelle Side, graphic designer; and Mark Teiwes, photographer.*

En Dash (–)

Use an en dash for number ranges with no spaces around it: *grades 1–6, the 2026–2027 academic year.*

Em Dash (—)

Use an em dash to create a break or add emphasis in a sentence, with no spaces on either side.

Aki joined Medical Corporation Tatsuoka—a health care services company—as a full-time music therapist.

Bulleted Lists

Use bulleted lists to improve readability. A few rules to follow:

- Capitalize the first word of each bullet
- No periods unless a bullet contains more than one sentence
- If any bullet needs a period, add periods to all bullets for consistency

Bold, Italics, and Underlining

Use **bold** sparingly for key information like headlines, phone numbers, and deadlines. Use *italics* for book and film titles or to emphasize key words. In print, do not underline hyperlinks; in digital text, underline hyperlinks only — never underline non-linked text, and don't include punctuation inside the hyperlink.

Acronyms

Spell out the full name on first use, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym consistently from that point forward — don't alternate between the acronym and the full name.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) is one of the most diverse districts in the nation. In 2012, BPS partnered with Turnaround Arts.

Spacing

Use one space between sentences, not two.

Digital Media Terms

Web Addresses

Write email and web addresses in roman type; bold them for emphasis if needed. When including a URL:

- Omit "<http://www.>"
- Avoid breaking URLs or email addresses across two lines
- Avoid ending sentences with a URL so punctuation doesn't interfere

For lengthy URLs, contact the digital marketing team for a shortened version.

Web Words

Write "website" as one word, lowercase. For other web-related terms, keep "web" lowercase and separate: *web page*, *web address*, *web design*.

Commonly Used Terms

Two words: social media

One word, lowercase: email, ebusiness, ecommerce, website, slideshow, online, homepage, smartphone, sitemap, tweet, retweet, enewsletter, username, eportfolio

Always capitalize: Facebook, Internet, iPad, iPhone, Google, Googled, LinkedIn, PowerPoint, Twitter, YouTube, URL

One word as a noun, two words as a verb:

Noun	Verb
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login	log in
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signup	sign up
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checkout	check out
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