

Guidelines for news articles on the external website

Proposed by SC&M, agreed in the meeting of senior editors on 15 March 2016.

Additional guidelines may apply for different faculties/units.

If you have any questions or comments about these guidelines, please contact M. Holleman, SC&M, m.m.holleman@bb.leidenuniv.nl

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Why news?

Organisations can only be successful if the stakeholders who are relevant for them trust and respect the organisation. (Van Riel).

Show, don't tell: news articles are a good way to SHOW the University's impact and so to gain trust and respect.

When other media respond positively to our articles, their reach and effect are multiplied. This is the reason we focus on news that is of interest to the press.

Selection and timing of news

- 1) When is something news? In selecting what we will write a news article about and which articles we will include in the newsletters, we take into account the following criteria, listed in order of importance:
 - The topic has to be current
 - The topic has to be in line with and/or contribute to the 6 objectives in the [University's strategic plan](#)
 - Societal relevance
 - The Executive Board and/ or Faculty Board(s) are involved
 - The topic has to match the research dossiers (research profiles)
 - Good mix of news. Three core aims: research, teaching and valorisation. Plus specific themes and faculties.

- 2) There is a hierarchy in how the news is presented on the website: the most important news is shown on the homepage as a header, then there are the three articles on the homepage, followed by 10 chronological articles (4 of which are generally those also on the homepage) under the heading News. The faculty and institute pages contain news relevant to the faculty or institute (via automatic feed). The newsletters contain the most important news of that week, or month. Press releases also play a role in the hierarchy; these are sent out by SC&M.

- 3) The aim of a news article can be:
 - To inform and interest the press (in the event of important news, arrange for a press release to be sent out; the senior editor of the faculty should discuss this with SC&M. SC&M sends out the press release).
 - To notify or inform the general public (often including our own staff, students and prospective students) about an important event, publication, research finding, development, new programme, etc.
 - Call to action: a call for crowdfunding, to watch a film, take part in a survey or competition, etc.
 - To highlight particular expertise of the University, using this expertise to explain current events.

- To report on an event, in order to inform a broader audience than only those who attended the event, and to attract their interest for future events.
 - Human interest: putting a face to the names of our staff, students and alumni.
 - To make a contribution to the strategy of the University (the 6 aims), faculty and/or institute.
- 4) Check how highly an article scores on the ABABA ladder (*Actueel, Belangrijk, Afwijkend, Beroemd, Autoriteit*; Current, Important, Different, Famous, Authority) . If the article scores highly, write an article based on the news itself. If the score is low, write an article focusing on the human interest angle (interview, Q and A, report).
 - 5) Timing: to interest the press, a news article should be completed preferably a week before the event (PhD defence, inaugural lecture, conference). When writing an article after the event (and preferably no more than a day after the event), keep it short and to the point. For press releases, always involve SCM, via the senior editor of the faculty.

How to tackle a news article

- 6) If you want to just announce an event, you should make a calendar agenda item rather than a news article. In exceptional cases, you can make a news article about an event (for example, an article about the subject matter of the event, with detailed background information or an interview). In this case, a calendar item should also always be made, and the news article should refer to the calendar item (not under the text, but in a 'spotlight' or banner block in the right-hand column. And vice versa: the agenda item should include a link to the news article.
NB We have put on the functional wish list that we want to have more options for extending a calendar item.
- 7) Decide the focus of your article in advance: what is the most important news fact, your main message or objective? Who will be interested in it? Who is your target group?
- 8) The content of your news article should be an inverted pyramid: the most important news comes first.
- 9) Don't make your article too long; if you have any extra information or background information, put it in a box at the bottom of the page (not in the right-hand column).
- 10) In terms of level of knowledge, we aim for first-year university student as our average readers.

Writing style

- 11) Write in the active voice and in concrete terms; be businesslike and as succinct as possible. Be sparing with superlatives (such as prestigious), avoid exclamation marks.

- 12) Avoid using expressions of time, such as 'yesterday' or 'last Tuesday'. Do mention the full dates of events, including the year.
- 13) Writing means deleting! Avoid unnecessary words.
- 14) Introduce people mentioned in the article (give their position with their name).
- 15) Avoid jargon or overly formal language and unnecessary passive constructions.
- 16) Write from the perspective of the reader and not the organisation.
- 17) Use the spelling checker (Dutch):
<http://communicatie.leidenuniv.nl/huisstijl/schrijfwijzer/spellingwijzer-a-z.html>
- 18) The heading is separate from the intro and the article (i.e. the text does not run on from the heading to the intro).

Getting more hits with search engines

- 19) Decide on the search terms. What search terms does someone use who is looking for your information? Note the singular and plural forms of these words. Think of synonyms.
Tip: Google Adwords offers a programme for search terms (<https://adwords.google.nl/KeywordPlanner>) where you can get some inspiring ideas for search terms. This tool gives an indication of the number of times a particular word is searched for on a monthly basis. Incorporate these search terms in important sections of the webpages:

Headings and sub-headings: include the search terms in the heading of a text and make regular use of subheadings. Search engines rate the texts of headings more highly than other texts. Make sure your headings are informative and that they contain search terms. Sub-headings make the article easier to read. Words at the start of a heading are rated more highly than words at the end of the heading.

Body text: make sure that the search terms occur in the body text. Vary them with singular and plural forms of the search terms and synonyms. Pay attention mainly to the upper part of the page: search engines often scan the first 250 words first.

Synopses: search machines pay extra attention to synopses because they often contain important information. Whenever content can be turned from an undifferentiated block of text into a synopsis, it makes it easier for visitors and search machines to understand what the page is about. Keep synopses short (three to five bullet points): the longer the synopses, the lower they are rated by search engines.

Links: Links give an impression of the context of a webpage. Emphasise this by using meaningful links. Avoid: 'click here'. Where possible, use search terms in the link text and keep the link five words or less.

Length of sections

20) Don't make your news article too long: a maximum of 450 words is the guideline.

21) Don't make the heading too long:

- The heading should preferably be no longer than 25 characters (this means that the heading is one line on a large screen, which is most effective).
- The heading should not be longer than 70 characters otherwise it will take up 4 lines.

Word breaks have an effect on the heading, so the number of characters is only an indication.

22) Don't make the intro too long:

- The intro should not be longer than 150 characters, including spaces, otherwise it will be cut off when it appears on the news page.

23) Don't make paragraphs too long, no more than 100 words, and use meaningful subheadings.

24) Long articles (these should be the exception, for example for lists of prize winners) should have anchors (use the flag in CK editor).

Tagging and categorising

NB: Further instructions about keywords will follow once the list of keywords has been updated.

25) Always add different categories and keywords, then the news article will appear in relevant places on the website. Always include a link to the relevant organisation unit and check with the senior editor whether the article also has to have a link to the faculty. See separate list of categories in appendix 1 (page 9).

26) Add a number of existing keywords; check what keywords the scientist in question uses. New keywords should not be added.

27) Always use internal links for pages within Hippo. That way, you won't be left with a broken link if the address of the pages on the website change at a later date.

28) There are standard categories for the blocks on the right-hand side: Academic staff, Research, Education, Organisation. Use these as much as possible. Only information that

isn't covered by these categories should be given a separate box (heading: Read more, for example).

29) Wherever possible, include a link to a science dossier in a 'spotlight' content block in the right-hand column.

- This is where you will find [all the dossiers](#).
- The photos that you can use are indicated with the name of the dossier plus 'icon' as the keyword, in the folder with images in Hippo (main images – general – research)

NB The dossiers will be put into Hippo in due course.

30) Teaching: if there is no related study programme, don't fill anything in here. Mention the bachelor's programme(s) first, and then the master's. Make sure that you don't by accident tick the general terms 'bachelor's programmes' and/or 'master's programmes' if you want to select a master's programme.

31) If you want to mention a contact person who is not a member of the academic staff, don't use the block for academic staff, but the manual links block on the left, with its own heading (such as, Contact) and link to the staff pages.

Extra options (right-hand column)

32) Items that relate to a particular meeting (for example, a lecture) should also be added to the calendar if they have not already been added. If you add a call to action in the box on the right-hand side, you should refer to the calendar item. This means that the date(s) and location don't need to be included in the heading or lead, but appear prominently in the box. Don't repeat all the information from the calendar item in the news item (it's duplication and if something changes, it has to be changed in two places).

33) Make a box on the right-hand side for a call to action: with an 'spotlight' content block with a photo (you should take photos for a right-hand box from the main images folder), or a banner content box with only a colour.

34) The column on the right-hand side is not intended for long texts, but for links and calls to action. For a long text, use a box under the article.

Dutch/English

35) All news articles should preferably be offered in two languages; only if the subject is of interest to a purely Dutch audience (for example, an article about a book in Dutch) should the article not be translated into English. If there is a lot of translation work, translate the most recent article(s) first.

- 36) English articles should always be coupled to Dutch articles and vice versa. (In other words, in Hippo you make the English item from the Dutch one, or the other way round; don't make separate items for the two languages. See Hippo manual).
- 37) Whenever possible, make sure that when you make an item, any links go to pages in the same language; for example links to academic staff or master's programmes. If there is no suitable page in the same language, then you can use the link to a page in the other language.
- 38) Use the English terminology list:
<http://communicatie.leidenuniv.nl/website/webredactie-richtlijnen/richtlijnen/engelstalige-terminologie.html>

Images

NB: Further information and guidelines to follow

- 39) Make sure you use an attractive, sharply focused photo (particularly the first photo that appears on the news pages and in newsletters). A header photo has to be 885x325 pixels (breadth x height).
- 40) Check the arrangements with photographers about copyright and whether or not the photographer and/or the course have to be mentioned.
- 41) No suitable photo? You can publish an article without a photo. It's also possible to buy a photo, on an incidental basis, via SCM's Istock account, via Maaïke de Jong (Mon – Wed. extn. 4594, m.h.de.jong@bb.leidenuniv.nl)
Examples of free image libraries:
- <https://pixabay.com/>
 - <http://quest.eb.com/>
- 42) Don't put a photo under the final paragraph.
- 43) Be sparing with photos in articles; think about how best to position them (left- or right-justified, centralised or large-format between paragraphs). The preferred format is medium or large (the small format can only be used when selecting a photo from the Hippo library (via dropdown bottom left, see Hippo instructions).

Things not to forget

- 44) Sub-headings in a box: use header 3 for this, using the editor (via Style > Header 3); don't make the sub-heading bold yourself.

45) Always use save & close and close the tab, otherwise no-one else can access the item.

46) Don't forget to publish it!

47) Make one or more tweets about your news article (particularly if it scores highly on the ABABA ladder) and plan it in Hootsuite and/or mail it to the social media editor.

Guidelines

48) These and other instructions can be found on: <http://www.leidenuniv.nl/hippo-handleiding/>

Summary: a short checklist

A good news article in Hippo:

- ✓ Short heading and intro (25, 150 characters, resp.)
- ✓ Enough and meaningful sub-headings
- ✓ All appropriate categories assigned (deepest layer of organisation)
- ✓ Suitable image(s)
- ✓ Categories on right-hand side correct (teaching (first bachelor's then master's), academic staff, research)
- ✓ Call to action in right-hand column (if appropriate)
- ✓ Internal links have been used
- ✓ Science dossier has been mentioned in right-hand column (if relevant)
- ✓ English version has been linked
- ✓ Save & Close and publish

Appendix 1: Categories of news

- News articles fall into one of the categories given below.
- The categories relate to the subject that the article is about, and not the target group of the article. This means that the Students category does not contain items *for* students, (these items are found on the student website), but, for example, an item about a student who has done something particular.
- An item might belong in several different categories (for example, an item about a student who has won a thesis prize should be put in ‘Students’ and ‘Laureates’).
- If there is no clear category, the ‘corporate’ category ‘Organisation’ will often be the most suitable. In exceptional cases, there may be no category that applies completely. That’s not a problem; in that case, don’t fill in the category (category is not a compulsory field). The item will then appear in the general news list, but will not appear in specific categories such as Education, Research or Laureates.
- These categories apply for news items, not for calendar items (announcements). There is a separate list of categories for calendar items.

Categories:

- Societal impact
- In the media
- Awards
- Education
- Research
- Organisation
- People
- Students
- Books

Explanation/examples by category:

Category	News articles about such subjects as:
Societal impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with industry • Knowledge valorisation • Spin-off companies, Bio Science Park • Societal impact, societal relevance, concrete applications of scientific research • Current events, contributions to debates in society, opinions

	of experts at the University, etc.
In the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media appearances (TV, radio, newspaper, journal, website) by Leiden scientists/academics/staff/students, with a fragment/link (only retrospective; use the calendar for announcements about coming events)
Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prizes awarded to Leiden scientists/academics/staff/students, honorary doctorates, major research subsidies/grants, (royal) distinctions, honorary appointments/memberships, etc. • Leiden honorary doctorates?
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (New) programmes • Student recruitment, information activities • Teaching policy, study success, quality assurance, etc. • Honours education • Educational rankings/study programme guides/surveys about teaching • Teaching facilities • ICT & education • Transition from pre-university to university education • Teaching prizes
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (New) research projects • Special research results • Special scientific/academic publications (<i>Nature</i>, etc.) • Subsidies, grants, etc. • (International) partnerships • PhD defences, inaugural lectures (if they are newsworthy and the PhD candidate has been interviewed) • Research rankings • Collections, open access, repository, etc. • Research awards, honorary doctorates
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board, Faculty Boards, Board of Governors • Appointment or departure of University administrators • University Council, Faculty Councils, co-participation bodies, University elections • Changes in organisation • Profile, strategy, policy, campaigns • Annual report, facts and figures, publications about the University • Buildings, real estate projects • University events, dies natalis, opening of the academic year, special anniversaries, including lustrum (5-year-anniversary) events • Visits by prominent guests

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships, strategic alliances, LDE, LERU • University and city (Leiden and The Hague), collaboration with the province, municipalities and city partners • Internationalisation (in so far as not focused specifically on education or research) • Rankings • The University as employer, job market communication, terms of employment • Alumni, fundraising • History of the University <p>Plus all other 'corporate' topics</p>
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment or departure of professors, administrators, etc. • Special activities/achievements by Leiden scientists/staff • Obituaries • Other topics about people, except (= Awards)
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special achievements by students, prizes awarded to students • Student life, Leiden and The Hague as student cities • Special activities of student associations (not announcements) • Students taking part in national sports • Student facilities • Introduction week, etc.