

Duke University Office of Government Relations Style Guide

The Office of Government Relations presents the following recommendations pertaining to official letters sent on Duke University letterhead to U.S. Government Officials, Military Personnel, Foreign Officials, and Nobility. The style guide also provides the appropriate form to be used in a spoken greeting.

The purpose of this style guide is to provide consistency for Duke communications in the political and foreign relations arenas. For guidance on correct writing style, word usage, capitalization, punctuation, and other general issues that arise daily in written communications, please refer to the Office of News & Communications Style Guide: http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke_community/style.html

To ensure compliance with federal regulations and university policies, communications regarding inviting officials to campus or expressing a university position on a policy matter should be shared and discussed with the Office of Federal Relations.

Capitalization:

Proper names are always capitalized. A proper name is a name or a title that refers to an individual person, an individual place, an individual institution, or an individual event. Here are several examples:

There will be a debate between Professor Lacey and Doctor Davis.
The Queen will address the House of Commons today.
Last week President Clinton met Chancellor Kohl.

However, do not capitalize when a word is used in a general matter. For example, observe the difference between the next two examples:

We have asked for a meeting with the President.
I would like to be the president of a big company.

In the first, the title, though does not precede a name, is capitalized because it is a title referring to a specific person. In the second, there is no capital, since the word *president* does not refer to anyone in particular.

Always capitalize the first letter of each word in a title when used in conjunction with a name. For example: Chief Justice John G. Roberts.

Always capitalize the first letter of each word of all official functions and political entities, such as: Capitol Hill, House of Representatives, Congress, Senate, etc. Do not capitalize stand alone words, such as administration, congressional, etc.

Salutations:

The chart below gives the appropriate forms to be used in written and spoken greetings.