

Getting Back to Basics:  
Writing for an International Audience

- All UB communication is really international communication
  - 17% of the student body is international (that means 17% of alumni too!)
  - International faculty and staff are a large part of our community
  - Any prospect, student, international community member can land on any UB page
- Keep it simple
  - Make sentences direct and to the point
  - Overusing descriptors muddies your message
  - The more important the information, (especially technical/how to) the more plain the language should be
  - The harder they have to work to digest your content, the less likely they are to read it
- Check your assumptions
  - Avoid internal jargon
  - They are not just learning about your unit but also about higher ed in the US overall
  - Teach them about norms without talking down to them (What is a pep rally?)
- Consider the literal translation
  - Avoid idioms and too much cleverness
  - “UB is as much a way as it is a place” → “UB represents a unique way of doing things”
  - Bottom line: Say what you mean!
- Remember the influencers
  - Students may be English proficient but their parents may not be
  - If you think it will be shared make it easy to understand
- Pictures can speak volumes
  - Use imagery and info graphics to support your messages
  - If you aren’t sure how to tell them, show them!
- Avoid taboos
  - Get to know the basic cultural norms of your primary international audiences
  - “Command respect and take the lead” → “Reach your goals and achieve distinction”
  - Especially important with imagery (What does a thumbs up mean? Should men and women be photographed in a dorm room together?)
- A different kind of diversity
  - Be representative of your key international demographics, let them see themselves in your communications
  - The largest UB populations are: Indian, Chinese, Korean, Iranian, Turkish, Saudi Arabian & Southeast Asian