Creating a print communications document

What are your reasons for communicating and who is your audience?

Before you start a print project, it's important to consider your objectives and who your communication is aimed at. Take a look at our general guidance on effective communications to help you pinpoint what you want to achieve.

Think about how you want your document to look

Unless you're producing a simple poster or Word document using one of our pre-designed templates, we advise that you approach a professional designer to design your publication. The designer will need to be briefed on our brand. If you need advice on designers to approach who have already been briefed on our brand, email us and we can help you to find a designer that suits your needs and budget. You can also read our guide to briefing a designer.

What images do you want to use? If you want to use photography in print, it needs to be a minimum resolution of 300dpi (the highest quality image) so that it doesn't look blurry when it's printed. To find out the resolution of an image, right-click on the file (normally an image file is in jpeg format), click 'properties' then 'details' and look down until you see the dpi. If you want to use stock images, i.e. images that are bought online rather than photos you already have, your designer will be able to source these if you give them an idea of what you want. You will need to pay for most stock imagery but sites tend to offer both value and premium options. Stock images can be photographs, abstract patterns or images of real things created by a graphic artist.

What format will you use?

The format you choose (fold-out pamphlet, poster, brochure, flier, etc.) will depend on your purpose and how much detail you want to include, as well as practical questions such a postage. Design agencies and Warwick Print will be able to advise you to some extent but it's good to have a rough idea of want you want before you speak to them. Narrowing this down will enable them to provide you with the most accurate quotation for the work before you start.

Depending on how many copies you will be getting printed, your budget and the finish you want to achieve, you'll need to decided whether you want to use digital or litho printing. Our Quick guide to print gives more information on the differences between the two printing techniques, and on paper stock, finishes, paginations and common formats for print documents.

Consider deadlines and timescales

Be practical about what is achievable in the time you have and produce a project plan of what needs to be done when, working back from the date by which you need the finished document or documents.

Ask the printer how long they will need to complete the job that you have in mind. This will give you your sign-off date by which all final amends must be completed by the designer. From there, work out how long the designer will need to design the job. Remember to factor in at least two rounds of amends (when the designer sends you PDF proofs of the designed document and you provide feedback on any changes you want to make).

If you need to send the initial text or designed pages to other stakeholders/contributors, allow time for them to provide their changes/sign-off and agree these times in advance so they can allocate time to look at content. Be prepared to chase people for their comments if necessary!

Set aside time to proofread your document/publication. If possible, ask someone who hasn't been closely involved with the work to proofread it too. It's easier to spot someone else's mistakes! For tips on spotting common mistakes, take a look at our proofreading checklist.

Need more support?

If you need support from the Marketing Communications team, please complete a briefing form and email it to marketing@warwick.ac.uk as soon as possible in the planning process to ensure we are able to set aside time to support you. As well as giving us information about what you need, the form is also designed to be a useful planning tool.

We can help with:

- Advising on tone of voice and house style
- Copywriting and editing
- Visual identity brand queries
- Sourcing and briefing a designer

For print support and queries, please contact Warwick Print.