



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean

Best practice guide

...to photography

University Communications Team
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Introduction

Great photographs help us tell our story internally and externally in a clear and compelling way, so the more pictures we have from across the partnership the better!

This best practice guide gives some useful tips for amateur photographers taking pictures for use within or by the university and includes guidance on using your camera as well as composing and directing your shots.

Make your camera work for you

Settings

Set your camera's resolution as high as you can to ensure you get the best quality photos possible and make sure that if you are taking photographs for university use, they are at least 800KB.

The automatic mode on your camera or smart phone will intuitively change your settings based on the type of subject you are photographing, but most cameras also come with a range of pre-programmed modes that will help you get the best out of your shot. Whether you are shooting portrait, landscape, in low light or at a fast moving event, there's usually a mode that will help you.

Focus

Most cameras focus on whatever is in the centre of the picture, but if you want your main subject to be positioned somewhere else for a more interesting shot, you'll need to change focus.

First, centre the subject and hold the shutter button halfway down. Next, reposition your camera (while still holding the shutter button) so the subject is where you want it. Finally, press the shutter button all the way down to take the picture.

If your subject is moving, the same rules apply, but rather than following them around, focus on the area you expect them to move into when you want to take your shot, hold the shutter halfway down and press all the way down when they enter the space in which you've focussed.

Keep your camera with you!

It sounds obvious, but keeping your fully charged camera (or mobile phone) to hand or designating someone to take photographs at key university events means you are more likely to capture that all important image.

Similarly, don't rely on just one or two shots - the best photographers take multiple photographs of the same scene so they can look at them properly after the event and identify the best image.

If you have a particularly important photo to take, check your device is fully charged in advance and consider having a second device to hand.

Composing your pictures

Keep close

Aim to fill the picture with your subject and stay within the range of your flash (usually five large steps away) to keep the picture bright and interesting.

Check the background

A plain background shows off the subject you are photographing, whereas a busier background helps to tell a story.

When you look through the camera viewfinder, carefully study the area surrounding your subject.

Make sure no poles grow from the head of your honorary professor and that no messy desks or bookshelves confuse the picture.

Look at the light

Check where your light is coming from and ensure your subject is well lit. If you need to, use the flash - even in sunny conditions

Frame your shots

Think about the composition of your photograph and incorporate pleasing shapes and lines to help you frame your subject.

Taking a picture at eye level is usually more pleasing to look at than just slightly off it, but there's also a benefit to experimenting with different angles and ranges to frame your shot and tell your story.

Use the rule of thirds

Many photographers say the most interesting photographs follow the rule of thirds.

To use the rule of thirds, imagine two lines lying horizontally and two lying vertically across the image creating nine even squares and use these lines and squares to play around with image composition.

Some images will look best with the focal point in the centre square, while using of the intersecting points may be more pleasing to the eye in other types of shots.

Direct your pictures

You'll get the best out of your subjects if you can give them a little guidance.

Pick the location, add props, encourage people to move slightly closer or to the left or right for a better shot and politely ask those not needed for a picture to stand clear.

Rights and release forms

You should be aware of your responsibilities under General Data Protection Regulation when organising and using photography.

Make sure anyone appearing in your photograph has signed a release form to let you use it and, if you are shooting in a recognisable business, property or organisation, make sure you have the permission to do that too. The university's filming, photographic, sound recording and text release form is available on the university intranet.

More information on General Data Protection Regulation is available in the policies and regulations section of the university website.

Any questions?

If you have a question, the communications team is always here to help. Contact us by email communications@uhi.ac.uk or telephone 01463 279 222.