Designing a study logo

A good logo is distinctive, appropriate, practical, graphic and simple in form. It conveys an intended message through concept or "meaning". It should be printed at any size, and, in most cases, be effective without colour.

1. Types of logos

There are different types of logos:

- Logotypes: typography based logos (words only)
- Literal logos: where imagery used directly ties to the type of project the logo is representing (such as a syringe for a vaccines study)
- Abstract logos: Where the logo imagery isn't obviously linked to the project, but may be based more on a feeling or mood.

2. Give yourself a brief

Get an understanding of who this logo is for, and what it's meant to say. Your brief should be short and include:

- **Background**: What is the research study?
- **Needs**: What does the logo need to say? How is it going to be used?
- **Target audience**: Who are they, and where will they see it?

3. Research what works?

Conduct research on logo designs that have been successful and on current styles and trends that may relate to the design brief. There's no need to reinvent the wheel, but don't copy someone else's logos - balance original design with a tried-and-tested concept.

4. Top tips

Simple is sometimes better

A complex logo can be difficult to reproduce and difficult to remember. It is better for a logo to be simple and instantly recognisable. Don't use Microsoft Publisher design features (reflections, gradients in text) unless it corresponds to something in the project, don't use clipart. You don't have to throw in the kitchen sink.

A logo doesn't have to convey what the study does

Iconic brands don't always represent their product through their logo, think:

- McDonald's Golden Arches: no burgers
- FedEx: no trucks or planes (though a cool 'hidden' arrow)
- Nike swoosh: no trainers
- Apple: no computer
- BBC: No TV or aerial

Size matters

The logo needs to reproduce at a variety of different sizes, particularly on the smallish size. Overly complex logos can lose all their meaning when you shrink them down. Think about the study website, letter head, compliment slip, a ballpoint pen. Logos with lots of elements, or the full study name, won't shrink down well and can often be difficult for people to read.

Aspect ratios

This is the relationship between height and width – it is critical. A logo that is too small and skinny, or too wide and short, is not visually pleasing, and you'll end up with all sorts of layout issues when it comes to setting it up on various artwork. Logos that are square, rectangular or circular work well.

Disconnecting icons and text

Some studies include both the study acronym and the full name. This can work well if you are using your logo in a large format, but when you shrink it down it makes the full study name impossible to read. If you can avoid it, try not to include the full study name in the logo, since it will usually always be accompanied by further information about the study that generally carries the study name somewhere.

If you need to include the full study name, then create two versions of your study logo. One with the graphic and acronym only, the other with the full study name. This way you'll be able to use either the text or icon solo, and the logo will always be clear.

Colour

The most important part of your logo is the design itself. Start off black and white, use colours later on to highlight and emphasise. Consider your choices carefully, whether you use two or four colours and how your logo will stand up next to the University of Oxford logo and your other partners.

51% of logos are monochrome (just one colour), 30% have two colours. Only 19% of logos have more than two colours.

- **Blue:** The most popular colour for logos, and ties in with the NHS branding, though it could look a bit "pharma". Despite this, blue means trusted, conservative, honest.
- **Black:** Used by "high-end" brands. It is somber, serious, sophisticated, luxurious, elegance.
- **Red:** Can mean stop, danger and hot. Works well on black/white backgrounds. Can mean bold, passion, strength.
- **Yellow:** Too bright to stand on its own and will require a secondary background or bordering colour. Universal caution colour. Means logical, optimistic, progressive, playful.
- **Orange:** Thought to stimulate appetite, used frequently in retail, often used as a call to action. Means happy, energetic, sociable, friendly.
- **Green:** Means 'go', used to represent eco-friendly brands, thought to be calming. Means nature, wealth, fresh, life, harmony.
- **Purple:** This is viewed as 'elitist', appeals to children and often used in toys packaging. Means royalty, mystery, pomp, ceremony, majesty.
- **Multi-coloured:** Relatively new phenomenon means fun, easy-going, child-life, internet, and authority.

Keep your logo 'metaphor light'

It's tempting to write 'War and Peace' with your logo's metaphors, or try to cram in too much about the study – an overworked logo is not a pretty sight. The most memorable logos are the most simple. Dozens of swooshes, dots and colours – all professing to mean something, will not mean anything to the first time viewer.

5. Designers and design software

Lots of graphic designers will create a logo at a relatively cheap rate. To find a freelancer visit https://www.fiverr.com or www.peopleperhour.com

Creating your logo using professional design software, and having a copy of the file in vector format (.eps /.ai) means you will be able to resize your logo easily without any loss or resolution. Adobe Illustrator can be good for designing

logos. Don't just output your logo as a .bmp file (e.g. never design it in Microsoft Paint) – you will always have scalability issues and will likely struggle to apply it effectively to any designs.

Try to steer clear of hand-drawn illustrations or images in your logo, unless they are a vector graphic. You will always have difficulties scaling these up or down.

Other software you could use:

https://logojoy.com - they'll charge about $65
https://hatchful.shopify.com/
https://logomakr.com/
https://www.wix.com/logo/maker

For free icons, check out https://www.flaticon.com/ (you'll need to credit the website somewhere)

If you already have an image to use, you can use this software to make a logo out of it: https://vectr.com

6. Feedback, feedback, feedback!

Above all, logo design can often be extremely subjective. A design that makes sense to you could mean nothing to someone else, so before you start using your logo test it with people in the office, your favourite GP, your friendly communications manager, or your mum. Listen to their feedback carefully, and alter your logo accordingly.

Effective Primary Care CTU logos include:

Example of how a logo could be improved:

Study: AUtomated Risk Assessment for Stroke in Atrial Fibrillation (AURAS-AF)

Automated Risk Assessment for Stroke in Atrial Fibrillation: A cluster randomised controlled trial of an electronic reminder intervention to promote anticoagulation and reduce stroke risk (AURAS-AF)

- Colours are insipid, though it only uses two colours which is good
- The text is too small, therefore the logo can't be shrunk down
- Its could be unclear what the squiggle is as its too small

- Similar design, but using two colours (red for emphasis) and playing on the iOS message icon.
- The text is much bigger so is better for scalability.
- The graphic elements are large and simple, so even without the text this could be shrunk down considerably and still be recognisable.

- If this was all black it would still work.
- Uses vector graphics rather than hand-drawn illustrations.