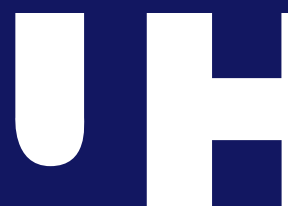


Style guidelines for copywriters and proofreaders

University of
Hertfordshire



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1. Background and purpose of the guide

This guide has been developed for those writing non-academic copy for external audiences of the University of Hertfordshire in both print and digital publications. It aims to provide writers with guidance on tone of voice and writing conventions to ensure consistency across all our external communications.

The guide provides a quick reference for common issues and questions encountered by copywriters, and also gives advice on how to achieve a tone of voice in your writing which accurately reflects the University's new strategic plan.

A group of writers and editors from within Marketing and Communications have developed the guide in line with Oxford University Press guidelines and in consultation with professional colleagues around the University to ensure it fits with our strategic plan, addresses issues of accessibility and equality appropriately and is sound in its recommendations.

The two reference sources we have used are:

Spelling the Oxford English Dictionary

Style guide: Hart's Rules – the Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors, Oxford University Press

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2. The Guide in Context

University values

The University has defined a set of core values which inform and sustain all of our activities:

- putting students first
- excellence and its celebration
- innovation, creativity and professionalism
- respect for the individual
- enjoyment in learning and work

Brand values

Welcoming, dynamic and **inspiring** are our three brand values. These were identified as a result of research conducted by brand agency Lloyd Northover during the development of the University's new branding. By following some simple rules and good practice, you can use your copywriting skills to reinforce our brand values.

Welcoming Adjectives which expand and explain this value: accessible / community-spirited / credible / customer-focused / diverse (culturally) / friendly / global / inclusive / open / respectful / supportive / transparent / warm

Dynamic Adjectives which expand and explain this value: adaptable / agile / creative / determined / energetic / entrepreneurial / focused / future-oriented / innovative / professional / purposeful

Inspiring Adjectives which expand and explain this value: ambitious / aspirational / blame-free / creative / encouraging / forward-looking / leading by example / motivating / passionate

Vision and key messages

The University's vision and key messages underpin everything we do. Use the practical guidelines on audience, medium and message to focus your writing.

Vision statement

'Our vision for 2012 is to be recognised as a new model of a university through far-reaching engagement with business, community and international partners, shaping the future success of our graduates operating in the global environment, and advancing the prosperity of our region.'

Key messages

Overarching message

The University of Hertfordshire is the UK's leading business-facing university, focused on serving the needs of students and business (including public sector and the professions) in the UK and internationally.

Key message 1

The University of Hertfordshire has a holistic business attitude in the way it runs itself as a university.

Key message 2

The University of Hertfordshire provides a unique experience for students, which engages them with the world of work and empowers them to succeed in life and work.

Key message 3

The University of Hertfordshire meets the business needs of the present and the future.

3. Practical advice

Writing style

Active

- Use active verbs (eg develop your skills).
- Tell the reader what to do next and how (eg apply online for an information pack).

Benefits-led

- Empathise with the reader and write with their needs in mind.
- Focus on the benefits (not just the features or services we offer).
- Put what you think is the key benefit for your audience first. Make it a heading if possible.

Clear

- Use plain English with short, commonly used words.
- Avoid jargon (including business jargon eg thinking outside the box).
- Avoid archaic terms (eg whilst, henceforth, thus).
- Avoid idioms, clichés, colloquialisms and slang.

Direct

- Use short sentences wherever possible. Avoid multiple sub-clauses.
- Focus on your message. Avoid waffle, padding and repetition.
- Get to the point quickly. Avoid long introductions.
- Place information words such as names, places and key concepts at the beginning of sentences.

Evidenced

- Make claims only if you can back them up with facts.
- When quoting statistics always check they are up-to-date, accurate and evidenced. It is powerful to use statistics that are less than a year old.
- Provide case studies, profiles or testimonials.
- If you are writing for the web, provide a link to further information where possible.

Friendly

- Address the reader as 'you'. Use 'we', 'us' and 'our' when referring to the University.
- Use positive language wherever possible. Avoid negatives. For example 'please place the enclosed parking permit in your windscreen' not 'you will not be permitted to park unless you display the enclosed permit'.

Message

Be very clear about the overall message(s) you wish to convey before you start writing. This will ensure your copy is focused and has the desired impact. All messages should be aligned with the University's overarching key messages.

To help define your message, ask yourself:

- What is it that I want to communicate?
- How would I sum up my message in one sentence?
- What one thing would I like the reader to be able to remember?
- What would I like the reader to think/do after reading this?
- Will the reader understand my message?

Always provide the reader with the tools for the next step:

- Give contact details, with a variety of contact methods (telephone, email, fax, postal address).
- Give clear, step-by-step instructions for filling in forms, making bookings or registering for events.
- Give a short, memorable 'go' web address (contact Marketing and Communications for more information on shortened web addresses).
- Give details of how to receive information in an alternative format (eg electronically) so it is accessible for disabled readers.

Audience

It is vital to think about who you are communicating with before you write. In some cases market research data may be available to guide you in addressing your audience or you may want to do some research yourself. However, if this is not available or feasible try to place yourself in the position of your typical reader and think about their needs and motivations.

Ask yourself:

- Who are my typical readers?
- What are they likely to want to know?
- What are the things that would influence their decision-making?
- What sort of language would appeal to them?
- How much time will they have to read this?
- Where are they likely to read this?
- What sort of information and language might they expect from a university?

NOTE: Although it is important to consider your typical reader, try to ensure your copy does not alienate or become unreadable to those outside your typical audience group.

Equality and diversity policy

Written publications should be aligned to the University's equality and diversity policy. The following extract relates particularly to marketing materials:



7.1.5 The University will:

- a) develop marketing and recruitment strategies to meet the diverse information needs of applicants;
- b) ensure that publicity material, events and information services are relevant and accessible to all prospective or potential applicants;
- c) ensure that publicity materials, events and information services communicate effectively the University's commitment to equality;
- d) pay particular attention to language, wording, images, content and format.



(Equality and diversity policy, 2006)

The full policy can be viewed on the Equality Unit's intranet site go.herts.ac.uk/equality.

Much of the advice given in this document supports this policy. However there are a few additional points to consider:

- Be careful about indirect discrimination: for example 'mature students' may be considered indirect age discrimination. Use instead 'returners to education' or similar.
- Keep electronic versions of your promotional literature that can be adapted to alternative formats eg large print or for use with a screen reader. NB Marketing and Communications produces plain text versions of key publications such as the prospectuses. These can be supplied on request by the Student Centre.
- For guidance on the language to use when referring to minority groups visit the Equality Challenge Unit's web site www.ecu.ac.uk.
- Avoid reference to page numbers in your text as this may cause problems if the format is changed.
- Include the following statement in all promotional literature:
'If you would like a copy of this document in a different format please contact:
(insert the appropriate telephone / email for your publication).
- If you are writing anything specifically for or about disabled people, check your use of language using information available on the Equality Unit website or by contacting the Disability Officer for advice.

Writing for international audiences

Writing for those whose first language is not English requires extra care. All of the usual considerations apply. However, it is advisable to make a special effort to:

- Keep sentences short. Avoid sub-clauses, complex tenses and conditional verbs if possible.
- Avoid English idioms and colloquialisms (eg 'run up a bill', 'pick a fight' or 'cut-off date').
- Keep jargon and abbreviations to a minimum (eg 'UFAA', 'post-application', 'after confirmation').



Good practice

Please send us your IELTS certificate by 31 August 2007. This will help us process your application quickly.



Poor practice

To enable us to expedite the application process, we advise all prospective students to submit their IELTS certificate before the cut-off date specified.

Medium

It is vital to consider the medium through which you will be communicating when writing your copy. People read copy on screen and in print, in very different ways. While readers are happy to read long sections of text in print they tend to scan text on screen.

Print and ambient advertising (eg posters, cinema, exhibition stands)

Remember, your advertisement may be competing for the reader's attention with other advertisements, print content, or environmental distractions, so you need to make your messages clear and concise.

- Use short, punchy statements.
- Use bullets wherever possible to break up text.
- Link text to imagery where possible.
- Avoid clichés and jargon.
- Focus on making key words, benefits and calls to action stand out.

Some of the above will depend on how your document is designed and laid out. Your designer will advise on how to make your key messages stand out visually.

Web

Writing for the web is a specific skill as you have to consider the different way in which people read text on websites, and also the importance of making your pages accessible and easy for search engines to find. All the general style guidelines apply, but the following guidance will also be useful. Advice and training is available for those writing for the University's web pages on a regular basis.

Writing style

- Reduce the length of your text compared to print copy (some sources suggest reducing it by as much as fifty per cent). Avoid long pages of text which require users to 'scroll'.
- Aim to keep paragraphs short (around 3-5 lines of text), and each containing one main information point.
- Keep your text objective, rather than overtly 'promotional'. Web users are generally looking for specific information.
- Each web page should have information on what to do next (ie contact details, web link, postal/email address etc).
- Make sure the text on each page is understandable without reference to other web pages on your site. The user can 'land' on any one of your web pages so they may not read them in the order you envisage.
- Put important information and action words at the beginning of sentences where possible.

Layout and formatting

- Your most important message should appear at the top of the page.
- Use bulleted lists to break up text and highlight key points.
- Only use underlined text if it is a hyperlink.
- Break up the text with clear, meaningful sub headings.

Links

- Use meaningful words for navigation or text links (eg 'read more about scholarships' not 'click here'; if the information on the web page is simply a list of short courses, navigate to it through a link called 'short courses' not 'developing your team', so your users know what to expect on the page).
- Write descriptive image captions for all imagery (useful for people with screen readers).
- Where you have a large amount of information or supporting documents, provide these as downloadable files. Provide a sentence or two on screen to summarise the content of each downloadable file.

Promotional literature

In promotional literature you can afford to include more prose; however this should still be broken up by paragraphs, bullet points, subheadings, charts and tables to hold the reader's attention.

- Keep a consistent format throughout the document where possible (eg each page has a heading, bulleted list, and two body paragraphs).
- Consider your document format when writing your copy (eg a postcard will require much shorter paragraphs than an A4 booklet).
- Include calls to action and links to further information consistently throughout.
- Use clear subheadings to signpost your reader to the information they need.
- Consider alternative ways to present your information which may have more impact than prose (eg tables, charts, case studies, profiles and bulleted lists).

Letters

Letters should be clearly presented according to the layout guidance given in the University's brand guidelines – see go.herts.ac.uk/uidentity. Consider the reader and break down your text into short paragraphs to help them easily pick out key points. Avoid squeezing text onto one page where two are necessary.

4. Copy-editing guidelines

Background and references

University of Hertfordshire house style guidelines are based on Oxford University Press reference guides. We have tried to highlight some of the more common issues in this guide, but please refer to the latest editions of these texts for more detailed explanations:

Spelling: the Oxford English Dictionary.

Editorial style guide: Hart's Rules – the Handbook of Style for Writers and Editors, Oxford University Press.



Apply these guidelines with common sense. It is possible to make exceptions, for example in promotional campaigns or for visual impact in design, at the discretion of the editorial team in Marketing and Communications.

If there is good reason to deviate from this style guide, record your decisions in a separate style sheet. This will help to ensure consistency throughout your publication, especially if someone else proofreads it for you.



Submit your style sheet to the authors of this style guide so that your decisions can be considered for inclusion in the guide.

Any publication should have a consistent style whatever editorial decisions are made.

Abbreviations and symbols

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Write contractions without a full stop.	Dr Mr Mrs	Dr. Mr. Mrs.
Write abbreviations without a full stop. Note that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'eg' means 'for example' 'ie' means 'that is' (it explains what has gone before). 	eg ie etc	eg. ie. etc.
Do not use ampersands '&' in place of 'and'. Note: exception in established usage (eg course titles such as Journalism & Media Cultures which have been validated with an '&').	Fees and bursaries	Fees & Bursaries



Award names and titles, study patterns etc.

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
	GCE A level BSc(Hons) PgDip PgCert MPhil MRes MA MSc EngD EdD DMan DBA DClinPsy	GCE A Level / GCE A-level BSc (Hons) or BSc Honours PGDip/ PgD PGCert / PgC Mphil Mres Ma MSC
Do not capitalise 'degree'.	Honours degree Foundation degree	Honours Degree Foundation Degree
Use apostrophes as shown.	Bachelor's degree Bachelor's degrees Master's degree Master's degrees	Bachelors degree Bachelors' degrees Masters degree Masters' degrees
Semesters	Semester A Semester B Semester C	first semester second semester third semester

Award names and titles, study patterns etc. Cont.



Years	Initial Year First Year Second Year Third Year (and see work placement below) Final Year	Year 0 1st Year / Year One /Year 1 2nd Year / Year Two / Year 2 3rd Year / Year Three / Year 3
Work placement references: use 'work placement year', not 'sandwich year'; modify to 'work placement/study abroad' as appropriate for individual courses (initial caps for headings; lower case in running text).	work placement year work placement/study abroad year	sandwich year
When writing personal qualifications, follow the style of the UH Calendar – lowest to highest qualification.	BSc(Hons), Master's degree, PhD	PhD, Master's degree, BSc(Hons)
Use capital letters only for formal award titles and not for subjects or qualification levels.	BSc(Hons) Mathematics You must have a degree in mathematics. PgDip Health Studies. You study for a postgraduate diploma.	BSc(Hons) mathematics You must have a degree in Mathematics. PgDip health studies. You study for a Postgraduate Diploma.
Describe taught degrees, diplomas etc as 'courses' in descriptive copy for market-facing promotional purposes. <i>Follow appropriate guidelines (eg for formal validation) where 'programmes' may be required terminology.</i>		
Be careful with courses within courses: a degree course can include 'modules' or 'units' as appropriate.		
Use appropriate phrase to describe modules. Do not say 'electives'.	choice of modules	Electives
Write module titles in running text and bulleted lists with initial capitals. Where there is a list of modules, always use bullet points (with initial capitals) where possible.	Introduction to Economics Foundations of Marketing	Introduction to economics, foundations of marketing

Brackets

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use standard round brackets (parentheses).	()	[] or { }
Avoid nested brackets in running text (brackets within brackets). If they are unavoidable, use double parentheses.	You choose one module from the list opposite (Seminar A) to complete your degree.	You choose one module (chosen from the list opposite (Seminar A)) to complete your degree.
Where brackets include a complete sentence, the sentence has an initial capital and ends with a full stop inside the bracket.	(He completed his course work on time.)	(He completed his course work on time).
Where the bracket is within another sentence, there is no capital and the full stop is outside the bracket.	He successfully passed his degree (he completed his coursework on time).	He successfully passed his degree (he completed his coursework on time.)

Bullet Points



Bullet points are particularly useful on web pages where running text lists should be avoided.

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
In bulleted lists use bullet points, not numbers (unless common sense dictates otherwise in specific circumstances).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first point • second point • third point 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. first point 2. second point 3. third point
Write consistently and do not mix the style of bullet points.	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work as hard as you can. • play when you have time. • study in the library. 	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as hard as you can. • Time management is important. • Compulsory module: Work-related Stress
For bulleted lists of formal titles use initial capitals and no punctuation. Formal titles include titles of modules, schools of study/ faculties (whether or not the word 'School of / Faculty of' is used); subject sets defined by the University of Hertfordshire as its subject classification system; chapter or section titles, eg within contents lists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Issues in the Workplace • Work-related Stress • Time Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental issues in the workplace • Work-related stress • Time management

Award names and titles, study patterns etc. Cont.



<p>For sentence fragments, use no initial capitals and no punctuation.</p>	<p>The University provides a range of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specialist one-to-one tuition from qualified tutors • peer mentoring for prospective and existing students 	<p>The University provides a range of services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist one-to-one tuition from qualified tutors. • Peer Mentoring for Prospective and Existing Students
<p>For full sentences where an introductory phrase is part of the sentence, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce the bullet points with a colon. • start each bullet point with a lower case letter. • punctuate the sentence correctly. • end each bullet point with a full stop. <p>The bullet point can include more than one sentence. Each point must read correctly from the introductory phrase.</p>	<p>Remember you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study at your own pace. • go out, if you like, once you have completed all your coursework. • build some relaxation in to your studies. • choose from a wide range of subjects. 	<p>Remember you can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study at your own pace • you can go out, if you like, once you have completed all your coursework • A Wide Choice of Subjects
<p>Full sentences can stand alone as bullet points with no introductory phrase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with a capital letter. • Punctuate the sentence correctly. • End with a full stop. <p>The bullet point can include more than one sentence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as hard as you can. • Go out, if you like, once you have completed all your coursework. • Build some relaxation in to your studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as Hard as You Can • go out, if you like, once you have completed all your coursework. • Build some relaxation in to your studies

Capitalisation and underlining



Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
<p>Capitalise the 'U' when using the University's full title and when referring to the University specifically. Use a lower case 'u' when referring to universities in general.</p>	<p>At the University of Hertfordshire you will find excellent learning facilities. The University is a market leader...</p>	<p>At the university of Hertfordshire you will find excellent learning facilities. The university is a market leader...</p>
<p>When referring to the University, use the full title wherever possible.</p> <p>For external, market-facing purposes, the abbreviation 'UH' should be used if unavoidable, eg in running text where you need to refer to the University many times and have previously used the full title followed by the abbreviated form in brackets. This form should not be used in titles or as the first reference. For internal communications, the form UH is acceptable as a convenient shorthand in documents which are unlikely to reach an external audience.</p> <p>Do not use a capital 'T' for 'the' University of Hertfordshire except as normal punctuation requires at the beginning of a sentence.</p>	<p>The University of Hertfordshire (UH) is a new kind of university. We offer a wide range of career-focused courses.</p> <p>The University of Hertfordshire (UH) is based in Hatfield. UH is a market leader in e-based learning.</p> <p>I studied at the University of Hertfordshire.</p>	<p>UH Uni/Hertfordshire is a new type of University. The university offers a wide range of career-focused courses.</p> <p>UH is based in Hatfield.</p> <p>I studied at The University of Hertfordshire.</p>
<p>Capitalise formal titles of office holders before a name but lower case for subsequent informal references or for generic job titles.</p> <p>Note: vice-chancellor is hyphenated.</p>	<p>...and Vice-Chancellor Professor Tim Wilson attended the meeting. The vice-chancellor commented that...</p> <p>The admissions tutor will advise you.</p> <p>The press officer can provide more information.</p>	<p>... and vice-chancellor Professor Tim Wilson attended the meeting. The Vice-Chancellor commented that ...</p> <p>The Admissions Tutor will advise you.</p> <p>The Press Officer can provide more information.</p>
<p>StudyNet has a capital 'S' and 'N' but no space</p>	<p>StudyNet</p>	<p>Studynet</p> <p>Study Net</p>

Hyphenation



Rules about hyphenation are often difficult to apply consistently, and proofreaders and editors need to use common sense. See Hart's Rules page 52.

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Do not hyphenate noun compounds.	website healthcare coursework	web site / web-site health care / health-care course-work
BUT where compound modifiers are used, they must be hyphenated to avoid confusion, for example to distinguish between 'deep-blue sea' and 'deep, blue sea'.	part-time study a two-year course work-based learning well-known artists	part time study a two year course work based learning well known artists
Use initial capitals only for the first part of a hyphenated compound.	Evidence-based Practice	Evidence-Based Practice
Do not hyphenate prefixes combining words.	Interprofessional Microengineering Online	inter-professional micro-engineering on-line
Exceptions are made where there is the potential for confusion or mispronunciation eg in double letters.	pre-eminent But: cooperate coordinate microorganism	Preeminent Not: co-operate co-ordinate / co-ordinate micro-organism
Do not add a space on each side of a hyphen.	part-time	part - time
Add a space each side of a dash.	Visit the College Lane Campus – we will meet you at Main Reception.	Visit the College Lane Campus—we will meet you at Main Reception.
Hyphenate written numbers.	twenty-one seventy-six	twenty one seventy six
Do not use hyphens to split words at line breaks; always carry the whole word over to the next line.	The atmosphere is electric.	The atmosphere is elec- tric.



Names and addresses

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Write postal addresses without punctuation in a block of text. Note that 'College Lane' is not part of the University's official address.	University of Hertfordshire Hatfield AL10 9AB UK	University of Hertfordshire, College Lane, Hatfield, AL10 9AB, UK
Where an address is written as run-on text, punctuate with commas for clarity.	The International Office, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield AL10 9AB, UK.	The International Office University of Hertfordshire Hatfield AL10 9AB UK
Do not include 'http://' when writing web addresses unless it is a requirement (eg https:// for secure addresses).	www.herts.ac.uk	http://www.herts.ac.uk
All other University web addresses should be given a shortened 'go address' to ensure that they are short and easy to read/type. A written web address should have no more than one forward slash. Contact your Marketing Executive or the web team for more information.	go.herts.ac.uk/apply	http://go.herts.ac.uk/apply www.herts.ac.uk/courses/more/a ndmore/stillmore/andmore
Write telephone numbers in a UK/international style.	+44 (0)1707 284800	01707 284800
In line for line address boxes, eg on business cards, use tel/fax/mob for telephone, fax and mobile. Do not use a prefix for email addresses.	tel +44 (0) 1707 284800 fax +44 (0) 1707 284870 mob +44 (0) 7999 999999 admissions@herts.ac.uk	Tel: 01707284800 Fax: 01707 284870 M: 07999 999999 email:admissions@herts.ac.uk
In running text write 'email' etc in full.	For more information, email admissions@herts.ac.uk, telephone +44 (0)1707 284800	For more information, e admissions@herts.ac.uk, tel. +44 (0)1707 284800
Use initial capitals for official building names. NB 'Resources' is plural Resources Centre(s).	de Havilland Campus Note: always a lower case 'd' and upper case 'H'. College Lane Campus School of Law, St Albans The Weston Auditorium Wright Building Learning Resources Centre(s) But note in subsequent references: the campus, the auditorium, the centre	Hatfield de Havilland Campus / De Havilland Campus Hatfield College Lane St Albans Campus The weston auditorium Wright building Learning resource centre(s) Not: The Campus, the Auditorium, The Centre



Numbers – figures or words?

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use words for numbers up to one hundred in running text.	Ninety-nine	99
Use figures from 101.	102	One-hundred-and-two
Use words for approximations, even where over 101.	Around two thousand international students study here.	Around 2,000 international students study here.
Hyphenate written numbers.	twenty-one seventy-six	twenty one seventy six
Exception: Use words where a number is at the beginning of a sentence.	Two thousand international students study here.	2,000 international students study here.
Where clarity dictates, mix words and numbers.	six 15-credit modules	six fifteen-credit modules
Spell out fractions in running text.	Three quarters of the class went home early.	3/4 of the class went home early.
Use commas to clarify numbers with four or more digits.	2,300	2300



Numbers – times and dates

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use the 24 hour clock.	Register for the open day at 13.00. Lectures begin at 09.00.	Register for the open day at one o'clock. Lectures begin at nine.
Write dates without commas or 'th' or 'st' starting with the day, followed by the month and then the year.	12 September 2007	12th September 2007
Do not abbreviate the month or year.	12 September 2007	12 Sept 07
If you are including days, write out the day in full without punctuation.	Wednesday 12 September 2007	Wed, 12 September, 2007
For a span of dates use a hyphen without spaces. For a range of dates use commas. Note: 'from 12 to 15 September' not 'from 12-15 September'.	12-13 September 2007 12, 15, 21 September 2007	12 & 13 September 2007 12, 15 & 21 September 2007
Write out centuries in words.	In the nineteenth century...	In the 19th century ...
Hyphenate when using centuries as an adjective.	nineteenth-century England	nineteenth century England, 19th century England
Note: exceptions can be made eg on forms which require dates or where space is restricted. In this case use dd/mm/yy.	12/09/07	12-09-07 US style: 09/12/07

Numbers - money

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Write money in figures as simply as possible.	£15.45, £15	Fifteen pounds and forty five pence
Do not include the 00 except for consistency of style in a range of figures.	The weekly cost is £75 But: Accommodation costs from £75.00 to £80.65	The weekly cost is £75.00 Not: Accommodation costs from £75 to £80.65
For smaller amounts write the simple unit. There is no space before the 'p'.	56p	56 p, 0.56p
Use lower case 'm' for millions and lower case 'k' for thousands with one space between the figure and the 'm' or the 'k'.	Our £15 m sports village Last year we spent £500 k on new books	Our £15m sports village Our £15 M sports village Last year we spent 500k on new books



Numbers - units of measurement

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use metric measurements. Write as figures followed by a space, then the abbreviated form of the unit (lower case with no stops).	The campus is 25 km from London.	The campus is 15 miles from London.
Use 'per cent' not % in running text.	The cost is fifteen per cent.	The cost is fifteen %.



Punctuation

This section covers common questions about punctuation, however Hart's Rules provides extensive punctuation guides for more detailed queries.



Apostrophies

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use 's to indicate possession after single nouns and after plural nouns that do not end in s. Use the apostrophe alone after plural nouns ending in s. Note particularly Students' Union where 'Students' is a plural noun (the union does not belong only to one student).	the boy's books (one boy) the boys' books (more than one boy) the children's nurse Students' Union	the boys books the childrens' nurse Student's Union
Do not use an apostrophe in possessive pronouns.	The book is hers.	The book is hers' / the book is her's.
Note the difference between 'it's raining' (a contraction of the phrase 'it is raining') and 'the University and its partners' (a possessive meaning 'belonging to it').	The University and its partners. It's raining today.	The University and its' partners. The University and it's partners. Its raining today.
Do not use the 'greengrocer's apostrophe' (ie lettuce's instead of lettuces) when writing plural nouns.	diplomas Note also: GCSEs 1980s PhDs	diploma's GCSE's 1980's PhD's

Colons and semi-colons

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
A semicolon (;) is not quite a full stop. It divides clauses which are related but which could be sentences standing alone and where a full stop could be used.	Hatfield is adjacent to the A1(M); St Albans is close to the M1.	Hatfield is adjacent to the A1(M): St Albans is close to the M1.
Do not use semicolons to separate lists unless individual listed items contain commas and/or conjunctions – when semicolons should be used for clarity.	You study marketing; economics and finance; human resources; business and management.	You study marketing, economics and finance, human resources, business and management.
A colon (:) points forward to an illustration, a conclusion, a list.	The course includes modules in different professional areas: business, biosciences and health.	The course includes modules in different professional areas; business, biosciences and health.



Quotation marks

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Always use single quotation marks (' ') rather than double (" ").	The School of Combined Studies provides a 'home' for students on joint honours degrees.	The School of Combined Studies provides a "home" for students on joint honours degrees.
When a grammatically complete sentence is quoted, the full stop is inside the quotation marks.	Professor Smith said, 'We provide first-class facilities for our students.'	Professor Smith said, 'We provide first-class facilities for our students'.
When the punctuation mark is not part of the quoted material, it is placed outside the quotation marks.	He is said to have commented that 'our facilities are first class'.	He is said to have commented that 'our facilities are first class.'



NOTE: Newspaper style is to use double quotation marks.

Where quoted speech runs over several paragraphs each new paragraph opens with quotation marks; however, only the final paragraph is closed with quotation marks.

Commas



Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
If you enclose a phrase in a pair of commas remember to include the final closing comma as well as the opening comma.	The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tim Wilson, was at a business exhibition.	The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tim Wilson was at a business exhibition.
Do not use commas to splice whole sentences. Use a conjunction (eg and, because), semi colon or full stop.	I go to the sports village because I like swimming. I go to the sports village; I like swimming. I go to the sports village. I like swimming.	I go to the sports village, I like swimming.
It is fine to use a comma before 'and' or 'or' in a list of three or more items ('the Oxford comma') where it helps to clarify meaning. In the example opposite, without the comma before the 'and', the final school could be the 'School of Psychology and Humanities'.	The Schools of Pharmacy, Art and Design, Psychology, and Humanities...	The Schools of Pharmacy, Art and Design, Psychology and Humanities...

Commas ('that' and 'which')



Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
A defining clause explains or defines the subject it relates to. Introduce the clause with 'which' or 'that', but no commas. (If you omit the defining clause, it changes the meaning of the sentence.)	Note the difference between the defining clause: He stopped the second car that was driven by a woman. (He didn't stop other cars in between, just the second one with a female driver.)	
A non-defining clause simply gives some extra information about the subject. Use 'which' (not 'that'), and enclose it in commas. (If you omit a non-defining clause, the essential meaning of the sentence does not change.)	He stopped the second car, which was driven by a woman. (This was the second car which came along – it just happened to be driven by a woman.) <i>(Example from Butcher's Copy-editing, Cambridge University Press)</i>	

Spelling



Use the spellchecker on your PC and make sure the settings are for UK English, but do not rely on it. Use the Concise Oxford Dictionary as your reference, available from Amazon (ISBN: 0199296340).

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use British not American spellings	defence theatre analogue programme centre	defense theater analog program center
Use -ise, not -ize.	finalise accessorise	finalize accessorize
Where there are alternative spellings, use the Oxford English Dictionary preferred spelling.	artefact	artifact



Mis-spellings

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Watch out for the common mis-spellings opposite.	accommodation environment assessment acoustic	accomodation enviroment asesment accoustic

Double consonants

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
There are extensive rules about doubling/not doubling consonants in verbs (Hart's Rules pages 46-47), but here are some examples of commonly used words.	focus / focused benefit / benefited enrol / enrolled install	Focussed benefitted enroll / enroled instal

Plurals

Guidelines	Use 	Do not use 
Use the English form of plurals as a norm. Exception	forums formulas alumni	fora formulae alumnuses

Widows and orphans

Stylistically, avoid widows (a last word or short phrase at the end of a paragraph especially where it runs over to a new page or new column) and orphans (the first line of a paragraph set as the last line of a page or column).

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