University of Edinburgh Website Editorial Style Guide

About the guide

This style guide is the primary website editorial reference tool for University staff, external suppliers, and freelance copyeditors. It outlines the English standard for all University websites.

It is based on Communication and Marketing's Editorial Style Guide for Print (bit.ly/university-print-style-guide), with additions and minor alterations to address points around website accessibility and usability.

All entries in the guide are set out alphabetically, with links to other relevant sections or guides.

How to use the guide

Read the document through once to get a feel for what it contains. Keep it to hand whenever writing or editing copy.

The most up-to-date version of this guide is available from the University Website Programme: bit.ly/edinburgh-web-guide.

You may disagree with some of the rules. Where this is the case, please use the University's version to maintain consistency. If you have any questions about the guide, or suggestions for additions and amendments please email website.support@ed.ac.uk.

Other useful writing guides

Further web publishing and writing training and resources are available from the University Website Programme: www.ed.ac.uk/website-programme

The Plain English Campaign provides free guides to writing in plain English: bit.ly/plain-english-guides

Abbreviations, tagging and accessibility

Tagging acronyms and abbreviations is essential to improve our online communication and ensure we meet accessibility requirements. In addition to the term-by-term guidance provided in this style guide, more detail on general concepts is available on the University website support wiki: bit.ly/abbreviations-acronyms

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February 2018
Latest version: bit.ly/edinburgh-web-guide
University Website Programme: www.ed.ac.uk/website-project

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A

@

The '@' symbol should only be used in an email address or Twitter address. Never use it to represent the word 'at'.

a, an

Use 'a' before all words beginning with a vowel with the sound of u', but use 'an' before words beginning with a silent 'h':

> a eulogy, a European
>
> an heir, an honest person, an honour
>
> Preference: an historic

abbreviations

Well-known abbreviations (UK, USA) do not need to be spelt out on the page, but they do need to be tagged most of the time, at least on the first mention on every page.

Specific cases of abbreviations that do not need to be tagged are included in the relevant entry in this style guide. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

Spell out less well-known abbreviations on their first mention on every web page, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. Thereafter the abbreviation can be used on its own.

> Geographical Information Sciences (GIS)

Don't use full stops between abbreviated initials.

> UK, US, Mr, am, pm

Abbreviate words such as company, corporation, incorporated and limited only when they follow the name of a company or corporate entity.

Plurals of abbreviations have no apostrophe.

> URLs, GPs

accents

Do not use accents on web pages where the primary language is English, such as in 'cafe', except where they appear as a name, eg José Manuel Barroso.

Most accented letters (special characters) should naturally copy from a text editor (eg MS Word) into EdWeb. If your special character isn't working, you will need to raise a support call.

See also tagging language.

accept, except

Accept means to agree or to receive, except means not including.

> I accepted all the proposals.
>
> I tried all solutions, except the first offered.

access

When giving directions to a building or other part of the University, always include information about access for people with disabilities.

See tagging for information on web accessibility.

acronyms

Acronyms which you know your audience will recognise do not need to be written out in full, but they usually need to be tagged.

Specific cases of acronyms that do not need to be tagged are included in the relevant entry in this style guide. (See also **tagging** for accessibility).

Others should be written out the first time they are used (on every page), with the tagged acronym coming after in brackets. After this the tagged acronym can be used alone. Don't put full stops between letters.

> Learning Teaching and Web (LTW)

active vs passive

Avoid using passive verbs as they result in a vague, over-formal tone.

> The professor will present her research at the conference.
>
> not
>
> Research will be presented by the professor at the conference.

AD, BC, CE, BCE

AD (Anno Domini) comes before the date. BC (Before Christ) comes after it, with no spacing. AD and BC need not be tagged.

AD967, 365BC

You can use CE (tagged as Common Era) or BCE (tagged as Before Common Era) in place of AD and BC. These abbreviations follow the year, with a single space. (See also tagging for accessibility.)

967 CE, 365 BCE

The dating system that you use (BC/AD or BCE/CE) will depend on the context of the writing; either is appropriate to use.

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addresses

Addresses should be formatted within contact boxes when using the central CMS.

Mrs L R Smith
114 Myrtle Road
Aberdeen AB12 9TT
not
Mrs. L. R. Smith, 114 Myrtle Rd., Aberdeen AB12 9TT

They should have as little punctuation as possible and not use abbreviations.
Road, Street, Avenue, not Rd, St, Ave

See also web addresses (URLs)

adverbs

Do not use hyphens after adverbs ending in –ly,

a badly prepared speech, genetically modified vegetables

Use hyphens after short and common adverbs, or when the phrase could be ambiguous.

a well-read book, a much-maligned composer

adviser

Not advisor

affect, effect

affect (verb): to have an influence on (The weather affected her plans.)
effect (verb): to cause, bring about, accomplish or achieve (The visit effected a change in the system.)
effect (noun): a result The film had a profound effect.

A level

No hyphen, lower-case l
Hyphenate in adjectival sense: A-level results

all right

not alright.

alumni

Consider using 'former students' or 'graduates' instead.
alumna - female graduate
alumnus - male graduate
alumni -graduates, plural

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am

No full stops. See **times** for more details.

(See also tagging for accessibility.)

Americanisms

Use British English and spellings, eg organisation, not organization, centre not center, holiday not vacation, shop not store.

See also -ise endings
If in doubt consult the Oxford Dictionary of English.
Exception: in official names, use spelling as the organisation spells it, eg World Trade Center, World Health Organization.

amid

Not amidst.

among

Not amongst.

ampersand (&)

Generally use the word 'and' in preference to an ampersand, although ampersands may be used in College, School and subject titles.

Ampersands can be used to save space within headings, but you should be consistent with this.

Ampersands should always be used in breadcrumb trails and navigation panels.

apostrophes

Possessive
Use with time periods where the time period modifies a noun,

two days' time, 12 years' imprisonment

but not where the time period modifies an adjective.

six months pregnant, ten years old

Singular possessive
Where an object or objects belong to one person or thing, the apostrophe goes before the *s*:

The University's halls of residence

The one exception to this rule is *its*:

The book was old and its cover was in tatters

Plural possessive
Where an object or objects belong to more than one person or thing, then the apostrophe goes after the *s*:

Students' Union, Freshers' Week

Where plural nouns that don't end in *s* are used – eg children, women, sheep – the apostrophe goes before the *s*:

The women's minibus runs until 11pm

Nouns ending in s
Singular proper nouns ending in *s* follow the rule of writing what is voiced: Keats's poetry.

It is acceptable to omit the additional *s* provided your approach is consistent. Dickens' Great Expectations, Welles' Citizen Kane. If the 's' is soft, omit the 's' in writing: Rabelais' writings.

The 's' is usually omitted when the last syllable is pronounced 'iz' and in the names of the ancients, except for 'Jesus':

Moses' scriptures, Socrates' philosophies, Achilles' heel **but** Jesus's disciples.

Plural
Never use an apostrophe in plurals, except to indicate the plural of single letters.

the 1960s *not* the 1960's; CDs *not* CD's; 3 As at A level *not* 3 A's at A level.

Crossing the i's, p's and q's.

archaeology

Not archeology.

artefact

Not artifact.

B

BA

Tag as Bachelor of Arts
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

BC/BCE

See AD, BC, CE, BCE.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

BEng

Tag as Bachelor of Engineering.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

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benefited, benefiting

Not benefitted.

biannual, biennial

Biannual: twice a year; biennial: once every two years (or lasting two years).

billion

Spell out the words in full wherever possible. Use bn (tagged as billion) as an abbreviation only if necessary. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

£10 billion, 6 billion people or £10bn, 6bn *not* £10b, 6b

brackets/parentheses

If the sentence is logically and grammatically complete without the information contained within the parentheses, the punctuation stays outside the brackets. When a complete sentence is within brackets, the full stop stays within the brackets as well. Square brackets are used when an interpolation [a note from the writer, not the speaker] is added.

Use gloves when conducting chemistry experiments. (These are stored in the cupboard.)
We will contact all postgraduate students (including PhD students).
Professor Elaine Watson said: "We are honoured that HRH The Princess Royal [the Vet School's patron] could be with us."

BSc

Tag as Bachelor of Science.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

bullet points

See lists.

C

capitals

As a main principle, use initial capitals (each word begins with a capital) for:

- proper nouns: people's names, towns and cities, countries, names of organisations
- nationalities, languages and religions
- days of the week and months of the year

Capitalise job titles, course titles, names of institutions and so on.

the Principal
the College of Science and Engineering
the School of History and Classics

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Subject areas – these should not be capitalised unless they form part of the title of a programme of study or course, or refer to the specific organisational area within the University.

> The Informatics laboratories have been improved to world-class standard
>
> She took philosophy as an outside subject in second year

University – 'The University of Edinburgh' should be used when appearing by itself without surrounding text, 'the University of Edinburgh' should be used when the phrase is included in copy.

> The University of Edinburgh – a great place to study
>
> Researchers from the University of Edinburgh have discovered

Seasons – lower case.

> spring, summer

Historical periods – upper case.

> a Georgian house, a Victorian lampshade, the Middle Ages.

Points of the compass – lower case.

> north, south

Titles/positions

> The lord provost decided not to attend the dinner.

But

> Lord Provost Lesley Hinds was in attendance.

car park

Not carpark.

CD-ROM

Need not be tagged.

CE

See AD, BC, CE.

(See also tagging for accessibility.)

charitable strapline

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336, VAT Registration Number GB 592 9507 00, and is acknowledged by the UK authorities as a "Recognised body" which has been granted degree awarding powers.

chemical formulae

Avoid where possible –

> Write 'carbon dioxide' instead of CO_2

Where used, these should be written in plain text – CO_2 - and do not need to be tagged.

If your web page contains reference to a number of chemical formulae and their use is unavoidable, consider creating a glossary of terms. Provide a link to this glossary on each relevant page.

collective nouns

These stand for a single entity.

> the total number **is** …
>
> the Scottish Parliament **has** …

The plural is more suitable when the emphasis is on the individual members of a group, and the singular when it is on the body as a whole.

> A committee was appointed to consider the subject
>
> The committee were unable to agree

College

Capitalise when referring to a specific Colleges of the University of Edinburgh.

> The College of Science and Engineering is having an open day on 3 March.
>
> but
>
> Open days are currently taking place in universities and colleges around the country.

Edinburgh's three Colleges are: the College of Science and Engineering, The College of Arts, Humanities & Social Science and the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine. For a full, up-to-date list of Schools & Colleges see bit.ly/schools-colleges.

colons

Colons are used to indicate the beginning of lists in sentences:

> Research topics include: gender and politics in France, French cinema, twentieth-century literature.

Colons can also be used to separate statements in a sentence, when the second statement explains the first.

> Chemistry has some of the best facilities in the country: its recently refurbished laboratories are state of the art.

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common sense

noun, two words: She has a lot of common sense.
Adjective, hyphenated: She took a common-sense approach.

compare with, to

To compare *with* is to draw attention to differences. To compare *to* is to stress similarities.

> Compared with March, it's very cold this month. (This month is colder than March.)
>
> This year's weather has been compared to The Great Chill. (This weather is very similar to the Great Chill.)

complement, compliment

To complement means to make complete; to compliment means to praise.

> You pay someone a *compliment*
>
> You have a full *complement* of students
>
> A book review may be *complimentary*.
>
> Two types of medical treatment, or two colours, can be *complementary*.

comprise, compose

To be made up of (**not** "comprised of"). The parts **compose** (make up) the whole. The whole **comprises** the parts.

> The flat for rent comprises entrance hall, living room, kitchen, one bedroom and bathroom.
>
> The image on the poster is composed of a series of tiny photographs.

contractions

A contraction results from letters being missed out (an abbreviation is a shortened version). *Mr* is a contraction of *M-iste-r*.

Don't use full stops in contractions or abbreviations.

> *Mr* rather than *Mr.*
>
> *eg* and *ie* rather than *e.g.* and *i.e.*

Contracted words are acceptable in less formal copy, for example, marketing to a younger audience.

> *you'll* for you will and *we'll* for we will

(See also tagging for accessibility.)

cooperate, cooperation

No hyphen or space.

coordinate, coordination

No hyphen or space.

courses

A course is a unit of teaching and learning formally offered within the University which carries credit which may contribute to a University award (certificate, diploma or degree).

Scottish History 1

criterion (singular); criteria (plural)

D

dashes v hyphens

For print publication, there is a clear distinction between hyphens, en-dashes and em-dashes (each being slightly longer than the last).

However, when writing for the web, always use a hyphen in place of all hyphens and dashes. The hyphen key is the one on your keyboard (whereas en dashes and em dashes would need to be formatted as special characters).

days of the week

Should be initial capitals. Don't abbreviate unless in a table, then keep to three letters each (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun).

dates

5 June, 27 March
21, July 2010
5–7 July 2010
Tuesday 12 August
1990s, the Nineties
the 4th century BC; the 19th century
1991–1993 *or* between 1991 and 1993, *not* 1991–3

See also AD, BC, CE, BCE

DClinPsychol

Tag as Doctor of Clinical Psychology.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

degrees, degree classes

No full stops. See individual entries for tagging guidance for specific degree abbreviations.

MA (Hons)

Use colons to separate

2:1, 2:2

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department

There are no academic departments at the University of Edinburgh – simply refer to the subject area.

> English Literature or Ecology
>
> The oldest/largest/highest-ranked centre for the study of chemistry in the UK.
>
> not
>
> The oldest/largest/highest-ranked Chemistry Department in the UK.

dependant (noun), dependent (adjective)

> In the event of his death, the man's dependants gave permission to remove his organs.
>
> The passenger was dependent on the air crew saving his life.

different

Different from, not different to or different than.

disinterested

Means impartial; uninterested means having no interest in.

Dr

No full stop. Need not be tagged.

DSc

Tag as Doctor of Science.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

E

e-

Lower case and hyphenated in most phrases.

> e-science, e-learning, e-commerce
>
> But
>
> email

When using in a header try to avoid putting at the beginning of a sentence which would require the 'e' to be capitalised. If unavoidable capitalise only the 'e' and not the letter after the hyphen.

> Conference on e-learning 2007 (preferable)
>
> E-learning Conference 2007 (acceptable)

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ECA

Tag as Edinburgh College of Art.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

EdD

Tag as Doctor of Education.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

eg

Avoid. Use "for example" instead.

ellipsis

Three full stops, not two.
Use a space before and after an ellipsis. Can be used to indicate a pause in speech, an unfinished thought or a trailing off into silence at the end of a sentence.

He said "The University of Edinburgh…is wonderful".

email

Not e-mail or Email, unless at the beginning of a sentence.
Always quote email addresses in text; don't hide in hyperlinks. Where appropriate, email addresses should be formatted in contact boxes when using EdWeb.

emphasis

don't be tempted to over-emphasise and end up saying the same thing twice:

significant landmark
added bonus

See also unique.

enquiry, inquiry

enquiry: the act or instance of asking or seeking information;
inquiry: an investigation, especially an official one.

enrol, enrolling, enrolment

etc

Avoid. State full list or use alternative phrases. If unavoidable, use 'etcetera'.

'Each month' rather than 'in January, February, etc'
'Ball games' rather than 'football etc'

EUSA

Tag as Edinburgh University Students' Association. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

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Exclamation mark

Use sparingly. It is unlikely this will be needed, even in direct speech. Never use in headings or navigation panels, unless it is a title of something.

> The Chancellor's favourite poem is 'Forward Ho!'
>
> not
>
> 'Forward Ho!' is the Chancellors' favourite poem!

F

Fairtrade

Fairtrade (one word, initial capital): refers to the mark sanctioned by the Fairtrade Foundation.

fair trade (two words, lower case); refers to the general concept of fair prices being paid to producers in developing countries.

> The University of Edinburgh is a Fairtrade university.
>
> Not
>
> Fair Trade

fewer

Fewer refers to number; less to quantity.

> fewer than 12 speeches; fewer than seven doctors
>
> I had less than £10; less than half the population

focused, focusing

Style is to use a single 's'.

Freshers' Week

Not Fresher's Week.

full time, part time

These should be hyphenated when used as an adjective or adverb, but not when used as a noun. References to modes of study will always be adjectives or adverbs, so should be hyphenated.

> This is a full-time course.
>
> They were studying part-time.
>
> The whistle blew at full time.

Do not abbreviate (ft, pt) unless absolutely necessary. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

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G

gender-specific suffixes

Avoid the use of suffixes such as –ess or –rix:

actor, *not* actress
manager, *not* manageress
chair, *not* chairman

government

lower case, unless referring to a specific government: the Scottish Government.

GP

Avoid – use 'doctor' or similar instead.
If it is unavoidable, tag as 'General Practitioner'. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

graduands/graduates

A graduand is to be awarded a degree. A graduate has been awarded and holds a degree.

groundbreaking

one word, no hyphen.

H

headings and titles - formatting

In report titles, headings and subheadings, use sentence case. Never use all capital letters.

The use of sentence case should follow normal grammatical rules where capital letters are used for the first letter of the first word and for names, proper nouns (such as people and place names) and abbreviations / acronyms. (See also **capitals**)

Headings should also omit the full stop at the end.

Review of universities
Review of universities in Scotland
Review of the University of Edinburgh
How to get a place at university
not
How To Get A Place At University
HOW TO GET A PLACE AT UNIVERSITY
How to get a place at university.

headings and titles – writing

Where you use headings to break up text, make sure the most important word is at the front.

> Getting a student card
>
> Finding the EUSA office
>
> Emailing your photograph
>
> Renewing your current card
>
> not
> How to get a student card
>
> How to find the EUSA office
>
> How to email your photograph
>
> How to renew your current card

Question and answer style headings can be very useful, but be consistent in style – don't mix questions and statements.

> How can I get a student card?
>
> Where is the EUSA office?
>
> Where do I email my photograph?
>
> Can I renew my current card?
>
> not
>
> How can I get a student card?
>
> Finding the EUSA office
>
> Where do I email my photograph?
>
> Renewing your current card.

helpdesk

One word

hi-res, hi-tech

Not high-

historic

'An historic' not 'a historic'.

honours

Lower case

> He graduated with first class honours.
>
> She has an honours degree in philosophy

Avoid using 'hons' where possible, tag as 'honours' where used. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

however

When used as a conjunction, this should be followed by a comma.
She needed to go, however, to catch the train.
She would have to go however she could get there.

HTML

Do not tag unless the page's purpose is to explain what HTML is. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

hyphens

Keep to a minimum. These words in particular should not be hyphenated:

Cooperative	Milkround	ongoing	Undergraduate
Email	multidisciplinary	online	Website
groundbreaking	multinational	postgraduate	Wellbeing
interpersonal	nationwide	teamwork	Worldwide

Use hyphens to form compound adjectives:

three-year deal, top-ranking institution

Use them in particular to avoid ambiguity: four year-old children is different from four-year-old children.

Do not use hyphens after adverbs ending in –ly:

genetically modified foods

I

ie

Avoid, use 'that is' instead.

incur, incurring

infer/imply

To infer is to deduce something from evidence; to imply is to hint at something (and wait for someone to infer it). The speaker implies; the listener infers.

institution

Avoid. If you mean university, say university. If you mean something else, say whatever that something else is.

internet

Lower case.

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-ise endings

Should be used in preference to –ize endings.

> recognise, economise, organise

See also Americanisms

italics

Avoid italics on the web. They can be very hard to read on screen.

its

It's means it is.
Its denotes the possessive:

> It's in the library.
>
> The car spun its wheels.

J

judgement

Always used over judgment

L

language tagging

See tagging language.

latin plurals

Some are so common that many people don't know they are plurals: alumni, data, criteria. However, many plural forms look pedantic and put the reader off.

> forums should be used in preference to fora.
>
> syllabuses in preference to syllabi.

licence (n), license (v)

lists

All long lists should be presented in bulleted or numbered form. Shorter lists containing very detailed points should also be presented that way, for clarity.

However, this does not apply to links, which should not be bulleted by the editor. A CSS stylesheet may add automatic bulleting.

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Use numbered lists where there is a clear order to the step, such as with a set of instructions. Otherwise, use a bulleted list.

- Lists should have at least three items.
- A bulleted list should not have more than nine items, unless there is a clear context understood by the reader, such as an alphabetised list of staff members, or months of the year.
- If you need to create an unfamiliar list of more than nine items, consider breaking it up with headings (see **headings and titles**)

A list should be introduced by a main clause, followed by a colon. The first word of each item should be lower case, and each item should have the appropriate ending punctuation.

For sentence fragments, use lower case initial letters (unless it is a proper noun or title) and do not use any ending punctuation.

To apply to the University of Edinburgh, you need to:
1. order a prospectus
2. fill in the application form
3. email or post the form
4. call the number below for further information

In terms of ongoing development:
- two-thirds of students felt no changes were necessary
- two-thirds felt a strong sense of loyalty to the University
- University staff felt satisfied with the procedures
- students were satisfied they had receive adequate training

Where each point is a complete sentence, use initial capital and full stops.

Key findings:
- The most popular reason for choosing Edinburgh is its international reputation.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents were happy with their choice.
- Over three quarters of respondents are satisfied with the accommodation.

LLB, LLM

Do not tag. (See also tagging for accessibility.)

M

MA

Tag as Master of Arts. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

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Masters, Master's, Masters'

| Master of Science, Master's in Human Geography |

.

Masters' should only be used when referring to more than one programme.

| The GeoSciences Masters' programmes |

Lower case 'masters' should be used when talking in general terms, as opposed to as specific programme or programmes.

| Students studying for a masters degree are entitled to free entry.

If you wish to study at masters level, please come to our open day. |

material

Avoid using this term; be more specific:

| Course notes, reading lists and textbooks are provided at the start of the semester.

rather than

Course material is provided at the start of the semester. |

MBA

Tag as Master of Business Administration. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

MB ChB

Do not tag. (See also tagging for accessibility.)

MCS

Tag as Master of Chinese Studies. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

MClinDent

Tag as Master of Clinical Dentistry. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

medieval

Not mediaeval.

miles/kilometres

Use miles in preference to kilometres. If kilometres are mentioned, use decimals.

| Haddington is 2.7 kilometres away

whereas

North Berwick is four and a half miles away. |

metres

not meters, or yards. Use m (tagged as metres) as an abbreviation only where necessary.
(See also tagging for accessibility.)

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millions

Spell out the word in full wherever possible. Use mn (tagged as million) as an abbreviation only where necessary.

£10 million or £10mn, *not* £10m

MMus

Tag as Master of Music. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

money

£5.00 *or* 75p *not* £0.75

Unless in a table, write out in full the name of foreign currencies: euros, yen (no initial capitals).

If dollars are not US dollars, say twenty-five New Zealand dollars or $NZ25 if in a table.

MPhil

Tag as Master of Philosophy. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

Mr, Mrs, Ms

No full stop.

Do not tag. (See also tagging for accessibility.)

MSc

Tag as Master of Science. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

MSW

Tag as Master of Social Work. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

MTeach

Tag as Master of Teaching. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

MTh

Tag as Master of Theology. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

multi-

Adjectives beginning with 'multi' are not usually hyphenated; exceptions include where it is followed by a vowel multi-ethnic, multi-user.

N

nationwide

Not nation-wide.

NB

Avoid; consider using a style element such as bold text, or a feature box.

NHS

National Health Service. Need not be tagged, depending on context. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

no one

Not no-one.

not only…

When followed by 'but also', it must either follow the verb, or you must repeat the verb.

> He hurt not only her feelings but also her pride
>
> not
>
> He not only hurt her feelings but also her pride

numbers

one to nine: write out in full;

10 and above: use digits.

Over 999: 1,000, 3,500, 23,000.

However, digits (numerals) stand out when users are scanning a web page, it if the information is core to the page purpose using a numeral may be better.

If a number is at the start of a sentence, always spell it out in full. Rewrite the sentence if this is problematic.

If, in a range of numbers, one is higher and one lower than ten, be consistent;

> The class can have between seven and thirteen students or
>
> The class can have between 7 and 13 students,
>
> *not* The class can have between seven and 13 students.

For more on numerals in web pages, see bit.ly/web-numerals (Blog on the Neilsen Norman Group website.)

numbered lists

See lists

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O

occur, occurred, occurring

online, offline

No hyphen.

on to

The preposition 'onto' is still not accepted as part of standard English (unlike into). It is likely, however, to be accepted as part of British English before long.

It is important to distinguish between the preposition 'onto' (or 'on to') and the use of the adverb 'on' followed by the preposition 'to':

> She finished fixing the windows and went on to the roof (ie continued to the roof).
>
> but
>
> She climbed out of the window and went onto the roof (she climbed on top of the roof). *or*
>
> She climbed out of the window and went on to the roof (she climbed on top of the roof).

out of date

Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

> The equipment used on the oil rig was out of date.
>
> The out-of-date equipment used on the oil rig caused an accident.

outwith

This is a Scottish preposition. Do not use on the web. Use alternative such as outside or beyond.

P

parentheses

See 'brackets'

part-time

See full time, part time

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per cent

Not percent. %, combined with a numeral, is better.

> 64%
>
> or
>
> Sixty-four per cent
>
> not
>
> 64 percent

See also numbers.

periods of study

Avoid shortening.

> Full version: 12 months part time, 9 months full time
>
> Shortened version (use only where necessary): 12 mth PT, 9 mth FT. (See also **tagging.**)

PGDE

Tag as Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (note: **not** Postgraduate Diploma) (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

PgDip

Tag as Postgraduate Diploma. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

PhD

Do not tag. (See also tagging for accessibility.)

phone numbers

The international format should be used.

> +44 (0)131 650 9747

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plain English

Should be used at all times. It is needed in all kinds of public information that people rely on to make decisions. Avoid extending sentences with redundant words.

> You can register now, or wait until July.
>
> not
>
> You can register now, or **alternatively** wait until July.

For more information, visit bit.ly/plain-english-guides

platitudes

Avoid using platitudes, such as: The University welcomes international students.

This is obvious. Instead, give evidence that the University provides a welcoming environment.

principal/Principal

> The University's Principal, Professor Timothy O'Shea.
>
> He agreed in principle.

postcodes

Do not tag (within the central CMS, these should normally be formatted within a contact box).

postgraduate

No hyphen.

prerequisite

No hyphen.

proactive

Professor

Do not abbreviate to 'Prof' unless absolutely necessary. If the abbreviated form is used, tag as Professor. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

programme

Not capitalised unless it is part of a course title.

> the Honours Degree Programme in Computing Science

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Q

question marks

A question or request should end in a question mark. There should be no space between the last letter of the sentence and question mark.

> Where do I get an application form?
>
> Not
>
> Where do I get an application form

quotation marks

Direct speech should be contained in double quotes; quotes within quotes, in single quotes.

> "Our Students' Union is excellent."
>
> "So I said to him, 'I don't think so' and he said…"

When quoting multiple paragraphs, opening quotation marks should be used at the start of each paragraph; closing marks only at the end of the final paragraph.

Titles of essays, articles, songs and poems should be in single quotation marks.

Quote using the EdWeb quotation element should not have quotation marks as these are added automatically.

R

ranges (numerical)

> students aged 18–21
>
> or
>
> students aged from 18 to 21
>
> not
>
> students aged from 18–21

regard, regards

regard (noun) She had no regard for rules
regards (noun): Give her my regards
as regards (concerning): As regards content, the paper will cover three topics
with/having/in regard to: He made enquiries in regard to the post *not* in regards to

RSVP

Avoid. Use 'please respond/reply' instead.

S

salutations

When a person is introduced for the first time, use their full title – first and second name, thereafter just the title and second name is required – ie Professor Smith, Dr Collins.

The Chancellor, HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh
Patron of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Medicine, HRH The Princess Royal

School

Capitalise when naming a specific school within the University:

> The School of Biological Sciences is having an open day on 3 March.
>
> but
>
> Open days are currently taking place in schools around the University.

For a full, up-to-date list of Schools & Colleges see bit.ly/schools-colleges

seasons

Lower case.

> spring, summer

semicolons

Used to separate clauses or items in a list, or to indicate a pause longer than that of a comma and shorter than that of a full stop. Usually the two parts of a sentence divided by a semicolon balance each other, rather than lead from one to the other (in which case a colon should be used – see **colons**).

> Some reporters were brilliant; others were mediocre.

spaces

Double spaces should not be used at the end of a sentence.

SQA

Tag as Scottish Qualifications Authority. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

stationary

Immobile

stationery

Paper, envelopes, notepads etc

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Students' Union

supersede

Not supercede

T

tagging

Most abbreviations or acronyms should be tagged as such at least on the first mention on every page.

Specific cases of shortened terms that do not need to be tagged are included in the relevant entry in this style guide. Items that do not need to be tagged are included in the University website glossary and are not read by screen readers as words because they don't contain any vowels.

Commonly-used abbreviations are included in a glossary in the accessibility pages of the University of Edinburgh site. If you choose not to tag these common terms within your webpage, include a link to the glossary on every page where they occur instead.

If you find it necessary to use a number of specialist abbreviations, consider whether creating your own glossary of terms will be easier than tagging each entry. Again, you must link to this on all relevant pages.

For more information on tagging, why it is important and how website users benefit, see bit.ly/abbreviations-acronyms

tagging language

Text in a language other than English should be tagged as such to ensure it is correctly read by the screen reader. This may include names eg José Manuel. (See also **accents.**)

tautology

A fault in style – particularly in marketing copy where there is the temptation to over-emphasise – which can be defined as "saying the same thing twice":

significant landmark
added bonus

See also unique

that, which

The overlapping use of 'that' and 'which' is becoming more acceptable; however, there are instances in which one should be used in preference to the other. Strictly, 'that' should be used for defining clauses and 'which' for non-defining. Defining clauses have no punctuation, while non-defining clauses must be between commas:

> He stopped the second car that was driven by a woman.
>
> He stopped the second car, which was driven by a woman.

times

am and pm should have no full stops and no space between the number and am or pm. They should not be tagged.

> 4am, 8pm, 5:15pm

For fractions of hours write out in full:

> half an hour; one and a half hours; one and three-quarter hours (nouns); a half-hour wait, a one-and-a-half-hour wait (adjectival); 24 hours a day.

The 24-hour clock should not be used.

titles

Capitalise job titles when referring to a specific person or role.

Titles of essays, articles, songs and poems should be in single quotation marks.

U

UCAS

Tag as University and Colleges Admissions Service. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

UK, USA

No full stops between letters. Must be tagged as United Kingdom, United States of America. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

uncooperative

No hyphen.

undergraduate

No hyphen.

under way

Not underway

uninterested

means having no interest in; disinterested means impartial.

unique

Cannot be qualified, such as by words such as almost, quite or very.

University

Always capitalise when referring to the University of Edinburgh:

> Student numbers are growing at the University

The University of Edinburgh

Not Edinburgh University

up to date

Hyphenated when used as an adjective.

> The message was up to date
>
> We received an up-to-date message

URL

Avoid if possible, using 'website address' or similar instead. If used, do not tag unless the purpose of the copy is to explain Uniform Resource Locators. (See also **tagging** for accessibility.)

See also web addresses

V

veto, vetoes

Vice-Chancellor, Vice-President, Vice-Principal

Hyphenated.

vice versa

No hyphen.

voicemail

One word.

W

waive

To relinquish rights; not wave.

web addresses (URLs)

Never publish URLs as links in web pages. Link text should describe the destination to the user, and make sense without the context of the rest of the copy on that web page. (Guidance on writing good text: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/UWP/Creating+good+links)

When a file (such as a PDF) is included as part of a website, explicitly quoting a URL is acceptable as these are primarily intended for use as printed documents.

When explicitly quoting a URL, remove aspects that do not need to be typed into the browser address bar to access the page (eg www.ed.ac.uk, not http://www.ed.ac.uk/home).

website

Not web site or web-site.

wellbeing

Not well-being.

which

see

that, which.

while

not whilst.

who or whom

If in doubt, ask yourself how the clause would read in the form of a sentence using 'he/she' or 'him/her'. If the clause makes more sense with 'he' or 'she', then 'who' is right. If it makes more sense with 'him' or 'her', then 'whom' is right.

Who taught second-year physics? (She taught second-year physics)
Whom did she marry? (She married him)
To whom do you wish to speak? (I wish to speak to her)

However, accepted practice in modern English is to use 'who' instead of 'whom' and, where applicable, to put the preposition at the end of the sentence:

Who do you wish to speak to?

withhold

workplace

one word.

worldwide

not world-wide.

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