



2026/1

Copy-editing Styleguide

ENGLISH

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*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*



UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA

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Legend for using this document

Bold words	=	Lemma ¹ , or anchor text referring to one.
Bold letters	=	Highlights the differences in spelling between two choices.
Cross reference	=	Blue
Hyperlink	=	url
<i>Italics</i>	=	Words in examples.
Double “	=	Denotes example sentence.
Single ‘	=	Denotes word used out of its usual context.
Tilde ~	=	Denotes lemma or lemma phrase.
Heading 1	=	Heading, Alphanumeric, etc.
Heading 2	=	Sub-heading.

¹ A lemma is the base form of a word – the form under which it would normally be listed in a dictionary, e.g.: “run” = lemma for/ “runs”, “ran”, “running” = inflected forms of the same lemma.”

General usage: South African (i.e., British/UK) English

defence NOT *defense*

double -l and not the single, e.g., *travelling*, NOT *traveling*, *jewellery* NOT *jewelry*; *levelled* NOT *leveled*

-ise instead of **-ize**, e.g., *realise*, *organise*, *organisation* NOT *organization*

manoeuvre NOT *maneuver* or *manoeuver*

-ou instead of **-o** e.g., *behaviour* NOT *behavior*; *labour* NOT *labor*; *harbour* NOT *harbor*; *colour* NOT *color*

percent NOT *per cent*, but use the symbol, %, in most circumstances

programme NOT *program* (BUT *computer program*)

-re instead of **-er**, e.g., *centre*, *sceptre*, *metre*, especially for measurements. However, when referring to an instrument, such as a *meter reader*, **-er** is used

single -s and not the double in *focused* and *focusing*

single -t and not the double, e.g. *benefited* NOT *benefitted*

towards, instead of the American *toward*

-yse instead of **-yze**, e.g. *analyse*

Note: Please check that your Word default dictionary is set to UK or SA English and NOT English (US). For details on how to check and change the default dictionary, click here: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/set-up-or-change-the-languages-used-to-check-spelling-and-grammar-64bd812f-a301-478b-883a-32ee2223d42d>

A

a, an: Pronunciation guides the use of either *a* or *an*. Generally, *an* is used for words beginning with a vowel, e.g. an egg, while *a* is used for words beginning with consonants, e.g. a cat. However, because we say MA as “em-ay”, we use “an M”, while – because we start to say master’s with a “mm” sound – we use “a master’s”. Likewise, we write “an honorary degree” because the ‘h’ is silent, but we write “a historic venture” because the ‘h’ is heard when the word is spoken. (See [Articles](#))

a lot: This is **always** two words.

Usage: Try to minimise the use of “a lot”:

Rather use “many” in a sentence such as: “A lot of cases” (“many cases”)

Rather use “much” in a sentence such as: “A lot of work” (“much work” = uncountable)

Abbreviations that are commonly used to show quantities have no full stop and no ‘s’ is added for plural forms. (See [Measurements](#)) (This is the style for general usage and may differ when used in mathematical or scientific texts.)

- 45 km
- 28 g
- 90 °C
- BUT 67% (no space)
- 45c (no space)
- 4 MB (megabyte)

Insert a hard space between the figures and the symbols to ensure that they are not separated when the sentence flows over to the next line. The hard space can also be inserted by pressing and holding in the control key, then the shift key, and then pressing the space bar. In web texts, this is done by inserting the code (without quotation marks) in the HTML section of the content editor.

There are no spaces between currency symbols and figures: R100.

The choice of using *a* or *an* before an abbreviation is determined by the pronunciation and not the spelling of the word following the indefinite article. Use *an* before abbreviations beginning with a vowel sound and an unaspirated *h*.

Degrees and diplomas: omit full stops and spaces in abbreviations of these. PhD, MTech, BSCHons, NDip. Exceptions include MB ChB, DLit et Phil, BMus

Use full stops in ordinary small-letter abbreviations such as *e.g.*, *i.e.*, *etc.*, *et al.*, and *p.a.*

Academic and Human Projects: Because these are two main focus areas of the university, it should be used in capital letters: i.e. **Academic and Human Projects**.

accept/except: Often mixed up. *Accept* means “to agree to take that which is offered or presented” (OED) while *except* means “not included” (OED).

access/assess: Often mixed up. Access (as a noun) means “right or opportunity of entering”, while assess means “to evaluate (a person or thing); to estimate (the quality, value, or extent of)” (OED).

acronyms: With names that can be made into acronyms, at the first mention the name must be spelt out in full, with the acronym in brackets at the end (e.g. University of the Free State (UFS)), and just the acronym (usually in CAPS) used thereafter. The UFS style is that all UFS acronyms (DIRAP, etc.) will be in CAPS.

See a list of acronyms at the end of this guide.

You can write an acronym in upper and lower case if you can pronounce it as a word (Unisa)

The is usually omitted before the acronym of a proper noun (i.e., before an abbreviation pronounced as a word), e.g. “Anita works at NASA”, but used with abbreviations whose individual letters are separately pronounced **if used with the full form**, e.g. “The EU is part of the EEA”.

Do not add an unnecessary word to an acronym that already contains the word in question:

ATM (ATM = automated teller *machine*)

CD-ROM (CD-ROM = compact *disc* read-only memory)

HIV (HIV = human immunodeficiency *virus*)

ISBN (ISBN = international standard book *number*)

PIN (PIN = personal identification *number*).

Acta Theologica: The academic journal of the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

Addresses: In English, the street number is written before the street name. The same rule applies to an apartment, which is written before the name of the apartment building.

23 Totius Street

7 Hampton Court

An office or floor number is written as follows:

Room 14, Administration Building

Fifth Floor, Kruinsig

BUT 10th Street (spell out *First* up to *Ninth*)

The meeting will take place in **Room 16** of the Main Building.

His office is located on the corner of Brink and Botha **streets** (note lower case of 'streets', BUT Brink **Street**).

adverse/averse: *Adverse* means "opposed or unfavourable to" while *averse* means "unwilling or reluctant to".

advice/advise: You *give advice* (noun) to people. *You advise* (verb) them.

adviser: NOT advisor. But note "advisory".

affect/effect: Often mixed up. *Affect* means "to have a material effect on; to influence" (OED), while *effect* (noun) usually means "that which results from the action or properties of something or someone" (OED). *To effect* (verb) means "to bring about (a result); to accomplish (an intention, a desire)" (OED). For example, "Bees are badly affected by rain" (note that *affect* could mean for the worse or for the better, so must be modified) and "What is the effect of rain on bees?".

Afrikaans: Always italicise Afrikaans words in English texts. (See **foreign languages**)

Aids: acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (See **HIV** and **HIV/Aids**). Note the upper and lower case.

alternate/alternative: Often mixed up. *Alternate* means "to occur successively or by turn", whereas *alternative* means "a second or further choice".

alumni: Graduates from a university. Singular: *alumnus* (masculine), *alumna* (feminine). Gender-neutral alternative: graduate(s), alum(s).

Alumnus of the Year award: Alumna of the Year award in the case of a woman recipient.

amid NOT amidst.

among/between: *Among* means "surrounded by and associated with", e.g. "Children among the crowd were the most taken with the story." *Between* refers to the position of something in relation to two other points, both literally and figuratively, e.g. "The child walked between her two brothers" and "There is a fine balance between freedom of speech and libel." (OED)

among others, among other things, inter alia: Use *inter alia* and do NOT use amongst.

amount of/ number of: Amount refers to things that are counted in bulk (usually money). Number refers to things that are counted individually. An **amount of money** was stolen. A **number of people** visited me. (See **fewer/less** and **number of**)

and/ampersand: The ampersand can be used when it is part of an official name, e.g. Smith & Decker, Proctor & Gamble, or when it is used in a title/headline of an article.

anticipate/expect: *Anticipate* means to realise beforehand and to take action before the event, while *expect* means *inter alia* "to look forward to (an event), regard (it) as about to happen".

apostrophe: No apostrophes for plurals of abbreviations and acronyms or centuries – **NGOs** and **SETAs** and **1900s** (NOT 1900's). (See **Punctuation**)

The **apostrophe** is used in two ways: to show possession (the ownership of something) and to show omission (that something has been left out)

For example (possession):

- All the princess's dresses were pink.
- That is Sarah's bag, not yours.
- The child's lunchbox went missing.
- The children's clothes were dirty after the soccer match.
- The students' marks were very good.
- The princesses' father lost their books.

For example (omission)

- It isn't light yet. (It is not light yet)
- Don't go yet as it hasn't finished yet. (Do not go yet as it has not finished yet)

* **it's** (contraction of "it is") and **its** (possessive).

The dog bit its tail. | It's already 20:00.

(See [Colloquial contractions](#) and [it's](#))

Apostrophes are also used to imply *of* in the genitive case. "He has six years' experience." "In a month's time, we will launch the programme."

appendix/addendum NOT annexure or schedule. Plural *appendices/ad-denda*.

appraise/apprise: Often mixed up. *Appraise* means "to value or to assess" whereas *apprise* means "to inform".

articles: *the* (definite), *a* and *an* (indefinite)

The is used to indicate when you refer to a specific person or thing:

"I am looking for the book with the red cover" (refers to a particular book that has a red cover, not just any book with a red cover).

A is used as a more general reference:

"They are going to paint **a** house" (there are many houses, and they are going to paint one of them).

An is used in the same way as **a**, except that it is used before a word that starts with a vowel, or before a word that is pronounced in such a way that it sounds as though it starts with a vowel:

"The principal had to deal with an incredibly difficult situation."

"He is an honest man." (The 'h' is not pronounced, so it sounds as though honest begins with 'o', which is why 'an' is used.)

(See [a](#), [an](#))

B

BAHons/BAgric/BMus, etc. – no full stops. (See [Degrees and diplomas](#) under [Abbreviations](#))

bachelor's degree: The apostrophe is retained even when the word 'degree' is not used: "She has a bachelor's from the UFS."

bacteria is the plural of bacterium and uses a plural verb, e.g. "bacteria are".

belief/believe: Often mixed up. *Belief* (noun) is "mental conviction" (OED) while *to believe* (verb) means "accept the truth or accuracy of (a statement, doctrine, etc.)" (OED) or "to have confidence or faith in (a person, God, etc.)" (OED).

beside/besides: The former, *beside*, means "at the side of" while the latter, *besides*, means "in addition to".

bestseller: but **best-selling title**.

biannual/biennially: *Biannual* is half-yearly, or twice a year, while *biennially* is every two years, or once in two years.

bimonthly/biweekly: Once every two months and once every two weeks (this could also be fortnightly). (Note: NOT twice a month or week.)

billion: A thousand million (this was US style and since 1974 is UK style too) – nine zeros, while trillion is a thousand billion.

Blackboard (with the capital B) is an online system at the UFS; with the lower case 'b' it is the usual teaching aid.

blind: Rather use visually impaired.

borrow/lend: Person A *borrow*s a book from Person B; this means Person B has *lent* a book to Person A. Person A asks, "Can I *borrow* this book?" and Person B might respond, "Yes, I will *lend* it to you."

both: Remember that what follows both should be repeated. "He will be remembered for both **his** flippant nature and **his** exuberant style." NOT: "He will be remembered for both his flippant nature and exuberant style."

Bullets (See [Punctuation](#))

Bullet-itemised lists are useful for stipulating or arranging specific elements without attaching any order of importance to the items listed. Use only one type of bullet throughout your document, preferably the simple black dot. Using diamonds, arrows and other bullets could make your document look cluttered. If it is really necessary to use a second level of bullets, choose a simple type and use it consistently.

The bullet list should begin on the line immediately below the introductory segment:

These are some of the percussion instruments:

- triangle
- tambourine
- cymbals.

It is not necessary to use a full stop after the final bullet, unless a semicolon or a full stop is used in the preceding bullet points.

Use a colon to introduce a list only if a full sentence or clause precedes the colon. Such a sentence would typically end with *the following*; or *as follows*: or similar phrases.

You should expect your vendor to do the following:

- train you in the care of our system
- offer regular maintenance
- respond promptly to service requests.

If the introductory sentence is a sentence fragment, if the list items complete the sentence fragment or if the sentence fragment would not 'naturally' take a colon, then no punctuation mark should be used in the introductory sentence.

The open day programme includes

- visits to academic departments;
- talks by experts in the field; and
- accommodation visits.

If the introductory phrase or clause and the listed items are meant to be read as one complete sentence, semicolons should be used to separate bullets, with terminal punctuation at the end of the last bullet.

Do not use semicolons or full stops for bullets followed by single words that do not form part of a complete sentence.

The following sports were not included in the list:

- soccer
- cricket
- rugby
- tennis.

Full stops are used at the end of each line for points that appear on their own as sentences and that follow a bullet below an introductory clause or phrase. The first letter of each word following the bullet is capitalised.

Plans for this year include the following:

- Twenty kilos will be lost.
- The garden will be cleaned regularly.
- The car will be washed every fortnight.

The grammatical form of the list items should agree.

Ways of staying sane include

- taking long walks;
- reading as often as possible; and
- talking to loved ones.

[NOT: Ways of staying sane include

- taking long walks;
- read as often as possible; and
- to talk to loved ones.]

bursary/scholarship: A scholarship is more prestigious than a bursary, e.g. Fulbright scholarship, a Fulbright scholar.

busy: Do not say: "He is busy working". Say: "He is working." The present continuous tense is sufficient.

C

campuses: When referring to multiple campuses, use the following format:

- For all three campuses: Bloemfontein, South, and Qwaqwa Campuses (uppercase)
- For two campuses: Bloemfontein and South Campuses (uppercase)
- For only one campus: Bloemfontein Campus (uppercase C)

can/may: *Can* means, inter alia: "to know how to; to be able" (e.g. "I can play the guitar". *May* means "to be allowed to do something", e.g., "You may leave when you finish the exam." It is in this sense that they are most often confused. We know that you "can" leave (i.e. are physically able to leave) but "you may leave" means that you have permission to leave.

capital letters: A sentence starts with a capital letter and proper nouns have capital letters. Apart from items listed below, little else uses capital letters. The only exceptions are:

"University" (when referring to the UFS):

- University of the Free State (first reference)
- UFS (where appropriate)
- the University (subsequent specific reference)
- universities / the university sector (generic lowercase)

“Council”, and “Senate” (when referring to the UFS Council and the UFS Senate).

Use capitals in the following circumstances:

The **chief words in titles** of people, books, plays, etc., e.g. Elizabeth the Second, A Tale of Two Cities. **Direct speech** opens with a capital letter. In **Latin names**, the gender or genus name is written with a capital letter and the common noun is lower case. It **MUST** be written in **italics**.

Capitalise each word in titles of events, seminars, etc. (e.g. the seminar titled Healing Trauma: Practice in Contemporary Society).

Words followed by a number indicating a sequence: *Chapter 11, Room 23B, Table 12, Form 7B, Grade 9, Rule 8.6, Regulation No. 7, Post Level 53.*

Names of fields of study, subjects, or disciplines: *Linguistics, Biology, History, Audiovisual Communication OVK2A11.*

Reference to a faculty, department, unit, etc: When we write the name of a department, centre, unit, etc – e.g. Department of Chemistry – capital letters must be used. When we **refer to** the department, centre, unit, division, etc., small letters must be used. E.g.: The Department of Chemistry has launched a new project ... By launching this project, the department is now one of the few in the country ...

Titles with specific reference to the titleholder: *UFS Chancellor Prof Bonang Mohale, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the UFS, Prof Hester Klopper, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Job Lategan, Dean Sue Briggs, Professor of Geology Dene Smuts, Senior Lecturer Jo Bokaba, Senior Lecturer Selby Mda, and Secretary General Thabo Tselo.*

But titles without a specific reference are lower case: Sue Briggs, Dean of Humanities, said; the dean said that she would

(This is also the case for references to titles of persons outside the University:

Margaret Black, Social Responsibility Director of ABC, has recently taken office; as social responsibility director, Black has made strides in establishing links with the community.

Thabo Msimang, Special Adviser on Ecology to the Premier of the Northern Cape; in his capacity as special adviser, Msimang has promoted the cause of ecology in the province.)

The names of any type of recognised geographical region: Cape Town, the Promised Land, the Wine Route, Southern Africa, Global North/South.

capitals and countries: The Afrikaans versions are not the same as the English ones.

cater for: not cater to (American English).

cellphone: One word.

Centres at the UFS: *See list at the end of the Style Guide.*

Central University of Technology.

chairperson/chair: *Chairman* has been replaced by *chairperson*, or *chair*, to avoid gender bias.

Chief Financial Officer

CLUSTERS: *See list at the end of the Style Guide.*

collective nouns: Most are singular or use the singular verb (e.g. data, public, none, staff), except for “the police are” and “the couple are”. Words like everyone, everything, everybody, nobody, nothing, no one, take a singular verb too.

colloquial contractions: Do not use (don’t, won’t, isn’t, it’s, etc.) unless in a direct quotation.

colloquium

commas: Commas are used to **record a list** of things, e.g. at the party we had cakes, jelly, chocolate, and lemonade (See **Oxford comma**); to indicate a pause in reading, mostly with **conjunctions**, e.g. although it was foggy, we played the match; **before who**, e.g. George, who is a student, has won a scholarship. Also in this case: Prof Jan Fink, Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, said so. (Remember the closing comma.) (See **etc.** and **namely**) Do not introduce a comma between subject and verb, or verb and object – even after a long subject, where there would be a natural pause in speech. “Those who have the largest incomes and who have amassed the greatest personal savings should be taxed most.” NOT: “Those who have the largest incomes and who have amassed the greatest personal savings, should be taxed most.”

compare: “*compare with*” and “*compare to*”: “He compared me TO Dolly Parton” means he suggested I was comparable to her or put me in the same class; “He compared me WITH Dolly Parton” means he

instituted a detailed comparison, or pointed out where and how far I resembled or failed to resemble her. (HW Fowler.)

competences NOT *competencies*.

complement/compliment: Often mixed up. *Compliment* means “praise”, and *complement* means “to add to, to provide a matching component”.

comprise: NOT *comprise of*. Use *comprise* with a complete list (e.g. of all the EU countries: “The EU comprises 16 countries.”) but use *include* if it is a partial list (e.g. “The herring-producing countries of the EU include Denmark and Norway.”). The passive form, “is comprised of”, is correct but avoid the passive in general.

concordance: Where the verb and subject agree in a sentence, e.g. “This *student is* doing well but generally the *students are* not coping.” (See [Verbs](#))

condition or situation: *condition* refers to the overall state or quality of something, while *situation* refers to the specific circumstances or context surrounding something.

consensus is when opposing parties agree on sufficient common ground in order to move forward. Don’t confuse with unanimous agreement where everybody is of one mind.

confer: A degree/diploma is conferred; to confer a degree **on**

conference (not **congress**).

contact numbers (See [Figures](#)).

Only the international format must be used. Do not use brackets or hyphens. Numbers are written with spaces separating the code and the number sequence, for example:

+27 51 401 5627 or +27 82 345 1723.

Toll-free numbers are grouped differently: 0800 40 30; 0800 220 224.

When appearing in a document intended for international readers, a note must be added that toll-free numbers are accessible only within South Africa.

Insert a hard space between the groupings of numbers to ensure that they are not separated when the sentence flows over to the next line. See [Abbreviations](#) for how to insert hard spaces in Word. For social media posts, write contact numbers in format +27-51-401-5267 for the same reason (so that they stay together/ remain readable even if they break over two lines)

contact someone: ‘at’ for an email address; and ‘on’ for a telephone number.

continual/continuous: A telephone that rings continually is one that rings often over a period of time. A telephone that rings continuously rings uninterruptedly.

convener: Use this (NOT *convenor* or *convenar*).

cooperative: No hyphen (See [Hyphens](#)).

coordination: No hyphen (See [Hyphens](#)).

council: Somebody serves **on** a council, committee, board. He or she is a councillor. When used as part of a title, the person will be **Councillor** [Name] [Surname].

counsel: e.g. counselling for the youth. A counsellor offers counsel to the students.

coursework: One word.

COVID-19: Note the capital letters.

criteria: This is the plural of *criterion* and uses the plural verb: “The criteria are ...”.

crimen injuria

cum laude

curriculum: The plural is *curricula*. (See [Foreign plurals](#))

Curriculum Vitae

D

data: The word is plural, but the usage is singular – “data is”. (See [Collective nouns](#))

data set: plural data sets.

dates: Thursday 21 April 2023. NOT Thursday 21st of April 2023 or Thursday, April 21, 2023 (the comma is not used in dates) or 2023-04-21.

deaf/Deaf: Use *deaf* where relevant. *Deaf* (capitalised) may be used when referring to a cultural or linguistic community. Avoid *hearing-impaired*, which is outdated and may be perceived as insensitive. Where possible, use the term preferred by the individual or community concerned.

defuse/diffuse: The former means “to make something harmless”, the latter “to disperse”.

Departments: See list at the end of the Style Guide.

department is singular, so it has **its** (not their) **expo**.

dependent/dependant: The *dependant* (noun) is the one who depends on another while *dependent* (adjective) means “having its existence contingent on, or conditioned by, the existence of something else” (OED). E.g. “The doctor’s dependant is not dependent on charity.”

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Institutional Change, Strategic Partnerships and Societal Impact.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation.

different: Different from NOT different to.

dilemma: Only use if faced with two or more undesirable outcomes. Use quandary otherwise.

Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP). (See **Capitals**)

Disability: Words such as *disabled* and *blind* are adjectives, not nouns. “Special arrangements will be made for disabled students.” OR: “Special arrangements will be made for students with disabilities.” NOT: “Special arrangements will be made for the disabled.” *Disabled* and *handicapped* have different meanings. A disability is a functional limitation or restriction of an individual’s ability to perform an activity. A handicap is an environmental barrier that limits or prevents full participation or entrance. Inaccessible entrances are an example of a handicap. “There are designated parking areas for disabled people.” NOT: “There are designated parking areas for handicapped people.”

disc/disk: *Disk* is only used as related to computers. All other discs are *discs*.

disinterest: *Disinterest* means free from bias or involvement. It is not the same as *uninterest*, which means not interested.

DNA: deoxyribonucleic acid.

doctor: A **doctor** can be someone who has a **doctorate** or someone in the **medical profession**. **Doctors’ fees** (or a doctor’s fees) are high. You go to the **doctor’s rooms**. When referring to the title Doctor, the abbreviation is written as Dr Smith (no full stop).

E

each of: This phrase always takes the singular verb, e.g., “Each of the rules is marked with an ‘x’.” (See **Verbs**)

earth: lower case. Only capitalise when used as a proper noun, e.g., “It takes six to eight months to travel from Earth to Mars.” When used as a proper noun, ‘the’ is usually omitted.

Edinburgh: Capital of Scotland, but **Edenburg** near Bloemfontein.

e-learning: A division of CTL.

email: No hyphen.

embarrass: Note double ‘r’ and double ‘s’.

enquiry: The act of asking a question, or an interrogation or a query; the act of seeking for truth, information, or knowledge. (See **inquiry**)

ensure/insure/assure: *Ensure* means “to make sure” while *insure* means “to guarantee against loss” and *assure* means “to remove doubts”.

enthusiasm: Do not overuse. Try synonyms such as **ardour**, **zeal**, or **zest**.

equine-assisted psychotherapy: Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Institute of South Africa (EAPISA).

erratum, plural *errata*.

etc. is preceded by a comma when it comes after two or more items already separated by commas.

evoke/invoke: Often mixed up. The former means “to bring to mind” while the latter means “to call upon solemnly”.

examination: To sit for an exam; to conduct an exam.

except/accept: Often mixed up. *Except* means “not included” while *accept* means “to agree to take that which is offered or presented” (OED).

everyone, everything, everybody: All these words take a singular verb, e.g. “Everyone is on board”. “Everything is alright.” “Everybody knows what to do.” (See **Collective nouns** and **Verbs**)

F

4x4: No spaces between the characters.

FACULTIES AT THE UFS: See list at the end of the Style Guide.

fall under: The division falls under the Faculty of Education.

family/relatives: A **family** is the parents and children. **Relatives** are your family too.

FARMOVS: clinical research organisation at the UFS.

few/many: Always take the plural verb when they qualify the subject, e.g. “A few books were lost in the fire,” and “Many birds are on the verge of extinction.”

fewer/less: Use *fewer* for individuals or individual items, e.g. *fewer* dogs, *fewer* toasted cheese sandwiches, while *less* refers to quantity and not number, e.g. *less* milk, *less* money.

Figures: When used in a text, write out in full the numbers from **one** to **nine** and numbers used figuratively (a thousand times).

However, for purposes of consistency, numbers below and above nine that appear in the same sentence should either all be written out or appear as numbers. In simple cases, the format used is usually determined by which form appears first. However, the format will also be determined by the numbers in the rest of the sentence. In other words, the text should read as easily as possible and all the figures in the sentence should be handled in the same way.

There were eight students in the one class and eleven in the other.

There were 13 students in one class, and 8 in another.

Numbers between 21 and 99 are hyphenated when written out in full.

For example:

- twenty-one
- ninety-nine
- one hundred and thirty-four (note that only “thirty-four” is hyphenated).

Fractions

Use a singular verb with fractions if the noun is singular (e.g. “Two thirds of the **crop was** destroyed by hail”) and a plural verb if the noun is plural (e.g. “Two thirds of the **apples were** rotten”).

Fractions don’t have hyphens: three quarters, two fifths.

Dates (See [Years](#))

The comma is not used in dates but can be used to indicate specific days and dates.

Thursday 2 March 2012, but we say “*the second of March 2012*” when reading it aloud

BUT Workers’ Day, Sunday 1 May.

Numbers and monetary values are indicated as follows (with hard spaces, not commas, separating the numbers of four digits:)

1 359 [NOT: 1,359]

125 392 [NOT: 125,392]

In South Africa the decimal comma is used, except in most financial and accounting texts, where the comma is used as a thousand separator, for example R1,500,000.00. Do not use the comma as a thousand separator in any other type of text.

All figures in tables should be aligned to the right.

Percentages

In administrative documents, write percentages in figures, e.g. 4%, with no space between the figure and the percentage sign. If it should be necessary to write a percentage out, such as at the beginning of a sentence, *percent* must be written as one word: “*Four percent of the company’s income is spent on advertising.*”

Use a singular verb with percentages when the noun is singular (as in the previous sentence: *income ... is ...*) and a plural verb when the noun is plural (e.g., “*Four percent of the students were absent*”).

first-time entering student/s (FTEN student - singular/ FTENs - plural); but students in their first year.

FNB Varsity Cup.

Focused, focusing (only one ‘s’).

foreign languages: Foreign words incorporated into English (use the OED as a guide) are not italicised (*laissez-faire*, *dolce vita*, *glasnost*, etc.). However, Latin words should be italicised (See [Latin](#): for details) and the UFS style is that Afrikaans words in English texts should be italicised as well.

- **foreign plurals** from, e.g. Latin, Greek and French. Foreign plurals are often used in the technical sphere, while the -s plural is mostly seen in everyday language: formulas (general) – formulae (in mathematics), antennas (general and in electronics) – antennae (in biology). Consult a dictionary if in doubt.

- Use the following: addenda, memoranda, curricula, symposia, alumni, atria BUT campuses, prospectuses, forums, stadiums, arenas.
- Use syllabi, not syllabuses (curricula and syllabi often appear together in the same context, and curricula next to syllabuses would look strange).

foreword/preface: A *foreword* to a book is an introduction written by a person other than the author. A *preface* is an introduction written by the author.

formatted, reformatted, formatting.

FTE: Full-time equivalent.

full-time: Hyphenated when adjectival (“*full-time* contract”), not when used as a noun (“at *full time* team A was ahead”). (See **part-time** and **half-time**)

G

gas, gasses, gassed.

gender-neutral terms: Use gender-neutral terms, e.g. chairperson (not chairman); distinguished guests (not ladies and gentlemen); human-made, artificial or synthetic (not manmade); workforce (not manpower); their (not his/her); they (not he/she).

gerunds: A gerund is the present participle of the verb (the verbal form ending in ing) when used as a noun. The possessive case should be used for modifiers of a gerund: “I would appreciate your attending the meeting.” NOT: “I would appreciate you attending the meeting.” “It is dependent on his signing the document.” NOT: “It is dependent on him signing the document.”

glamour, glamorise, glamorous.

Global South, Global North: note capitalisation.

go-ahead, go-between.

-goer: Cinemagoer, theatregoer, churchgoer, etc.

government: Not capitalised – the South African government.

graduand – plural graduands/graduandi (about to be graduated), graduate – plural graduates (has graduated).

graffiti: A plural noun (singular graffito): “graffiti are”.

granddaughter but great-granddaughter (See **Hyphens**).

grey NOT gray.

H

haematology

half-time: e.g., half-time at a football game (noun) or as “a half-time assistant” (adjectival).

handicapped (person): Rather use person with a disability.

hands-on

hello not hallo.

he/she: There are several options to avoid using *he/him/his* as pronouns to refer to both males and females. (also see **gender-neutral terms**)

- The UFS style is:

Use *he/she, him/her, etc.* (*The candidate must prepare himself/herself for a selection test, after which he/she will be interviewed.*)

One can rewrite the text to avoid pronouns, but it is cumbersome (*Preparation for a selection test is necessary, after which an interview will follow ...*).

HIV/Aids: The Medical Research Council’s “portal for Aids information for Southern Africa” uses the “/” to separate the two acronyms. This is the UFS style.

HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus.

Honorifics, if used, are written with capital letters, e.g. Prof, Dr, Mr, etc. However, it is the UFS style not to use honorifics except for Prof and Dr, except in exceptional circumstances.

When you write a surname starting with **de, du** or **van:** If you have the initials or name: Prof PJ de Wet, or Prof Piet de Wet, the **de** is **lower case**. If you do not have it, the **De** is **upper case**, e.g. Prof De Wet. In the first instance use the full name and title, Prof PJ de Wet; thereafter just the surname with the ‘de’ capitalised, De Wet.

If there are only initials preceding the surname, there are no full stops after the initials – Prof DF Malherbe, MJ Smit.

Mr (no full stop).

Prof (e.g. Prof V Reddy). (No full stop.)

Ms does not take a full stop: if an honorific is called for, “Ms” is the one used for all women (except if the woman in question is a Prof or a Dr, which then supersedes the Ms, according to the UFS style).

The abbreviation *Dr* (no full stop) is for doctors (both medical doctors and people who have a doctorate).

Exception: The only exception to the use of honorifics is when referring to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Hester C. Klopper. The preferred format in these instances is “Prof Hester C. Klopper.” Note that a full stop should follow the initial.

honour but honorary professor.

hopefully: Use “it is hoped”.

humankind: not mankind.

Hyphens (See **Punctuation**):

A hyphen can change the meaning of a phrase. There is a difference between *20 odd students* (20 students who appear strange) and *20-odd students* (approximately 20 students).

No space before and after hyphen when indicating ranges (e.g. 8-12 February 2016 / 15:00-17:00).

An adverb ending in -ly and preceding an adjective or participle is **never** hyphenated, e.g. a hotly disputed ending, a constantly evolving saga, genetically modified food, a superbly written report.

But hyphens are needed with other adverbs, e.g. ever-forgiving family, ill-prepared report, much-loved character, well-founded suspicion, state-owned enterprise.

Adverbs such as *high, low, long, short, well, best, little, half*, etc. often have the following patterns:

Long-term objectives, but *objectives in the long term*.

First-year students, but *students in their first year*.

Compound words: There may be confusion with some compound words, e.g. *life cycle, life-cycle, or lifecycle?* (It is life cycle.) Consult a dictionary (the OED, online at the UFS) when in doubt.

Hyphens are usually omitted after prefixes: (e.g., **antenatal, antivivisectionism, bioethics, cooperation, coordination, counterirritant, hyperphysical, interracial, minicomputer, postgraduate, pseudopodium, subcommittee, subeconomic, superinduce, ultracentrifuge**).

When the prefix ends with an ‘e’ and the word begins with an ‘e’, a hyphen is used (e.g. re-energise), and when the word could be misconstrued a hyphen is also used (e.g. re-cover (to cover again), etc. Consult a dictionary when in doubt and see specific word entries in the Style Guide.

Word Breaks: It can be difficult to decide where to insert a hyphen to indicate a forced word break at the end of a line. The safest procedure is to consult a dictionary that indicates word breaks.

Suspensive hyphen: Use as follows:

- *a five- to ten-minute break*;
- *full- and part-time staff*;
- *second- and third-year students*.

Note the form of *sportsmen and women* (no hyphen before *women*).

if I were ... we use the conditional tense when talking about events that are possibilities or when we are being speculative, e.g.

“If cabbages were kings, pigs would fly.”

“If I were you, I would not take that from her.”

“Even were you to tell me everything, I still would not believe you.”

“If you were to write to him before the weekend, he would receive the letter on Monday.”

impact: Have/make an impact on/upon (noun). When used as a verb, meaning to strongly influence, do NOT use as an intransitive verb, e.g., “The policy impacted **on** the economy.” The correct use is: “The policy impacted the economy.”

imply/infer: They are not interchangeable. *Imply* is “to suggest without being direct” while *infer* is “to deduce”.

incidence/incidents: Often mixed up. *Incidence* means “the range or scope of a thing, the extent of its influence or effects”, while *incident(s)* mean, *inter alia*, “an occurrence or event, sometimes comparatively trivial in itself, which precipitates or could precipitate something major” (OED).

inclination/tendency: He is *inclined* to be moody. The *tendency* of bad service delivery is driving a lot of people crazy.

inquiry: Use inquiry in the context of a public inquiry or a court of inquiry. (See [enquiry](#))

install, installation, instalment.

instil, instilled, instillation, instilment.

inter- : All words compounded with *inter* are one word (no hyphen) (See [Hyphens](#)). Remember that “*inter alia*” (not a compound) is two words.

internet: Lower case.

inverted commas: Put the title of a paper in **inverted commas** (aka **single quotes**). This also pertains to the titles of lectures and themes. If you refer to a word/words in the title later, it still uses the single quotes. Remember to close the quotes.

invite: You invite someone **to** a function, tea, etc.

isiXhosa (See [Languages](#))

isiZulu (See [Languages](#))

italics: The titles of books, magazines, newspapers, journals, seminars, etc. are italicised, as are the titles of films and plays, but the titles of songs, chapters in books, and articles in newspapers have single quotes around them. (See [Quotes](#))

it’s: *It’s* is the contraction of “it is”. *Its*, with no apostrophe, is the possessive adjective (e.g. “the council, its intentions, and aims”). (See [Apostrophe](#) and [Colloquial contractions](#))

J

Jewellery NOT jewelry. (See [General usage](#) on page 1)

journal NOT magazine (when referring to academic publications). Of course, there are magazines such as *Time*, *Vogue*, etc.

judgement except regarding legal judgments.

K

kick off (verb)/ **kick-off** (noun): A rugby or soccer match kicks off. The kick-off was at 19:00. Most other things **start**.

kickstart: One word (noun); kick-start (verb).

Kovsie ACT – ACT is the acronym for Active. Civic. Teaching.

KovsieGear

Kovsie Health

KovsieInnovation

Kovsie-Inn

KovsieSport

kW: kilowatt (See [Measurements](#)).

KwaZulu-Natal

L

laissez-faire: Not italicised, as with other incorporated foreign words/phrases, and always hyphenated. (See [foreign languages](#))

languages: The UFS style for the names of the official South African languages is Sesotho, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sepedi, Setswana, isiNdebele, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, English, and Afrikaans.

Latin: Always italicise Latin words. This does NOT include words incorporated into English in their Latin form (curriculum, syllabus, stadium, arena, etc). (See [foreign languages](#) and [Foreign plurals](#))

lecturer: A *lecturer* lectures at an institution of higher education. Lecturers NOT staff.

led: *Led*, the past and past perfect form of the verb *to lead*, e.g. he was *led* to the altar, is often misspelt as *lead*.

Lengau Agricultural Development Centre

leverage: “The university will leverage digitalisation” (correct); NOT “The university will leverage **on** digitalisation” (incorrect).

LGBTIQA+: acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual. The ‘+’ represents minority gender identities and sexualities not explicitly included in the term LGBTIQA.

Library and Information Services

license/licence: The verb is spelt with an ‘s’ while the noun is spelt with a ‘c’, e.g. “I am going to license my car at the licensing department.” “My car now has a licence.”

Life/live: Often mixed up. *Life* (noun) is “the condition or attribute of living or being alive” while *to live* (verb) means “to be alive; to possess life”.

Live (adverb and adjective) means “that possesses life; is full of active power” (OED). Please consult the dictionary for the many uses of *live* and *to live*.

literally: Don’t use, since it is seldom *literally* the case.

LLB (See **Degrees and diplomas** under **Abbreviations** and **Punctuation**)

Log in is a noun or adjective. As a noun, it means a username and password to enter a computer, program, or website. As an adjective, it describes the screen or page in which a person will enter the computer, program, or website. **Log in** is the verb form. It means that you connect **to** a machine (such as a host, server, workstation and so on) or authenticate **to** a user interface by providing your credentials. In this case, **to** is a preposition that links the phrasal verb to the upcoming word. That is why the correct spelling is **log in to** not **log into**.

M

macro: Compound words using macro are not hyphenated, e.g. macroeconomic, macroclimate.

manoeuvre NOT maneuver. (See **General usage** on page 1)

master’s degree: You write a **dissertation** to get a *master’s* degree. Note the apostrophe and the lower case ‘m’, which remain even when *master’s* is used without ‘degree’, e.g. she has a *master’s* in English literature. (See **a, an**)

matrix, matrices.

me/myself/I: “It was up to Michael and me.” NOT: “It was up to Michael and I.” “The task was undertaken by the manager and me.” NOT: “The task was undertaken by the manager and myself.”

Measurements (See **Abbreviations** for style)

- *Distance:* millimetre – mm; centimetre – cm; metre – m; kilometre – km
- *Mass:* milligram – mg; gram – g; kilogram – kg; ton – spell out in full
- *Area:* square millimetre – sq m; square centimetre – sq cm; square metre – sq m; hectare – ha; square kilometre – sq km

- *Volume:* millilitre – ml; litre – spell out in full; centilitre – cl; hectolitre – hl; megalitre – Ml; kilolitre – kl; cubic centimetre – cu cm; cubic metre – cu m
- *Temperature:* degrees Celsius 30°C
- *Speed:* km/h

media: As a collective noun, the media, though etymologically plural, uses the singular form: the media is, the media has. (See **Collective nouns**)

media release, news release: NOT press release.

Memorandum of Understanding: Only MoU (note caps) when it refers to a specific one.

Messrs – is the plural of Mr (if an honorific has to be used). (See **Honorifics**)

military ranks

misspelt

morale/moral: Often mixed up. *Morale* means: “The mental or emotional state (with regard to confidence, hope, enthusiasm, etc.) of a person or group engaged in some activity”. *Moral* means, *inter alia*: “Of or relating to human character or behaviour considered as good or bad; of or relating to the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, desires, or character of responsible human beings; ethical” (OED).

more than: Use *more than* instead of “over”, e.g., “More than 100 houses were bought.” “She said that more than 20% of voters had voted already.”

Ms – plural **Mss**. If using an honorific (See **Honorifics**), use these instead of Mrs or Miss.

multi: Compound words using *multi* are not hyphenated (multimillionaire) unless the other word starts with a vowel (multi-areolate).

mum NOT mom.

N

namely: Use a comma before *namely* and no semicolon after *namely*. E.g. “Four boys and four girls, namely Sue, Jane, Pam, Doris, John, Peter, Thomas, and Joe.” (See **Commas**)

naturalist/naturist: Don't mix up. The first is a scientist, the second a nudist. They are not incompatible, however.

neither/either and **neither ... nor:** both neither and either use the singular verb, e.g. neither A nor B is present; either A or B is a good idea. The exception is when B is plural, when a plural verb is used, e.g., neither the South African nor the Zambians were present). (See **Verbs**)

Nelson Mandela University (NMU)

New Year: The caps are only for 1 January, i.e. New Year's Day.

nobody, none, no one, nothing: All use singular verbs, e.g. "Nobody is to leave before we say so." "None of them has any meaning." "No one knows the trouble I've seen." "Nothing comes from North Korea except refugees." (See **Collective nouns** and **Verbs**)

no-go area.

no one: No hyphens and always two words.

No. 1 (See **Figures**): You only use **No.** with No. 1, etc.

not only ... but also and **not ... but:** The noun closest to the verb determines the concord, e.g. "Not only the mountains but also the coast is suffering from an extended drought." "Not the cat but the dogs are coming." (See **Verbs**)

number of: *Number of* uses the singular verb when *number* is used as a noun, e.g. "The *number* of grasshoppers *is* unusual" (where number but not grasshoppers is the subject) but the plural verb when it is used adjectivally, e.g. "A large number of grasshoppers *were* flying past" (where the grasshoppers are the subject, with number qualifying the subject). (See **Verbs**)

O

Odeion String Quartet

offline: One word.

offside: One word.

offstage: One word.

ongoing: Avoid altogether.

OK: Use only in quotes (NOT okay).

online: One word (no hyphen).

only: Place as close as possible to the words it qualifies.

E.g. "The company pays a bonus only in December" means something different from "The company only pays a bonus in December".

on to: Always two words.

out: Compounds using *out* are not hyphenated, e.g. outmanoeuvred.

over: Compounds using *over* are not hyphenated, e.g. overbred.

over: Use "more than", e.g. "It is said that more than half the population is literate." (See **more than**)

Oxford comma: The UFS style is to use the Oxford comma, i.e., the comma after the last item in a list, before the 'and'. E.g. "The student should equip her/himself with pencils, oil paints, palette, an A2 pad, a scientific calculator, and pastels." (See **Bullets** and **Commas**)

P

page: Put a space between the abbreviation of page and the number: p. 12-15.

partake/participate: Often confused. You *participate* in a meeting; you do not *partake* in a meeting. *Participate* means "to take part" (OED), while *partake* (used with "of") is generally about sharing, whether characteristics, food, action, or conditions.

passerby (singular), **passersby** (plural).

peer/equal: People who work with you are your **colleagues**.

persons: Rather say people.

population groups: If essential, use *black*, *brown*, *coloured*, and *white* in relation to population groups, and do not use capital letters. "This year there are many black participants in the event." NOT: "This year there are many Blacks in the event." When you refer to an Indian person, the word *Indian* is capitalised because it refers to the country of origin, namely India, which is a proper noun.

Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation

postgraduate: One word. Postgraduate students or postgraduates.

post-mortem: Two words, hyphenated.

practise/practice: The verb uses an 's' while the noun uses a 'c', e.g. "I will *practise* on the piano."; "The doctor's *practice* is down the road."

pre: Compounds using pre are often not hyphenated, e.g. prebook, except, in general, if the other word begins with a vowel, e.g. pre-empt. If in doubt consult the dictionary (OED online) since it varies widely.

prepositions: She is a student **at** the University of the Free State, or she is **at** university. She is a student **in** the Faculty of Law **of** the University of the Western Cape. She is a member **of** the team participating **in** the tournament. (See [university](#))

price/prize: Often mixed up. *Price* is the cost of an item while *prize* is a reward or symbol of victory.

primarius and primaria: Male and female leaders in residences.

Prof/Profs – professor(s). No full stops. (See [Honorifics](#))

programme and program: The latter spelling is only used in computing. Use *programme* elsewhere.

proscribe/prescribe: Often confused. *Proscribe* means “to prohibit”, whereas *prescribe* means “to set down as an order”.

provinces: Limpopo or Gauteng NOT the Limpopo or Gauteng province. (See [South Africa - provinces](#))

public: Uses the singular verb, e.g. “The public is aware of what is going on.” (See [Collective nouns](#))

Punctuation: (Also see [Bullets](#), [Capitals](#), [Commas](#), and [Hyphens](#))

Brackets

If bracketed words form an integral part of a sentence, place the full stop after the closing bracket. If a full sentence is bracketed, place the full stop inside the closing bracket. For example:

A student may choose from three options (A or B or both).

Note the single t in benefited and benefiting. (American spelling uses a double t.)

Square brackets are used within round brackets.

Colon

Capitals should be used after colons only if the word following the colon is a proper noun; if the first word of a quotation is capitalised; if the colon follows a formal salutation or brief instruction such as *Note:* or *Warning;* or sometimes if the material following the colon is a whole sentence or sentences expressing a complete thought.

The man warned: Chuck Norris takes no prisoners.

Please note: The deadline for entries is 21 February 2011.

Do not use a colon to introduce a statement or a list that completes the sentence formed by the introduction. In the following example, a colon should not be placed after *to*.

During our holiday, we went to Hout Bay, Kommetjie and Cape Town.

Dash

The dash (en rule) is longer than a hyphen and half the length of an em rule. Use the en rule with spaces either side as a dash. The hyphen should not be used as a dash. The dash can be easily inserted by pressing Ctrl followed by the minus sign key (usually in the upper right corner of your keyboard on the same line as the Num Lock key). On a Mac press the Alt key with the minus sign to get the en dash.

· She studied him carefully – unknown to him – and then pounced.

The en rule without spaces either side is used as a substitute for *to*, but should not be used after *from* or *between*.

· A range of 3–5%.

· BUT It ranged from 3% to 5%.

· AND It was somewhere between 3% and 5%.

Ellipsis

Handle like a word = spaces on both sides and ALWAYS 3 dots. No full stop after 3 dots.

Quotation marks

When a quotation appears within a quotation, single quotation marks should be used within double ones.

· “I suggest,” she said, “that you embrace the theory of ‘no pain, no gain’ when working on that six-pack.”

Use single, not double quotation marks in headlines of publications such as newspapers and newsletters.

· Stormers told to ‘win back the supporters’

In general, double quotation marks should be used for direct speech, while single quotation marks are used in the following cases:

· When setting off words or phrases used in a special sense

· When using word ironically

· When using words that are particularly significant or that might be unfamiliar to the reader

· Mark your preference with an ‘X’.

Solidus ('slash')

The main use is in separating alternatives (not as a replacement for *and* and *or*) and is usually set close up (without spaces) to the matter it relates to on either side.

The general rule is that spaces are used before and after the solidus only when one or both of the items separated by the solidus contain more than one word.

- and/or (no spaces)
- executive members / consultants (i.e., with spaces)

Although the solidus forms part of certain abbreviations, it should not be used in place of a full stop in an abbreviation.

- a/c for account, c/o for care of, 24/7 for twenty-four hours a day

Q

Qwaqwa Campus: Note the lower case second 'q' and the capital 'c'.

Qwaqwa Campus job titles: Campus Principal: Qwaqwa Campus; Campus Vice-Principal: Academic and Research; Campus Vice-Principal: Support Services

quorum, quorums.

quotation marks: (See [Punctuation](#) and [Sources](#))

quotes: Quotes in non-academic texts should use standard grammar, e.g., "All the world's a stage" (Shakespeare). If the quotation is longer than five lines it is usually indented, on both sides.

In academic texts, quotes are indented, and text size may drop.

R

race: (See [population groups](#))

rands: Use the plural (and lower case) for more than one rand when written out – e.g. a million rands.

re: Compound words that use the prefix *re* are usually not hyphenated, e.g. rearrange, rehouse, unless the second word begins with an 'e', e.g. re-entry, or unless the word could be confused with another, e.g., re-cover, re-create, re-form.

rectorate: Lower case.

references: (See [Sources](#))

refute/rebut: *Refute* means to refuse and disprove, NOT to deny, and *rebut* means to rebuke or reproach (a person) violently.

registrar: Lower case, unless as part of a proper noun phrase, e.g. Registrar of the UFS Nikile Ntsababa, but the registrar said.

regrettably/regretfully: *Regrettably* means "it is to be regretted that", while *regretfully* means "showing regret".

remuneration: The letters are often transposed and the word misspelt as renumeration.

Rigour/rigor: *Rigour* (UK English) means strictness or severity in rules, conditions, or intellectual/scholarly work. *Rigor* (UK English) means shivering, trembling or stiffness.

RIMS: Research Information Management System.

Russian words: Use the English version of words and names – tsar, Gorbachev, etc. (See [foreign languages](#) and [Capitals](#))

S

saccharin/saccharine: *Saccharin* (noun) is the synthetic sweetener whereas *saccharine* (adjective) means excessively sweet.

school-leaver: Hyphenated.

Schools at the UFS: *See list at the end of the Style Guide.*

semi-final/s

Senate

sentences: Keep them short and sweet. Your aim is to **impart information correctly**, not to indulge in creative writing.

Sesotho (See [Languages](#)).

shoot-out: Hyphenated.

shortlist: One word, no hyphen.

skill set: Plural skillsets.

smoke-free workplace

SMS: Plural SMSes.

Social media: Social media post (not hyphenated).

Sources:

- A good guide to one of the commonly used referencing styles, the Chicago style, can be found at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- An excellent guide to the Harvard and APA methods can be found on the UJ website <http://www.uj.ac.za/EN/Library/Documents/REFERENCE%20TECHNIQUES%202008%20Harvard%20Method%20and%20APA%20Style.pdf>
- A number of very useful referencing guides from the UCT website can be found at <http://www.lib.uct.ac.za/research-help/referencing-help/>

South Africa – provinces: the Eastern Cape (capital Bisho), the Free State (capital Bloemfontein), Gauteng (capital Johannesburg), Kwa-Zulu-Natal (capital Pietermaritzburg), Limpopo (capital Polokwane), Mpumalanga (capital Mbombela), the North West (capital Mahikeng), the Northern Cape (capital Kimberley), the Western Cape (capital Cape Town).

Southern Africa: Note caps. NOT southern Africa.

staff: Staff uses the singular verb, e.g. “The staff is well-educated but anxious about the future.” However, always safer to refer to staff members, then there is no confusion (See **Collective nouns**).

state of the art: Used adjectivally, it is hyphenated, e.g. “a state-of-the-art laboratory”, but as a noun it is not, e.g. “The library is state of the art in its collections.”

stationary/stationery: Often mixed up. *Stationary* means “not moving or not intended to move”, whereas *stationery* means “writing and other office materials” (OED).

step-by-step application guide

Student Affairs: See at the end of the Style Guide.

sub: Compounds with the prefix *sub* are normally not hyphenated, e.g. subeditor, subconscious, though there are some exceptions, e.g. sub-head, sub-aquatic. Please consult the dictionary (OED online at the UFS).

such as: is inclusive, whereas **like** implies comparison.

Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns: NOT to be translated, remains Afrikaans on their English websites. It means the South African Academy for Science and Arts.

Support Services: See the list at the end of the Style Guide.

T

takeover: (noun) but *to take off* (verb).

that/which: A general rule is as follows: use *that* to introduce a defining clause: “This is the car that won the race.” Use *which* to introduce a qualifying clause: “This car, which won the race, is up for sale.” As a rule of thumb, use *which* and set off the phrase or clause by a comma if the information that follows is parenthetical or unessential to the meaning of your sentence. Use *that* and do not set off your phrase or clause by commas when the information that follows is essential to the meaning of your sentence.

thesis: For a doctoral degree.

threshold: Note only one ‘h’.

time: Use the 24-hour system: (See **Figures**)

· 10:00

· 20:15

NOT 10h15

time frame: Two words.

timetable: One word, no hyphen.

titles of papers, of lectures and themes must be in **inverted commas** (aka **single quotes**). E.g. A film of ‘Anna Karenina’ with a script by Tom Stoppard will soon be on circuit. Please note that this style may vary in academic references. (See **Inverted commas**)

titled/entitled: “The dissertation is titled ‘The influence of stress on the body’ **but** “The people are entitled to their rights.” (See **Italics**)

towards NOT toward. (See **General usage** on page 1)

total: A total of 300 people *were* hurt (*total of 300* is being used adjectivally) but “the total (*result/amount, etc.*) *is* being calculated now” (*total* used as a noun). (See **Verbs**)

translate into English / from Afrikaans

T-shirt

U

U19 team

UFS': not UFS's – to indicate possession.

unaware/unawares: Sometimes mixed up. *Unaware* (adjective) means “to be ignorant of” while *unawares* (adverb) is used e.g. “her presence caught him unawares”.

under way: Two words.

unexceptionable/unexceptional: Often mixed up. The former means “beyond criticism or objection”, while the latter means “ordinary or normal”.

uninterested: Often misused and confused with *disinterested*. *Uninterested* means “not interested in”, while *disinterested* means “free from bias or involvement”. (See [disinterest](#))

unique: Something is unique – not very unique or mostly or partially or equally or nearly or completely.

UNITS AT THE UFS: *See list at the end of the Style Guide.*

university: She is a student **at** the University of the Free State, or she is **at** university. She is a student **in** the Faculty of Law **of** the University of the Western Cape. She is a member **of** the team participating **in** the tournament. (See [Prepositions](#))

University of South Africa: Its acronym, **Unisa**, is spelt upper and lower case and you can say it as a word.

University of the Free State: “the event will be held **at the** University of the Free State” NOT “the event will be held at University of the Free State or University of Free State.”

V

Varsity Cup: Note caps.

verbal/oral: Do not confuse. All agreements are *verbal* (that is, they consist of words) but an agreement that is not in writing is *oral*.

verbs: A verb is the “doing word” in the sentence. It is essential. DON'T make sentences too complicated and lose the verb in the process.

In addition, make sure the verb and subject agree (this is called concordance): **a singular subject takes a singular verb**, e.g. the department *has* four professors, and *is* one of the best in the university, while **plural subjects take plural verbs**, e.g. the student and the lecturer *are* at odds, *they have* come to blows.

(See

- collective nouns
- each of
- everyone, everything, everybody
- few/ many
- if I were
- neither/either
- nobody, none, no one, nothing
- not only ... but, and not only ... but also
- number of
- total
- whereabouts)

Vice-Chairperson: In all the following titles, caps are used when they refer to a specific named person, i.e. the title holder of the post, e.g. “Vice-Chairperson Thabo Smit said ...” but “the vice-chairperson said”.

Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

vis-à-vis: Note the hyphens and the accent (and it is NOT in italics). (See [foreign languages](#))

Vision 130: Should not be italicised and must include a space between ‘Vision’ and ‘130’.

voters roll: No apostrophe.

Vrystaat Arts Festival: This is the correct name of the festival (not Free State Arts Festival).

W

waiver/waver: *Waiver* is “the act of renunciation” while *waver* is “to vacillate”.

War Museum of the Boer Republics

website/webpage: One word – lower case.

Western: This applies to *Western* values, values of the countries of the West (i.e. Europe, etc.). It must be capped in this context. However, in, for example, “the *western* parts of the province” the word *western* is not capped.

whereabouts: Is a singular noun, e.g. his whereabouts is unknown. (See [Verbs](#))

while: NOT whilst.

white paper, green paper: Use lower case unless it is the official title of a specific white or green paper.

withhold: Note double ‘h’.

woman scientist(s): Rather than female scientist(s).

word break: But *word-breaker*.

workplace: One word, not hyphenated.

writing letters: Go to <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk>. Under the Free guides section, you will find “How to write letters in plain English”. This is an excellent, easy guide that you can download.

World War I and **World War II**.

X

Xerox is a trademark; rather say photocopy. E.g. NOT “I have spent the entire morning xeroxing these books” but “I have spent the entire morning photocopying these books”.

X-rays

Y

Years (See [Figures](#), [Dates](#))

Use numerals to write specific years, e.g. 1958, mid-2004, and decades, e.g. the 1980s, and centuries, e.g. the 1700s. Alternatively, refer to centuries in the following way: 12th Century, 18th Century (note the caps).

Use an apostrophe (a single right quote) before the numeral when referring to a single year, e.g. the floods of ’93, but NO apostrophe (and use figures) when referring to e.g. the 70s, the 50s.

Youth for Human Rights International: US organisation.

Z

Zairians: the people of Zaire (historical only since this is the former name (between 1971 and 1997) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

zero, zeroes.

Acronyms

CGS – Council for Geosciences

CHE – Council on Higher Education

CSIR – Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

CSRC – Campus Student Representative Council

DHET – Department of Higher Education and Training

ECS – Executive Committee of the Senate

FSB – Financial Services Board

HEQC – Higher Education Quality Committee

HSPT – Health Sciences Placement Test

HSRC – Human Sciences Research Council

ICT Services – Department of Information and Communication Technology Services; other abbreviations include ICT and ICTS

IGS – Institute for Groundwater Studies

IRDP – Institutional Research Development Programme

ISRC – Institutional Student Representative Council

LGBTQIA+ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, [transgender](#), queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and others. The “plus” represents other sexual identities, including pansexual and Two-Spirit.

MINTEK – Council for Mineral Technology

MRC – Medical Research Council

NBTs – National Benchmark Tests

NMISA – National Metrology Institute of South Africa
NRF – National Research Foundation
NFSAS – National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSTF – National Science and Technology Forum
PanSALB – Pan South African Language Board
RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning
RIMS – Research Information Management System
RUFORUM – Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture
SAAO – South African Astronomical Observatory
SABS – South African Bureau of Standards
SACQSP: South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession
SADC – Southern African Development Community
SAFEFE – South African Foundation for Economic and Financial Education
Sanpad – SA Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development
SARIMA – The Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association
SARS – South African Revenue Services
SLE – Senior Lecturer Equivalent
Safex – South African Futures Exchange
SAQA – South African Qualifications Authority
SASBMB – South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
SATI – South African Translators' Institute
SDS – Student Development and Success
SRC – Student Representative Council
UDRAW – Unit for Development of Rhetorical and Academic Writing
UMC – University Management Committee
UWC – University of the Western Cape
WRDM – Water-Related Disaster Management Network
WRC – Water Research Commission

Faculties at the UFS

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Faculty of The Humanities

Faculty of Health Sciences

Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Education

Faculty of Law

Faculty of Theology and Religion

Departments

Departments in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

- Business Management
- Centre for Business Dynamics
- Centre for Development Support
- Economics and Finance
- Industrial Psychology
- Public Administration and Management
- School of Accountancy
- UFS Business School

SARChI Research Chairs

- Higher Education and Human Development (Centre for Development Support)
- Strengthening Urban Economies: People, Place, Production and Policy (Economics and Finance)

Departments in the Faculty of The Humanities

- African Languages
- Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French
- Anthropology
- Art History and Image Studies
- Centre for Gender and Africa Studies
- Centre for Health Systems Research & Development (CHSR&D)
- Communication Science
- Criminology
- Drama and Theatre Arts
- English
- Fine Arts
- Hebrew
- History
- Linguistics and Language Practice
- Odeion School of Music
- Philosophy & Classics
- Political Studies and Governance
- Psychology
- Social Work
- Sociology
- South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies
- Unit for Professional Training and Service in the Behavioural Sciences (UNIBS)

Departments in the Faculty of Health Sciences

School of Biomedical Sciences

- Animal Research Unit
- Basic Medical Sciences

- Biostatistics
- Human Molecular Biology Unit
- South African National Control Laboratory for Biological Products
- Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit

School of Clinical Medicine

- Anaesthesiology
- Cardiology
- Cardiothoracic Surgery
- Clinical Imaging Sciences
- Community Health
- Critical Care
- Dermatology
- Family Medicine
- Forensic Medicine
- Internal Medicine
- Medical Physics
- Neurology
- Neurosurgery
- Nuclear Medicine
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- Oncology
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopaedics
- Otorhinolaryngology
- Paediatrics and Child Health
- Pharmacology
- Plastic Surgery
- Psychiatry
- Surgery
- Urology

School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

- Exercise and Sport Sciences
- Nutrition and Dietetics

- Occupational Therapy
- Optometry
- Physiotherapy

School of Nursing

School of Pathology

- Anatomical Pathology
- Chemical Pathology
- Haematology and Cell Biology
- Human Genetics
- Medical Microbiology
- Virology

Divisions in the Faculty of Health Sciences

- Community-Based Education and Rural Health
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Frik Scott Medical Library
- Health Sciences Education (HSE)
- Medikeion (Medical Museum)
- Public Health
- Research Directorate
- Research Ethics Committee
- Student Learning and Development

SARChI Research Chairs

- SARChI Chair in Vector-borne and Zoonotic Pathogens (Virology)

Departments in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Natural Sciences

- Centre for Microscopy
- Centre for Environmental Management (CEM)
- Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry
- Chemistry

- Computer Science and Informatics
- Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC)
- Genetics
- Geography
- Geology
- Institute for Groundwater Studies (IGS)
- Mathematics and Applied Mathematics
- Mathematical Statistics and Actuarial Science
Statistical Consultation Unit (SCU)
- Microbiology and Biochemistry
- Physics
- Plant Sciences:
Divisions: Botany
Plant Breeding
Plant Pathology
- Zoology and Entomology
Divisions: Entomology
Zoology

Agricultural Sciences

- Agricultural Economics
- Animal Science
Divisions: African Large Predator Research Unit (ALPRU)
Animal Breeding
Animal Nutrition
Animal Physiology
Grassland Science
Predation Management Centre

Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences

- Sustainable Food Systems and Development

Divisions: Centre for Sustainable Agriculture,
Rural Development, and Extension
(CENSARDE)

Building Sciences

- Architecture:
Earth Unit (EU)
- Quantity Surveying and Construction Management
- Urban and Regional Planning

Technical Divisions

Divisions: Electronics
Instrumentation

SARChI Research Chairs

SARChI Chair in Disease Resistance and Quality in Field Crops
(Plant Sciences)

SARChI Chair in Pathogenic Yeasts (Microbiology and Biochemistry)

SARChI Chair in Solid-state Luminescent and Advanced Materials
(Physics)

Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Research Chairs

- Agriculture Risk Financing
- Climate Change and Agriculture
- Innovative Agro-processing for Climate-smart Food System
- Sustainable Livestock Production

Departments in the Faculty of Education

Department of Childhood Education

Department of Curriculum Studies and Higher Education

Department of Education Foundations

Department of Languages in Education

Department of Education Management, Policy, and Comparative Studies in
Education

Department of Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Technology Education

Department of Social Sciences and Commerce Education

Postgraduate and Research Directorate

Teaching and Learning Unit

Teaching Practice Directorate

Departments in the Faculty of Law

Free State Centre for Human Rights

Mercantile Law

Private Law

Public Law

School of Financial Planning Law

UFS Law Clinic

Departments in the Faculty of Theology and Religion

Historical and Constructive Theology

Old and New Testament Studies

Practical and Missional Theology

Religion Studies

SLP Unit:

Shepherd Centre

Academies at the UFS

Academy for Multilingualism

Kovsie Phahamisa Academy

Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Research Chairs at the UFS

Agriculture Risk Financing
Climate Change and Agriculture
Innovative Agro-processing for Climate-smart Food System
Sustainable Livestock Production

Centres at the UFS

Centre for Development Support (CDS)
Centre for Environmental Management (CEM)
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (CGAS)
Centre for Graduate Support (CGS)
Centre for Health Systems Research & Development (CHSR&D)
Centre for Labour Law
Centre for Microscopy
Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development and Extension (CENSARDE)
Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)
Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC)
Free State Centre for Human Rights
Health and Wellness Centre
Interdisciplinary Centre for Digital Futures (ICDF)
Predation Management Centre (PMC)
Robert WM Frater Cardiovascular Research Centre (Frater Centre)
Shepherd Centre

Directorates at the UFS

Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP)
Directorate Research Development (DRD)

Postgraduate and Research Directorate (Education)
Teaching Practice Directorate

Groups at the UFS

International Studies Group (ISG)

Initiatives at the UFS

Initiative for Creative African Narratives (iCAN)
Make the First 1 000 Days Count Initiative
NPO Research and Development Initiative

Institutes at the UFS

Institute for Groundwater Studies (IGS)

Laboratories at the UFS

Analytical Laboratory (Institute for Groundwater Studies)
IDEAS Lab
South African National Control Laboratory for Biological Products (SANCLBP)
Sensory Lab
South African Doping Control Laboratory (SADoCoL)

Libraries at the UFS

Frik Scott Medical Library
Music Library
Neville Alexander Library (South Campus)
Sasol Library
TK Mopeli Library (Qwaqwa Campus)

Programmes at the UFS

Academic Student Tutorial Excellence Programme (A_STEP)
Agribusiness Transformation Programme (AGTP)
Family Math and Family Science Programme
Flow Characteristic Programme/Free Pumping Test Programme (Institute for Groundwater Studies)
Food Environment Programme
No Student Hungry (NSH) Programme
Peer Mentor Programme
Programme for Innovation in Artform Development (PIAD)
Transformation of the Professoriate Mentoring Programme
Umoja Buddy Programme
University Access Programme
University Staff Development Programme (USDP)

Projects at the UFS

Two Observatories Project
UFS Community Garden Project

Research focus areas at the UFS

Food Security and Land Reform
Health and Well-Being
Local and Regional Socio-Economic Development
New Scientific and Industrial Challenges
Social Justice, and the Removal of Inequalities
Water and Water Quality

Residences at the UFS

Bloemfontein Campus

- Ike e: /xarra //ke-President Steyn
- Abraham Fischer-Boetapele
- Akasia
- Ardour
- Ardour Annex
- Arista
- Armentum
- Beyers Naudé
- Conlaurès
- Emily Hobhouse
- Harmony
- Imperium
- Imvelo-Yesizwe
- Intsika-ye-Khaya
- Kagiso
- Karee
- Karee Annex
- Kestell
- Khayalami
- Legatum
- Lehakwe
- Madelief
- Madelief Annex
- Marjolein
- Maroela
- Outeniqua
- Protea
- Roosmaryn
- Soetdoring
- Sonnedou

- Toa Mageuzi
- Tswelopele
- Vergeet-My-Nie
- Veritas
- Villa Bravado
- Wag-'n-Bietjie
- Welwitschia
- Welwitschia Annex

Qwaqwa Campus

- Bokamoso
- Charlotte Maxeke
- Chris Hani
- Fulufhelo
- Khayaletu
- Khayelitsha
- Steve Biko
- Tshimolohong

South Campus

- Legae
- Liberty Female
- Liberty Male
- South Campus Day Res
- Toka

SANRAL chair at the UFS

SANRAL Chair in Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology Education (Prof Loyiso Jita)

SARChI research chairs at the UFS

Disease Resistance and Quality in Field Crops (Prof Maryke Labuschagne)
Higher Education and Human Development (Prof Melanie Walker)

Pathogenic Yeasts (Prof Carolina Pohl-Albertyn)
Solid-state Luminescent and Advanced Materials (Prof Hendrik Swart)
Strengthening Urban Economies: People, Place, Production and Policy (Prof Ivan Turok)
Vector-borne and Zoonotic Pathogens (Prof Felicity Burt)

Schools at the UFS

Business School
School of Accountancy
School of Biomedical Sciences
School of Clinical Medicine
School of Financial Planning Law
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS)
School of Nursing
School of Open Learning
School for Social Sciences and Language Education

Theatres and Art Galleries at the UFS

Scaena Theatre
Wynand Mouton Theatre
Centenary Gallery
Johannes Stegmann Gallery

Units at the UFS

African Large Predator Research Unit (ALPRU)
Fromontane Research Unit (ARU)
Animal Research Unit (Faculty of Health Sciences)
Arboviruses and Zoonotic Diseases Research Unit
Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit
Earth Unit (EU)

High-Performance Computing (HPC) Unit
Human Molecular Biology Unit (Faculty of Health Sciences)
Next Generation Sequencing Unit (UFS-NGS)
Social Support Unit (Student Affairs)
Statistical Consultation Unit (SCU)
Teaching and Learning Unit
Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice
Unit for Language Development
Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment (ULFE)
Unit for Professional Training and Service in the Behavioural Sciences (UNIBS)

Rectorate (Portfolios)

Academy for Multilingualism
Interdisciplinary Centre for Digital Futures (ICDF)
Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice
Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office (GEADO)

Student Affairs (Portfolios)

Office of the Executive Director: Student Affairs, Sport, Arts and Culture

- **Social Support**
- **Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)**
- **Student Life:**
 - *Active Civic Teaching (ACT)*
 - *Arts and Culture*
 - *Career Services*
 - *Gateway First-year Orientation*
 - *Food Environment*
 - *Student Leadership Development*

- *Peer Mentor Programme*
- *Research and Co-Curricular*
- *Student Media:*
 - *Kovsie X*
- **KovsieSport**
 - *Sport Clubs:*
 - Athletics
 - Badminton
 - Basketball
 - Chess
 - Cricket
 - Fencing
 - Football
 - Hockey
 - Judo
 - Karate
 - Netball
 - Rugby
 - Swimming
 - Table Tennis
 - Volleyball
 - *KovsieFit (Gym)*
 - *Campus Recreation*
 - *Qwaqwa Sports Office*
 - Body Building
 - Goalball
 - *South Campus Sports Office*
- **Housing and Residence Affairs**
 - *Finance and Human Resources*
 - Dining at Kovsies
 - Awela Restaurant
 - Conferences
 - Catering at Kovsies

- *Housekeeping*
- *Physical Residence Services*
- *Residence Life and College Communities*
- *Accommodation Administration*
 - On-Campus
 - Off-Campus
- *South Campus*
 - Housekeeping and Physical Residence
 - Accommodation Administration
 - Residence Life
- *Qwaqwa*
 - Housekeeping
 - Physical Residence Services
 - Residence Life
 - Accommodation Administration
 - On-Campus
 - Off-Campus
- **Health and Wellness**
 - *Kovsie Health*
 - UFS Health Practice (services - General Practitioner (GPs), Sport and Exercise Medicine and Travel Medicine)
 - UFS Physiotherapy Practice (Sport and general physiotherapy services)
 - UFS Primary Health Care
 - First Aid
 - *HIV/AIDS Office*
 - HIV Testing, Counselling and Support
 - HIV and AIDS awareness and advocacy through prevention programmes
- **Student Counselling and Development**
- **Institutional Student Governance and South Campus Student Affairs**
- **Student Affairs – Qwaqwa Campus**

Support Services

Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)
Centre for Graduate Support
Communication and Marketing (DCM)
Community Engagement
Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP)
Directorate Research Development
Finance
Health and Wellness Centre

- [Kovsie Health](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Office](#)

Housing and Residence Affairs
Human Resources

- Human Resources Business Partners
- Benefits and Administration
- Organisational Development
- Talent Acquisition
- Employee Relations Management
- Remuneration Management and Business Architecture
- Pension and Provident Fund

Information and Communication Technology Services (ICT Services)
Institutional Advancement
KovsieSport
Library and Information Services
Directorate Research Development (DRD)
Management and Administrative Language Service
Office for International Affairs
Postal Services and Documentation
Protection Services
SARCHI Chair in Higher Education and Human Development Research Programme
Service Learning
Student Academic Services
Student Affairs
Student Counselling and Development
Student Recruitment Services
University Estates

Best Practice for online platforms

Optimal Website News Article Length

Content Type	Word Count	Purpose
Standard news article	500-800	Ideal for updates, event coverage, and announcements, quick to read and scannable.
In-depth feature article	1,000-1 500	Suitable for interviews, research highlights, or institutional impact stories.
SEO-optimised editorial/Thought Leadership	1,200-2 000	Ranks better on search engines when well-structured with headings and keywords.
Brief Media Release/Notice	250-400	Used for public announcements, statements, and urgent communication.
Guidelines for higher engagement and visibility		
First 100 words	Must answer the “who, what, when, where, why” (inverted pyramid model).	
Paragraph length	2-4 sentences each, to improve readability on mobile and web.	
Use of headings and subheadings	Improves navigation and SEO.	
Multimedia integration	Embed images, videos, or infographics to increase time on page.	
SEO best practices	Include meta title (50-60 characters), meta description (150-160 characters), and keyword density of 1-2%.	
Best Practices		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep institutional tone, yet ensure accessibility and narrative flow. • Link to related content (faculty pages, events, strategic goals). • Always include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of publication • Author or department • Contact for media inquiries • Strategic category tag (e.g., “Student Success”, “Research Excellence”, etc.) 		

Optimal heading lengths for web banners(e.g., UFS campaigns, event promotions, research highlights)

Banner Type	Character Count	Purpose
Hero Banner (Homepage)	20-40	Short, punchy, and impactful. Must grab attention within 3 seconds.
Event/Call-to-action banner	30-50	Clear and action-driven: e.g., “Register Now for Spring Graduation 2025”.
Faculty/Department Banners	35-55	Balanced tone, clear subject matter. Avoid jargon.
Mobile Web Banners	20-35	Space is limited. Prioritise clarity and vertical centering.
Announcement Alert Bars	15-30 characters	E.g., “Campus Closed Today” - concise and high-visibility messaging.

Digital Specific Style Guidelines

1 Social Media Style Rules

1.1 Tone and Voice

- Direct, concise, people-centred.
- Speak with audiences, not at them.
- Avoid institutional jargon. Use plain language.
- Maintain brand voice: factual, credible, warm but professional.
- Do not sound promotional unless it is a campaign post.

1.2 Structure for Posts

- First sentence must deliver the point, users scroll fast.
- Use short paragraphs; ideally 1–2 lines per block.
- Hard news: lead with the outcome, then context.
- Campaigns: lead with the value or call to action (CTA).

1.3 Language Rules

- UK English spelling.
- Avoid emojis in formal announcements; allowed in student-facing posts only if aligned with tone.
- Do not use all caps for emphasis.
- Avoid hashtags inside the sentence; place them at the end.

1.4 Hashtags

- Use only 1–3 relevant hashtags.
- Institutional hashtags must always be consistent.
- Avoid hashtag spamming, platforms penalise it.

1.5 Images, Video, and Media

- Use high-contrast, brand-aligned images.
- For accessibility, include alt text (Facebook, LinkedIn).
- Videos must include captions.
- Avoid using text-heavy images.

2. Web English Style Rules (Website / Intranet / Microsites)

2.1 Digital Writing Basics

- Write for scanning: 3–5 line paragraphs.
- One idea per paragraph.
- Put the key message first.
- Use descriptive headings (H1 > H2 > H3).
- Break content into manageable sections.

2.2 Standard Language Rules

- UK English.
- Dates: 1 January 2026.
- Times: 09:00–16:30.
- Numbers: 1–9 spelled out; 10+ as numerals.
- Use active voice: “You must apply by...”

2.3 Avoid

- PDF-first content for information needed by students or staff.
- Long sentences.
- Over-capitalisation.
- Unnecessary academic tone.

2.4 Calls to Action

- CTAs must be explicit:
- Apply
- Register
- View requirements
- Contact support
- Avoid vague CTAs like “Click here”.

3. Digital Documents (.pdf, guidelines, reports, handbooks)

3.1 Purpose of PDF

- Use PDF only for:
- Policies

- Reports
- Formal documents
- Legal content
- Templates

Do NOT use PDF for:

- Registration instructions
- Student support content
- Step-by-step processes
- Time-sensitive information

3.2 Writing Rules

- UK English.
- Formal tone but still plain and readable.
- Avoid long paragraphs; use subheadings.
- Include version number and last updated date.

3.3 Formatting Standards

- Minimum 11 pt font size; body text ideally 12 pt.
- Sans-serif fonts (Arial).
- 1.5 line spacing.
- Proper heading hierarchy.
- Full justification is discouraged; left alignment preferred.

3.4 Accessibility Requirements (PDF-specific)

- Tag all headings correctly.
- Alt text for images.
- Use real text, not scanned text images.
- Ensure colour contrast meets WCAG 2.1 AA standards

4. Cross-Platform Consistency Standards

4.1 Language Consistency

The following must be identical across social media, web, and documents:

- UK English spelling
- Capitalisation rules
- Date and time format

- Terminology (maintain a controlled glossary)
- Tone: clear, factual, direct

4.2 Branding Consistency

- Use official brand colours.
- Use approved photography and iconography.
- Do not distort logos or stretch images.
- Maintain consistent voice and positioning.

4.3 Content Governance

- Every digital asset must have:
 - Owner
 - Review frequency (6–12 months)
 - Last updated date
 - Version control (for PDFs, strategies, policies)

4.4 Fact-checking

- Statements must match across all platforms:
 - Fees
 - Deadlines
 - Requirements
 - Process steps
 - Statements issued by leadership
 - Inconsistency damages credibility.

5. Accessibility and Compliance (non-negotiable)

WCAG 2.1 AA Requirements

Mandatory for web, social media images, and digital documents:

5.1 Text

- Minimum contrast ratio 4.5:1.
- Avoid text in images.
- Use headings logically.

5.2 Images

- Every image must have alt text (unless decorative).
- Alt text must describe purpose, not aesthetics.

5.3 Video

- Captions or subtitles required.
- Provide transcripts for long educational videos.

5.4 Links

- Use meaningful labels, not “click here”.
- Ensure link colour is accessible.

5.5 Forms and Downloads

- Forms must be screen-reader friendly.
- PDFs must be tagged and accessible.

5.6 Legal and Institutional Compliance

- POPIA for all personal information.
- Copyright respected for all media.
- Crisis messaging follows approved channels.

Acknowledgements

University of Johannesburg Style Guide

Stellenbosch University Style Guide

The Guardian Style Guide

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide/>)

Plain English Campaign (<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>)

University of Oxford, Writing and Style Guide

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/public-affairs/style-guide>

University of Cambridge, Editorial Style Guide

<https://www.cam.ac.uk/brand-resources/editorial-style-guide>

London School of Economics (LSE), Writing for the Web

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/web-help/guides/writing-for-the-web>

MIT, Writing for the Web

<https://web.mit.edu/webmasters/guide/writing-for-the-web.html>

Australian National University (ANU), Writing Style Guide

<https://services.anu.edu.au/communications-marketing/writing-style-guide>

University of Queensland (UQ), Web Writing and Editorial Style Guide

<https://web.library.uq.edu.au/research-tools-techniques/digital-essentials/writing-digital-world>

University of Cape Town (UCT), Editorial Style Guide

<https://www.news.uct.ac.za/media/uct-assets/downloads/uct-editorial-style-guide.pdf>

Stellenbosch University – Language Centre /

Plain Language and Editorial Guidelines

<https://languagecentre.sun.ac.za>

GOV.UK, Digital Service Style Guide (Global Benchmark)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/style-guide>

WCAG 2.1 Accessibility Standards

<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

The style guides of the UFS Department of Communication and Marketing and of the university’s Management and Administrative Language Service have been incorporated into this style guide.



2026/1

Copy-editing Styleguide

Additional guidelines:



<https://www.ufs.ac.za/branding>

www.ufs.ac.za

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