Style Guide

All Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students

2016/2017
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NOTE: throughout this Guide, the term ‘dissertation’ should be taken to include BA and MA dissertations and theses for research degrees, unless otherwise specifically stated.

Style and Structure

Style is partly a matter of personal preference, but there are accepted conventions of grammar and presentation which will make your work clear and effective. You should aim to achieve the best professional standards of historical writing both in content and in presentation at all times. The aim when planning the structure of your work is to ensure clarity of exposition and argument. This is assisted by a sensible division of the text into suitable paragraphs (and, in a dissertation, the grouping of these paragraphs into chapters). However, too many subdivisions can interrupt the chain of argument and make the work appear disjointed.

The essential principles to bear in mind are clarity, readability and ease of reference. In stylistic terms, this means the use of good written English. There is no particular merit in long and cumbersome sentences. Aim instead for a writing style that remains clear and concise, and is expressive through using a sophisticated vocabulary. Care should be taken over grammar and punctuation.

Page Layout

All work must be word-processed in justified text using Times New Roman font in 12 point type, with double or 1.5 line spacing. The page size should be A4, and the top, bottom, left and right margins should be of 25mm (except that in dissertations and theses, the left-hand margin must be 40mm, to allow for binding). Each page must be clearly numbered, using the header. When the hard copy of dissertations and theses is printed, only one side of each sheet of paper must be used.

All coursework assignments and undergraduate dissertations: there must be a header on each page containing your student number (which you will find located directly below your name on your ID card), the module and assignment number, and the total word count (all of which should be positioned at the left-hand margin), and the page number (which should be placed at the right-hand margin). These and only these identifiers should be in the page headers: **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON YOUR WORK.** For essays and similar assignments, the full title of the question that you are answering should be placed at the top of the first page.

MA dissertations and theses for higher degrees: these are submitted bound with the title and author identification on the first page, and so each page needs only its number (placed at the top right-hand corner).

In all cases, the first paragraph of an essay, and of each chapter in a dissertation, should start at the left-hand margin. The beginning of each subsequent paragraph must be clearly indicated, either by inserting a blank line or by indenting its first word by at least 20mm.

Spelling

All word-processing programmes include a spell-check facility. Whilst it is a good idea to use it, you need to remember its limitations. The ‘spell check’ will not recognise many of the names of persons and places which you use and, consequently, it is easy to mistake these; for example, to put ‘Atlee’ throughout your essay when the name is actually ‘Attlee’. The default setting of most spell-checkers is ‘United States English’, and you may need to reset it to ‘United Kingdom English’ in order to avoid creating errors. Remember also that the ‘spell check’ does not know your intention, so that if you typed ‘hear’ when you meant ‘here’, it will not detect the error. For this reason, there is no substitute for giving the final version of your work a thorough proof-reading before you submit it.

Grammar

A good essay should read well. It should flow and not be marred by bad grammar, punctuation, spelling or style. These are basic skills of written English and you will be penalised for carelessness in this regard. Above all, your writing should be clear. Divide your text into paragraphs, each of which makes its own distinct point.
One of the commonest and most fundamental errors in students’ work is the misuse of the comma where stronger punctuation is required (usually a full stop, or a semi-colon).

Wrong: He went to the door, there was no one there.

Right: He went to the door. There was no one there.
He went to the door; there was no one there.

Also very common is misuse or neglect of the apostrophe. The apostrophe has two uses:

1. to denote the omission of letters in a contraction (as in can’t), and
2. to denote a possessive.

The general rule is that a possessive is formed by adding ‘s to a word (the conflict’s origin, Asquith’s policy, women’s rights), except where the word concerned is a plural that itself ends in s, in which case an apostrophe alone is added (students’ union, the Joneses’ house).

A particular pitfall is presented by its and it’s since here the possessive does not follow the normal rule. The apostrophe in it’s always signifies the contraction of it is, and the correct possessive form is simply its. Thus, while you might properly say One’s got to do one’s best, you cannot say It’s not in it’s place. Instead, the correct form is It’s not in its place.

The word-processing programme can assist you by highlighting some issues of grammar. However, as with spelling, the programme is not aware of your intent. A particular problem arises from the programme’s preference for an active as opposed to a passive tense. There are various guides to grammar and English expression, such as Lynne Truss, Eats, Shoots & Leaves (2003). In addition, the Careers Service has an excellent range of short explanatory sheets about various aspects of punctuation as well as broader issues of style, essay planning, etc.

You may find that reading your work out loud will help you to improve your grammar and style. This can be especially helpful for the correct placing of commas: where you would naturally pause for a beat when speaking, it is likely that there should be a comma in a written text.

**Initials, Abbreviations, Contractions and Colloquialisms**

Commonly used and well known initials and acronyms can be used in your text (such as BBC, NATO, MP, UN, etc.), but the name should be given in full at the first mention and immediately followed by the initials in brackets:

... original charter of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was granted in ...

In other cases, you should not replace names with initials in the text; it should always read ‘the Prime Minister’ and not ‘the PM’, ‘the Foreign Office’ and not ‘the FO’. Always put ‘First World War’ and ‘Second World War’ in full, and do not use ‘WW2’ or ‘WWII’, etc. In all cases, clarity is more important than brevity.

Abbreviations, contractions and colloquialisms (such as: e.g. didn’t, the bottom line), should be avoided. It is permissible to use abbreviations in footnotes, but they should always be readily understandable. Any abbreviations used should be explained on their first occurrence in the text, and in a dissertation they should also be included in a reference list placed after the contents page. The only exceptions to this are abbreviations which are standard conventions used in references, as follows:

- p. page (e.g. p. 147)
- pp. pages (e.g. pp. 147-9)
- MS manuscript (plural: MSS)
- *Ibid.* *Ibidem* (meaning ‘in the same place’)
- vol. Volume (plural: vols)
Use of ‘ed.’ and ‘eds’

When following a person’s name or multiple names, ‘ed.’ and ‘eds’ mean ‘editor’ and ‘editors’, respectively. In this context, ‘ed.’ has a full stop and ‘eds’ does not. This is because ‘ed.’ is an abbreviation (a shortened version of a word, created by deleting the end part of the word), and ‘eds’ is a contraction (a word created by omitting one or more letters from within it).

For example:


Editions of primary sources place the editor(s) after the title of book; in these cases, ‘ed.’ means ‘edited by’ and can refer to either a single editor or multiple editors.

Dates, Names and Numbers

Dates should be given in a consistent pattern of the number of the day, then the name of the month, and then year, as follows: 24 August 1931. The day should be given as a plain numeral, and not followed by ‘st’, ‘rd’ or ‘th’. The format 24/08/31 is not acceptable in either text or references. Dates of years should always be given in full as numbers, e.g. ‘1789’. Decades do not take the possessive case, i.e. they should appear as 1580s, not 1580’s. If referring to a century, this should be given in word form, e.g., ‘the seventeenth century’. When a century is used as an adjective then it should be hyphenated but not otherwise, e.g. ‘seventeenth-century women’, but ‘women of the seventeenth century’.

Names should also follow a consistent pattern. The full name and title should be given at the first mention of a person in the text, after which all further mentions refer to that individual by her/his surname (except for monarchs and popes, who are referred to by their forename and number or distinguishing appellation, e.g. Henry VIII, Innocent IV, Frederick the Great). However, if more than one person with the same surname is mentioned in the text, an identifying forename or title will need to be given, *either* at all mentions if both occur persons frequently (e.g., Austen Chamberlain and Neville Chamberlain, or the 14th Earl of Derby and the 15th Earl), *or* where one person appears rarely, only for that person (e.g. in an essay on Margaret Thatcher, where she is just ‘Thatcher’ but the one or two mentions of her husband are indicated by the use of ‘Denis Thatcher’).

It is permissible to give a full name and title on the first mention and subsequently refer to that individual by her/his surname or title (e.g. Wellington) on all following occasions.

Numbers up to ten should be written as a word; for larger numbers use figures: one, ten, 11, 167, etc. Commas make large numbers more comprehensible, so 1,256 and 245,000. It is permissible to use the abbreviations m. for million(s) and bn. for billion(s). Fractions and decimals should be given as 1½, 1.37, but otherwise use an expression, such as ‘half of the empire’ etc. When referring to percentages in the text, use ‘per cent’ not ‘%’.

Capital Letters

When writing prose (as opposed to a bibliographic list), capital letters should only be used for proper nouns: the names of people, places, institutions and specific items such as an act of parliament. For example:

Martin Luther, the Duke of Wellington, Mount Fuji, Foreign Office, Socialism, Reform Act of 1918

However, capital letters are not used where the term is generic, or a common noun, such as ‘foreign policy’ or ‘general election’. Examples of both forms are: ‘Pope Benedict issued a bull’, but ‘many popes lived in the Vatican’; ‘King Henry VIII’, but ‘Henry VIII, king of England’ and ‘the powers of the king of England’; ‘the Cabinet’ but ‘cabinet ministers’.
Capitals should usually be used for all of the words in the titles of books, periodicals and newspapers.

**Italics, Underlining and Asides**

Be very sparing in the use of either italics or underlining in order to give emphasis. Do not over-use brackets: an aside or subsidiary clause is often better surrounded by commas or dashes, or placed in a separate sentence altogether. Italics should normally only be used for:

- titles of publications (see the sections below on references)
- terms or phrases in languages other than English (but not where they are in a quotation)

**Quotations**

In presenting your argument, you may wish to quote extracts from the secondary or primary sources that you have been reading. Be careful, as this has many pitfalls. Never insert quotations simply to pad out your text. Only use a quotation when it is particularly relevant to your line of argument, and show that this is so. Excessive quotation of sources should be avoided.

It is important to strike a balance between failing to buttress your analysis with evidence and the over-frequent insertion of quotations, especially those of excessive length. Remember that all quotations are included in the calculation of the word length of the assignment.

Quotations of up to two lines of typescript should remain within the text of a paragraph, placed between single quotations marks ‘like this’. Longer extracts should stand separately at the appropriate point in the text: they should be indented from both margins by not less than 10 mm., set in a smaller font (11 or 10 point) and put in single-spaced lines. A blank line must be left both above and below each such quotation, so that it stands out clearly from the surrounding text. For this reason, it is not necessary to place such quotations between quotation marks. In the case of a longer quote, place the footnote reference number at the end of the quote.

All quotations must correspond exactly with the original in wording, spelling, capitalisation and interior punctuation; in this respect, they are exempt from the rules given in this guide. Any alterations, omissions or insertions must be clearly shown, using the following conventions.

You might wish to shorten a quotation. This is an acceptable practice so long as it does not in any way sacrifice clarity or alter the meaning of the original. It is undertaken by means of an ellipsis, which is represented as three spaced full-stops at the point where the omission has taken place, regardless of the length of the omission, i.e. … Common sense should be used when editing quotations in this manner. Too many ellipses within a quotation should be avoided, and it is not normally worthwhile to make omissions of less than five words. On the other hand, ellipses should not be used to link material across a very large omission, and extracts which are widely separated in the original should be given as two distinct quotations. Do not begin or end a quotation with an ellipsis, even if words have been omitted here (if your quote begins within a sentence, do not change the first letter in the quote from lower case to upper case).

All quotations should read grammatically so far as it is possible. In order to achieve this (or to make a quotation clearer), it may be useful to insert information. All such interpolations introduced by you, or by any previous editor, must be placed in square brackets, i.e. [like this]. This rule applies to both short and long quotations. Interpolations may be necessary in order to clarify a name, date or place. They may also be required for inserting a word clearly omitted in error in the original, e.g. ‘the King was of the opinion [that] war should be declared’. However, it is not necessary to alter minor grammatical points in a quotation, such as the tense.

In some cases, a quotation may be made even less clear by the use of many such interpolations. When this might occur, alternative conventions can be employed to indicate that your reproduction of the original is not in error. One alternative is placing the word *sic* (a Latin word meaning ‘as it is written’) in square brackets after the appropriate word or phrase. e.g. The document states that ‘Henry VIII wanted to beheed [*sic*] his wife’. However, it should not be overused, and it is not necessary to use it repeatedly when quoting from documents written in medieval or early modern English. A second alternative is the insertion of a question mark, again in square
brackets, after any word where there is some doubt as to the correct reading, e.g. ‘Baldwin spoke to Greville[?] who said he could [would?] agree...’.

All quotations must have a footnote reference giving the precise details of the source – for the correct format of citation for different types of source material, with examples, see the References section below.

**Quotation Marks**

Single inverted commas should be used to indicate quotations, except if there is a quotation or words already placed in inverted commas in the passage which you are quoting. These words or existing quotation should be indicated by double inverted commas in your text, even if they were in single inverted commas in the original.

For example:

As the government became more unpopular, one cabinet minister noted in his diary that ‘the pressure to ditch the “poll tax” rises every day’.

Nancy Jay wrote: ‘The moment we say “The celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act” ... we have lost any possibility of gaining any understanding beyond the one we already had and brought along with us.’

If the passage or words quoted is of only part of a sentence, the closing quote mark is placed before the full stop at the end of the sentence (as in the first example above). However, if a complete sentence is quoted (even with some excision within it), then its closing full stop is part of the quotation and should be included within it, before the full stop (as in the second example above).

Single inverted commas or quotation marks are also used to indicate the titles of items within a publication, such as the titles of an article in a periodical or newspaper and an essay in an edited book of essays.

**Foreign Words and Quotations**

Foreign words or phrases embedded in your text should be italicised, e.g. ‘The Reichstag voted for war credits in August 1914’ and ‘Louis Napoleon staged a coup d’état in December 1851’. However, italics are not needed for foreign language quotations. Note also that where the English name for a place differs from the native form, the English version is used in all cases, unless it is a direct quotation.

If you are working with foreign language sources, the question of whether you should quote in the foreign language or use an English translation is a difficult question which should be discussed with your course tutor or dissertation supervisor. Languages which do not use the Roman alphabet present special difficulties which your supervisor can assist you with. It is usual to use English translations or paraphrases unless the original is required but, whatever you decide, you must be consistent and clear in your reasoning. Any summaries or paraphrases should be carefully considered to ensure they are accurate, and precise references to the original material must be given. If you are working from a translation, then a reference to the translated edition is adequate, but you should consider whether there are any potential pitfalls of using a translation. These are issues which particularly affect the writing and presentation of dissertations.

**Tables, Charts, Maps and Illustrations**

Ensure that all such material is clearly set out and that you explain its relevance in the main body of the text. Tables, graphs and charts should be given a number (figure 1, table 1, etc.) and title, placed above the item; maps and illustrations should have a caption placed below. The source is given immediately below the table, graph or chart, or for maps and illustrations, immediately below the caption.

All illustrative materials should have a numbered title (which in the case of a dissertation would be the combination of the chapter number and the illustration number), followed by its title in italics. In the following example, the table is table 1 in chapter 3 and so is numbered 3.1. The next table in chapter 3 would be numbered 3.2. The source of the table is given as a reference immediately below the table (as below), and not as a footnote to the table heading; the source should be in a smaller font, such as 10 point.
Table 3.1: Ionian Islands, selected estimated population, 1836.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corfu</td>
<td>65,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cephalonia</td>
<td>63,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zante</td>
<td>35,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levkas/Santa Maura</td>
<td>17,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithaca and Calamos</td>
<td>9,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>190,441</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Normally, illustrations (maps, graphs, pictures, etc.) in a dissertation are listed as separate series, with each series numbered in the same way by chapter and its place within the chapter series, so illustration 2.1 would be the first illustration in chapter two. As with charts, diagrams, graphs and tables, the source of an illustration should be given immediately below it, and not as a footnote to its title or caption.

## References – Footnotes

References acknowledge the source of specific quotations or information, and to cite evidence in support of your analysis. They should take the form of footnotes (placed at the bottom of the page) and are separate from the bibliography. Do not place references in brackets within the text – this is an unwieldy system which deflects the reader’s attention away from the content of the essay, and it is unsuitable for references to unpublished documents.

Footnotes can also be used to clarify or comment upon a point in your discussion, when doing so in the text would disrupt the flow and effectiveness of your argument. However, think very carefully whether including such material is really necessary – in most cases, it is not. A general rule is that if something is worth saying, it should be in the main text and not in a footnote; remember that the references are included in the word limit, so you do not gain anything by putting commentary in a footnote, and doing so to any extent will use up valuable space in a less effective way.

When referencing, your foremost objective must be to give clear and complete information about the sources that you have used. The first citation of any source, whether secondary or primary, should give its full details. All subsequent references (in dissertations, this includes all references in later chapters) can use what is called ‘short title’ references. These contain sufficient information about the authorship and title of the work or document to make it recognisable without difficulty, but otherwise are as concise as possible. A ‘short title’ can be as brief as a surname and sufficient key words from the title to make sense – which might be as few as one or two. However, if you have consulted more than one work or document by the same person, you must ensure that your short titles are not too similar to each other. Further instructions on using ‘short titles’, with examples, are given below, at the end of the references section.

References should not be over-used. There is no credit for having references simply for their own sake, and an excessive number will reduce the space available for presenting your analysis. It is certainly not necessary to have a reference for every sentence, although it would be odd for a whole paragraph to have no references at all. It is not necessary for all of the works or sources that you have consulted to appear in the references; the Bibliography at the end of the essay or dissertation provides you with the opportunity to display the comprehensiveness of your research, and has the advantage of not being included in the word limit.

Footnote markers should be ordinary numbers (do not use Roman numerals), and should be superscripted, i.e. appear as a small number in the upper half of the line. These numbers should be a single numerical sequence.
throughout an essay, starting with the number 1; in BA and MA dissertations, they can be in one sequence throughout, but higher degree theses should begin again with number 1 in each chapter.

Normally, a sentence only has one reference which is placed at the end, after the full stop, as the reference is an appendix to the sentence and is not grammatically a part of it. For example:

Baldwin declared that Conservatism ‘starts from temperament rather than logic’, and so was arrived at individually.¹⁴

The sole exception is where a sentence contains two or more quotations which are from different sources:

Gladstone believed the Ottoman Empire to be ‘beyond reform or value’, ³⁶ but Disraeli considered that it was ‘a vital national interest’³⁷ that it be maintained as a barrier to Russian expansionism.

The most important principle in reference citations is that you should be consistent. Do not refer to a work or source in different ways on different occasions; for example, do not in some cases give the forename of the author, but in others put the initials. A lack of consistency, whether in the text or in the references, is careless as well as misleading. Remember to give always a precise reference: in the case of a book or article, the citation should be to the exact page or pages in question, with the abbreviations of either p. (for one page), as in p. 147, or pp. (for more than one page), as in pp. 147-9. Page numbers should be contracted to the minimum number of digits necessary to make clear the pages in question. The only exception to contracting the page numbers specified as those consulted is in the case of pages in the ‘teens’, so put pp. 111-13 and not pp. 111-3. In the case of documents, the reference should be to the particular item (in long documents, to a specific part) and its precise location in a published work or an archive.

The text of the footnote must end with a full stop – they are a special form of a sentence. If a reference contains more than one item, they should be distinguished from one another by placing a semi-colon after each one, and with a full stop at the end of the whole footnote. It is understood that the item cited first is the source of the quotation, and you do not need to state this. Thereafter, or if there was not a quotation, items should be listed either in the alphabetical order by authors’ surnames or by the date of publication or of the document.

References to unpublished primary sources (e.g. letters) reproduced in published collections and published primary sources in modern editions take the forms given below under ‘primary sources’. The sections below also include examples of various formats (the examples are in some cases invented for illustrative purposes).

### Format of References

The full guide to the correct format of references is located on the university Library website. You can find it directly from the link below; alternatively, click on ‘How to Reference’ on the Library home page. and on the next page follow the link under the heading ‘Styles by Department’ to find the History guide.

http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/help/referencing/footnote

The guide contains information on the format of references, with examples, for various types of secondary sources and an extensive range of different primary sources. It is important that you become familiar with the correct format of referencing, and use it consistently and correctly in your work.

### Subsequent References: Using the ‘Short Title’ System

Subsequent references to the same source may be presented as a ‘short title’, so long as certain minimum information is retained and clarity is not sacrificed. The author is normally referred to by surname only, and the title is shortened to a few key words taken from the first part of the title (not from a sub-title); it may be reduced to just one or two words, provided that this does not cause possible confusion with other works by the same author. The short title form of a book remains in italic, and the short title form of an article or essay appears in single quotation marks. The publications detail are completely omitted. The following examples show the full first reference and subsequent ‘short title’ formats for a book, journal article and book chapter:


6. Addison, ‘Churchill and the working class’, p. 49.

In example 6 above, shortening the title of the book chapter to just ‘Churchill’ would have caused confusion with other articles and chapters written by this author.

Where a reference is identical with the one immediately previous except for the page numbers being cited, the abbreviation ‘Ibid.’ (an abbreviation of Ibidem, meaning ‘in the same place’) may be used instead of the short title of the book or article concerned:

**Bibliography**

The bibliography of a piece of work should list all of the sources, both primary and secondary, that you have consulted during your research. You must append a bibliography at the end of your assignment; it is not an alternative to footnotes - you should have both. Do not include items which you have only seen indirectly by a mention or quotation in another work. However, you should include all of the items that you have actually looked at, even if they are not directly mentioned in the text or referenced in the footnotes.

If there are any primary sources, these should be listed first. Secondary works should be arranged as a single list, in alphabetical order by the authors’ surnames. Where there is more than one publication by the same author, they should be listed by their title. You should give the full details of each item, following the same format as the full first citations in the referencing guide. No page numbers are given for books, but in the case of both journal articles and essays in edited books, you should give the ‘extent’ of the item – that is, the number of its first page and of its last page.

In the case of most coursework assignments, the bibliography is usually divided only into primary and secondary source sections. However, for dissertations and theses, each of these sections may be divided into a number of sub-sections, particularly where different types of primary sources have been used. For undergraduate dissertations, see the further guidance in the relevant section of the HS3501/HS3502 Dissertation Handbook. For MA dissertations and theses for higher degrees, follow the advice of your supervisor.