Introduction

We have produced this style guide as a service for staff to use when writing and editing text for publications and the web. It sets out conventions which are intended to promote the University’s reputation through consistency and accuracy.

A uniform style is reassuring to readers and less likely to distract them. This guide gives information on general issues of language and provides an A-Z index of the style to use for common words, names and phrases. This is designed to save you time since it means that decisions are only made once. The final sections give information on misused words and sensitivity in text.

We are all responsible for enhancing and developing the image of the University. The way we present information is fundamental to our professional image. I hope this guide will be helpful to you.

Joan Concannon
Director of External Relations
University of York
February 2011
Use of English

Points of language

GRAMMAR

Run-on sentences/Comma splice
A run-on sentence is two sentences that are merged incorrectly without a joining word or linked by too weak a form of punctuation. This example shows a form known as a comma splice: Run-on sentences are grammatically incorrect; they are one of the most frequent errors in text. There are easy ways to correct a run-on sentence:
- add a semi-colon, which is much stronger than a comma: Run-on sentences are grammatically incorrect; they are one of the most frequent errors in text.
- change the run-on sentence into two sentences: Run-on sentences are grammatically incorrect. They are one of the most frequent errors in text.
- add a joining word: Run-on sentences are grammatically incorrect and they are one of the most frequent errors in text.

Singular/Plural
Take care to match the subject with the verb: A group of new buildings including the Departments of Computer Science and Theatre, Film and Television opens in October not A group of new buildings including the Departments of Computer Science and Theatre, Film and Television open in October.
Collective nouns, such as team, crew, tribe, group, none, should be followed by a singular verb or pronoun when thought of as a single unit, but they take a plural verb or pronoun when thought of as a collection of individuals:
The committee gave its unanimous approval to the plans.
The committee enjoyed biscuits with their tea.
Number can be either singular or plural depending on how it is used: A number are without a loan but The number is slowly decreasing.

Split infinitives
Sometimes split infinitives make a sentence easier to understand: Enrolment in distance learning courses is expected to more than double in the next five years. However, a sentence is easier to understand if you don’t split the verb with a lengthy phrase. As a rule, choose the version that sounds the least stuffy.

PUNCTUATION
Some general points:
- Headings at all levels have minimal punctuation.
- If a web address (url) occurs at the end of a sentence, finish the sentence with a full stop.
- Avoid double punctuation. Quotations that end with a question mark or exclamation mark should not be followed by a full stop outside the quotation marks.
- If the sentence ends with a quotation that is a full sentence, the full stop should be put before the closing quotation mark.
- Avoid using exclamation marks.

Apostrophes
Apostrophes are used to indicate abbreviation, possession or contraction.
Possessives
Belonging to just one person: the lecturer’s notes. Belonging to more than one person: the lecturers’ notes.
Possessive plurals of nouns omit the s after the apostrophe: The classes’ timetables were confused.
Some plural nouns have no s: children. These take apostrophe s in the possessive: children’s games not childrens’ games.
Names
Use ’s for the possessive case in English names and surnames wherever possible: Hargreaves’s, Dickens’s. It is customary, though, to leave out the ’s when the last syllable of the name is pronounced iz, as in Bridges’ as long as you are consistent.
Time
Use apostrophes in phrases such as in two days’ time and six weeks’ holiday but no apostrophe in adverbial phrases: three weeks old.
University examples
Use apostrophes in:
Students’ Union
Overseas Students’ Association
Graduate Students’ Association
Freshers’ Week
Colons (:) Colons are used to:
• introduce lists: There are specialist pathways in: child and adolescent mental health, diabetes nursing, health and social care, learning disability, midwifery.
• separate statements in a sentence, when the second statement explains the first: The Department of Chemistry has some of the best facilities in the country: its laboratories have recently been refurbished.

Never follow a colon with a dash or hyphen. Always follow a colon with a l/c unless the next word is a proper name.

Commas (,)
We do not normally use ‘serial’ (or ‘Oxford’) commas. Use them only if it is necessary for clarity: for the Departments of Biology, Computer Science, and Theatre, Film and Television.

In general, don’t add commas just because you might pause when speaking a sentence, but do add them if the meaning might be misconstrued without them.

Dashes (–)
The en dash (also known as en rule) is used as a dash. It is longer than a hyphen and has different functions. In most software, it can be found under ‘Symbol/Special characters’.

En dashes are used:
• between ranges of numbers (12–15, 2000–2003), taking the place of to
• for linking distinct items or names for contrast or comparison: north–south divide
• where they replace ‘and’: Myers–Briggs
• to indicate ‘minus’: –3°C
• with spaces on both sides to separate clauses as a ‘dash’: Nearly all academic staff undertake teaching and research – a distinguishing feature of York.

Ellipses (…)
There is no space before an ellipsis, but there should be one space after one: ‘... an important date.’

Do not add a full point after an ellipsis at the end of a sentence: ‘There is a problem...’
Hyphens (-)

Hyphens are used:

- in compound adjectival phrases: up-to-date records; a 12-hour journey and three-digit number
- for two-word adjectives when followed by the noun: fast-flowing river; but not if it comes after the noun: the river is fast flowing
- when two words are frequently used together: an in-depth interview; the longed-for result
- to avoid confusion: to re-create a scene.

Semi-colons (;)

Use semi-colons to separate:

- two related ideas within one sentence: Don’t add a semi-colon for a pause; add one only if the text afterwards relates to the text before. When used in this way both ideas must have a subject and a verb.
- items in a list when the items include commas so are fairly complex: The meeting was attended by Professor Andrew Wilson, University of Barnsley; Professor Christine Watson, University of Skipton and Dr Hilary Holmes, University of Auckland.

Do not use a semi-colon to introduce a list (use a colon for this).

Quotation marks (“ ”)

- Use double quotation marks not single.
- Use single quotation marks for emphasised words or phrases and for a quotation within a quotation.
- For a longer quotation, simply indent on both left and right sides.
- There is no need for quotation marks around the title of a module, workshop or conference which has initial capitals on important words.

Punctuate quotations as follows:

- He said, “This is the right way to punctuate quotations.”
- “This is the right way to punctuate quotations,” he said.
- He said that this was ‘the right way’ to punctuate quotations.
- He said, “This is the ‘right’ way to punctuate quotations.”

Keeping your style simple

Keeping your style simple by using plain English is important because it makes your text more readable. This guide, and the suggestions here, are designed to make text and images in University publications easy to understand, enjoyable to read and accessible to all. The guide is not intended to make publications simplistic, or to crush individual writing styles.

VARY SENTENCES

Try not to use the same sentence construction throughout your prose. For example, if you are writing about a particular person, do not begin every sentence with their name or the personal pronoun.

Fred Bloggs was professor of glass studies at Harrogate University for six years before moving to Australia to examine the effects of tropical weather on modern glass manufacturing. This in turn led him to write about glass performance in typhoons in the South Pacific. The book was a surprise best-seller.

Sounds more interesting than...

Professor Fred Bloggs was appointed to a chair in glass studies at Harrogate University in 1977. He moved to Australia in 1983 to study glass manufacturing. He spent a great
deal of time in the South Pacific islands and wrote a book about typhoons and glass.

Text is often more readable if you vary the length of sentences. This gives a more interesting rhythm to the words.

**USE ACTIVE VERBS**

Any text can come across as turgid if it is written using passive language. You can engage the reader’s attention by using active verbs. It’s usually better to say *The committee decided to...* than *A decision was made by the committee to...*

The procedure will be implemented next week is better than The implementation of the procedure will take place next week. We discussed the matter is better than We had a discussion about the matter.

**WRITE APPROPRIATELY FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES**

Any writer should be clear who they are writing for before they begin to write. Is your audience young, well-educated, familiar with the subject? Are you writing important information which they are expecting and need to have for their job? Or are you writing for strangers, trying to engage their interest in something?

When you are writing for the web, remember that your text must make sense out of context since readers will have come to it from different routes. Keep your sentences concise. Use bulleted lists, descriptive headings and emphasise keywords by using bold. For further information see www.york.ac.uk/web-writing.

**‘VERBIN’ NOUNS**

Avoid using verbs which have been made, for convenience, from nouns. There is an increasing trend in journalism to do this and they tend to make writing heavy-handed.

Examples include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Example of ‘verbing’</th>
<th>What to use instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>action</td>
<td>We must action these items.</td>
<td>carry out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access</td>
<td>Please access the file to find out.</td>
<td>find; look in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact</td>
<td>The weather will impact the event.</td>
<td>have an impact on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>author</td>
<td>Who will author the report?</td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source</td>
<td>Who will source the material?</td>
<td>search for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progress</td>
<td>The minutes were progressed straightaway.</td>
<td>produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>task</td>
<td>We have been tasked to...</td>
<td>asked; given the job of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**An A–Z of University style**

**A**

a, an  
a historic or a heroic rather than an historic or an heroic

**abbreviations**

Try to avoid shortened words since they may not be understood outside the University:  
postgraduate certificate not PgCert  
January not Jan. or Jan  
UK not United Kingdom  
USA not United States or US  
European Union when used first, then EU  
Eg, etc, ie are set in roman without full points  
Do not use ampersands unless in a formal name or trade name: City & Guilds  
Use per cent not % in text. Use the symbol in headlines, charts and figures  
Close up unit abbreviations: 10mm, pp10–12  
Close up am and pm: 5pm, 10am  
Use Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms, PhD, MSc, MA without full points  
Spell out Professor in full: never use Prof. or Prof  
Use the appropriate article (a, an, or the) with abbreviations when you would use that article in speech: The CII is part of the Department of Biology  

**abbreviated negatives**

Do not use contractions such as don’t, can’t, won’t in text unless in direct quotes or chatty columns in magazines  

**accents**

Use these where possible except in words that have become part of English: hotel, elite. Keep when it makes a difference to the sound: café  
accommodation has double c and double m  
acknowledgement not acknowledgment  

**acronyms**

Write the phrase or title in full the first time it appears, followed by the acronym in brackets. After that, you can use the acronym on its own  
Where the abbreviation is better known than what it stands for there is no need to spell it out in full: BBC, NATO, IRA, AIDS  
Use:  
• capitals, even if the acronym is pronounced as a word: AIDS, NATO, IPUP  
Do not use:  
• full stops in acronyms or put spaces between initials  

**addresses**

**PRINTED**

Use commas when the address is on one line: University of York, York, YO10 5DD. If the address is on different lines do not use commas:  
Department of Biology  
University of York  
York YO10 5DD  
There is no need to include ‘Heslington’ in the University’s address  
For department addresses, put the department name before the University  
Some important details:  
• no full stops at the ends of the lines  
• no comma between the number and the street name
Style guide

- do not abbreviate Road, Street or Avenue
- postcode should appear after the town, county or city on the same line
- no comma between town/county and postcode

EMAIL

Try to avoid breaking email addresses in print if possible but not if a large amount of white space is left. In text, use lower case for University email addresses: fred.bloggs@york.ac.uk

WEBSITE

There is no need to include ‘http://’ in front of www, and do not include a final forward slash to a web address if technically possible (check to be sure). In text, try to include a web address only at the end of a sentence. Do not insert space so it moves to start the next line. If it has to run over two lines, split it at a forward slash. Make the web address bold and use a full stop (not bold) as closing punctuation

adviser not advisor
ageing not aging

Ages

Use initial capital letters in Dark Ages, Middle Ages, etc

A levels not A–Levels or A–levels

all right not alright
alumni (plural), alumnus (singular)
alot this word does not exist. A lot means a great deal

American spellings

Change to the English version when possible: Secretary of Defense to Secretary of Defence. When there is no English equivalent, and for place names, keep the American spelling: Labor Day and Pearl Harbor

amid, among not amidst, amongst

ampersand (&)

Use the word and unless referring to an official company name: Smith & Nephew. Ampersands should not be used on University of York business cards and stationery

Ancient Greek not ancient Greek

any more two words

anyway one word

apostrophes

Use:
- to denote possession in a noun: student’s timetable
- when replacing missing letters and numbers: students in the ’70s

Do not use:
- with possessive pronouns: yours not yours’
- in plurals of numbers, letters or in acronyms: 1970s not 1970’s; three A’s at A Level; CDs not CD’s

Some important uses:

Students’ Union
Overseas Students’ Association
Graduate Students’ Association
Freshers’ Week

asterisks

These are sometimes used in running text to refer a reader to an important footnote. They are rarely used in marketing materials and never on the web. Use only if absolutely necessary

awol not AWOL
bachelors not bachelor’s

Use with a hyphen when combined with another word to form an adjective: work-based

benefited not benefitted

between and among

Use between with two people or things and among with three or more people or things

brackets

Punctuation stays outside the brackets (parentheses) if the sentence is complete without the information inside. (A complete sentence that stands alone in brackets starts with a capital letter and ends with a stop.)

Britain/UK

Britain and UK mean the same. Great Britain refers only to England, Wales and Scotland. Take care not to write Britain when you might mean only England and Wales, for example when referring to the education system. Use UK in the University of York address, not England

bullet points

SIMPLE LISTS

Learners should identify the following organs of the human body:

- brain
- heart
- lungs
- stomach.

Note there are no initial capital letters (unless using proper nouns) and no punctuation except for a full stop at the end of the last bullet point.

PART SENTENCES

Sentences that have been broken down into bullet points should still ‘flow’ throughout:

People go on holiday to:

- have a change of scenery
- enjoy hot weather
- get away from editing BTEC Short Courses.

Note the colon, the lack of capitalisation and the single full stop. If the bulleted lines are very long, add a semicolon to the end of each line and end with a full stop.

FULL SENTENCES

Bulleted lists containing complete sentences should start with a capital letter and finish with a full stop.

Students must give examples of how this is implemented.

- For mark band 1, one example is required of its implementation by either a care worker or the organisation.
- For mark band 2, more than one example of either a care worker or the organisation is required.
- For mark band 3, it is desirable that students give examples of both workers and the organisation.

There does not have to be a colon at the end of the preceding sentence.

capital letters

Also known as u/c, or upper case

Capitalise:

- names of people, places and organisations (proper nouns)
- subjects at York: You don’t have to be a Music student to enjoy music.
names of institutions
- King, Pope when specifically named
- the Solar System, Sun, Moon, Earth
- the Catalyst not The Catalyst
- Acts of Parliament
- British Government departments of state and agencies
- the main words in the names of programmes and modules within text
- months and days of the week
- countries, rivers, lakes and mountains.

Do not capitalise:
- the smaller words in titles such as in, at, of, the, and, on
- generic job or occupation titles: He is the managing director of the company.
- general subject titles: Students study all aspects of archaeology.

University: use an initial capital in specific references to York: the University. When referring to a university use lower case.

College: use an initial capital when referring to a specific college: The College is named after Lord James. When referring to colleges in general use lower case: Goodricke is the first college on Heslington East.

Avoid over-use of capitals as they make the text more difficult to read. Whole titles or chunks of text written in capitals should be avoided as it looks like YOU ARE SHOUTING at the reader. If you want to emphasise a word, use italic instead.

Accents are not needed on capital letters.

city of York not City of York when referring generally to the city; use l/c for city

City of York Council is the full name of the Council

collective nouns
Nouns such as committee, family, government take a singular verb or pronoun when thought of as a single unit, but a plural verb or pronoun when thought of as a collection of individuals: The family can trace its history back to the Middle Ages.; The family were sitting down, scratching their heads.

colons (:) Use colons to:
- introduce a list
- separate statements in a sentence, when the second statement explains the first

Never follow a colon with a dash (:- )

compas points
Regional phrases should be in caps as in the North, the South, the West, the South East, etc but southeast England (because it is an adjective)

Use capitals for abbreviated compass points: NE, SW

CAT scan not Cat scan

church
Capitalise when referring to the body of the Catholic Church, but church when referring to the building

computer/new media terms
Use the following spellings:

browser
database
desktop
disk not disc
drop-down box
e-learning
email not e-mail
extranet
feedback
home page
hyperlink
internet not Internet
intranet
multimedia
offline
online not on-line
onscreen not on-screen
a pop-up
portal
program not programme
url
world wide web – the web
www
web page
website
wiki

**contact details**
Always provide a telephone number and an email address. Web addresses are strongly recommended. Only provide fax numbers when required.
Always provide these contact details in the following order: telephone, email, web.
If including a fax machine number then the order should be: telephone, fax, email, web.
Telephone numbers should always follow the format: +44 (0)1904 32XXXX
There is no need to introduce contact details with the terms ‘Telephone’, ‘Email’ or ‘Web’. They are self-explanatory.
If, however, it is necessary to list a fax number as well, then precede the numbers with the terms ‘Telephone’, ‘Fax’, ‘Email’ or ‘Web’ to separate the fax number from the telephone number.

**contractions**
Avoid the use of can’t, won’t and so on.
Other contracted words, for example you’ll for you will and we’ll for we will, are fine in the right context. When writing for a student/prospective student audience, contractions can help establish a friendly, informal tone. Use sparingly.

course titles
Always refer to University degree courses as programmes, not courses. The right way to write a course title is BA(Honours) History or BA(Hons) History. Note there is no space between BA and (Honours). Programme is not capitalised unless it is part of a full course title.
co-operate not cooperate
co-ordinate not coordinate

**D**
dash (see page 4)
The en dash (also known as en rule) is used as a dash. It is longer than a hyphen and has different functions. The en-dash can be found in most software under ‘Symbol/Special characters’.
database not data-base
datum (singular); data (plural)
day one
Capital letter and figure, as in: It’s been happening since day one

dates
- Write 21 March 2009 with no comma. Leave out the day of the week and year, unless needed for clarity. Do not use st, nd, rd and th after figures.
- Write March 2009 not March 09.
- For ranges in text use 1750 to 1780 with no dash in between.
- For the academic year use 2010/11.
- Use c1750 not c.1750 or c 1750.
- Decades are 1960s and ’60s (plural) not 1960’s and ’60’s (unless possessive).
- Avoid using the style 25.3.09 for dates because of the different usage in the US.
• Centuries should be written as 19th century (noun) or 19th-century literature (adjective)

• AD comes before the date: AD350; BC comes after: 350BC. The alternative abbreviations BCE and CE both go after the date. No space between numbers and letters

degree classes
First, 2:1, 2:2, 3rd. Never use 1st. Use a capital when referring to a First, but lower case initial for first-class degree. Never use first degree, as this can be confused with an undergraduate degree. She was awarded a First in biology. He was awarded a 2:1 in English. She was awarded a first-class degree in chemistry

departments
For all University departments always use Department of not XXX Department, except for the Environment Department

Department has a capital D when it is part of the department’s title: Welcome to the Department of Computer Science

When referring to the specific department, use an u/c D: The staff in the Department are friendly and approachable. The same applies to specific schools: Welcome to the Management School. The School has an excellent record

If you use an acronym for your department or school, such as HYMS, always make sure you also write it out in full the first time you use it in a text

Deputy Vice-Chancellor but Pro-Vice-Chancellor with two hyphens

disc (for recordings) but disk (for computers)

drop-down box not drop down box

E

eg no full stop after. Use a comma before. Only use the abbreviation where space is an issue, such as in tables: We offer part-time courses in a range of subjects, eg computing, languages and the environment

ellipsis close up to previous word, but leave one space before following word. When used in direct quotation, it indicates a pause in speech, or where words are missing

email no hyphen. Less well-known e-words such as e-commerce and e-learning should be hyphenated

enquire and enquiry rather than inquire and inquiry

enrol, enrolled, enrolling, enrolment note which forms take a double l

eras These should be in capital letters eg Gothic, Romantic, Modernist except in wider use: He had a romantic nature

etc no full stop, preceded by a comma if there are three or more items

equal opportunities see pages 22-3

Take care when describing or addressing different groups of people in print or on the web. For example:

• deaf people or the deaf community not the deaf
• people with disabilities not disabled people
• wheelchair users not people in wheelchairs
• people with AIDS not AIDS victims
• elderly people not the elderly or old people
• lecturers and their partners not lecturers and their wives

et al use roman, not italic, and no full stop
examination not exam
exclamation mark (!) Do not use except in quoted speech

F
Fairtrade not Fair trade or Fair-trade
FAQs (frequently asked questions) not FAQS
Far East
This encompasses: China, Hong Kong, Japan, North and South Korea, Macau, Mongolia, Taiwan
feedback (noun) not feed-back;
feed back (verb) not feed-back
fewer and less
Use fewer for countable nouns/numbers and less for uncountable nouns/quantity: fewer lectures; less time
fieldwork no hyphen, not field-work or field work
flu (no apostrophe)
focused not focussed
foot-and-mouth disease should be hyphenated
foreign words
Use italics if not accepted as fully part of English: en masse, fait accompli. Et al has no italics and no full stop
for example
Only use the abbreviation eg (without full points) when space is an issue, such as in tables. Always use the full for example if possible
fordo not forego
forward slash (/)
This should only be used in web addresses. Leave off the final forward slash in a web address if technically possible (check to be sure). Do not use a forward slash for or (male/female) or to (July/August)
fractions
An hour and a half has no hyphens.
Similarly, two and a half years, two thirds
Fragments
Broken or incomplete sentences are picked up by your spell-check as Fragments. To correct them, rewrite your sentence, making sure it has a subject and a verb. Fragments are acceptable in some contexts, such as bullet points, entries in directory-style publications, or as a device in creative writing
full stop (.)
Do not use after abbreviations (BA, Mrs), acronyms (BBC) or middle initials. Try to split long sentences into shorter ones. Shorter sentences make text easier to read
NB Leave one blank space not two after a full stop, colon or semi-colon
full-time, part-time are hyphenated
fundraising not fund raising or fund-raising

G
gauge is correct, not guage
Government
Use u/c Government when referring to a specific one: ‘the Government resigned last night’
Use l/c government in all adjectival contexts: a government minister, government expenditure
groundbreaking not ground-breaking or ground breaking

H
Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca (roman)
headings and titles
Use:
- sentence case which has an initial capital letter only: This is a heading not This is a Heading
- headings which are only one or two lines long
Do not use:
punctuation at the end of headings, ie do not add colons, full stops, hyphens or en rules after the final word of the heading
healthcare one word, without a hyphen
Heslington East is an extension or expansion of the campus. The original part of the campus at Heslington is known as Heslington West. They are not separate campuses
home page not homepage
the Hub not The Hub
hyphen (-)
Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity.
Do not use hyphens:
- with no one
- with compass points: northeast England
- in adverbial phrases: The students were well dressed for the icy conditions
- with fractions: one third; three quarters
- for expressions such as step by step; up to date; whole school unless being used adjectivally: the step-by-step instructions; up-to-date technology
When there is another adjective or adverb preceding the hyphenated word, there does not need to be another hyphen: a well thought-out plan
The following words are never hyphenated: interpersonal milkround multidisciplinary multinational nationwide ongoing policymaker postgraduate undergraduate worldwide

ie no full stop afterwards. Use a comma before initials
Do not use initials in a name unless the person particularly wants them for clarity.
Do not use full stops: John G P Barnes
internet use I/c, not Internet
-ise or -ize
Use s spelling, not z: organise not organize, organisation not organization, emphasise not emphasize, specialise not specialize, hypothesise not hypothesize, internationalise not internationalize
italics
Use italics for:
- foreign words that are not anglicised (with correct accents)
- clarity: upon is often unnecessary; on will do
- titles of books, journals, newspapers, films, television programmes and plays, poems, long musical compositions, paintings, sculptures and photographs, names of ships
Do not use italics for:
- titles of articles, the Bible, the Qur’an, chapters, stories and articles within a book, shorter poems
- v, eg, etc, ie, c, vice versa, et al, in vitro, in vivo, per capital, per se, status quo, ad hoc
Acts of parliament, hotels, theatre
it’s or its
It’s means it is. Its means belonging to it

J
jail, jailer not gaol, gaoler
jargon
Avoid using jargon, business-speak, corporate buzzwords – any terms that will only be understood by a select group. Marketing hyperbole should be avoided at all times
job titles and commas
No commas: Vice-Chancellor John Smith said...
With commas: John Smith, Vice-Chancellor, said...
judgement not judgment

K
Key Stage 1, 2, 3 caps and figures for Government’s educational targets
kick-off (noun), but to kick off (verb)
kick-start (hyphenate, whether noun or verb)
the King’s Manor
Always use ’s and l/c the: not at King’s Manor or The King’s Manor or Kings Manor
kilogram not kilogramme

L
laboratory not lab
Latin
When in common usage, there is no need to use italics: quid pro quo, QED, habeas corpus, in situ, vice versa
learned (past tense and past participle of learn); note also learned (adjective, as in scholarly)
liase is correct, not liase
lower case
Also known as l/c or lower case; means not a capital letter

M
man-made not man made or manmade
masterclass one word
masters not master’s
medieval not mediaeval
media
The media is plural so use the plural form of the verb: the news media are not the news media is
millennium has double l and double n
million(s)
Use numerals followed by the abbreviation m: £2m
minuscule not miniscule
module titles
When used in text, use u/c on all important words
multimedia
Only use this when there are more than two media. No hyphen
music
For song titles, album titles, operas (including arias) use italics

N
newspapers and journals
Use italics for titles and use u/c The in the title whenever appropriate: The Times, The Sunday Times, The Economist, The Press but the Guardian, the Independent, the Daily Telegraph, the Sunday Telegraph, the Observer, the Financial Times,
the Daily Mirror, the Daily Mail, the Daily Express, the Yorkshire Post

**no one** not no one or no-one

**noticeboard** not notice board

**numbers**
- Spell out numbers up to and including ten. After ten use figures except for exact measurements and charts where figures can also be used for numbers below ten.
- Use a comma to group in threes after 999: 1,000.
- Centuries above the tenth should be written as 19th century (noun) or 20th-century literature (adjective with hyphen).
- Always use numerals to express sums of money.
- For million, use numerals followed by the abbreviation m: £2m.
- Write out the names of foreign currencies except in tables: yen, francs, dollars. No capital letters. If dollars are other than US, state this: $HK1,000.
- Use numbers to express per cent: 5 per cent (text or caption) and 2% in table, box, list or label.
- Never start a sentence with a number – it must always be written out or, preferably, try to reword it.

**package** not off-line

**on-going** not ongoing

**online** not on-line

**onscreen** not on-screen

**Open Day**

Use u/c when referring to the University’s Open Days. Otherwise use l/c.

**part-time, full-time**

Hyphenate when used adjectivally as in full-time course but not in my course is full time.

**per cent**

Write out in full as two words except in headlines. Use the symbol % in charts and figures only.

**Phase 1** (Heslington East) not phase 1 or phase one.

**phone number**

Use the full international code when giving a University phone number in marketing material with the following spacing:

+44 (0)1904 320000

**place names**

Use the English convention but be aware of official changes: Mumbai not Bombay. If in doubt, put the old name in brackets following the new name.

**policymaker** one word, without a hyphen.

**postgraduate** one word, without a hyphen.

**practice** (noun) but practise (verb).

**programme** (for courses) but program (for computer programs).

**programme titles**

When used in text, use u/c on all important words.

**prophecy** (noun) but prophesy (verb).

Pro-Vice-Chancellor with two hyphens but Deputy Vice-Chancellor

**publications**

Use italics and u/c on major words for names of books and journals: The War of the Worlds, The Plant Journal. Use single quotation marks for journal articles.
qualities

No full stops or commas to separate each qualification but use a comma between the surname and the first qualification: Andy Smith, MSc PhD

quotation marks

Use “double” quotation marks for speech and quotations from articles and books; and ‘single’ for a quotation within speech (see page 5 for more information)

Make sure the full stop comes inside the closing speech marks if the quote is a complete sentence: “We’re very excited about this new area of research.”

Qur’an not Koran

race

Capitalise formal racial distinctions: Asian, British, Native American, but use l/c for less-formal references: black, white

ranges (numerical)

children aged 12–16 or children aged from 12 to 16; not children aged from 12–16

the Ron Cooke Hub not The Ron Cooke Hub

seasons

The seasons are l/c, but use Spring Term, the Summer Term

siege but seize

semi-colon (;)

Use to mark a pause longer than a comma but shorter than a full stop. It separates:

- two related ideas
- items in a list

spelling

Use:

- ise spelling instead of ize: organise not organize; emphasise not emphasize
- –ed for past participles, not t: learned not learnt

Do not use:

- –st for prepositions: amid not amidst; while not whilst; among not amongst

terms

Should be styled Spring Term, Summer Term, Year 1, Term 4

telephone numbers

Give as an international number with the following spacing: +44 (0)1904 32XXXX

titles

Use Professor not Prof. or Prof

Use Dr not Doctor

Avoid using Mr, Mrs or Ms in publications unless it is requested

Vice-Chancellor is hyphenated, as is Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Lord-Lieutenant

Theatre, Film and Television not Theatre Film and Television
Style guide

**times**
Use *am* and *pm*, not the 24 hour clock. Use full stops not colons eg 9.30am not 09:30. There is no space between the number and the abbreviation to avoid confusion with the word *am*. Use 12 noon or 12 midnight to distinguish between night and day.

**U**
undergraduate one word without a hyphen
under way two words

**University**
Always refer to York as the *University of York*, not *York University* (which is in Canada). Use an initial capital in specific references to York: the *University*. When referring to university in general use l/c: *a university*

**V**
Vice-Chancellor two words, hyphenated

**W**
the *web* but a *web address*
web addresses
- For simplification, leave out the *http://* unless the address contains no *www*
- It is acceptable to split a web address over two lines, but preferable not to
- Give web addresses at the ends of sentences only and end the sentence with a roman full stop
- Give web addresses in bold
- When citing specific departmental web addresses there is often no need to finish with a forward slash (check to be sure): *www.york.ac.uk/admin*

web page two words

**website** is one word, not *web site* or *web-site*. The *w* is lower case unless at the beginning of a sentence
well-being not *well being* or *wellbeing*
while not *whilst*
wifi not *Wi-Fi*
with
We meet people and *speak to* people, not meet with people and *speak with* people
World Wide Web initial caps on all words

**X**
X-ray is u/c

**Y**
Year in Industry not *year in industry*
York Ambassadors Scheme no apostrophe

**Z**
ize or ise?
Use s spelling, not z: *organise* not *organize*, *organisation* not *organization*, *emphasise* not *emphasize*, *specialise* not *specialize*, *hypothesise* not *hypothesize*, *internationalise* not *internationalize*
a disinterested observer of the debate. The audience was uninterested in the subject.

Fortuitous
Fortuitous means accidental, not fortunate: The incorrect start time on the lecture poster was fortuitous; the delay was convenient for delegates held up by heavy snow.

Free
Avoid the modern cliché for free when the meaning is simply free of charge: Parents will receive an illustrated graduation programme free of charge.

Hopefully
Use to mean with hope: She looked at the list of exam results hopefully. Avoid in the sense of it is hoped that: Hopefully the timetable is workable.

Imply/Infer
Imply means hint; infer means reach an opinion: A writer implies and a reader infers.

In order to
Replace in order to with to unless it would cause ambiguity: The meeting was called to inform staff of the changes.

Less/Fewer
Use less for uncountable nouns and quantity, and fewer for countable nouns and numbers: They attended fewer lectures this term because they had less time.

Neither/Both
Care must be taken to place these correctly: which neither suits him nor me should be
which suits neither him nor me. Which both suited him and me should be which suited both him and me.

**Position of only**
Only must be placed in the correct position: Rooms are only available for private hire should be Rooms are available for private hire.

**Practicable/Practical**
Practicable means feasible; practical means useful: The reorganisation of the Department was entirely practicable; it was a practical solution to the problem.

**Practice/Practise**
Practice is the noun and practise is the verb: In the practice session she practised her violin.

**Presently**
Presently means soon, not at present: Professor Bloggs will retire presently once his workload has been transferred to colleagues.

**Principal/Principle**
Principal means chief; principle means a basic truth: The principal outlined her school’s principles.

**Stationary/Stationery**
Stationary means fixed in position; stationery means writing materials: The tray remained stationary as he withdrew the stationery.

**That/Which**
That defines and restricts; which does not. You will usually need to precede which with a comma: She attended the second lecture that was given on a Tuesday. She attended the second lecture, which was given on a Tuesday.

**That/Who**
Use who when referring to a person. Use that when referring to a class or type: She is the type of student that enjoys partying and he is the only one who goes to be early.

**Who/Whom**
Who (or whoever) refers to the subject; whom (or whomever) refers to the object: I am the person who is responsible for the project; to whom should I send my report?

**Who’s/Whose**
Who’s is a contraction of who is or who has; whose is the possessive form of who: Who’s been here before? Whose books are those?

**Overused words and phrases**
Use the simpler word or phrase rather than an overused or unnecessarily complex term.

- accelerate → speed up
- action plan → plan
- additional → extra
- advise → tell, say
- anticipate → expect
- application → use (not with job applications)
- apprise → inform
- approximately → about
- assist → help
- attendees → those attending
- breakthrough → significant advance/development/progress
- combine → mix
- commence → start
- complete → fill in/finish
- comply with → keep to
- consequently → so
Sensitivity in print

Choose words that are accurate, clear and free from bias. Instead of man or mankind write people, humanity. Use they/them for singular where gender is not specified.

If the author has consistently used he or she it is probably best to leave it. Do not use s(he).

Avoid:
- specifying gender and age
- Third World as this is outdated; use developing countries
- imbalanced mixes of races in photos of students
- sexist stereotypes. Research scientists often neglect their wives and children should be: Research scientists often neglect their families.

Age

Avoid referring to someone as elderly, aged, old. Use older people. Geriatric is applied to medical treatment for the elderly: geriatric hospital.

Disability

Avoid de-personalising people by turning them into collective nouns:
- instead of the disabled use disabled people
- avoid stigmatising words eg crippled, spastic
- instead of wheelchair-bound say people who use a wheelchair.

Use acceptable vocabulary to describe disabilities:
- partially-sighted, blind
- hard-of-hearing, hearing-impaired
- speech-impaired, not dumb
- learning disabilities/difficulties not mentally handicapped.

Race

Avoid:
- words which use the word ‘black’ in a pejorative way
- racism by stereotype, omission, tokenism.

Use:
- u/c when referring to Aborigines, Aboriginal (native Australians). Native Americans also takes a capital letter
- geographic or ethnic origin rather than colour of skin, eg Bangladeshi, Jamaican, West Indian, Nigerian
- black British, is preferred by many people of African and Caribbean origin
- use Inuit not Eskimo, except in occasional historical contexts
- use Gypsy not gipsy. Use u/c when referring to the group of people, but lower case in the general sense: The gypsy look is in for spring.

Sexism

Avoid gender-specific language unless intended. Do not assume someone is male: A professor should always control his classes should be Professors should always control their classes. Chairman should be Chair.
Replace pronouns specifying gender where it won’t affect the sentence: *the participant completed his tasks* could be *the participant completed the tasks.*

**Religious words**

Use *christened* and *christening* only when referring to a Christian baptism; do not refer to a boat being christened or a football team christening a new stadium.

Use (l/c) for the established church: *the Anglican church is still established today* but *Church of England.*

*Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca (u/c and roman)

*Islam*

- The holy book of Islam is the *Qur’an* not the *Koran*
- *Muslim*, not Moslem
- *Allah*, Arabic for ‘the God’
- *Arab* always takes an initial capital. It is both a noun and an adjective and is the preferred adjective when referring to Arab things in general, eg Arab history, Arab traditions
- *Archbishop* John Sentamu is the *Archbishop of York* at first mention, and thereafter *Dr Sentamu* or *the archbishop."

**Visual accessibility**

There are a number of guidelines for making print accessible to those who are visually impaired or who have reading difficulties. Sometimes it is not practical to follow these to the letter but please bear these points in mind.

*Font* – use a sans serif eg Arial, Helvetica or Frutiger if your publication might be read by visually impaired people

*Size* – text should be a minimum of 12 point if your publication is targeted at visually-impaired people

*Case* – use l/c rather than u/c. Text which is all in u/c is harder to read.

*Colour* – red on green and vice-versa can be hard for people with colour-blindness

*Contrast* – ensure that there is enough contrast when using text against tinted boxes

*Format* – make sure you offer your publication in alternative formats; ten per cent of readers will have some form of visual impairment or reading difficulty.

**Use of images**

It is important to be as sensitive in the choice of images as in the choice of words. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes. When representing people at the University of York, try to use a wide range of facial types.

Try to avoid using photography of situations which some people may find offensive. Some cultures may find pictures of students drinking alcohol or wearing very skimpy summer clothing off-putting.

Do not flip photos so the subject’s left side would be seen as their right side. When possible, use real students to illustrate a particular York department and do not exchange students between departments.

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