

The Department of English Style Guide

School of Communication and Culture
Aarhus University

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1 Preliminary remarks

Academic writing, whether produced by professional scholars for publication or by students pursuing a course of higher education, requires rules and standards of presentation, documentation, and style. These rules and standards vary from one institution to another, and from one academic discipline to another. Consequently, many different style guides are available, and you will see numerous variations in the published academic work that you read. But that does not mean that you can mix conventions at random within your writing. What is essential is to pick a specific set of conventions and stick to them. This choice has been made for the Department of English, Aarhus University, in the ways explained in the present *Style Guide*.

The rules and standards described here apply to all of the official writing that you will do at the Department. For MA and MA Minor students, there is an academic objective in the academic regulations (2017) that states that '[i]n the evaluation of the student's performance, emphasis is placed on the extent to which the student is able to [...] us[e] academic conventions in terms of layout, notes, references and citations as specified in the Department of English Style Guide.'

Please note there are some rules, particularly concerning references and documentation, that apply specifically to work in one or other of the Department's sub-disciplines: linguistics, literature, history/society/culture, and media. Accordingly, you will find below two sets of instructions for referencing and documentation, based respectively on the *Chicago Manual of Style* 17th edition and the *MLA* [Modern Language Association of America] *Handbook* 8th edition.

Learning to follow stylistic conventions accurately is an important part of your training as a student, and of your developing competence in the English language. It is also something that you will almost certainly be required to do, one way or another, in your post-university career. Meanwhile, the correct application of the rules and conventions in the *Style Guide* will be taken into account in the grading of many of your exams. You should, therefore, make sure that you have read the whole guide thoroughly and understood its contents.

2 Layout

2.1 Page setup

Set a 3-cm margin on the left of the page (to allow for binding) and 2-cm margins for the top, right and bottom.

Indent the first line of each paragraph 1 cm. The first paragraph of each chapter or section, however, should *not* be indented.

Set page numbers to print on the top right-hand corner of the page. A page number is not required on the first page of the main text. For the pagination of MA theses (*specialer*), see Section 4.2 below.

Font: Use Palatino or Times New Roman. Select 11-point (Palatino) or 12-point (Times New Roman) type size. All fonts should be black.

Set line spacing to 1.5.

Set paragraph alignment to 'justified'.

Finally, set hyphenation to 'off' and set widow/orphan protection to 'on' (the latter prevents single lines from the beginning or end of a paragraph being printed at the top or bottom of a page).

Conforming to these guidelines will help ensure that your research paper or MA thesis meets the specifications for standard pages on which the required lengths for research papers and MA theses are based (see Section 7). While these guidelines are meant to make it easier for you to align character count with page count, there is no guarantee that they will do so. It is your responsibility to check that your research paper or MA thesis falls within the allowed page range required for the exam by getting a character count from your word processor.

All research papers, MA theses, or other work submitted in connection with course work should be handed in on standard unlined white A4 printer paper unless otherwise specified by your teacher. Since work handed in should not be handwritten, these guidelines presuppose the use of a word processor such as MS Word or similar.

2.2 Headings

Section headings, if used, should be flush left. They should be numbered using the format '1, 1.1, 1.2 ... 2, 2.1', and so on. Section headings should be in bold type. Multiple subsection levels may be appropriate in linguistics research papers but should be applied sparingly, if at all, in literary and historical research papers. All fonts should be black.

For MA theses, see Sections 4.2.8 and 4.2.9 below.

3 Language

Research papers must be written in British English or American English. Remember to set the language for spelling and grammar in your word processor accordingly.

For MA theses, see Section 4.2.1 below.

4 Contents

4.1 Exam papers

The contents of exam papers (research papers, set take-home exams, and so forth) are as follows, and appear in the following sequence.

4.1.1 Title page

The research paper should have a separate title page. Provide

- the title of the research paper, centred near the top of the page
- your name and student identification number (*årskortnummer*)
- the title of the course for which the research paper is submitted
- the name of the teacher
- the submission date

The title page should *not* be numbered.

4.1.2 Summary (obligatory for the Bachelor Project)

The research paper for the bachelor project requires the inclusion of a summary written in English. The summary must be ½-1 page in length. The summary is included as a modifying factor in the overall assessment.

4.1.3 Table of contents (optional)

A table of contents listing the sections of the research paper is not compulsory but may be included on a separate, unnumbered page. The list of sections should indicate page numbers. For best results, use the automatic table of contents function in your word processor.

4.1.4 Main text

Begin the main text on a new page. There should not be a page number on the first page of the main text.

4.1.5 Appendices (optional)

Appendices appear after the main text and are comparatively rare in research papers. They are mainly found in MA theses. See Section 4.2.10 for further details on appendices.

4.1.6 Substantive notes (optional)

Notes may be used for additional substantive commentary but *not* citations. Keep such notes to an absolute minimum. Substantive notes may be either endnotes or footnotes and should be numbered consecutively throughout the research paper. Endnotes appear after the main text.

4.1.7 Reference List (Chicago)/Works Cited (MLA) (obligatory)

Documentation with a list of sources, usually called 'Reference List' in the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition) author-date system (hereafter 'Chicago') and 'Works Cited' in the *MLA Handbook* 8th edition (hereafter 'MLA') system, is obligatory. See Section 6 for further details.

4.2 MA theses

4.2.1 Language of MA thesis

MA theses must be written in English. The obligatory summary for MA theses must also be in English.

The contents of an MA thesis are as follows, and appear in the following sequence:

4.2.2 Title page (obligatory)

The MA thesis should have a separate title page, including:

- the title of your MA thesis centred near the top of the page
- 'MA Thesis'
- your name and student identification number (*årskortnummer*)
- the name of your MA thesis supervisor
- the name of the Department
- the submission date

The title page should not be numbered.

4.2.3 Table of contents (obligatory)

Chapters should be listed; sections may be listed as well. Any of the following items that are included in the MA thesis should also appear in the table of contents. As noted above, use the table of contents function in your word processor to generate a table of contents.

Start page numbering at this point with the Roman numeral 'i'.

4.2.4 Summary in English (obligatory)

If you are writing according to the 2017 academic regulations, the summary must be 1-2 standard pages in length. It is included in the overall assessment, but not in the specified page total. If you are writing your MA thesis according to the 2014 academic regulations, it must include a summary of 0.5-1 standard page in length.

4.2.5 Acknowledgements (optional)

Acknowledgements are used to express thanks for help with preparing the MA thesis, for permission to reproduce material, and so on.

4.2.6 Preface (optional)

A preface is used for personal comments on the MA thesis, such as reasons for carrying out the work, but should not include material that is properly part of the main text itself.

4.2.7 Main text

Start page numbering from one. There should *not* be a page number on the first page of the main text. Pagination for the main text and end matter is in Arabic numerals.

4.2.8 Chapter headings (obligatory)

Chapter headings should be centred. They should be identified 'Chapter 1', and so on. They should be in bold type of a slightly larger font size than the main text. All fonts should be black.

4.2.9 Section headings (optional)

Section headings use the same format and take the chapter number as the highest level. Thus, all section headings in Chapter 2 will begin with '2': '2.1, 2.1.1 ... 2.2', and so on. Leave additional white space above section headings. It is not necessary to begin a new page for each section. All fonts should be black.

4.2.10 Appendices (optional)

Appendices are used for materials to which the reader may need to refer, but which do not form a part of the MA thesis proper. Page numbering should continue through the appendices.

4.2.11 Substantive notes (optional)

Notes may be used for additional substantive commentary but *not* citations. Keep such notes to an absolute minimum. Substantive notes may be either endnotes or footnotes and should be numbered consecutively throughout the research paper. Endnotes appear after the main text. All fonts should be black.

4.2.12 Reference List (Chicago)/Works Cited (MLA) (obligatory)

For details about how to list sources, see Section 6.

5 Quotations

5.1 Acknowledging sources

Words, information or ideas taken from any source must be acknowledged as such by precise documentation of the source.

Failure to acknowledge sources opens you to accusations of *plagiarism*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *plagiarise* as 'to take and use as one's own (the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another person); to copy (literary work or ideas) improperly or without acknowledgement; to pass off as one's own the thoughts or work of (another)'. Please see Section 10 below about plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

5.2 Formatting quotations

There are only two ways to mark quotations: by *either* quotation marks *or* indentation. See 5.4 for guidelines for when you should use quotation marks and when you should indent.

Do *not* mark quotations by *both* quotation marks *and* indentation.

Do *not* use italics, bold or a different font or font size to indicate quotations, unless any of these are present in the original (or, in the case of italics, they are added for emphasis).

5.3 Incorporating quotations

You should usually incorporate quotations (direct or indirect) into your prose rather than introducing them as separate independent sentences. They can appear at the beginning, middle or end of your sentence.

5.4 Marking direct quotations

Material that is quoted directly from other sources must be marked as a quotation and properly integrated into your text. Depending on its length, the quotation can be either run into the body of the text and punctuated with quotation marks or indented without quotation marks.

Cite the source of each quotation parenthetically at the end of the sentence in which the quoted material is used, and include the source in the Reference List (Chicago)/ Works Cited (MLA) (see Section 6.1).

5.4.1 Quotations of four lines or less

Place quotations of four lines or less within quotation marks. See Section 5.7 for the differences between British and American punctuation of quotations. The parenthetical reference, whether in Chicago or MLA format, should be followed, not preceded, by a final full stop.

5.4.2 Quotations of more than four lines

Indent quotations that are more than four lines in length 2 cm.

Do *not* place quotation marks around indented quotations.

Do *not* change the font size, the line spacing, or any other aspect of the text's formatting.

5.4.3 Quoting verse

When quoting three lines or fewer, mark line-breaks with a slash. For example: 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day / Thou art more lovely and more temperate.'

Indent verse quotations of more than three lines 2 cm. Do *not* use quotation marks, italics, bold or a different font or font size in indented quotations unless in the original or, in the case of italics, they are added for emphasis, as at the beginning of this sentence.

5.5 Ellipsis

Ellipsis (material omitted) in quotations must be indicated by means of three ellipsis points: 'The term *black hole* ... was coined in 1969'.

Ellipsis must not be used to change the *meaning* of the original source.

You can insert a word or phrase to make a quotation grammatical or to restore the sense after material has been cut. Place square brackets around inserted material to indicate that it is an alteration: 'the mushrooms are ... [then] harvested'. Square brackets should also be placed around a capital or lower-case letter where the case has been changed from the

original to fit into the text. Place square brackets around the ellipsis points to show ellipsis if quoting from a text that itself includes ellipsis points.

Ellipsis is not usually necessary at the beginning or end of a quotation where it is obvious that only a portion of the original source is being quoted.

5.6 Indirect quotations

You must indicate the sources of information or ideas that come from other writers, even if you do not quote their exact words. For example, you may wish to summarise or paraphrase the argument of a writer in your own words. In this case, do not mark the passage with quotation marks or indent it. Cite the source parenthetically at the end of the sentence where the material is used, and document the source in the same way as for direct quotations.

5.7 British English and American English punctuation of quotations

An important difference between British English and American English concerns the punctuation of quotations marked by quotation marks.

British English uses single quotation marks, and American English double.

In both British English and American English, when a quotation occurs within a quotation, the other type of quotation mark is used for the embedded quotation.

In British English, quotations take any concluding punctuation *after* the quotation marks are closed, except in the case of question marks and exclamation marks that form part of the quotation.

In American English, commas and full stops (periods) that follow a quotation come *before* the quotation marks are closed, even if the punctuation belongs to the surrounding text and not the quotation. Other punctuation marks come before the quotation marks if they were in the original, or after if they form part of the surrounding text.

The following examples demonstrate the main differences:

British English

Hawking states that ‘up to about twenty years ago, it was thought that protons and neutrons were “elementary” particles’. But what does Hawking mean by ‘elementary’?

American English

Hawking states that “up to about twenty years ago, it was thought that protons and neutrons were ‘elementary’ particles.” But what does Hawking mean by “elementary”?

Note that elsewhere in this *Style Guide*, examples are given in British English only.

In both British English and American English, sentences that include quotations and end with a parenthetical reference (see Section 6) take the full stop *after* the final parenthesis. In other words: do not put an additional full stop before the parenthesis.

5.8 Quoting non-English sources

Quotations should normally be given in their original language. Discuss whether a translation is necessary with your teacher.

6 Documentation

The choice of method of documentation will depend on whether your research paper or MA thesis is based on a linguistics, literature, history/society/culture, or media topic. These categories may sometimes overlap. If in doubt, consult your teacher to determine into which category your research paper or MA thesis topic falls.

For linguistics or media studies courses, the documentation of research papers is based on the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th ed., 2010) author-date system. Access the *Chicago Manual of Style* via the Aarhus University Library Web Portal. For the most frequently used types of sources, you can use the 'Chicago-Style Citation Quick Guide'/'Author-Date' link.

For literature or history courses, the documentation of research papers is usually based on the MLA system, as described in the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed., 2016), which can be supplemented with the basic guidelines, updates and advice available at the online *MLA Style Center*.

Instead of either footnotes or endnotes, both systems make use of parenthetical references within the paper, referring to works in the list of sources (usually called 'Reference List' in the Chicago author-date system and 'Works Cited' in the MLA system).

6.1 Documentation: Reference List (Chicago)/Works Cited (MLA)

Both the Chicago author-date and the MLA systems of documentation require a detailed list that includes only the sources referenced in the paper. Titles for the list of the sources vary, but the recommended choices are 'Reference List' for Chicago and 'Works Cited' for MLA.

The entries in the list of sources are arranged in alphabetical order by author surname.

Format entries with a hanging indent of 0.5 cm. Use your word processor's hanging indent function rather than the tab key or spaces to format entries.

The Reference List or Works Cited is placed at the end of the paper. It should begin on a new page. Centre the title (Reference List/Works Cited) at the top of the page.

6.2 Citation management software

The Department of English recommends using the citation management software EndNote, which is available at no cost to students from Aarhus University. It includes predefined citation styles for both Chicago 17th ed. author-date and MLA 8th ed. The citation information for sources can be imported directly from the AU Library search results as well as most of the databases you will access via the AU Library. The program will format your entries for you. Please note that EndNote does not replace the Department of English *Style Guide* or the sources mentioned above for authoritative information on citations. It will make it easier to cite sources correctly, although you are responsible for correcting any errors or inconsistencies.

6.3 Documentation guides

If you have any questions about how you should format your references or the entries in your list of sources, unanswered by the information provided in this *Style Guide*, consult one of the following guides.

6.3.1 Guides for research papers and MA theses written in English

Composition and argumentation

Booth, Wayne C., et al. *The Craft of Research*. 4th ed., U of Chicago P, 2016.

Rainsford, Dominic. *Studying Literature in English: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2014. Chapters 13, 'Primary and secondary sources', and 14, 'Reading, research, writing'.

Your course teacher or MA thesis supervisor may provide you with additional guidelines.

7 Length of exam papers and MA theses

The study regulations for examinations stipulate in the section "Regulations for assignments" the required lengths for written exams, including MA theses, in terms of a *normal page*, which is defined as containing 2,400 characters, including spaces. The settings given above in Section 1 should produce normal pages of text with approximately 2,400 characters (with spaces) each. You are still responsible for doing a word count and ensuring that your research paper or thesis meets the required length requirement.

When you submit a written exam digitally, you have to state the number of characters in the exam paper. As explained in the Aarhus University *Guide to the Digital Exams System for Students*, the information you provide as ‘information about the hand-in’ is ‘part of your official cover sheet’ and thus an official part of the exam hand-in. You are required to report the number of characters correctly.

7.1 Substantive notes

Include the text in substantive notes in your word count.

7.2 Elements *not* included in character count

The following elements should *not* be included in the character count:

Research papers

Title page, table of contents, acknowledgements, appendices, summary (bachelor project), and list of sources/works cited.

Master’s MA theses

Title page, table of contents, summary, acknowledgements, preface, appendices and list of sources.

7.3 Diagrams, tables, and other visual materials

Some factors may lead to a difference in the actual number of characters per page (for example, the use of headings or non-textual material). If you expect that your research paper or MA thesis will contain a substantial amount of non-textual material, consult your teacher or MA thesis supervisor.

8 Usage guide

8.1 Academic style

Academic papers should be written in an appropriately academic style. Normally, this will be compatible with an objective approach. For example, use of the first person will be relatively infrequent, direct address to the reader will rarely be used, and the passive form may appear more frequently than in non-academic writing. Slang, as well as contractions and abbreviations such as ‘don’t’ and ‘e.g.’, will usually be avoided.

An important element of academic English is the absence of bias in the language. The *Chicago Manual of Style* discusses gender and other forms of language bias and provides alternative formulations to help you write bias-free English in the section 'Bias-Free Language'.

It is recognised that some variation in style may be regarded as appropriate. Consult your course teacher / MA thesis supervisor for further guidance.

8.2 Titles in English: italics or quotation marks?

In the body of your paper, the title of a separately published work should be presented in italics, whereas the title of a subsection of such a work should be presented in quotation marks and without italics. Thus, the titles of books, scholarly journals, plays, epic poems, web sites, newspapers, paintings and films, for example, should be italicised.

The titles of chapters of books, scholarly journal articles, short stories, poems (unless published as separate works) and newspaper articles, for example, should be in quotation marks.

Do *not* use bold or a different font or font size to indicate titles.

8.3 Apostrophes

English uses an apostrophe to designate possession (with the exception of possessive pronouns – *his, hers, theirs, its, ours, yours*). Most forms of the possessive are straightforward, but note the following:

	Joan's	Jones's	the Joneses'
with the meaning:	<i>of Joan</i>	<i>of Jones</i>	<i>of the Joneses</i>

Do not put an apostrophe in decades when written as numerals. Instead, they should be written as follows: 1590s, 1800s, 2010s, and so on.

Remember the difference between the possessive pronoun *its* and the contraction of *it is*, which is written *it's*. For example:

What has Joan's dog got in its mouth? It's the Joneses' Style Guide!

9 Proofreading

Careful reading and correction of your work are two essential skills that you can develop as an academic writer. You should not just write the last word of your paper and submit it.

Instead, you should read the whole completed draft, try to see it from an objective point of view, and eliminate mistakes and confusion. At the same time, you should check systematically that you have followed the instructions in this *Style Guide*.

10 Academic dishonesty

Please note that *any unacknowledged input from another person that goes beyond proofreading and involves new content or 'ghost-writing' is a form of cheating, closely related to plagiarism*. Note in particular that it is *not permissible to pay another person to write, proofread, correct or improve work that will be submitted for examination*. Doing so constitutes academic dishonesty and will be treated as such.

For information on how to avoid plagiarism, you can consult:

Beyond the Loan Word: Plagiarism in Academic Writing, by Dale Carter (Blackboard)

The MLA's guide to 'Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty'

The AU Library guide, 'Avoid plagiarism – for students'

Aarhus University's leaflet, 'Avoid pitfalls at exams'

11 Checklist for student research papers

To ensure that you have not forgotten any elements of your paper, please complete the 'Department of English Checklist for Exam Submissions' available on Blackboard. You do not have to include it with your papers unless asked to do so by your teacher or MA thesis supervisor.