



**University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>**

**Communications**

---

# **University of Zurich English Writing Guide**

UZH Communications

This writing guide was created to support people writing in English or translating into English at the University of Zurich.

# Table of Contents

<b>1 General Information and Introductory Remarks</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2 UZH General Usage</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 UZH General Recommendations	5
2.1.1 No definite article when using the abbreviation <i>UZH</i>	5
2.1.2 Use of the term <i>faculty</i>	5
2.2 Writing Dates	5
2.3 Inclusive Language	5
2.3.1 Other aspects of inclusive language	6
2.4 Academic Titles / Abbreviations of Academic Titles	6
<b>3 Capitalization</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 The University of Zurich	7
3.2 Special Recommendations on Capitalization	7
3.3 Faculties at UZH	7
3.3.1 Other organizational units	7
3.3.2 Course titles	7
3.4 Fields of Study	8
3.5 Capitalization in UZH Publications	8
3.5.1 Headline-style capitalization	8
3.5.2 Sentence-style capitalization: Use after colons and with bullet points	8
3.6 Capitalization on Websites	9
3.6.1 Headline-style capitalization for websites	9
3.6.2 Sentence-style capitalization on web pages	9
3.6.3 Other considerations	9
3.6.4 Examples	9
3.7 Capitalization Recommendations for Print Publications, Especially UZH Regulatory Texts	11
3.7.1 Headline-style capitalization in print publications, especially UZH regulatory texts	11
3.7.2 Sentence-style capitalization in print publications	12
<b>4 Abbreviations:</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 General Recommendations	12
4.1.1 Abbreviation of degrees issued by UZH	13
4.1.2 Abbreviations of the faculties of UZH	13
<b>5 Punctuation</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1 General Recommendations on Punctuation	13
5.2 Commas	13

5.3 Ellipses	13
5.4 En Dash	14
5.5 Hyphens	14
5.6 Quotation Marks	14
5.6.1 When not to use quotation marks	14
5.7 Exclamation Points	15
<b>6 Recommendations on Spelling</b>	<b>15</b>
6.1 General Recommendations	15
6.2 UZH Special Recommendations on Spelling	15
6.3 American or British English?	15
6.4 Foreign Words	16
6.4.1 Umlauts and accents	16
<b>7 Numbers, Computer Terms, Miscellaneous Information</b>	<b>16</b>
7.1 Writing Numbers	16
7.2 Capitalization of Computer Terms	17
7.3 Miscellaneous Information	17
<b>8 For Translators</b>	<b>17</b>
8.1 Passive or Active Voice	17
8.2 Syntax	17
8.3 Legal Texts: Translating Regulatory Texts and Contracts	18
8.3.1 Modal verbs	18
8.3.2 Translation of the parts of a contract or regulation	18

# 1 General Information and Introductory Remarks

The following writing guide offers help to people writing in English or translating into English at the University of Zurich. It has been developed from real-life examples and hopes to address and answer practical questions that arise when writing and, especially, translating for the University of Zurich. The author welcomes any questions, comments, or criticism that will help improve the guide.

Concerning the type of English used at UZH, the Executive Board of the University established the use of American English in a decision from 20 September 2001, and confirmed this decision on 16 October 2008. American spelling is therefore preferred. It is, however, important to note that publications in English at the University of Zurich are aimed at an international audience and, as a result, should adhere to a neutral use of English and avoid regional expressions. And, if a publication is specifically geared to a particular region or for a specific publication, the orthography of that region or publication should be used.

When dealing with terminology, it is important that writers and translators consult UZH's termbase UniTerm (<http://www.uniterm.uzh.ch/>). Our termbase contains a growing list of terminology from the world of higher education, and contains the preferred German and English vocabulary for administrative business. Overall, UniTerm is a key reference for University terminology, including the names of departments, offices, and affiliated institutions.

While this writing guide aims to offer as many useful tips as possible, no manual can replace a good dictionary. When in doubt, please consult the most recent edition of a widely respected dictionary such as The American Heritage Dictionary, Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, or The Oxford American Dictionary.

The Chicago Manual of Style is the main guide at the UZH Communications Office. It is not free of charge, but worth the fee. More information at: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

The EU's English Style Guide for writers and translators is also an excellent source for good English. A free download of the most recent edition is available online at: [http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/en\\_guidelines\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/en_guidelines_en.htm), or an HTML version at <http://www.fjfh.eu/esg/index.htm>. Although the guide adopts British spelling, the general style guidelines are very helpful and apply to all language regions.

For legal texts, Bryan Garner is the main reference: *Black's Law Dictionary*, *Legal Writing in Plain English*, and *Garner's Dictionary of Legal Usage*.

Last but not least: This guide is continually updated. Please check online for the latest version at <http://www.kommunikation.uzh.ch/services/translations/tools.html>

## 2 UZH General Usage

### 2.1 UZH General Recommendations

The following includes recommendations that are specifically valid for the University of Zurich. Please see the fact sheet Phrases, Abbreviations, and Writing Dates in German and English (<http://www.kommunikation.uzh.ch/services/translations/tools.html>) for information on the recommended conventions for these terms.

#### 2.1.1 No definite article when using the abbreviation UZH

Please omit the *the* when using the short form *UZH*.

- With its 26,000 enrolled students, the University of Zurich (UZH) is Switzerland's largest university. Founded in the year 1833, UZH was Europe's first university to be established by a democratic political system; today, UZH is one of the foremost universities in the German-speaking world.

#### 2.1.2 Use of the term *faculty*

Faculty pertains to the division at the University (die Fakultät). It is **not** used to designate professors, teaching assistants or staff members. The correct terms are defined in UZH's termbase UniTerm.

### 2.2 Writing Dates

To avoid confusion, write dates as follows: day month year

- The spring semester begins on **18 March 2010**.
- The oral examinations take place on **25 November 2011**.

In addition, all dates should be written out:

- **11 January 2008**, not ~~1/11/2008~~ or ~~11/1/2008~~

### 2.3 Inclusive Language

The University of Zurich has a Gender Code of Conduct and encourages the use of inclusive language.

Please use the following guidelines to avoid sexist language – and clumsiness when doing so.

- Do not use the masculine pronouns he, him, his, himself when the person in question could be either male or female. Use the plural form instead:
  - A student is responsible for his own schedule. → Students are responsible for their own schedules.
- Try to eliminate pronouns entirely:
  - A teaching assistant is generally a PhD candidate who takes on teaching responsibilities while working on his/her thesis. → A teaching assistant is generally a PhD candidate who takes on teaching responsibilities while working on a thesis.

- Avoid the use of the awkward *he/she* or *his/hers*. Rewrite the sentence using either a plural pronoun or no pronoun (examples above). When neither variation is possible, use the plural pronoun *them* instead. Many strict grammarians will cringe; UZH endorses this usage nonetheless:
  - If suspicion of plagiarism is substantiated, or if it cannot be discounted, the teaching staff is advised to confront the student and to make them aware that, should the suspicion persist or be corroborated, the student's entire work will be checked for plagiarism.
- Use a genderless term for words with masculine markers. Use the same term consistently for men and women.
  - Chair or chairperson instead of chairman and chairwoman
  - Mankind → humanity, humankind, people
  - Manmade → synthetic, artificial
  - Manpower → workforce, employees

### 2.3.1 Other aspects of inclusive language

Language referring to *sexual orientation* (not *sexual preference*) is expanding with society's sensitivity and understanding of gender. For example, *sex* must not be used to mean *gender* (or vice versa), and the inclusive term *LGBTQ community* is currently the preferred term (not *homosexuals*).

## 2.4 Academic Titles / Abbreviations of Academic Titles

Capitalize titles of individuals:

- Professor Eugenia Weiss
- Professor Emeritus Hans Müller

Do not capitalize titles that follow a name or are used as a description:

- Eugenia Weiss, professor of anthropology...
- Hans Müller, professor emeritus of German studies...

On business cards, titles should be capitalized:

- Eugenia Weiss, PhD  
Professor of Anthropology

Abbreviated titles follow this convention:

- Gertrud Schmid, BA
- Gerhard Schmid, MA

Multiple titles should be written as follows:

- Agnes Müller, MD, PhD            or
- Arnold Müller, PhD, MD

## 3 Capitalization

### 3.1 The University of Zurich

The University of Zurich is a proper noun and is capitalized. When writing about the University of Zurich at large, please capitalize the “U”:

The University of Zurich was founded in 1833, although its origins go back to the days of protestant reformer Ulrich Zwingli. Today, the University enjoys international renown as a place of education and research.

### 3.2 Special Recommendations on Capitalization

At the University of Zurich, the following terms are capitalized:

- Bachelor’s degree, Bachelor’s program
- Master’s degree, Master’s program
- Doctoral degree, Doctoral program

The term *doctorate*, however, is not used as proper noun. While this may seem confusing, the reason is that *Doctoral* is used as an adjective derived from what UZH deems a proper noun (Doctor), whereas *doctorate* (a synonym for a PhD degree) is treated as a common noun.

### 3.3 Faculties at UZH

When writing general texts about the faculties at the University, the term “faculty” is not capitalized. If, however, the text is written for a specific faculty, the term “Faculty” may be used as a proper noun/synonym of the full name of the faculty in question.

- There are seven faculties at the University of Zurich.
- Faculty of Science, students at the Faculty, graduates of the Faculty

#### 3.3.1 Other organizational units

Capitalize names of departments, institutes, and divisions when using the full official name of the unit.

- Department of Psychology
- Division of Cell and Molecular Pathology

Do not capitalize fields of study when used generically (see 3.4).

#### 3.3.2 Course titles

Capitalize course titles. Please do not use quotation marks.

- Students are required to take Macroeconomics I and the Philosophy of Logic as part of their interdisciplinary requirements.

Do not capitalize subjects when used generically (see 3.4).

##### 3.3.2.1.1 Examples of course titles in translations

**Source Text:** Sie interessiert sich für Wirtschaftswissenschaften und hat deshalb die Studienrichtung BWL gewählt.

**Target Text:** She is interested in economics and business administration [general, therefore treated as a common noun] and therefore chose the Business Administration specialization [specific, therefore treated as a proper noun].

### 3.4 Fields of Study

Do not capitalize fields of study.

- Ms. Smith received a Bachelor’s degree in biology.
- Mr. Smith earned his Master’s in art history last June.
- Ms. Jones is working on her PhD in East Asian<sup>1</sup> studies.

### 3.5 Capitalization in UZH Publications

As a general rule, headline-style capitalization is used for titles and major headings, while sentence-style capitalization is used for subtitles. Please see sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 for definitions of headline-style and sentence-style capitalization, and see sections 3.6 and 3.7 for recommendations that apply to UZH websites and publications/UZH regulatory texts.

Academic personnel at UZH who are writing for a specific journal should adhere to the recommendations used at the journal in question.

#### 3.5.1 Headline-style capitalization

Headline-style capitalization is not as straightforward as perhaps desirable. The following recommendations aim to simplify usage at UZH:

- Capitalize nouns, pronouns, verbs (including conjugated forms of *to be*), adjectives, and adverbs.
- Lowercase definite and indefinite articles (*a, an, the*).
- Lowercase all prepositions when used strictly as prepositions – no matter how long they are.
- Capitalize prepositions when used as adverbs or adjectives: *Straighten Up and Fly Right*.
- Lowercase usage of *to* in all situations – whether as a preposition or as part of an infinitive.
- Capitalize the second part of a hyphenated compound: *Research-Based Teaching and Learning*.

#### 3.5.2 Sentence-style capitalization: Use after colons and with bullet points

In sentence-style capitalization, the first word of a title or subtitle, and any proper nouns are capitalized. In addition, the first word after a colon or bullet points is capitalized. This last rule will most likely irritate purists, but it ensures consistency:

- Lifelong learning at UZH
- The University and society: An obligation to share

<sup>1</sup> *East Asian* is capitalized because it is an adjective derived from a proper noun.



## 3.6 Capitalization on Websites

This section sets out UZH policy for capitalization on websites.

### 3.6.1 Headline-style capitalization for websites

Use headline-style capitalization (see 3.5.1 for a definition of headline-style capitalization) for:

- Titles on web pages at the levels h1 and h2 in the University's content management system;
- Navigation (main and secondary) titles;
- Teaser titles.

### 3.6.2 Sentence-style capitalization on web pages

Capitalize only the first word of a subtitle on a web page (unless, of course, a word is a proper noun). In the University's content management system, this generally refers to titles at the level h3 and below.

### 3.6.3 Other considerations

Although the main recommendation for headline-style capitalizing navigation titles, teaser titles, and h1-level titles, there should be some freedom in choosing whether or not to use headline-style capitalization at the h2-level, as sometimes the capitals look a bit odd. Nonetheless, it is very important that the **same style** is chosen for an entire website (not only a single web page).

One way around this is to shorten overly long titles – especially as titles ideally are short and to the point. For example,

“**Es braucht Zeit und manchmal auch ein bisschen Glück**” could be “**Time (and Luck) Required**”

or

“**Es gibt viele Wege, um an eine Stelle zu kommen**” could be “**Many Paths Lead to a Career**”

### 3.6.4 Examples

The following image is an example of recommended capitalization of navigation titles and the h1 and h2-level titles on a website:

The screenshot shows the 'Erasmus' page on the University of Zurich's International Relations website. Annotations include:

- main navigation:** A red box labeled 'main navigation' with an arrow pointing to the top navigation bar containing links like 'News', 'UZH International', 'Studying at UZH', 'Studying Abroad', 'Doctoral Students', 'Teaching Staff', and 'North-South Cooperatio'.
- h1-level header:** A red box labeled 'h1-level header' with an arrow pointing to the main heading 'Erasmus'.
- h2-level headers:** A red box labeled 'h2-level headers' with arrows pointing to the sub-sections 'Introduction', 'Partners', and 'Duration of Stay'.
- secondary navigation:** A red box labeled 'secondary navigation' with an arrow pointing to the left-hand sidebar menu.

**Exchange Programs**

- Erasmus
- Departmental Coordinators
- Application
- Worldwide Agreements
- ISEP
- Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships
- EuroScholars
- Organization of Studies Abroad
- International Master's Students

**Erasmus**

- Introduction
- Partners
- Duration of Stay
- Application
- Grants
- Tuition Fees
- Preparation for Stay

**Introduction**

Erasmus, the European Union's education and training program, was set up in 1987 with the aim of promoting cooperation and mobility between European institutions of higher education.

Through its participation in the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) since 2011, Switzerland is an official partner in the Erasmus program.

**Partners**

The University of Zurich currently has approximately 480 Erasmus agreements in 50 fields of study with 240 partner universities throughout Europe. These agreements provide the basis for student exchange between the University of Zurich and its → partner universities.

**Duration of Stay**

Erasmus allows for a stay of one or two semesters at a partner university. Students must arrange the duration of their stay with the Departmental Coordinator in their field at their home university. The lecture period lasts from mid-September to the end of December (fall semester, "HS") and from mid-February to the end of May (spring semester, "FS"). Students who intend to come to Zurich for a period of study outside the → regular semester dates are requested to contact the International Relations Office at the University of Zurich.

The following is an example of recommended capitalization of headers h1 through h3:

**Plagiarism** ← h1-level header

**How to Best Prevent, Detect, and Penalize Plagiarism** ← h2-level header

All academic work done at the University of Zurich must adhere to the principles of integrity and honesty, and must fully and consistently disclose all sources of information. The University of Zurich has a comprehensive plagiarism policy that has made the information available as downloadable files:

**Information and communication:** Systematically informing students about the rules and practices in academic work has the highest priority. The teaching staff has the duty to convey the principles of academic integrity to students and to inform them of the proper ways to deal with intellectual property and their own scholarly work.

**Declaration and word of honor:** The teaching staff is further advised to require students on proceedings that can be prescribed when assessing work; one example is requiring students to give their written word of honor attesting their authorship.

**Suspicion, warning, and period of grace:** Should plagiarism be suspected, instructors can first use a simple Internet search to look for suspicious passages. If suspicion of plagiarism is substantiated, or if it cannot be discounted, the teaching staff is advised to confront the student and to make them aware that, should the suspicion persist or be corroborated, the student's entire work will be checked for plagiarism. A rectification of the work within a fixed period of time can only be allowed in cases where the original suspicion is not corroborated (e.g. if only a few sources are missing). Instructors may also choose to consult with the relevant dean's office and possibly the → University's attorney to discuss the appropriate way of acting in cases of suspected plagiarism.

**Detection and report:** Should the suspicion of plagiarism persist, the work in question must undergo thorough examination, including a documentation of the suspicious parts. This examination is executed with the aid of → software for detecting plagiarism provided by UZH and conducted by experts at the faculty in question.

**Proceedings and sanctions:** If a major case of plagiarism is detected, the teaching staff is obliged to notify the University's attorney, who will then initiate the appropriate proceedings. These can result in sanctions of differing extent, including expulsion

### 3.7 Capitalization Recommendations for Print Publications, Especially UZH Regulatory Texts

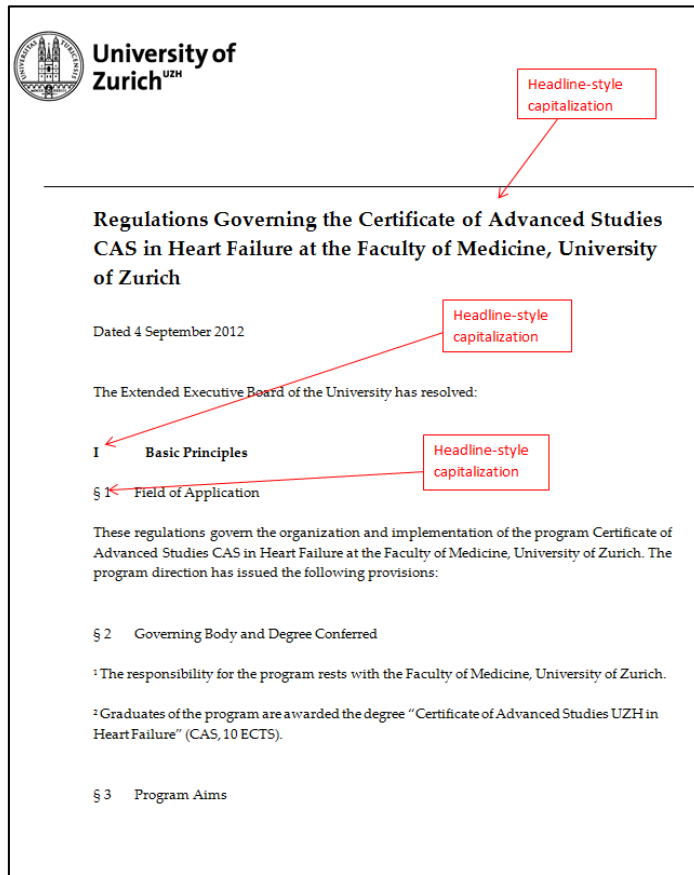
The recommendations for capitalization in UZH publications such as brochures and flyers are more difficult to determine, particularly when the publications are bilingual. In addition, academic staff writing for a journal should adhere to the style used by the journal in question. The following recommendations should, however, be applied in the case of regulations, ordinances, and the like.

#### 3.7.1 Headline-style capitalization in print publications, especially UZH regulatory texts

Use headline-style capitalization for main titles and titles at the heading 1 and heading 2 levels (as used by Microsoft Office Word). This document provides an example of the recommended usage.

For UZH regulatory texts, please capitalize the main title, the level marked by Roman numerals, and the level of the paragraph (marked by “§”). The following image provides an example:

Abbreviations:



### 3.7.2 Sentence-style capitalization in print publications

Capitalize only the first word of a subtitle from the level heading 3 (as used by Microsoft Office Word) and down, unless, of course, a word is a proper noun. This document provides an example of the recommended usage.

## 4 Abbreviations:

### 4.1 General Recommendations

Avoid abbreviations, with the exception of footnotes, bibliographies, or formats where space is tight. Standard abbreviations are found in a dictionary. Please refer to UniTerm for abbreviations of UZH departments and offices, and for abbreviations of UZH-specific terminology.

Use the abbreviation preferred by the bearer of a name:

- Frank M Whiting
- Harry S. Truman

Follow American usage concerning the abbreviation of words such as:

- Dr., Mr., Ms.

Spell out a long term that will be used repeatedly on first use and include the abbreviation in parentheses. Afterwards use the short form alone:

- Earning a Bachelor of Science (BSc) qualifies students to enter a Master's program. A BSc does not, however, qualify students to enter a teacher-training program.

#### 4.1.1 Abbreviation of degrees issued by UZH

Omit periods from abbreviations of academic degrees; do not leave a space between the letters:

BA, BSc, MA, MSc, PhD, MBA

#### 4.1.2 Abbreviations of the faculties of UZH

The German abbreviations of the UZH faculties are also used in English texts when necessary. Nevertheless, it is preferable to avoid this practice and to either write out the name or the faculty. When the abbreviation is deemed necessary, its usage must be established at the beginning of a text (e.g.: ...in the following PhF).

## 5 Punctuation

### 5.1 General Recommendations on Punctuation

Punctuation usage at UZH follows American convention. A good dictionary will define standard practices.

### 5.2 Commas

Use of the serial, or Oxford, comma is recommended, even when it is not required for clarity/correctness. Although some writers will feel this rule goes against the grain, it is a good idea that all UZH texts use the same punctuation conventions

Example:

The audience was made up of students, experts, and other interested listeners.

The audience was made up of students, lecturers and experts, and other interested listeners.

Use commas according to general grammar rules, i.e. in non-defining/non-restrictive clauses, and to establish clarity in sentences.

### 5.3 Ellipses

Use ellipses to show that material has been left out from the middle of a quotation. Ellipses have three period characters. In an ideal world, a partial space is used before and after the ellipsis. This, however, is not necessary for UZH publications.

If the ellipsis comes at the end of a quotation, add a period. But, if the ellipsis is used to denote a deliberately incomplete sentence, no period is used. Some people find this rule difficult to grasp, but...

## 5.4 En Dash

Use an en dash for continuing or inclusive numbers.

The 2006–07 academic year brought yet again an increasing number of students to the University.

Do not use a hyphen or an en dash as a substitute for the word *to*.

She taught in the chemistry department from 2003 to 2007. (NOT: She taught in the chemistry department from 2003-2007.)

## 5.5 Hyphens

The following recommendations apply to using hyphens:

- Use a hyphen to distinguish between homographs: Redress and re-dress, recover and re-cover.
- Compounds formed out of modifier and a participle are hyphenated if the modifier does not end in -ly: Ill-conceived, well-planned, good-looking, broad-based. But: A broadly based theory, a poorly planned paper.
- Adjectives formed out of a noun and a participle are hyphenated: Drug-related illness, crime-fighting measures.
- Modifiers formed out of an adverb and a noun are hyphenated: A long-term strategy (but a strategy for the long term), large-scale renovations (but renovations on a large scale).

## 5.6 Quotation Marks

Use of double quotation marks is recommended as the standard for quotations and single quotation marks for quotes within quotes. Proper double quotation marks are always at the top of the line, not the bottom, which is the convention in German.

Example: **The first mark is called “sixty-six” and the second mark is called “ninety-nine.”**

Do **not** use German or French quotation marks („zum Beispiel“, « par exemple »). These marks are not readily understood by English speakers.

### 5.6.1 When not to use quotation marks

- The use quotation marks for names of organizational units at UZH is not recommended.
- As a general statement, writers should only use quotation marks when quoting something or someone. It is generally not a good idea to use quotation marks to set off humorous language. If you really are funny, your readers will understand without extra notice.

This is especially important for translations from German, as German authors are “fond” of using “quotation marks” to stress a word/concept or to indicate “humor.” Use of quotation marks in English, however, calls the term so marked into question.

Nevertheless, quotation marks are appropriate to emphasize satirical or ironic usage:

- The “right” to bear arms, Professor R. stressed, often results in accidental shootings.

Quotation marks are also suitable if a word or concept is most likely unknown or used in a technical sense:

- A series of compounds called the “nitrosamine group” was the basis for her graduate thesis.
- It is not recommended to use quotation marks for titles. Instead, titles and subtitles of books, brochures, magazines, journals, and newspapers should be set in italics.

Quotation marks can be used for articles in periodicals, essays, and newspapers.

### 5.7 Exclamation Points

Please avoid exclamation points! They are generally irritating! This recommendation – in analogy to the use, or overuse, of quotation marks in German texts – applies particularly to translators! *Willkommen auf unserer Homepage!* is acceptable. *Welcome to Our Homepage!* is less so.

## 6 Recommendations on Spelling

### 6.1 General Recommendations

Consult the most recent edition of a good dictionary, for example: The American Heritage Dictionary, Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (also available online) or The Oxford American Dictionary. Use the dictionary to check irregular plurals, word division, hyphens. When in doubt, look it up.

### 6.2 UZH Special Recommendations on Spelling

Please note the following recommendations:

- Advisor (not adviser)
- Catalogue (not catalog)
- Dialogue (not dialog)

### 6.3 American or British English?

The Executive Board of the University established the use of American English in a decision from 20 September 2001, confirmed on 16 October 2008. Please note, however, that regionalisms are generally to be avoided when writing for the University of Zurich, whose audience is international and often does not include native English speakers.

The following guidelines apply: A neutral use of English is preferred, US orthography is required, and, when a writer must choose between a British expression and an American idiom, the American idiom should be given preference.

Examples:

- Specialization (not specialism or specialist field);
- Stand in a line (not a queue);
- Use -ize spellings instead of -ise: Specialize, organization, recognize (unless, of course, “-ise” is the correct spelling, such as advertise, enterprise);
- Use -yze endings rather than -yse: Analyze, paralyze;
- Do not use ae in the middle of words (hematology, encyclopedia), unless when using as the name of an establishment/as a proper noun.

Exception:

- Archaeology – whether in the US or elsewhere – is generally written with an “ae” (not archeology).

This website is helpful for spelling differences: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/words/british-and-american-spelling>.

This website offers information on idiomatic differences in everyday language: <http://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com/usukenglish/>.

Wikipedia has a very large entry with some good information: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_American\\_and\\_British\\_English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_American_and_British_English). But – as is the case with all such comparisons – the information is not always accurate, especially as regards idiomatic expression.

## 6.4 Foreign Words

In keeping with most English writing guides, it is recommended that foreign words are placed in italics, with no quotation marks.

- In Nazi Germany, women were expected to confine their lives to *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*.

Familiar foreign words are generally not put in italics except *sic*, which, because of its usage, should be put in italics and brackets [*sic*].

- Inter alia
- Doppelgänger *or* doppelgänger
- Weltschmerz
- A priori

### 6.4.1 Umlauts and accents

If a word or name has an umlaut or accent, retain the umlaut or accent: Müller, André Gide.

If a layout program cannot incorporate umlauts, please write them out: ä=ae, ö=oe, ü=ue.

## 7 Numbers, Computer Terms, Miscellaneous Information

This section contains useful information on special usage at UZH.

### 7.1 Writing Numbers

- Write out numbers zero through nine. From 10 on, the numerical form is preferred.



- Write out *hundred, thousand, million* after the numbers mentioned above: Over nine thousand visitors attended the research fair.
- Use a comma to mark the thousands separator in numbers: 3,092,398 not ~~3'092'398~~. In some print publications, a space will be made: 3 092 398. This is acceptable as long as it is done consistently throughout the publication. For websites, please use the comma.

## 7.2 Capitalization of Computer Terms

- *Internet* is technically a proper noun but is generally no longer capitalized. UZH also treats *internet* as a common noun.
- The *web* is treated as a common noun, but the *World Wide Web* is a proper noun.
- In UZH usage, *website* is a common noun (and one word); *web page* is also a common noun, but is two words.
- Write the word URL in capital letters.

## 7.3 Miscellaneous Information

- Data is a plural noun: The data are conclusive.

# 8 For Translators

## 8.1 Passive or Active Voice

Clarity is the guiding principle when deciding whether to use the passive or active voice. Most translators will be aware of the fact that English uses the active voice more regularly than German. What may be a bit trickier is making sure that not only the voice is active, but that subject is actually the acting agent. This example should help clarify what is meant:

- *Die Bewerbung für eine Nominierung erfolgt bei der Abteilung Internationale Beziehungen der Universität Zürich.*
- Literally: *Applying for a nomination is done at UZH's International Relations Office.*
- Better: *Interested students apply for a nomination at UZH's International Relations Office.*

As in all translations, awareness of the function of a text – and of a sentence, or even word in a text – will help translators make a good decision on how to deal with this issue.

## 8.2 Syntax

Translators must constantly be on guard to not overlook the obvious fact that German syntax is quite different from English syntax. And they must not forget that a grammatically correct English sentence is not necessarily a good translation – or, indeed a good sentence. The best choice is always to adhere to the standard syntactical conventions of the English language.

As with choosing the passive or the active voice, when making decisions concerning syntax, here, too, it is helpful to keep the target audience and the function of the text in mind.

Also: Translators should not be afraid to break a long sentence into two parts. This may cause some difficulties with segmentation in the translation software, but such problems can be dealt with. Unclear sentences can cause misunderstandings that are possibly much more difficult to resolve.

### 8.3 Legal Texts: Translating Regulatory Texts and Contracts

The main reference works for legal and regulatory texts are those edited by Bryan Garner. In particular:

- *Legal Writing in Plain English*;
- *Garner's Dictionary of Legal Usage*; and
- *Black's Law Dictionary*.

When translating legal and regulatory documents, it is a good idea to have a copy at hand.

#### 8.3.1 Modal verbs

When translating contracts, **do not use *shall, should, can***. UZH prefers a very direct, easily understood language – and, above all, a language that cannot be misunderstood.

- For a positive command or a future required action, use *must* or *will*:
  - Die UZH hat den Auftraggeber/Besteller über die Ablehnung in Kenntnis zu setzen. → UZH must inform the client/recipient of services of any refusal to provide services.
  - Diese Kosten werden dem Auftraggeber/Besteller auf der Rechnung gesondert ausgewiesen. → These costs will be billed to the client/recipient of services per separate invoice.
- For positive permission and – as a rule – when translating *können*, use *may* and not *can*:
  - Ein unbefristeter Vertrag **kann** vorbehältlich zwingender gesetzlicher Bestimmungen gemäss den vertraglich vereinbarten Kündigungsbestimmungen (ordentlich) beendet werden. → An open-ended contract **may** be (regularly) terminated in accordance with the contractually defined terms of ending the contract, subject to binding legal provisions.
- For prohibition, use *may not*:
  - Students may not bring any aids to examinations.

#### 8.3.2 Translation of the parts of a contract or regulation

Please structure the name of the various sections as follows:

- **Part** (corresponds to German "Abschnitt," generally a number: Abschnitt/Part 1)
  - **Section** (often unnamed in UZH texts and given a letter form, e.g. "A. Gegenstand und Geltungsbereich")
    - **Paragraph** (para) (§ or Absatz)
      - **Subparagraph**
        - **Item** (not "letter") (corresponds to "litt.")

