



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

**Communications**

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# **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.

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# 1 General Information and Introductory Remarks

The following writing guide is intended for 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. Comments, questions and suggestions for improvement are welcome.

In principle, American English is used at UZH. Please note, however, 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 large and growing list of terminology from the world of higher education, and includes the preferred German and English vocabulary for administrative university business. Overall, UniTerm is a key reference for UZH 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 Oxford English Dictionary (<https://www.lexico.com/>) or Merriam Webster (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>).

The Chicago Manual of Style is the main style guide used at the UZH Communications Office for matters not addressed in this writing guide. See: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

The EU's English Style Guide for writers and translators is also an excellent resource. You can find it online at: [http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/en\\_guidelines\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/en_guidelines_en.htm). Although the guide adopts British spelling, the general style guidelines are very helpful and apply to all language regions.

For legal English, see *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 also see section 9, Dates, Time, Salutations, etc in German and English, for information on recommended conventions.

#### 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.

### 2.2 Writing Dates

Dates are written as follows: day month year

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

When used in a body of text, dates should be written out in full:

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

### 2.3 Inclusive Language

The University of Zurich has guidelines for gender-neutral language in German published by the Office for Gender Equality and Diversity. Inclusive language should also be used in English. Please use the following guidelines:

- Do not use the generic masculine pronouns *he*, *him*, *his*, *himself* when the gender of the person in question is not known. Use the plural form instead:
  - A student is responsible for his own schedule. → Students are responsible for their own schedules.
- Alternatively, try to avoid pronouns:
  - A teaching assistant is generally a PhD candidate who takes on teaching responsibilities while working on his thesis. → A teaching assistant is generally a PhD candidate who takes on teaching responsibilities while working on a thesis.
- Avoid use of the awkward *he/she* or *his/hers*. Rewrite the sentence using either a plural pronoun or no pronoun (examples above). When neither option is possible, use the plural pronoun *them* instead. UZH endorses the use of the singular “*they*” or “*them*”, which is now in common usage in English:

- 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

## 2.4 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
- Agnes Müller, PhD, MD

# 3 Capitalization

## 3.1 The University of Zurich

The University of Zurich is a proper noun and is capitalized. There is no need to capitalize the word university on its own when referring to UZH, but it may be appropriate to do so in some contexts; this is left to the discretion of the author.

## 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 (NB. the word doctorate (a synonym for a PhD) is not capitalized)

### 3.3 Faculties at UZH

The word faculty is not capitalized, except for as a proper noun for the name of a specific faculty, e.g. Faculty of Science

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

The word faculty is not used to refer to members of staff at UZH.

#### 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. After bullet points, the first word should be capitalized. See sections 3.6 and 3.7 for recommendations that apply to UZH websites and publications/UZH regulatory texts.

UZH researchers writing for a specific journal should adhere to the recommendations of the journal in question.

#### 3.5.1 Headline-style capitalization

- Capitalize nouns, pronouns, verbs (including conjugated forms of *to be*), adjectives and adverbs.
- Lowercase definite and indefinite articles (*a, an, the*).
- Lowercase conjunctions (*and, or*).
- 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*.

### 3.6 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 UZH's content management system (Magnolia);
- 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 is for headline-style capitalization of navigation titles, teaser titles and h1-level titles, there should be some freedom in choosing whether or not to use headline-style

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

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,

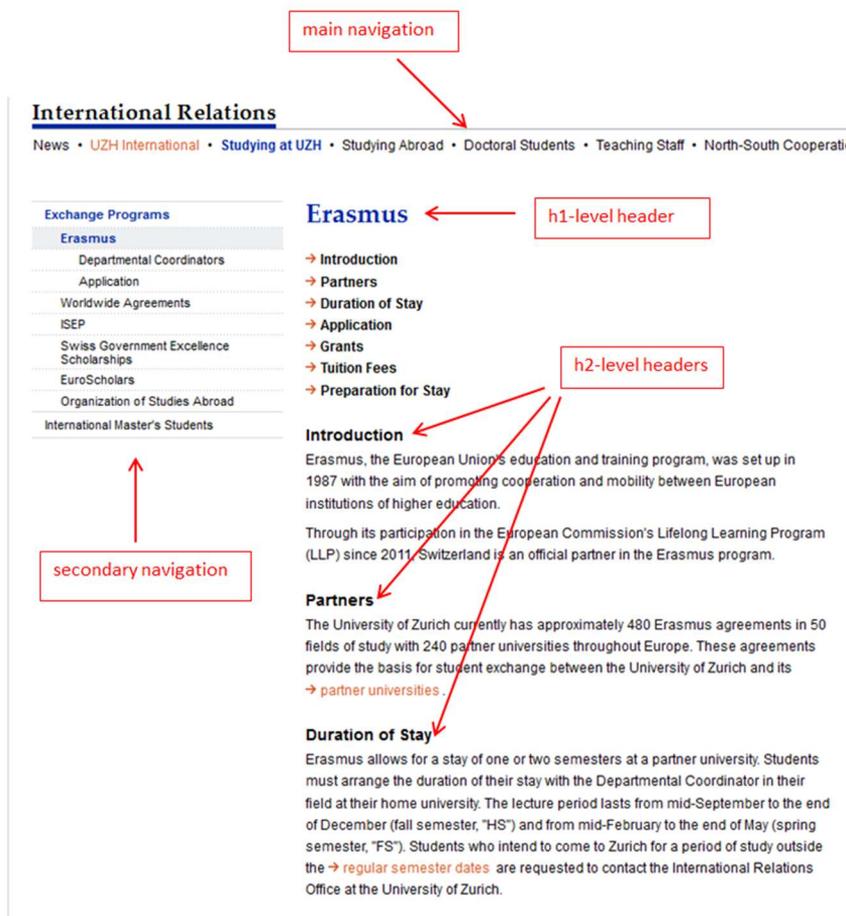
“Es braucht Zeit und manchmal auch ein bisschen Glück” could be “Time (and Luck) Required”

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 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

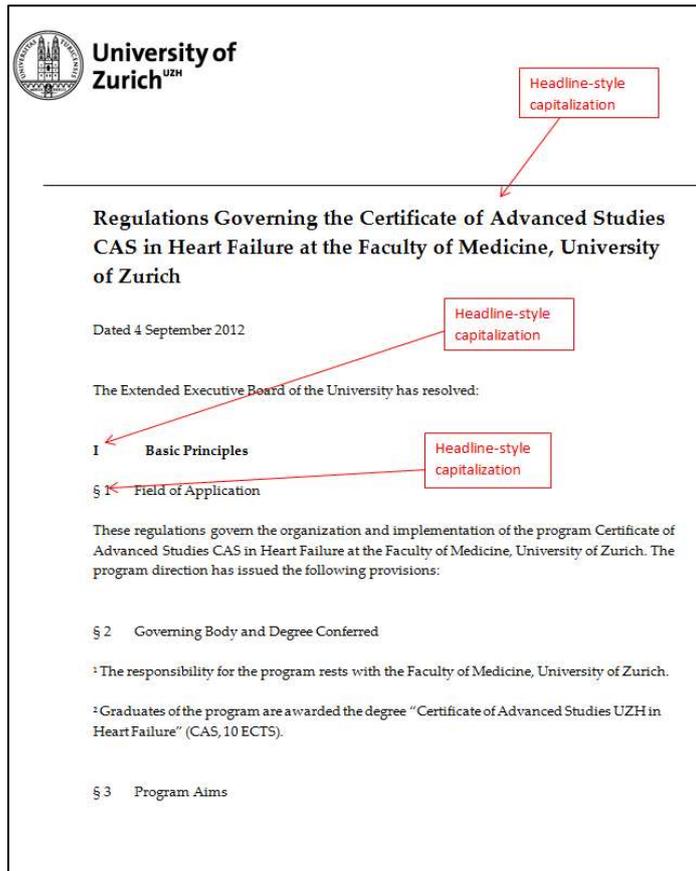
### 3.7 Capitalization Recommendations for Print Publications, Especially UZH Regulatory Texts

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, researchers 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, capitalize the main title, the level marked by Roman numerals, and the level of the paragraph (marked by "§"). The following image provides an example:



### 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 below, unless, of course, a word is a proper noun. This writing guide 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. See also section 9 of this guide.

Use the abbreviation preferred by the bearer of a name:

- Frank M Whiting
- Harry S. Truman

Use a period after abbreviations such as Dr., Mr., Ms. as per American usage.

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 write out the name of the faculty. When the abbreviation is deemed necessary, its usage must be established at the beginning of a text, e.g.: ... at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (PhF).

#### 4.1.3 Measurements/percentages

If abbreviated, the percentage sign and measurement abbreviations come immediately after the number without a space in between:

90%, 23m (for 23 meters)

## 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 no longer recommended, unless required for clarity/correctness.

Examples:

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

The audience was made up of students, instructors 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 En Dash

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.)

When using dashes to separate parts of a sentence, ensure an en dash (–) and not a hyphen (-) is used.

## 5.4 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).
- 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 of Zurich.

## 5.5 Quotation Marks

Use of double quotation marks is recommended as the standard for quotations, with 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.

### 5.5.1 When not to use quotation marks

- The use of 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 of books, brochures, magazines, journals, newspapers, exhibitions and paintings should be set in italics.

Quotation marks can be used when citing articles from periodicals, essays and newspapers.

### 5.6 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 American or British English?

The Executive Board of the University established the use of American English at UZH in a decision of 20 September 2001, confirmed in 2008 and 2018. 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:

- 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, digitalize, 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 is generally written with an “ae” (not archeology).

Please also note the following recommendations:

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

### 6.2 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*]. E.g.:

- Inter alia

- Doppelgänger *or* doppelgänger
- Weltschmerz
- A priori

### 6.2.1 Umlauts and accents

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

## 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, except at the beginning of a sentence.
- 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 Translating Legal Texts

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.

### 8.1.1 Modal verbs

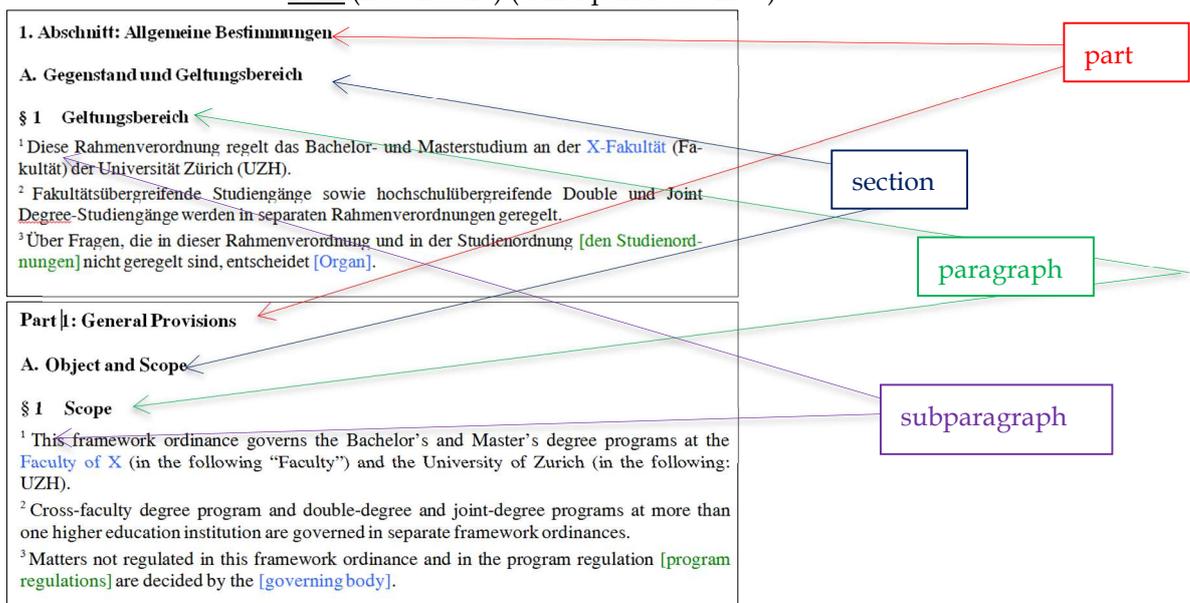
When translating contracts, **do not use *shall, should, can***. UZH prefers a very direct, easily understood language – and, above all, a language that cannot be misconstrued.

- 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.

### 8.1.2 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.”)



**§ 47 Anrechnung an den Studienabschluss**

<sup>1</sup> Anerkannte Studienleistungen sind anrechenbar, wenn:

- a. sie ~~gemäss~~ Studienordnung [Studienordnungen] an ein Studienprogramm anrechenbar sind;
- b. sie äquivalent zu Studienleistungen ~~gemäss lit. a~~ sind.

item

**§ 47 Transfer of Credit toward a Degree**

<sup>1</sup> Credit for recognized academic achievement is counted toward a degree if:

- a. The program regulation permits [program regulations permit] credit for the achievement to be transferred to a study program.
- b. The achievement is equivalent to academic achievement in accordance with item a.

## 9 Dates, Time, Salutations, etc. in German and English

German	English
Telefon	Phone
Tel.	Phone
Telefax	Fax
Fax	Fax
Mo.	Mon
Di.	Tue
Mi.	Wed
Do.	Thu
Fr.	Fri
Sa.	Sat
So.	Sun
16. Dezember 2020	16 December 2020 <sup>2</sup>
1.6.2021	1 June 2021 <sup>3</sup>
1. Januar bis 2. Februar	1 January to 2 February
9.00–12.30 Uhr	9:00am–12:30pm <sup>4</sup>
12.00 Uhr	12:00 noon
E-Mail	e-mail <sup>5</sup>
Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren	Dear Sir or Madam
Sehr geehrte Frau XY	Dear Ms. <sup>6</sup>
Sehr geehrter Herr XY	Dear Mr.
Freundliche Grüsse	Kind regards (in e-mails) Sincerely (e-mails and in letters) <sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In English: No periods, commas or other punctuation.

<sup>3</sup> Write out all dates in English.

<sup>4</sup> In English: No periods or spaces. In both languages: **With a dash** (en dash, not hyphen).

<sup>5</sup> Not "Email" or "email". In English: "E-mail" only at the start of a sentence.

<sup>6</sup> In English: Unless the person addressed has stated a preference for "Mrs." or "Miss".

<sup>7</sup> No comma after the salutation and close in either language.