



Style: Absolute essentials for academic texts

Why a style guide (not just a referencing guide) for academic texts?

Style stipulates rules about how texts should be written. Style in academic texts ensures that the documents in specific departments, faculties or the institution as a whole are consistent in their presentation, look and feel. This forms part of branding and identity.

The author or student's capacity to document their work adequately demonstrates their commitment to and understanding of academic rigour. Presenting information correctly reinforces their competence and establishes integrity. Following style guidelines ensures a well-written and structured document that supports organised and coherent thought; it is not only about which referencing style to use.

Below is a list of style elements, the use or application of which should be clarified at the start of any academic writing journey. This will make writing, reading and understanding easier for everyone – students, supervisors, examiners and copy editors.

STYLE ELEMENT

Front matter

- Cover page with instructions about the detail to be included
- Order of content, for example, cover page, abstract, dedication, declaration, content sections, reference list, appendices/annexures, etc.
- Automated table of contents
- Automated list of figures/tables
- List of acronyms/abbreviations

Page numbering

- Format required (top, bottom, left, right, centre)
- Page numbers for front matter and body of document (continuous or different)

Headings

- Numbered or not
- Different styles for different level headings
 - UPPERCASE, Title Case, Sentence case, **bold**, *italics*, regular
 - Font size and typeface: Arial 11, Times New Roman 14, Calibri 10, etc.
 - Alignment: left aligned, centred or justified

Paragraphs

- Font size
- Alignment: left or justified
- Line spacing: single, 1.5, double

Referencing

- Style guide to be supplied with examples of in-text citations and referencing list/footnotes
- Referencing style to be confirmed: Harvard, APA, Vancouver, Footnote, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.