

# Style Guide for English-Language Texts at Technische Universität Berlin

Available online at: <https://www.tu.berlin/en/international-affairs/researchers-staff/translation-services/glossary-and-guidelines>

This style guide is a resource for all members of the University as well as external persons when composing English-language texts for and about TU Berlin. Its aim is to help achieve consistency regarding the University's internal and external communication in English.

Terminology relating specifically to the University as well as general higher education terminology can be found in the TUB [glossary](#).

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## 1. American English

Technische Universität Berlin uses American English. This is reflected in word choice, grammar, and most of all spelling.

### *Examples:*

- ✓program, ✗ programme
- ✓organization, ✗ organisation
- ✓color, ✗ colour

When using Microsoft Word, you can set the document language in the bottom bar to English (United States) to help avoid errors.

## 2. Name of the University

The University should be referred to as Technische Universität Berlin, even in English-language texts ([see circular from 26.10.2015](#)). The abbreviation TU Berlin can be used as an alternative. Both options should be used without the definite article “the.”

### *Examples:*

- TU Berlin has seven faculties.
- 34,000 students are enrolled at Technische Universität Berlin.

## 3. Address details

Postal addresses should, as a rule, not be translated (e.g. for letterheads and job advertisements).

Contact details and email signatures should be in both German and English ([see circular from 26.10.2015](#)) with the international format used for telephone numbers.

### *Example:*

- Jane Smith
  
- German job title
- English job title
  
- Technische Universität Berlin
  
- [German name of your faculty/department]
- [German name for your institute]
- [English name for your faculty/department]
- [English name for your institute]
  
- Any Street 23, 10857 Berlin

GERMANY

Tel: +49 (0)30 314-12345  
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jane.smith@tu-berlin.de  
[www.tu.berlin](http://www.tu.berlin)

#### 4. Academic qualifications

**German academic qualifications** (e.g. *Diplom*, *Master*, *Habilitation* etc.) are **not** to be translated and should be italicized.

*Example:*

Megan just earned her *Habilitation*.

Periods may be used in English for the abbreviations of academic titles

*Example:*

Bachelor of Arts = B.A.

#### 5. Quotation marks

In English, unlike in German, quotation marks are always positioned above. Please note that if using curved quotation marks, these should be facing inward. Do not use a single apostrophe twice in place of quotation marks.

*Example:*

He said, “The new edition of *Fundamental Astrophysics* will be published next year.”

In German the opening quotation marks are positioned below, meaning that if German is selected as the document language, or is the default language, then the opening quotation marks will automatically be placed below. Please change the document language to English if necessary.

#### 6. Oxford/serial comma

When writing a list of three or more items, we use the Oxford or serial comma directly before the conjunction (usually and/or) before the final item.

*Example:*

The funding program is intended for post docs, doctoral candidates, and current students.

## 7. Dates and times

Date (as a number) month (written as a word) year (as a number) and not separated by commas

*Example:*

30 May 2013

When writing a time frame within the same year, you only need to write the year once.

*Example:*

15 to 30 May 2013

24-hour clock system with hours and minutes separated by colon and without *am* or *pm*

*Example:*

The lecture starts at 19:15.

When referring to the duration of an event etc., the start time (if commencing on the hour) should be written as a single number

*Example:*

The event runs from 7-11:15.

The lectures will take place from 13-15:30.

## 8. Building names

The official names of buildings are to be written in upper case.

*Examples:*

Mathematics Building

Main Building

Some building names are not translated easily. In such cases, we recommend writing the original building name and including additional helpful information in English.

*Examples:*

Treffpunkt ist am Eingang des **Architekturgebäude Flachbau**.

Meet at the entrance of the **two-story architecture building (Architekturgebäude Flachbau)**.

Zentraler Abfallplatz auf der **Schleuseninsel (Müller-Breslau-Straße)**

Central waste dumping point on **“Schleuseninsel” (Müller-Breslau-Straße)**

## 9. Gender-inclusive language

Gender-inclusive language aims to address all genders respectfully. This means addressing not only men and women but intentionally giving space and attention to trans and non-binary individuals as well as those of other genders. Below are a number of areas, where you can use language that is more inclusive.

### Word-choice:

#### *Examples:*

- The suffix -man at the end of a noun should be replaced by the suffix -person: chairman → chairperson
- In some cases there are alternatives for gender-specific nouns or adjectives:  
policeman → police officer  
mankind → the human race / human beings  
man-made → synthetic

### “They” as a gender-neutral singular pronoun

The pronoun “they” is increasingly used as a singular pronoun. This avoids the inconvenience of writing more complicated formulations such as “he/she” or “she or he.”

Using “they” as a singular pronoun is particularly useful when multiple pronouns are used in a row.

#### *Examples:*

- A researcher has to be completely objective in his or her findings.  
A researcher has to be completely objective in **their** findings.
- The goal is to support him/her with his/her career and reaching his/her individual goals.  
The goal is to support **them** in **their** career and reaching **their** individual goals.

In the above examples “his or her” and “him/her” are correct. However, they make the sentence longer and more cumbersome. Using “they” shortens and simplifies the sentence. Generally, the remaining text provides the context as to who is meant and whether the pronoun is being used in the singular or plural. Despite the grammar rules you may have learned, the singular use of “they” is commonly grammatically acceptable. Additionally, it is a neutral variation for individuals who do not identify in the binary genders of female/male.

### Written correspondence

**Email:** Use gender-neutral salutations in emails, if you do not know how a person identifies, such as “Hello Laura Lopez.”

**Written communication/serial letters:** Similar to the recommendation for email communication, refrain from including a gendered salutation (Ms./Mr.) in written correspondence, particularly when sending serial communication: Dear First Name Last Name,

**Certificates:** In English, it is not customary to include the salutation on a certificate.

*Example:*

This is to certify that Laura Lopez born on 01.04.1990 in Berlin has been awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science in the degree program Biology.

**Body of a text:** When referring to persons in a text (i.e. not as a salutation), the titles Mr. and Ms. should not be used and the person's name written in full (first and last name). Other titles indicating academic status or other rank should generally be retained.

*Example:*

✓ Please send your registration form to Silke Schmidt at silke.schmidt@email.com

✗ Please send your registration form to Ms. Schmidt at silke.schmidt@email.com

If a person's name appears several times in a text, the first mention of the name should be in full. Thereafter they can be referred to by their last name only.

*Example:*

And these building materials of life are exactly that, particularly so for Professor Juri Rappsilber, head of the Chair of Bioanalytics at TU Berlin. [...] This liquid chromatography mass spectrometer (LC-MS) is the heart of the analysis conducted in Rappsilber's labs.

### Job postings

There is no English equivalent for the German "m/w/d" as English-language texts generally already implicitly address all genders. However, in an effort to explicitly welcome gender minorities, TU Berlin's Coordinating Office for Women's Advancement and Gender Equality recommends including the following statement in job postings:

"To ensure equal opportunities between women and men, applications from women with the required qualifications are explicitly desired. Applications are also explicitly desired from qualified persons who are intersex, trans, non-binary or another gender, as well as from persons with an immigrant background and/or experience of racism."

It is also possible to write “all genders” in place of “m/f/d.”

### Texts explicitly intended for women and/or gender minorities

There are occasions when events or programs are only intended for a specific target group, such as women in tech, women professors, etc.

Over the years a variety of words have been used to include marginalized individuals (transwomen, non-binary individuals, etc.) such as womxn or wom\*n. However, while these terms intend to be inclusive, they can have the opposite effect and communicate that transwomen aren’t women.

In general, it is recommended to state exactly who the event is for:

#### *Examples:*

This event is for anyone who self-identifies as a woman.

This event is open to women and people of gender minorities.

For further information including guidelines for gender-inclusive writing (in German), please refer to the [Coordinating Office for Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality](#).

## 10. Quoting laws

Laws should be quoted as follows:

<b>German</b>	<b>English</b>
Paragraph (§)	Section
Absatz	subsection
Satz	sentence
Nummer	number
Buchstabe	letter

#### *Example:*

**German:** § 31 Abs. 1 Satz 1 Nummer 1 Aufenthaltsgesetz

**English:** Section 31 (1) sentence 1 no. 1 of the Residence Act  
(*Aufenthaltsgesetz* - AufenthG)

If a legal text is referenced, the title of the law is to first be written in English followed by the German name in italics and the abbreviation thereof. Both the German name and abbreviation are to be put in parentheses. Should the text be referenced again within the same document, either the English translation or the German abbreviation can be used.



*Example:*

Der Fakultätsrat hat gemäß § 71 des Berliner Hochschulgesetzes (BerlHG) die folgende Studienordnung beschlossen. Laut § 71 BerlHG...  
The Faculty adopted the following study regulations in accordance with Section 71 of the Berlin State Higher Education Act (*Berliner Hochschulgesetz* – BerlHG). Pursuant to Section 71 BerlHG, ...

## 11. Use of upper and lower case

### 11.1. Academic and non-academic institutes and institutions

**Only the official and complete names** of universities, schools, departments and agencies are to be written in upper case.

*Examples:*

Academic Advising Service  
Applied Physics Research Group  
Berlin Centre for Higher Education  
Office of the President  
Chair of Aerodynamics  
Central Institute School of Education

#### Universities

As an exception to the above-mentioned rule, the **U** in **University** is to be **written in upper case** (when it appears on its own) when referring to **TU Berlin**. When referring to a university other than TUB, then lower case is to be used.

*Example:*

TU Berlin introduced the Council for Sustainability last year. Since then the **University** has succeeded in reducing its environmental footprint by 20%.

This is an important year in the history of Bath University. On 22 March the **university** will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### Organizational units

When referring to specific organizational units (e.g. a faculty, institute or department) upper case is to be used. When referring to departments etc. in a general sense, then use lower case.

*Example:*

The **Faculty of Humanities** (specific faculty) comprises seven **institutes** (institutes in general). The **Faculty** (specific faculty) includes the **Institute for Language and Communication** (specific institutes).

## Buildings

The official names of buildings are to be written in upper case.

### *Examples:*

Mathematics Building  
Main Building

## **11.2. Academic disciplines/subjects**

### Degree programs at TU Berlin

The names of specific degree programs offered at TU Berlin are capitalized, for example in program descriptions and regulations.

### *Examples:*

The Brewing and Beverage Technology bachelor's program is taught in German.  
In the Biotechnology bachelor's program, you gain the necessary knowledge to handle and solve biotechnological problems.

### Generic disciplines and subjects

In general, academic disciplines and subjects (main/subsidiary subjects) are neither to be written in upper case nor placed in inverted commas.

### *Examples:*

I studied history, sociology, and law in Berlin.  
He studies biology and math, but his minor is music.  
I completed my master's in social and economic history in Berlin.  
The University is looking to appoint a professor of civil engineering and some postdocs in kinetic studies.

See *11.5 Job titles* for information about writing names of professorships.

## **11.3. Titles of events, courses and modules**

The official titles of events, courses and modules are to be written in upper case.

### *Examples:*

She was required to take Fundamentals of Nursing during her first year.  
The Long Night of the Sciences is an annual event in Berlin.

Please note: Non-specific descriptions of events, courses and modules are to be written in lower case.

*Example:*

Professor Ross teaches a really interesting course on the economics of pop-up stores.

#### **11.4. Academic qualifications**

If the title of an academic qualification is **written in full**, then **lower case** is to be used.

*Example:*

She earned a bachelor of science degree from UCCS.

**Abbreviations** for qualifications are to be written in upper case.

*Example:*

He has a Ph.D. in applied geosciences.

#### **11.5. Job titles/official titles**

Job titles/official titles (also external) are to be written in lower case unless the title occurs immediately before the name of the person or if it appears as a part of a listing. Even if the job title appears immediately after the name, it is to be written in lower case.

*Examples:*

the chancellor of the university  
John Smith, biology professor  
Mathew Jones is professor of history at UCLA.

*But:*

Title before the name

Professor Ann Williams

Dean and Vice Chancellor of Health Affairs Richard Krugman

I have informed Professor Brown about the matter and he was none too pleased.

Listing

**Professor Dr. Christian Thomsen**

*President*

**Professor Dr.-Ing. Christine Ahrend**

*First Vice President*

**Professor Dr. Hans-Ulrich Heiß**

*Vice President*

## 11.6. Main headings

Within the title of documents (e.g. flyers, forms, brochures etc.) and the main headings of texts, the first letter of all words is to be upper case (exceptions: articles and prepositions shorter than five letters such as **from** and **the** or **a** are to be written in **lower case**. BUT: For additional sub-headings in the document, only the first letter of the first word is to be in upper case, with all other words in lower case.

### *Examples:*

#### Main headings

Mastering Berlin: International Postgraduate Programs  
Introduction to the Fundamentals of Financial Accounting  
Application to Withdraw from an Examination

#### Subheadings

English-language master's programs  
Key terms in financial accounting

## 11.7. Using the forward slash

Unlike German, there is no space on either side of the slash.

### *Example:*

Corporate finance/accounting

## 12. Correspondence

### 12.1. Salutation

**Mr.** and **Ms.** (pronounced \‘miz\)) are the equivalents of Herr and Frau.

Please note: The use of **Mrs.** to refer to married women in correspondence is outdated!

The following salutations are possible in letters:

#### Name of contact person unknown

Dear Sir or Madam,  
Dear Editor/Service Representative/Spokesperson,

#### Name of contact person known

Dear Mr./Ms. Wilson,  
Dear Professor Adams,

The following salutation is to be used for employment references:

To Whom It May Concern,

Further information is available in *Chapter 9 Gender-inclusive language*.

## 12.2. Opening of text

The first letter of the first word in the line after the salutation in letters and emails is to be written in upper case.

*Example:*

Dear Bob,  
Thank you for your letter...

## 12.3. Complimentary close

**Formal:** Sincerely / Yours sincerely

**Somewhat less formal:** Best wishes / Kind regards

“i. A.”/“im Auftrag” (on behalf of) is generally not used in an English letter.

## 12.4. Titles

The German titles **Dr.**, **Prof. Dr.** or **Prof. Dr. h.c.** should not be translated. It is possible, however, to use only the highest title, e.g. **Professor** in running text after the initial mention of the full title (e.g. Prof. Dr. h.c.):

*Example:*

Professor Dr. Christian Thomsen became president of the Technische Universität Berlin in April 2014. Professor Thomsen has completed his doctorate....

## 13. Titles of texts

### 13.1. Books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, websites, brochures and flyers

Titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, brochures and flyers are to be italicized in running text:

*Examples:*

I never met anyone who actually finished *Finnegan’s Wake*.  
Lots of people have read *Ulysses*.

If technical issues prevent the use of italics, titles of books and other publications should be placed in quotation marks, e.g. “Finnegan’s Wake.”

### 13.2. Single articles in periodicals, magazines or newspapers

Titles of individual articles in journals, magazines or newspapers as well as unpublished texts (academic works, speeches, manuscripts) are to be placed in quotation marks:

*Example:*

*The Journal for Climate Science* has an interesting article this month entitled “Climate Predication Technologies of the Future.”

### 14. Days of the week

The days of the week are to be abbreviated as follows:

*Example:*

Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun  
(always three letters and no period)

### 15. Currencies

Currencies can be designated by either writing the name of the currency in full after the amount, or by using the international ISO code norms placed before the amount:

*Examples:*

300 euros  
210 US dollars

*or:*

EUR 300  
USD 210 (with a space between the currency and the amount)

### 16. Numbers

Numbers and ordinal numbers from zero to nine are to be written as words. The numbers 10 and above are to be written as numbers.

*Examples:*

Numbers: zero, one, two ... 10, 11 etc.  
Ordinal numbers: First, second, third, fourth ... 10th, 11th etc.

Should several numbers occur in a text, however, all related to the same theme (for example a ranking list), then all numbers referred to in this context should be presented in the same format (either numbers or words) in order to ensure clarity and continuity.

At the start of a sentence, numbers are generally written as words.

Please note: In English the use of commas and points is different to German:

*Example:*

German: 100.898,32 = English: 100,898.32

## **17. Translation of organizations, titles of laws, political offices etc.**

Should an official English translation already exist, then always use this, placing the German abbreviation or, if no abbreviation exists, the full German title in brackets after the translation.

*Example:*

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

If there is no official English translation, the German title is to be used and an English translation is to be provided after the German term in brackets as an explanation. Should it not be possible to provide a meaningful translation, then a short English text should be provided in brackets, again after the German term, briefly explaining the function or tasks of the organization etc.

*Example:*

Verwaltungsakademie (Berlin Academy of Administration)

General non-English terms which are not part of standard use of language, and which are not to be translated should be italicized for their first usage in a text and thereafter not. Non-English words which form a standard part of the language (for example words which have an entry in a dictionary) should not be italicized.

## **Sources**

This style guide is based upon the style guide of Universität Hamburg. We would like to thank Universität Hamburg for its kind permission to use its style guide.