

## *Memorandum: HSRC house style*<sup>1</sup>

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The house style of the HSRC will be discussed briefly in this memorandum. By house style is meant here spelling policy, punctuation policy, policy regarding hyphenation, capital letters, italicization, correct use of tenses, etc. Unless indicated to the contrary the same policy applies to both official languages. The idea behind a house style is to ensure that as far as possible there is a certain conformity and consistency in the style of the documents produced by an organization. A house style implies rules or guidelines and it goes without saying that such rules, language being what it is, cannot cover all cases equally satisfactorily. Sometimes a more elegant solution to a particular language problem has to yield to the requirements of consistency - the principle being that a rule that has too many exceptions soon loses its validity.

This memorandum cannot possibly cover all problem cases but the principles and examples discussed may be of some help. Of overriding importance is that the writer should be consistent in the style he/she chooses to follow.

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1 A house style is something which enjoys constant revision and adaptation. As this memorandum was drawn up a while ago, some of the items may no longer apply. - Editor

Language problems, particularly those concerning the use of capital letters/small letters and hyphens, that are frequently encountered in HSRC documents will be discussed with the help of model passages that illustrate these problems. Explanatory notes on the problems are given at the end of the passages. Because of the problems many researchers appear to have with tenses and the punctuation that is appropriate for quotations, references, test items, etc., separate sections have been devoted to these at the end of the memorandum.

## MODEL PASSAGES

At the meeting of the Work Committee: Education of Gifted Children<sup>1: 5</sup> held in the HSRC Building on 12 December 1987 (1987-12-10) at 09h30<sup>2</sup> it was decided among other things<sup>3</sup> that research conducted in terms of the HSRC Investigation into Education<sup>1</sup> should be organized<sup>4</sup> and co-ordinated along multidisciplinary lines, i.e.<sup>3</sup> the disciplines concerned should collaborate. This was also in accordance with the stipulations contained in Section No. 2, Paragraph 5 of the memorandum issued by the work committee<sup>5</sup>.

Dr<sup>6</sup> V. C. de Villiers,<sup>6</sup> President of the HSRC,<sup>5</sup> who acted *ex officio* as chairman of the work committee,<sup>5</sup> reiterated that this procedure had been followed successfully at microlevel<sup>7</sup>, in the family-planning<sup>7</sup> research project (as part of the overall health care programme)<sup>7</sup> conducted in the vicinity of the Rietvlei Dam<sup>5</sup> in the north-western Cape using a sample of 1 500 black<sup>9</sup>, coloured, Indian and white<sup>5</sup> farm workers.

The president<sup>5</sup> went on to say that although the Executive (Hoofbestuur)<sup>5</sup> and the Management Council (Bestuursraad)<sup>5</sup> felt that socio-economic issues should be addressed, some executive director<sup>5</sup> (including the Executive Director of the NIPR)<sup>5: 6</sup> and institute councils<sup>5</sup> thought that more attention should be paid to the wishes of decision makers, clients, government officials, *et al.*<sup>8</sup> in the RSA.<sup>6</sup> In this regard cognizance would have to be taken of the Copyright Act, 1978 (Act No. 98 of 1978)<sup>5</sup> which had the full support of all 1 100<sup>9</sup> publishers in the country.

## NOTES

1. *Names of HSRC committees, etc.*

This is the recommended form for the *full* name of an HSRC work committee/national investigation. Note the use of initial capital letters and of the colon in the case of the work committee. The HSRC's annual report is a useful source of information on the correct spelling of HSRC committees, investigations, centres, divisions, etc. (See also Note 5.)

2. *Dates, time*

Note that the numeral 12 precedes the month and that the 24-hour system is used to indicate the time.

3. *Commas*

Note that in the passage it is not necessary to place commas before and after 'among other things' or between the month and the year. Punctuation, including commas, should be functional otherwise it merely clutters up a sentence. However words/abbreviations/expressions such as namely (not 'viz'), etc., e.g., for instance should always be preceded by a comma.

4. *Z spelling and English/American spelling*

The use of a 'z' instead of an 's' in words like *organize, subsidize, moralize* is preferred by the compilers of such dictionaries as *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* and the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. It is also recommended for use in the HSRC. Generally speaking the 'z' indicates verbs derived from the Greek suffix 'izo' and the 's' verbs derived from Latin. Words that must be spelt with an 's' include *advertise, supervise, surprise, advise, despise, exercise*. The English as opposed to the American spelling of such words as labour (labor), aluminium (aluminum), programme (program) except when referring to specific computer programmes (e.g. the QPAC program) is also recommended.

5. *Capital/small (lower case) letters*

When the *full* title of a person or the *full* name of a committee, act of parliament, government department, HSRC institute, etc. is given, initial capital letters should be used. However when the title or name is not given in full, lower

case letters are generally better. Words in this category that can give rise to uncertainty include town council (the Town Council of Springs), minister (the Minister of National Education), parliament (the South African Parliament), government (the South African Government), cabinet (the South African Cabinet), state president (... State President Botha, the State President of South Africa), etc.

Exceptions in the HSRC context are the Executive (Hoofbestuur) and the Management Council (Bestuursraad), which should always be spelt with initial capitals.

Initial capital letters should also be used in HSRC documents in English when a specific section, chapter, paragraph, table, standard, etc. is referred to. For example in Chapter 6, Table 2.1 Standard 5, *but* page 14. In Afrikaans lower case letters are used: hoofstuk 6, tabel 2.1, standerd 5, bladsy 14.

Initial capital letters are recommended in the case of specific rivers, dams, oceans, mountains, etc. For example the Orange River (die Oranjerivier), the Midmar Dam (die Midmardam), the Indian Ocean (die Indiese Oseaan), the Rocky Mountains (die Rotsgebergte).

Widely recognized geographical areas should also be spelt with initial capitals, e.g. in the Northern Transvaal (in Noord-Transvaal), in the Eastern Province (in the Oostelike Provinsie), in the Western Cape (in the Wes-Kaap), in South West Africa (in Suidwes-Afrika). Less well-known areas should be spelt with lower case letters, e.g. north-western Transvaal (Noordwes-Transvaal), south-eastern Free State (Suidoos-Vrystaat), north-eastern Lesotho (Noordoos-Lesotho). When in doubt as to how widely recognized an area is, use lower case letters for the descriptive (point of the compass) part of the term. Note also that the names of population groups in South Africa that are based on colour are spelt with lower case letters, e.g. blacks (swartes), coloureds (kleurlinge), whites (blankes, wittes).

6. *Abbreviations and full stops*

In English, as opposed to Afrikaans, if the abbreviation ends with the same letter as the full word a full stop is not used, e.g. Mr Brown (mnr. Brown), Dr Phibes (dr. Phibes) but Prof. Rauch (prof. Rauch). If the abbreviation is easily pronounceable the definite article is not necessary, e.g. the Institute Council of IPER but the Institute Council of the BRSS.

Note also the use of full stops as well as the spelling 'de'. Dr V. C. de Villiers but Dr De Villiers, i.e. when not preceded by initials or first name. The same spelling rules are applicable to surnames starting with du, le and van. Virtually all abbreviations of countries, organizations, institutes, devices, etc. are spelt without full stops, e.g. RSA, USA, UNESCO, SABC (SAUK), SASOL, SAA (SAL), SABRA, ISODEM, ICBM, ESKOM.

In HSRC documents abbreviations of academic qualifications such as B.A., M.A., D.Sc., LL.B., which are derived from Latin words, should have full stops as should abbreviations of most foreign expressions, for example, e.g., i.e., etc., *et al.*, *ibid.* The Afrikaans equivalents also have full stops: bv., d.w.s., ens., e.a.

7. *Hyphens*

In English hyphens should be avoided wherever possible: rather write the term or expression as one word or as separate words. Most prefixes can be joined to the following word without using a hyphen, for example *postgraduate student*, *semicircle*, *antenuptial contract*, *extramarital relationship*, *sublieutenant*, *sociopolitical* and *psychosocial*. However when the prefix ends with an o or an e and the following word begins with an o or an e a hyphen is often preferable: socio-economic, co-ordinate, co-operate, re-educate, etc.

Hyphens are also recommended in all 'non' and 'self' combinations as well as in all fractions, compass directions and in many titles, e.g. *non-recurring*, *self-effacing*, *two-thirds*, *south-*

*easterly wind, vice-president, director-general.* Combinations with 'self' are written as one word in Afrikaans, e.g. *selfverklarend*.

As can be seen in the model passage, a hyphen should be used in expressions consisting of *three* words when the middle word is a past or present participle but not when the middle word is a noun or other part of speech. Fractions in Afrikaans are written as separate words, e.g. *twee derdes*.

Finally, a hyphen should also be used in three-word expressions indicating degree, particularly when numbers are involved, for example *second-class pass, first-rate fellow, ten-ton truck, two-rand note*.

8. *Italics*

At the HSRC the general rule is to italicize (or underline) most foreign expressions, particularly those consisting of two or more words (e.g. *faux pas, inter alia*) as well as the titles/names of books (*Das Kapital*), plays (*People are living there*), newspapers (*Business Day*), magazines, films, ships, etc.

9. *Numbers*

Numbers up to and including ten should generally be spelled out unless, for example, they occur in a statistical text containing many numbers. The symbol (e.g. 2) of a number should not be used at the start of a sentence.

As can be seen in the model passage a space should be used to indicate thousands.

## TENSES

The choice of the correct tense when writing research reports, etc. gives a lot of people a lot of trouble. When you write a report on an investigation you generally use the past tense because the investigation has normally been *completed*. Thus for example in the abstract

of the report you would say: 'The aim of the investigation was to determine the number of coloureds in the north-eastern Free State ...'. However when referring to the content of the report itself you would say: 'In chapter 6 the incidence of alcohol-related driving accidents in the Indian community is discussed.'

Some people have trouble with tenses in English because they do not understand the convention that exists with the past tense: just because you use the past tense it does not mean the thing you are talking about no longer exists or is not continuing. For example if a friend tells you that a certain person *could* not find the entrance to the HSRC Building, it would be quite correct and natural for you to ask: 'Didn't you tell him where the entrance *was*?' Here we have the phenomenon of 'sequence of tenses' - the past tense 'could' followed by the past tense 'was'. Accordingly, when writing the minutes of a meeting, for example, it is acceptable to use the past tense throughout because even if it is not stated expressly, the meaning is: (It was stated/reported that ...) 'The question of diversification *would* be considered when the latest sales figures *had been received*.' In Afrikaans the present tense is used for minutes.

In research reports the present tense should be used when you make general statements (often in the conclusions and recommendations of reports), and the past tense when you refer to *specific* respondents, percentages, methodology, etc. in the particular investigation. In order to emphasize the specificity always add the definite article 'the', i.e. do not write: 'Table 4.1 reveals that only 20,2 % of blacks, 4 % of coloureds chose this option.' Rather say 'the blacks', 'the coloureds'. When writing your report do not continuously switch from general statement to specific statements (from present tense to past tense) as this can be confusing for the reader.

The following passage illustrates most of the above points:

The main aim of the survey was to establish whether the different population groups in the RSA supported violence. A glance at Table 6.1 *reveals* that only 20,2 % of the blacks, 4 % of the coloureds and 3 % of the Indians were in favour of violence. From these percentages it *is* clear that most people in

South Africa *do* not support violence. This finding *confirms* P. Smith's observation that 'men and women generally want to live in peace and get on with their own lives'.

## PUNCTUATION IN QUOTATIONS

If the quotation or highlighted word or phrase forms an integral part of the sentence the full stop should be placed outside the closing inverted commas (quotation marks). In the example below (Example (a)) it will also be noted that double inverted commas are preferred - single inverted commas are recommended for a quotation or highlighted word or phrase within a longer quotation.<sup>2</sup>

When a quotation or piece of direct speech is loose standing or when it is separated from the rest of the sentence by a colon, the full stop should be placed inside the closing inverted commas (Example (b)).

- (a) John understood the problem 'in a flash'.
- (b) Horatio said: 'To every man upon this earth death cometh soon or late.'

When a quotation consists of one paragraph only (or a line or two) inverted commas are used at the beginning and end of the quotation. If a quotation consists of more than one paragraph the commencing inverted commas are repeated at the start of *each* paragraph - only when the last sentence of the last paragraph is reached are the inverted commas closed.

'In the engineering group the growth of first post-graduate qualifications will probably follow the same growth pattern as that of the expected number of Bachelor's degrees ...

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2 Readers should note that, in *English Usage in Southern Africa*, policy on the use of single and double inverted commas is different - which explains the apparent contradiction here between what is stated and what actually appears. - Editor

'In the agricultural group the prognosis with regard to Bachelor's degrees is equally optimistic, and since no significant ...

'The medical group's expectation in respect of Bachelor's degrees is a conservative one ...'

## **PUNCTUATION WHEN A REFERENCE NUMBER IS USED**

When a quotation ends and a reference number is also used, the full stop appears first, then the inverted commas are closed and last of all the reference number is indicated.

### **EXAMPLES**

'... will be a practical decision determined by the production needs at the time.'<sup>6</sup>

'... will be a practical decision determined by various factors.'<sup>6; 7; 8</sup>

The references 6; 7; and 8 indicate that there are three different sources for the same statement. Note that a semicolon and not a comma is used to separate the various numbers.

If several references are indicated, a dash may be placed between the first and last reference number, for example 6-10.

## **PUNCTUATION WHERE THERE IS AN INTRODUCTORY SENTENCE/PHRASE<sup>3</sup>**

- (1) The findings were as follows:
- (a) Creative pupils sometimes leave school too soon.
- (b) Creative pupils have a very close relationship with their parents.
- (c) Creative pupils mainly come from families in the above average income group.

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3 This is also of relevance in the writing of test items.

Full stops are used after (a), (b) and (c) because they are complete sentences.

- (2) The following types of antisocial behaviour will be discussed:
- (a) Theft
- (b) Murder
- (c) Drug abuse

Note that no full stop is placed after (a), (b) and (c) since they are not complete sentences.

- (3) It was found that
- (a) creative pupils sometimes leave school too soon,
- (b) creative pupils have a very close relationship with their parents,
- (c) creative pupils sometimes clash with their teachers.

The above examples illustrate the punctuation that can be used when a sentence runs on. Semicolons or full stops can also be used in the place of the commas at the end of the lines.