GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN

ENGLISH USAGE STYLE GUIDE

This guide sets out to advise about the use of international English at our University to:
- ensure a clear and consistent use of language that can be understood by English-speakers from a wide range of backgrounds and countries
- answer common queries and address common mistakes
- provide references to recommended resources

1. GENERAL
- Always write for your specific audience. Texts should be clear and accessible to them.
- State whether your event is in English or German or both and who should attend.
- In cases where there is no exact translation (for instance, it is a German concept such as *WissZeitVG* or *Impressum*), please use the German word in italics and explain as necessary. Sometimes, such terms can simply be omitted from a text.
- Places, buildings, street names etc should not be translated into English equivalents unless the English is also in general usage. If in doubt, check google maps.
- If there is more than one correct way of writing something, choose whichever uses least space and ink (*email* instead of *e-mail*).

2. COMMON MISTAKES
The University of Göttingen
- General texts: University of Göttingen or the University of Göttingen, also acceptable: Göttingen University
- Scientific journals: University of Goettingen
- When referring to the legal entity: Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. Note that the hyphens are required.
- Please do not combine German and English, as in Georg-August University.
- Capitalise "University" and "Campus" when referring to the University of Göttingen or the Göttingen Campus, not when referring to a university or campus in a general sense.
- Please refer to Corporate Design to download the logo and for further advice. Please note, the University does not use an English version of its logo.

Equal opportunities
Please avoid outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise. Note that language evolves very quickly. Check websites that represent the group you want to describe or the recommended resources below, such as the UN or BBC or APA websites. Please use inclusive and respectful language, for example:
- people with disabilities, **not** disabled people
- wheelchair users, **not** people in wheelchairs
- older adults, or people aged 65 years and above, **not** the aged or the elderly

Commonly mistranslated words
The table below shows some examples taken from our University Glossary. See Claire's clear writing tips (below) for other common errors when German-speakers write in English.

German	English	Clarification
Controlling	auditing monitoring review	For instance, "GleichstellungsControlling" could be translated to "equal opportunities monitoring".
Drittmittel	Research grant funding	Note: "Third party funding" is often used by EU funders and so you should use this term if this is your audience. However, it wouldn't be widely understood outside Germany.
Mensa	cafeteria dining hall canteen	When referring to a specific University location, the name should not be translated, eg Alte Mensa or Mensa am Turm.
Nachwuchswissenschaftler*in	Postdoc or Early Career Researcher (ECR)	Postdoc refers to the phase following PhD completion, whereas Early Career Researcher includes other researchers who may still be studying. Avoid using "young" (as in "young scientist") unless describing schoolchildren or there is an age restriction, for instance as in some funding schemes.
sogenannt (X)	"known as (X)" or "referred to as (X)" or "called X"	In English, "so-called" can be used sarcastically as in "my so-called friend". "Sogenannt" may often be omitted or the word being referred to can be put in quotations or a phrase like "known as" can be used.
Wissenschaft Wissenschaftler*in	Science/scientist or research(er) or academia/academic	Science is sometimes perceived as referring to the natural sciences only. Depending on the context, "academia/academic" or "research/researcher" may be better choices to ensure inclusivity. "Scholars" is inclusive and includes students.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Before using an abbreviation or acronym, consider whether there is any benefit in doing so. Many English-speakers do not recognise these forms and such words can spoil the fluency of a text. For example, NB (nota bene) would not be understood by most people.

- If used, the trend is to avoid using full stops in common abbreviations: eg, ie, etc. However, many publications still use them, so follow their guidelines.
- Always spell out the acronym the first time it is used in a text: "The project was completed with the support of the University Medical Center (UMG)."
- If an entity has an English translation, you would normally continue to use the German acronym, as in: German Research Foundation (DFG). The exception to this is CRC/SFB (Collaborative Research Centre/Sonderforschungsbereich).
- Do not combine "Professor" and "Dr" Instead choose the most applicable title. For instance, use Professor Mary Smith, not: Professor Dr. Dr. Mary Smith
- Choose either "Dr Jane Cooper" or "Jane Cooper PhD". Do not use both.

British vs American English

British spellings are recommended; however, clear communication and official names (eg German Primate Center) take precedence over all else. Be consistent within the text. For publications, follow the guidelines of that publication.

- Use: colour, favour, enrol, enrolment, programme, fulfil
- NOT: color, favor, enroll, enrollment, program, fulfil (but enrolled, enrolling, fulfilling are correct).

Capitalisation

- Do capitalise names of departments, qualifications, job titles: Department of History, Professor of Economics. Do not capitalise when it is not a title: "Professor Mary Smith is a professor in the Institute of Computer Science."
- Do capitalise months, days of the week, holidays: July, New Year's Eve, Advent
- Do capitalise languages and nationalities: German, English language, Chinese food
- Do not capitalise seasons of the year: summer, winter semester, spring break
- Do not capitalise disciplines: economics, law, medicine, dentistry, physics
- AVOID BLOCKS OF CAPITALS. IT IS HARDER TO READ. AND IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU ARE SHOUTING.

Dates/Times

Use either dashes or from/to when referring to spans of time, but not a mixture of both. When using the 24-hr clock, do not use am/pm.

- Use the 24-hr clock: 08:00 – 00:00: "Office hours are from 11:00 to 14:00."
- You do not need to write "CET" (Central European Time) except if you are advertising an online event where people may join from all over the world.
- The recommended date format is: "20 March 2019" or "Wednesday 20 March 2019"

Greetings in email communications

It is common to address the recipient as "Dear Dr LastName" or "Dear Professor LastName". If the rank is not known, you can use "Dear Firstname Lastname" (Dear Jane Cooper). It is usual to use "Dear Firstname" (Dear Jane) after a few emails or after speaking to someone.

Degrees and programmes at the University of Göttingen

- Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc)
- Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc), Master of Education (MEd)
- master's programme or master's degree, doctoral degree programme, doctorate (PhD)

Hyphens

- Hyphens are used in words beginning with prefixes such as co, de, pre or re, when two of the same vowels appear together (re-emerge, de-escalate) but not when the vowels are different (proactive, reorder).
- Hyphens are used to join adjectives that describe other descriptors but not adverbs: large-scale projects, entry-level positions, internationally renowned team
- Hyphenate numbers used as adjectives: 18- to 21-year-old students
- Use dashes to separate a non-essential phrase – such as this one – but use sparingly.

Numbers

- Spell out whole-number words for one to ten and if a number starts a sentence.
- Use numerals for 11 and above and for percentages, measurements and currency.
- Internationally, the decimal point is a full-stop (period) and a comma is used to separate thousands, as in: 1,200.21
- For currency, place the symbol directly before the number: £200, €21.99, $4.20
- For most English-speakers, one billion is 1,000,000,000. One million is 1,000,000. They may be abbreviated as 1B and 1M, respectively.

Additional resources

- Please use this **University tool** to look up German words and find their English equivalents or explanations: Glossary.
- There are many **style guides** available online. Note that they often disagree and language evolves very quickly but these are some of the most useful:

Oxford University style guide	The Economist Style Guide
Cambridge University style guide	BBC style guide
The Guardian/Observer guide	UN gender inclusive language & guide
APA inclusive language guidelines	

- **Dictionaries:** Oxford Languages (or via google) or Oxford English Dictionary
- **Translation software** is excellent but rarely 100% correct. It needs to be checked. The following are recommended: Deepl.com, Google translate.
- Be careful when using sites like Leo.org, because the algorithms reproduce common errors.
- Claire's **Clear Writing tips** for German-speakers writing in English: https://www.kowi.de/en/Portaldata/2/Resources/temp/clear_writing_tips_en.pdf
- Many German laws, statutes and regulations have been translated into English and are available on the Federal Ministry of Justice website.

  Please contact Melissa Sollich, International Communications, Public Relations Department, for queries and suggestions about this guide.

Updated: 6 February 2023