



School of Geography, Geology and the
Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES HOUSE STYLE

Guidance for undergraduates studying

BSc Environmental Science (Single/Combined)
BSc Environment & Sustainability

Updated 5th December 2017 by Dr Adam Moolna

House style guide

Requested by Student Voice feedback

Guidance on fonts, referencing and general document presentation has been requested by the Student Voice representatives, citing the availability of the “House Style for Geography at Keele” for fellow students on Geography programmes as being very helpful.

In response we have produced this "Environmental programmes house style" guidance based very closely on the existing Geography house style. Dr Peter Knight created this original guidance and we have followed this with a view to a future School-wide "house style" being agreed. See Knight and Parsons (2003) for further advice.

Knight, P.G. and Parsons, T. (2003) *How to do your essays, exams and coursework in Geography and related disciplines*. Routledge, London.

What is a “house style”?

Most organisations, such as businesses or professional associations, use their own particular style of presentation for all of their published materials. This is known as the “house style” of that organisation. The adoption of a house style allows the organisation to ensure a consistent standard of presentation in all of its work, and to maintain a coherent and recognisable public face. For example, academic journals each have their own house style, requiring contributors to format text, illustrations and references in a particular way.

Many of you may take up careers with organisations that will require you to adopt their house style in your professional work, so an ability to follow house style rules is an important transferable skill. In the Keele context, creating a house style not only helps students to learn and practice basic skills of clear and correct communication, but also helps to preserve the anonymity of student work during assessment. It allows examiners to more easily ensure fairness and consistency in marking. The house style provides a default set of instructions for preparing work, to which staff and students can refer where specific or unique instructions are not provided for particular assignments.

When to follow the house style

Students are encouraged to follow this house style in all modules run by the School of Geography, Geology and Environment, unless specifically instructed otherwise for particular assignments.

You should also apply the principles of the house style in other aspects of your University work such as on-line discussions and email correspondence with tutors. Please note that other subject areas, for example your other principal course or modules run by different Schools, might have different house styles. It is an important professional skill to be able to write in the style required for each particular assignment.

For a particular assignment you may be given instructions that differ from the house style, or you may be advised that the house style does not apply to that assignment. In such cases, you should follow the specific instructions attached to that particular assignment. If you are given no specific instructions to the contrary, you should adopt the house style.

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1. House Style for essays

1.1. Language

The language of instruction and assessment is UK English. Writing in clear and correct English in a style appropriate to a formal academic or scientific context is an important transferable skill that many students will require in their future employment. We encourage you to develop and reinforce that skill during your studies.

It is expected that all submitted work should be written in clear and correct UK English. Persistent or major errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar or syntax may be penalised.

Students who wish markers to be aware of any recognised condition such as dyslexia that might affect their performance **MUST** declare this, for example by displaying the sticker (if submitted in hard copy) or number (if submitted in electronic form only) provided by the University on the front page of their assignment.

All students, whatever their circumstances, are expected to make every effort to present their work at the highest standard that they are able. When you use spelling-check or grammar-check software, ensure that it is set to UK English and always double check any changes that it suggests.

Non-native English speakers who wish to find extra support and guidance for the use of English at Keele should consult:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/lc/academicenglish/supportforinternationalstudents/>

1.2. Style

You should generally write in the formal academic style characteristic of the major journals within your subject area. Check the “Instructions to Authors” provided by journals for guidance. Avoid colloquialism and cliché. Avoid sexist or any other discriminatory terms. Write in impersonal terms avoiding the first or second person singular pronouns (I and you) unless they are absolutely required (for example it may be appropriate to use “I” in some circumstances if the essay title includes “you” or if you are describing your own role in a situation or carrying out a piece of reflective writing) or unless they are appropriate to the particular type of work you are presenting.

1.3. Word processing and printing

Work should be **word-processed** and pages should be **numbered**. Numbering should be in the bottom-centre or bottom right of each page. Where submission is electronic, files should be readable in **Microsoft Word** or as a PDF (Portable Document Format). When printed work is submitted, double-sided printing should be used wherever appropriate unless it makes the document more difficult to read.

1.4. Paper size

Where paper submissions are required, work should be submitted on plain (unlined) A4 paper unless specific assignments make different requirements.

1.5. Margins and alignment

Margins of at least 2.5cm should be used. Text should be aligned to the left margin.

1.6. Fonts and font size

Work should be presented in a standard font such as Arial or Times New Roman. The font size should be 11 or 12 point. Arial 11 point or Times New Roman 12 point are preferred. Most of the text in this document is Arial 11 point.

This sentence is in Times New Roman 12 point. Do not use decorative fonts such as *Comic Sans*, or **impact**. Do not use small fonts.

1.7. Line spacing

Text should be formatted **at a line spacing of 1.5 or 2**. Single spacing is hard to read and does not leave room for the marker's comments. Most of this document is single spaced, which would not be appropriate for a coursework assignment. This paragraph has a line spacing of 1.5 to illustrate the difference.

1.8. Paragraphs

The start of each new paragraph should be made clear by leaving space between paragraphs (an extra line or set your paragraph options in Word to add spacing of e.g. 6 pts below paragraphs). The same approach should be adopted consistently throughout the piece. A paragraph in a typical essay should include all the information, context and evidence required to make a point. It is unlikely that single-sentence paragraphs will be appropriate in your written work.

1.9. Headings and subheadings

Sub-headings in shorter essays should be kept to a minimum but are likely to be required in reports and other assignments. Where they occur they should be clearly indicated, for example by the use of italic font, underlining or numbering. In extended pieces of work such

as a dissertation, the text will be divided into chapters and sections. The Dissertations Handbook provides advice about ordering and numbering sections.

1.10. Binding, cover page and labelling for submission

Most pieces of assessment will be submitted electronically but some may also require hard copy submission. In the case of hard copies being required, unless otherwise specified in the instructions for the individual assignment, you should staple the pages of your work securely using a staple in the top-left corner. You should not use plastic wallets or folders unless it is specifically required by the nature of the assignment. You should make sure that the module number and the title of the piece of work are clearly visible on the front page along with your name or identification number. For group work, give not only the number of the group but the individual names or numbers of the group members.

1.11. Citing sources and References

References should be cited and listed in the Harvard style (author, year, title, publication details; see section 4).

1.12. Word count and word limits

For any work that has a set word limit or maximum length you **must add a word count**.

Excluded from your word count are the title page, reference list and appendices only (all text in between these front and end portions of your written work count, including headings and figure captions). We will allow leeway of 10% without penalty but submissions exceeding the specific word count by more than 10% will be subject to a deduction penalty of 10 percentage points.

If you use a word processing package such as MS Word, simply highlight the text of your essay and use the Word Count tool to measure its length. The word count should take the form: essay length = 1497 words. Check with your tutor for specific instructions regarding any unusual assignments.

Guidance for word counts will in future usually be set out as in the following example for a 2500 word limit essay:

The word limit is set in the University approved module description as [2500] words. Excluded from your word count are the title page, reference list and appendices only (all text in between these front and end portions of your written work count, including headings and figure captions). We will allow leeway of 10% without penalty but submissions exceeding [2750] words will be subject to a deduction penalty of 10 percentage points.

2. House Style for posters and websites

2.1. Language and style

The same requirements for clear, correct and appropriate formal English that apply to essays (see above) apply to posters and web pages.

2.2. Format and layout

Posters and web pages allow greater flexibility in format and layout than essays do. However, all work should adhere to the highest standards of clarity. Posters should be produced using software such as PowerPoint.

2.3. Poster size

Your tutor will give you specific instructions about the size and format of any posters that you are required to submit. References are as important in posters as in any other type of work. For any work that has a set word limit you must add a statement on word count. Work that exceeds any set length limit will be penalised (see instructions for essays above).

2.4. Citing sources and references

References should be cited and listed in the Harvard style (author, year, title, publication details; see below).

3. House Style guidance for formal correspondence

These rules apply to all course-related correspondence including e-mails to your tutors, letters explaining absence from classes, etc.

3.1. Keele e-mail account

When you contact course staff by e-mail you should always use your official Keele e-mail account, not an off-campus account such as hotmail. This allows us to ensure that students do not “borrow” each other’s identity and helps to secure the e-mail system.

3.2. Sender’s details

The name and return address of the sender must be clear. In emails, the “from” field should include your surname and initials (or full name), not just your surname or just your user-ID. In a letter, your full name and return address should appear at the top of your letter. You should also put your name (first name and surname) at the bottom of your letter or email. It is a good idea to set up a email signature that automatically adds your name and details to the bottom of every email you send.

3.3. Subject line

In an email, the subject line should always be completed with a short title indicating the purpose of the email. For example: “Explanation of tutorial absence” or “Request for meeting”. In a letter, you should also put a subject line just after the salutation and before the main body of the text.

3.4. Salutation

Emails and letters should always begin with a polite and formal salutation such as “Dear Dr Knight”, or “Dear Peter”. This is particularly important for the first e-mail that initiates a correspondence. Subsequent emails in the “conversation” may do without the formal salutation. It is **not** appropriate to initiate a correspondence with a phrase such as “Hey! I have a question...”.

3.5. Language and style

It is important that correspondence is written in clear and correct English. This minimises the risk of miscommunication, and also demonstrates a respectful and professional attitude. Like any other writing, emails and other messages should be checked carefully for spelling and grammar before they are sent.

4. Referencing and citations

4.1. Purpose and principles of referencing

Correct referencing is an essential academic and transferable skill. Referencing is the way in which you cite previous research or acknowledge your sources of information and allow the reader to trace and check your sources.

Failure to cite sources is poor academic practice and may be construed as plagiarism. Failure to provide proper and correctly cited references in your work will be heavily penalised.

You should use the Harvard style (author, year, title, publication details) for referencing, unless otherwise instructed for a specific piece of work. The Harvard style is also known as the author-date system, and is the most commonly used system in science publishing.

In the text of your assignment where you wish to refer to a source or to previously published work you must give the author (surname only) and the year of publication (for example: Smith, 1997; Smith and Jones, 1998; Smith et al., 1999). At the end of your work you must provide a list of all the sources that you cited in your text, arranged alphabetically by author and with full bibliographic details of each item. Every item that you cite in your text must be listed in the reference list at the end of the work. The reference list must contain only items that you cited in your text. Further details of this system and examples are provided below.

4.2. Citing references within your text

A “citation” or “reference” in your text is where you mention, or refer to, somebody else’s work in your own: for example if you mention a previously published research paper or quote some data from a book or a web site.

You make a citation by giving the surname (no initials) of the author of the work you are citing and the year of its publication (in brackets).

Smith (1987) argued that...

If the author is not a natural part of the sentence enclose it in brackets with the date.

The data were unequivocal (Smith, 1989).

If the work has two authors, give both their surnames.

Smith and Jones (1988) argued that...

If there are more than two authors, provide only the name of the first author, followed by “et al.”, which is an abbreviation of the Latin for “and others”.

Smith et al. (1989) argued that...

If you cite more than one item written by the same author(s) in the same year, distinguish between them with a lower-case letter after the date.

Smith (1989a) argued that... whereas Smith (1989b) suggested...

The “author” may in some cases be an organisation rather than an individual.

UNESCO (2001) argued that...

Where no author is named on the original work, use “Anon.” (short for anonymous) instead of an author surname.

Anon. (2004) argued that...

If a publication has no date, use “undated” instead of a date after the author.

Smith (undated) argued that...

If you refer to several items in a list, separate the items with semicolons.

The data were unequivocal (Smith, 1989; Jones, 1990; Smith and Jones, 2001).

If you cite a source that you have not seen yourself but have learned about from another source, (known as secondary referencing) you should use the phrase “cited in”. For example, if you read a paper by Smith that referred to earlier work by Jones, and you want to mention Jones’ work you should include both Jones (1978) and Smith (1987) in your reference list and write:

Jones (1978, cited in Smith, 1987) argued that...

If you provide a direct quotation (putting the exact text from your source within quotation marks) then you should provide the page number that the quotation came from.

According to Smith (1987, p.25) “It was enormous”.

4.3. Listing references at the end of your text

Full details of all the sources cited in your text should appear under the heading “References” or “Reference List” at the end of your work. You are not required to produce a bibliography and you should not use “Bibliography” as a heading for your reference list. References should be listed alphabetically by first author. Do not subdivide your list into sections for different types of item (books, journal articles, etc).

Please note: a reference list is not the same as a bibliography. For most of your work you are required to provide a reference list. Do not use the heading “Bibliography” at the top of a reference list! If you are required to produce a bibliography you will be given specific instructions about how to present that by the tutor who sets the assignment.

For each item you should provide full details that would enable a reader to trace the original material. The material differs a little depending on the nature of the source, but generally the details should be provided in the order: authors, date, other information. The following examples provide guidance.

Books and book chapters (print versions available)

A book written by a single author

Author’s surname, Author’s initials, (year of publication in brackets), Title of book in italics, (publisher and place of publication). Example:

Adams, J. (2005) *Geographical Inspirations*. (Inspire Publishing, London.)

A book edited by a single editor

Editor’s surname, Editor’s initials, (ed., in brackets) (year of publication in brackets), Title of book in italics, (publisher and place of publication). Example:

Smith, J. (ed.) (2005) *Geographical Inspirations*. (Inspire Publishing, London.)

A book with more than one author

First Author’s surname, First Author’s initials, Second author, third author, etc, (year of publication in brackets), Title of book in italics, (publisher and place of publication). Example:

Zachary, J., Jones, B., Bloggs, W. (2005) *Geographical Inspirations*. (Inspire Publishing, London.)

A 2nd or later edition of a book

Author’s surname, Author’s initials, (year of publication in brackets), Title of book in italics, (edition number in brackets), (publisher and place of publication). Example:

Smith, J. (2007) *Geographical Inspirations* (2nd edition). (Inspire Publishing, London.)

A chapter in an edited book

Chapter Author’s surname, Chapter Author’s initials, (year of publication in brackets), Title of Chapter. The word “in” in italics, Editor’s surname, Editor’s initials, (ed., in brackets), Title of book in italics, (publisher and place of publication). Example:

Smith, J. (2004) Minor Geographical Inspirations, in Smith, J. (ed.) Geographical Inspirations. (Inspire Publishing, London.)

Journal articles (print versions available)

A paper in a journal (single author)

Author's surname, Author's initials, (year of publication in brackets) Title of paper. Name of Journal in italics, volume and issue numbers, page numbers of paper. Example:

Smith, J. (2002) Early Geographical Inspirations. *Journal of Inspirational Geography*, Vol. 22, no.3, p.23-45.

A paper in a journal (more than one author)

List all authors, surname then initials, with "and" before the final author, (year of publication in brackets) Title of paper. Name of Journal in italics, volume and issue numbers, page numbers of paper. Example:

Smith, J., Jones D.B. and Harrison, P.T. (2002) Earlier Geographical Inspirations. *Journal of Inspirational Geography*, Vol. 22, no.3, p.12-17.

Online books and journals

E-books and papers accessed online

Details as per the print version when one exists. You do not need to give the url of the online version for papers or books that exist as print copies even if you access an online copy. Even if you accessed the paper online, the example given above would still be listed as:

Smith, J., Jones D.B. and Harrison, P.T. (2002) Earlier Geographical Inspirations. *Journal of Inspirational Geography*, Vol. 22, no.3, p.12-17.

A web site

Author(s)/Editor(s) if known (Author may be an organisation eg US Geological Survey). Date of creation of site if provided. Title of page or site in italics. "Online". Publishing organisation if different from author. URL (web address). Date of your access. Example:

NASA (2006). Earth Observatory News. Online.
<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/> Accessed 24th Dec. 2006

Personal communications and other sources

Personal communications

Author's surname, Author's initials, Year. "Personal Communication". Type of communication (eg: e-mail, interview, conversation, lecture). Date of communication. Example:

Smith, J. (2007) Personal Communication. Telephone conversation 7th January 2007

Other sources

Other sources of many different types may be used, such as maps, theses, newspapers, online bulletin boards, films or performances. The style for referencing these sources should follow the general principles applied to the examples above.

4.4. Formatting the reference list at the end of your document

Items in the reference list should be presented alphabetically by author. The list should not be divided into sections for different types of publication. The separate items should be clearly separated either by leaving an extra half-line space between items or by boldening the first author's surname in each item. The list should be clearly headed "References" or "Reference List". For example:

Reference List

Adams, J. (2005) *Geographical Inspirations*. Inspire Publishing, London.

NASA (2006). *Earth Observatory News*. Online. <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/Newsroom/>
Accessed 24th December 2006

Smith, J., Jones D.B. and Harrison, P.T. (2002) Earlier Geographical Inspirations. *Journal of Inspirational Geography*, Vol. 22, no.3, p.12-17.