

FACULTY OF LAW

GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER STYLE GUIDE¹

These guidelines have been created to assist you as you write and submit papers to the faculty. In the event of conflict, individual instructors' requirements for course papers take precedence, as do the Faculty of Graduate Studies [Thesis Guidelines](#) and the guidelines for theses and major research papers in the Faculty of Law, which are available on our [Current Graduate Students](#) website.

I. General Format

Typeface: Times New Roman

Font size: 12 point (except that 10 point should be used for footnotes).

Printing: Please use single-sided printing for all papers

Spacing: Double-space throughout, except for footnotes, bibliographies, tables of contents and block quotations, which are indented within the text. These should all be single-spaced.

Margins: 1" (2.5 cm) on all sides.

Justification: Either left-justified or full justification is acceptable.

Headers and footers: Do not use any, except for page numbers.

Page numbers: 0.75" (2.0 cm) from the top and 1" (2.5 cm) from the right-hand margin. Every page should be numbered, except for the title page. If the paper includes a preface, the prefatory pages may be numbered with small Roman numerals starting with "i." Prefatory page numbers are centered at the bottom of the page.

Headings: Capitalize and centre all main headings. Subheadings to these headings may be left-justified to distinguish them.

Paragraphs: Insert a tab at the beginning of each paragraph (other than long, indented quotations) and maintain consistent indentation and justification throughout the paper. Do not add an additional space between paragraphs.

Quotations: If a quotation is longer than four lines of text, create a block quotation by single-spacing the quotation and indenting it by 1/2" (1.25 cm) from both the left and right margins. Indent a paragraph within a block quotation as you would a regular paragraph. Do not use quotation marks around block quotations.

Sections of a paper:

¹ These guidelines were prepared by Annie Voss-Altman under the direction of Jennifer Koshan and Jonnette Watson Hamilton. They were updated by Lyndsay Campbell in 2017, 2022 and 2024.

- Title page: Please refer to the sample title page at the end of these guidelines.
- Abstract: Subject to instructor's requirements, no more than 150 words.
- Table of Contents: Required for theses and major research papers but otherwise optional. Please refer to the University's [thesis guidelines](#) for format.
- Body of the text.
- Bibliography: Subject to instructor's requirements, but not required by McGill style guide, as publication information is included in the notes.
- Appendices: as needed.

II. Footnotes

Format: Footnotes receive Arabic numerals, starting with "1." They are to be single-spaced with no space between footnotes. A footnote must be placed on the same page as the citation to which it refers. A short line should separate the footnote from the text. If the footnote carries over to the next page, it is common to separate the footnote from the text using a line that spans the width of the text, from one margin to the other.

Style: Please refer to the most recent edition of *The Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citations* (the "McGill Guide") for the correct style for all footnotes.

When to footnote: Please refer to the McGill Guide, chapter one, for information on when to footnote material. Footnote both directly and indirectly quoted (paraphrased) material. *A good rule of thumb is that if the idea or the words are not yours, then they need a citation to their source.*

Footnoting electronic sources:

- Cases: if a neutral (electronic) citation is available, cite the neutral citation first and one print citation second, preferably from an official source. The McGill guide provides more information.
- Statutes, articles and other material: If the source is readily available in print, cite the printed source. If not, cite the electronic source, using parentheses at the end of the citation to note the source (e.g. (HeinOnline)).

Abbreviations: Consult the appendices to the McGill Guide and, for U.S. sources, the most recent edition of *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*. These guides contain abbreviations for courts, places, and journals.

III. Other Formatting

Numbers: All numbers from one through one hundred are to be spelled out, as well as any of the whole numbers that are followed by *hundred, thousand, hundred thousand*, and so on (e.g., *thirty-seven, four hundred*), unless they are part of statistical or scientific data, in which case use numbers. This rule also applies to currency (write *twelve hundred dollars* but \$35.67). Fractions are to be spelled out unless they are mixed fractions, which contain both a whole number and a fraction (e.g., *three-fifths* vs. 4 2/3).

Exceptions:

- If a sentence begins with a number, spell out the number (e.g., Three hundred and thirty-three years ago ...).
- If the number precedes %, do not spell out the number unless it begins a sentence, in which case spell out both the number and *percent* (e.g., Fifty-nine percent of all Canadians agree that) .
- Time of day is generally expressed in numerals if the time is followed by a.m. or p.m. (8:15 a.m.); otherwise, spell out the time (e.g., eight o'clock in the morning).
- Citations of footnotes always retain their numerals (e.g. *supra* note 1).

Numbers with commas: Use commas to mark off the thousands (e.g., 15,257,000).

Inclusive numbers: If the number sequence is less than 100 or begins with a multiple of 100, use all numbers (e.g., 36-54, 600-637). Otherwise, retain only the last two numbers (e.g., 1748-59) unless more are needed for clarity (e.g., 304-429).

Hyphenating inclusive numbers: Hyphenate inclusive numbers unless the number is preceded by the word *from* or *between*, in which case use *to* or *and*, as appropriate (e.g., “She attended law school from 2005 to 2008” or “The essays were published between 2003 and 2007”).

Dates: The preferred style is day-month-year (e.g., 13 May 2009).

IV. Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation, Style

A. Spelling:

Please be aware that a spell check tool may not catch all misspelled words, particularly homophones (e.g., *their*, *there*, *they're*) Always review all corrections suggested by the computer before accepting them. This also provides an opportunity for a final edit. Either American or British spelling of words is acceptable, but you should be consistent.

Abbreviations: All words should be spelled out in their first usage unless they are part of an official company name (e.g., Rogers & Co.). Acronyms can be substituted subsequently, provided that the acronym is first placed in parentheses directly following the initial spelled-out usage of the term (e.g., Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB)).

B. Grammar:

Parallelism: All elements in a series must have the same grammatical form. Do not mix verbs with nouns or use different forms of verbs in the same series (e.g., After breakfast, Amelia *washed* the dishes, *vacuumed* the house, then *revised* her paper for Environmental Law.) This rule also applies to consistent tense use within a sentence (e.g., If I had gone to the store, I would have bought carrots.)

ESL concerns: For grammar concerns of particular interest to ESL students, such as articles, subject-verb agreement, proper placement of adjectives, and so on, see Hacker and Sommers, *A Canadian Writer's Reference*, which has a special section on ESL trouble spots.

C. Punctuation:

Dashes: Use two hyphens together to create an em-dash. Use an em-dash to indicate extra material in the sentence that could also be enclosed by parentheses (e.g., The judge noted that the colour -- not blue but closer to turquoise -- matched the description of the colour of the clothes worn by the defendant.).

Hyphens: A single hyphen can be used in compound words but should be used sparingly, as the trend has been to move away from their use. If in doubt about whether or not to hyphenate, consult an unabridged Oxford or Webster's dictionary. The reference resources at the end of this handout also provide guidelines for hyphenation. In fully justified texts, hyphens can be used to divide words at the end of lines. Divide words between syllables, and use hyphens sparingly.

Periods and semi-colons: Semi-colons and periods often have the same function. Use semi-colons to separate two separate but linked thoughts (e.g., First year associates often find the time commitment daunting; however, the long hours enable them to assimilate quickly to the culture of their new firm.)

Semi-colons may also be used to separate items in a complex list that includes commas (e.g., The committee considered the following locations for the conference: Kingston, Ontario; Quebec City, Quebec; and Red Deer, Alberta.).

Colons: Use colons to separate a general complete thought from specific items within a list (e.g., There are three kinds of fruit in the basket: apples, oranges, and grapes.).

Commas: Use commas to create ease in reading. Commas are used to separate dependent clauses (e.g., “My sister, who loves Renaissance art, arrived home from Italy last week”); prepositional phrases (e.g., In case of emergency, break glass); and elements in a series (e.g., The following courses are mandatory in the first year: Torts, Constitutional, Property, Crime, and Contracts.).

A comma is never used to separate two complete sentences unless the comma is followed by a conjunction, such as *and*, *but* or *or* (e.g., Rome wasn't built in a day, but Nero's fire destroyed it in just a few hours.). If the second sentence shares the same subject, the second subject can be dropped and the comma omitted (e.g., Jane loved dogs but loathed cats.).

The Faculty of Law follows the *Chicago Manual of Style* in using the “Oxford” or serial comma. We write “sheep, pigs, and goats” instead of “sheep, pigs and goats.” The serial comma at times avoids important ambiguities.

Quotation marks: The rule regarding the placement of quotation marks depends on the type of punctuation that ends the sentence. Place all commas and periods inside quotation marks. Place all colons and semi-colons outside quotation marks. For question marks and exclamation points, determine if the punctuation applies just to the quotation or to the entire sentence. If it applies just to the quotation, place the punctuation inside the quotation mark. If it applies to the entire sentence, place the punctuation outside the

quotation mark (e.g., The professor asked the class, “How can this ruling be applied?” vs. How can we avoid the “tragedy of the commons?”).

Double vs. single quotation marks: Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation or title that occurs within another quotation (e.g., The author mused, “What message does the ‘tragedy of the commons’ offer us today?”). Never use either single or double quotation marks around a word or phrase to emphasize it or give it an ironic meaning.

Emphasis: Italics should be used sparingly to emphasize words.

Brackets: Square brackets are primarily used to enclose material that is not originally in the quoted text but is needed for clarification (e.g., In order to evaluate their [the NDP’s] success, one must begin by looking to their Saskatchewan roots.).

Parentheses: Use parentheses to enclose related information and for glosses or translations of unfamiliar or foreign terms (e.g., *ex turpi* (illegality)) and for the first occurrence of an acronym immediately following its spelled-out form.

D. Stylistic Considerations:

Paragraphing: In general, limit paragraphs to one idea per paragraph; however, do not write one-sentence paragraphs. There may be rare exceptions to this rule, but one should be thoroughly confident and fluent before breaking it.

E. Machine Learning / Generative AI:

It is a fundamental expectation of the Faculty of Law that that all work submitted will be the product of the student’s own mind and efforts. On theses, refer to the Thesis Requirements document on the Current Students webpage. For major research papers and other course papers, refer to the instructions provided by the instructor.

V. More Resources:

The following books are useful resources for citation, grammar, and paper-writing. Copies are available at the bookstore or in the library.

A. Books

Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation (“McGill Guide”), newest edition. This book is the standard Canadian citation guide. It is available to Law students through the library database Westlaw Edge.

The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, newest edition. This book is the standard American citation guide.

The Chicago Manual of Style, newest edition. This book is an essential reference for questions about style, grammar, and usage. It is available through the Purdue Owl website, as well as on paper: see https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html.

Diana Hacker, *A Canadian Writer's Reference*, 7th ed (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2019). This book is an excellent resource for questions of grammar and usage. It includes a section specifically for ESL students. Individual strategy, organization, and style are covered.

John M. Swales and Christine B Feak, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012). This book is an introduction to academic writing with a focus on ESL students. Individual strategy, organization, and style are covered.

B. At the University:

The [Writing Support Centre](#) offers various supports for students, including one-on-one coaching.

C. On the Web:

- The [University of Calgary's guidelines](#) for writing, submitting and publishing theses.
- [University of Michigan](#) resources for English language learning.

Sample title page:

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF LAW

COURSE NUMBER AND NAME
[TITLE OF PAPER]

BY
[NAME]
[DATE]