

NORTHERN STUDIES STYLE GUIDE

Updated May 2025

General Language and Style (see also specific topics in more detail below)

- Use formal academic English as used in the UK (rather than in North America), e.g., ‘-ise’ is preferred to ‘-ize’.
- It is acceptable to use the second person pronoun, e.g., ‘you can appreciate’ rather than ‘one can appreciate’. Be wary about writing in the first person, but some instances are fine.
- Ensure that comments on the work of other writers do not infringe copyright and defamation legislation and avoid language which might be offensive to others.
- Avoid language which is gender specific or makes unfounded assumptions regarding gender. Reword instances to avoid using pronouns rather than overusing ‘he and she’ and use the plural ‘they’ if it seems appropriate. If rewording is not possible, use ‘he or she’, not ‘s/he’ or ‘he/she’.
- Scottish (rather than English) legal terminology is preferred: e.g., *briefe* (not *writ*), *feu* (not *fief*), *procurator* (not *proctor*), *sasine* (not *seissin*).
- Foreign language quotations should be accompanied by a translation and be italicised. Latin, where long adopted into English (such as: *in situ*, *et al*) need not be italicised. Unadopted phrases should be italicised (see **Italics** below)
- The journal leaves it up to authors to choose whether or not to use the **Oxford comma**, as long as it is consistent throughout the entire article.
- For further guidance on language and style, please refer to the *MLA Handbook* and/or the editor, as well as below.
- **em dashes**: em dashes are increasingly coming under scrutiny with the rise of AI writing, but Northern Studies encourages their use when appropriate in the sentence (see the MLA [here](#)).
 - Please **use**: word—word (no spaces before or after em dash)
 - Please **do not use**: word — word (spaces before and after em dash)

Captions

If there are any tables, figures, maps, or other illustrations, a separate list of captions should be supplied.

Captions should be consistent and clear and take the form:

Figure #: <Title of the figure (with initial capital for the first word and any proper nouns)>, <date (if required)> <(Source [including if used with permission, if not created by author])>

Examples:

Figure 2: Plan of Kirkwall Cathedral

Figure 4: Tynwald Hill, Isle of Man, 2023 (Photo by author)

Acknowledgements

Any acknowledgements should be given in the first footnote.

References and Bibliography

References for the article text should be in footnotes, not in-the-text citations. Footnotes should be indicated in the text with a superscript Arabic numeral at the end of the sentences, using the <insert footnote> function. Multiple citations within a footnote should be ordered chronologically, not alphabetically.

For published sources, the **Harvard** citation system will be used. The reference in the footnote should consist of <author surname> <date>, <page>.

Examples:

¹ Crawford 1987, 23

² Thornton 1998, 23; Barrett 2007, 322

³ Hermann Pálsson 1988

* For Icelandic author names, list the first name and patronymic/matronymic for the author, in that order, in both the footnote and in the bibliography (see below)

Edited publications of primary sources should be referenced by abbreviated title and numbering.

Examples:

¹ *CSSR* v, 189

² *Orkneyinga Saga*, 34

For unpublished primary sources, some archives give guidance on the referencing of documents; otherwise, identify by the repository, full archive number, brief description and date.

- Use the following abbreviations when relevant: 'MS'/plural 'MSS' for manuscript (s), 'fo.' or 'fos' for folio(s), 'p.' and 'pp' for page(s); 'col.', 'cols.' for columns(s). Further abbreviations may be used in second and subsequent references.

Examples:

¹ Shetland Archives, SC/12/65/3, p. 15, Disposition by Thomas Olasone of Veasetyr to Henry Phancoucht, 28 Oct. 1525

² The National Archives: Public Records Office, SP75/8, f.61, 'The State of the King of Denmark's Army', Mar. 1627

A **bibliography** listing all sources cited should be included at the end of the article.

- For authors' names, initials or full given names will be acceptable, as long as the decision is consistent across the entire bibliography.
- For Icelandic names, list the first name and patronymic/matronymic for the author, in that order, in both the footnote and in the bibliography. In the bibliography, the entry should be listed alphabetically in order according to the first letter of the author's first name.
 - For more on this specific citation situation, see the MLA style guide [entry](#) on Icelandic names
 - Example: Hermann Pálsson 1988, 'A Foundation Myth in Landnámabók', *Medieval Scandinavia* 12, 24-28.
 - This would appear in the bibliography under 'H' and would be cited as (Hermann Pálsson 1988) in the footnote

Examples of sources in the bibliography (following [Harvard](#) citation system, replacing periods with commas):

Journal articles

Cant, Ronald G 1984, 'Norse Influences in the Organisation of the Medieval Church in the Western Isles', *Northern Studies* 21, 1-14

Thornton, T 1998, 'Scotland and the Isle of Man, c.1400-1625: Noble Power and Royal Presumption in the Northern Irish Sea Province', *Scottish Historical Review* 77:1, 1-30

Hermann Pálsson 1988, 'A Foundation Myth in Landnámabók', *Medieval Scandinavia* 12, 24-28

Chapters in multi-authored books

Barrett, J H 2007, 'The Pirate Fishermen: The Political Economy of a Medieval Maritime Society', in B Ballin Smith, S Taylor and G Williams (eds), *West Over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300*, Leiden: Brill, 299-340

Woolf, A 2003, 'The diocese of the Sudreyar', in Steinar Imsen (ed), *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153-1537, Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press, 171-182

Monographs

Crawford, B E 1987, *Scandinavian Scotland*, Leicester: Leicester University Press

Editions and/or translations of sources

Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome, Dunlop, A I *et al.* (eds), 1934-1997, vols. i, ii and iii, Edinburgh: Scottish History Society and vols. iv and v, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press

Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney, Hermann Pálsson and Edwards P (trans), 1981, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Newspapers

The Scotsman 14 Apr. 1934, 6

Parliamentary Papers and Debates

Parliamentary Papers (PP) 1922, IX, Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, 44
Parliamentary Debates (Parl. Debs.), 3rd ser., vol. 298, cols 844-62, 18 May 1885

Unpublished papers

Cohen, Bronwen J 1983, 'Norse Imagery in Shetland: an Historical Study of Intellectuals and Their Use of the Past in the Construction of Shetland's Identity, with Particular Reference to the Period 1800-1914', unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Manchester

Maps

OS 1878 Ordnance Survey. 'Argyllshire', Sheet CIV.12 (1876–7), 1:2500

Online sources

Author surname(s), initial(s), (Year of publishing) Title of page/site [Online]. Available at: URL. Accessed: day month year)

Mitchell, JA, 2017, How and when to reference [Online]. Available at: <https://www.howandwhentoreference.com/>. Accessed: 27 May 2017.

Databases

*Databases will often provide their own preferred citation method, and the journal will defer to that preference

The Scotland, Scandinavia and Northern European Biographical Database (SSNE), A Grosjean and S Murdoch (eds), 2024 [Database]. University of St Andrews Institute of Scottish Historical Research. Available at: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/ssne/>.

Films and CDs

Suicide Mission (Shetlandsgjengenfilm) 1954, film directed by M Forlong, Norway: Nordsjøfilm

Further Guidance on Language and Style

Abbreviations and Contractions

- For the use of abbreviations in references to books and manuscripts, see **References and Bibliography** above.
- Avoid contracting 'not' in phrases such as 'doesn't', 'wouldn't' and 'hasn't'.
- In text, it is preferable to use: 'for example' rather than 'e.g.', 'that is' instead of 'i.e.', 'and so on' instead of 'etc.', 'namely' instead of 'viz.'
- Do not use the ampersand (&) instead of 'and'.
- Full points/periods should be used in abbreviations.
 - Examples: i.e.; e.g.; Esq.; etc.; Co.; no.; ibid.; et al.
 - No full points/periods should be used in upper-case abbreviations such as 'USA' or 'UK', but people's initials are spaced and followed by a full point/period e.g., A. A. Milne (except in a bibliography)
 - Abbreviations ending with the same letter as the original word do not take a full point/period, for example: Mr (not Mr.); Ltd; 1st; eds; edn; vols; Dr; Mrs
- Abbreviated units of measurement do not have full points and do not take a final 's' in the plural. (See **Dimensions and Measurements** below)
- Please note the following:
 - For saint/s use 'St.' and 'SS.', not 'S.', 'Sts'.
 - Use 'ca.' (not 'c.' or 'c.') for circa.
 - For 'died', 'obit' (etc.), use 'ob.'.
 - The word 'line(s)' should always be written in full.

Acts of Parliament

The title of the Act should have no comma between it and the year. Use a lowercase 't' for 'the' before the name of the Act, e.g., the Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act 1988.

Capitalisation

- Keep capitals to a minimum.
- Use full caps for acronyms, for example: NATO, USA, TV.
- Use small caps only for BC, AD, CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before the Common Era).
- Use capitals to distinguish specific from general, e.g., 'He is a professor at Edinburgh University.' but 'He is Professor of Literature at Edinburgh University'.
- Capitalise quotations on an *ad hoc* basis according to sense. If a quotation starts a new sentence, then use a capital; if it continues as part of a sentence, use lower case.

Compass Directions

- Do not abbreviate compass orientations (except for longer compounds such as NNE, WSW, etc.).
- Compass orientations are written in full for simple orientations and hyphenate compounds ('to the north', 'from the south-east').
- A capital letter should not be used with the points of the compass spelled out and used as nouns or corresponding adjectives or adverbs, (e.g., northern regions), except in when referring to a specific area (e.g., 'the North'; 'North Pole').

- A forward slash indicates alignment or axial orientation, as ‘The building lay on an east/west alignment’.

Dates (see also Time Periods below)

- Pairs of dates should be condensed to the shortest form, using unspaced hyphens, e.g., 1671-2; 1970-5, but repeat numbers in the teens, e.g., 1914-18; 11-15.
- BC and BP dates should be written out in full (day number, month in full, year number) with no punctuation. AD, BC and BP should be in small capitals with no points.
- In references to decades use the formula 860s, not 860’s.
- AD 870x872 describes dates between which a historical event is supposed to have occurred. AD 1263-66 describes the duration of the event.

Correct

16 November 1978
1400s, 1860s, 1980s
AD 410, 527 BC
10th century AD

Incorrect

November 16th 1978
1400’s, eighteen-sixties, eighties, ’80s
410 AD, BC 527

Definite Articles

Use lower-case ‘t’ before names of associations, companies and other bodies but for newspapers and periodicals, follow the use of ‘The’ in its own title, e.g., the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, *The Times*, *The Scotsman*, *The Press and Journal*.

Dimensions and Measurements

- Use metric units and appropriate abbreviations, e.g., km, m, mm, as follows: 0.3 m or 300 mm. Dimensions for small finds should be as follows: L: 15 mm; W: 14 mm; Diam: 25 mm; Th: 4 mm
- Imperial units may be given, e.g., 5 ft 7 in, but the metric equivalent should also be provided in brackets.
- Leave a space between the number and the unit of measurement, e.g., 12 km; 7 in; 34 kg.
- Percentages should be given in figures, e.g., 23%; 0.5%.

Ellipsis

Show ellipses by three evenly spaced dots on the same line, preceded by a space and followed by a space [...] or by a closing quotation mark or a closing parenthesis [...”]. Avoid following ellipses with a full stop or a comma.

Hyphens

- Do not break words at the end of a line.
- A hyphen is used in compound adjectives and adverbs, e.g., ‘nineteenth-century building’ but ‘a building of the nineteenth century’; ‘ninth-century kingship’; ‘a mid-ninth-century manuscript’; note also ‘the mid-ninth century’.
- No hyphen is used for compounds ending in –ly, e.g., ‘clearly explained account’, or when the compound follows the noun to which it refers, e.g., ‘the procedure is well established’.
- Hyphens should be avoided in cases such as ‘ill advised’, ‘well known’, ‘much abused’.

Italics (see also **General Language and Style** above)

Italicise only what is absolutely necessary. Emphasis should be achieved by the phrasing and grammar. It should not be necessary to use italics or bold to show emphasis. Surrounding punctuation should not be italicised.

<u>Italic</u>	<u>Roman (not italic)</u>
<i>infra</i> (preferably use 'above')	e.g.
<i>supra</i> (preferably use 'below')	et al.
<i>contra</i>	ibid.
newspaper titles (e.g., <i>Financial Times</i>)	i.e.
journals	cf.
books	in situ
plays	locus
films	names of institutions or associations
names of ships	
works of art	

Medieval Personal Names

- Norse names should be given in the forms appropriate to the date of the person concerned
- English names up to and including the eleventh century should be given in Old English. Modern forms are preferable for personal names after the eleventh century.
- For individuals who are identifiably Celtic, avoid Anglicised forms and treat names within the historiographical tradition of the country concerned. For Irish/Gaelic, names should be given in the forms appropriate to the date of the person in question. For Welsh (including Cumbrian), names should be given in Modern Welsh (unless it is absolutely impossible to update a medieval form). Breton and Cornish names should be given in the forms appropriate to the date of the person in question. For Pictish, consult the editor.

National Grid References

Give National Grid References for all archaeological sites or historic buildings which are central to the publication. References should be given as NGR: NT 2511 7349 (not NT25117349).

Numbers

- Give numbers in full one up to and including one hundred, except for measurements and dates.
- Use Arabic numerals for 101+ except when beginning a sentence with a number.

Place-names

Follow current editions of the Ordnance Survey for the UK or sources relevant to the area under discussion. Significant changes or variants should be identified and discussed, as appropriate. Where historical place-names are used, this must be clarified within the text.

Time periods

Use the most widely established terminology: Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Early Historic, early/late/post-medieval, Middle Ages, Early Modern, Modern. Specific date ranges are best whenever possible.

Radiocarbon Tables

Full details of radiocarbon ages should be given in the form of a single table, identifying at a minimum the information laid out in this example.

Where dates are given in calibrated form, the particular calibration programme should be identified with reference to a published source of calibration data. BP dates must be calibrated if the determinations fall within a calibration curve. Further columns for necessary information such as depositional context and sample description may be added.

Site	Sample	Material	Context	Uncal	Calibrated 1-sigma (OxCal 4.4)	Calibrated 2-sigma (OxCal 4.4)	Delta ¹³ C ‰
Forres, Morayshire	SUERC -(GU12606)	Corylus avellana	90	2130 ± 35	210-90 BC	240-40 BC	-26.4
	SUERC -(GU12599)	Betula sp.	025B	2120 ± 35	200-90 BC (65.8%)	210-40 BC (87.7%)	-26.1