

# STEP RESEARCH PROJECT LANGUAGE GUIDE

---

ELSA INTERNATIONAL  
2020/2021



*elsa*

The European Law Students' Association

# STEP Research Project Language Manual

---

Dear National Officers & Members of SRP Working Groups,

After many discussions with the whole network, we have come to the conclusion that the STEP Research Project is a piece of international legal research worth formal publishing. As we already have possible legal publishing partners, it is of utmost importance that our final report is of the highest quality, not only with regards to its content, but also style-wise.

This is the reason why we are happy to introduce you this Language Manual, which helps to go beyond simply “British English”, by sharing useful information about spelling, grammar/punctuation, use of nouns/pronouns, verbs/adverbs and use of nondiscriminatory language.

As you can see, this manual shares similar knowledge with the one used in the ELSA's International Legal Research Groups. Hence, with this manual, as well as the Style Guide and the updated SRP Guide published as well, we firmly believe that all National Reports and the final one will meet all the needed criteria and have an excellent quality in general!

For any further inquiries, do not hesitate to contact us via email at [assistant.srp@elsa.org](mailto:assistant.srp@elsa.org).

Yours sincerely,

**Francesco Bondi**

Vice President in charge of the Student Trainee  
Exchange Programme of International Board of  
ELSA 2020/2021

[step@elsa.org](mailto:step@elsa.org)

**Maria Angelopoulou**

Assistant for the STEP Research Project of the  
ELSA International Team 2020/2021

[assistant.srp@elsa.org](mailto:assistant.srp@elsa.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>STEP Research Project Language Manual</b>	<b>1</b>
Spelling	3
Quotation Marks	3
Possessive Apostrophes	3
Comma	4
Capitalisation	4
Spelling	5
Non-Discriminatory Language	5
Links to Dictionaries	5
Sources Used	5

## 1. Spelling

---

There are several differences between British and American English. Some of the linguistic differences to be aware of are:

- The use of the -ise instead of -ize.
- The use of the -yse instead of -yze.
- The use of the -isation instead of -ization.
- The use of putting -ou instead of -o.
- The use of -re instead of -er.
- The use of -ogue instead of -og.
- The use of -lling instead of -ling.
- The use of -lled instead of -led.
- The use of -lled instead of -ler.

Exceptions to the change in spelling is when it concerns the names of institutions from other English-speaking countries. Therefore, any institutional names from e.g. American or Australian English retain their original spelling, e.g. the World Trade Organization.

## 2. Quotation Marks

---

Quotation marks are also known as inverted commas that can be either single or double:

- Single quotation marks are used when highlighting a word in text or for marking direct speech.
- Double quotations marks are used when inserting a quote within said speech.

There must be a full stop at the end of quotation marks unless there is already one within the quotation marks.

### 3. Possessive Apostrophes

---

Possessives are used to show the relationship between one thing and another.

Plural possessive represents the ownership of more than one person, place or thing. Singular possessive is used to indicate if a person, place or thing owns something. Possessive indefinite pronouns use to indicate the possessive in pronouns that do not refer to who or what they are.

- When an apostrophe is used as a possessive for plural nouns, singular nouns or indefinite pronouns that do not end in -s, the form -'s is used.
- If the plural ends with -s then only an -' is added and is -s'.
- Nouns that end in -s have -'s added at the end.

Another reminder is that possessive pronouns have no apostrophe added. Possessive pronouns are used to replace nouns and show ownership. This can be with words such as ours, theirs, yours and hers.

### 4. Comma

---

It is important that the comma is used correctly in legal writing otherwise it can potentially misconstrue the meaning of the text.

- It can be used to pair sentences and add emphasis to certain parts of a sentence.
- Pairs of commas can be used for non-defining clauses in a sentence. A non-defining clause is information within a text that can be taken out of the text without changing the meaning of it. This means that commas should not be used for defining clauses and should not be used in the start of a sentence either.
- A comma can also be used to replace words such as who or which.

Excessive use of commas should be avoided as they can lead to very long and often confusing sentences.

## 5. Capitalisation

---

Capital letters are used for:

- Proper nouns, the pronoun I, acronyms and titles of organisations, institutions and committees.
- Nouns and adjectives when stating the full title of international agreements/conventions.
- Days, weeks, months, years and holidays.
- The word State in legal writings.
- Political parties and divisions.

## 6. Spelling

---

Always use the official designated English name for an organisation/institution. Keep the original spelling for an organisation/institution if it is spelt in English but is a variation of the English language. This is seen with the American English spelling of the World Trade Organization. In certain cases, if the foreign word/title/body is widely known or the intended readers know it then it is acceptable to use the original spelling. In legal acts use the original spelling.

## 7. Non-Discriminatory Language

---

When writing, use as often as possible gender-neutral titles as well as neutral vocabulary to avoid discriminatory language. Use alternatives where they exist and use the gender specific form only when it is absolutely necessary for context. The same is to be said for titles such as Miss or Mr unless the individual says so. Avoid using gender bias and pronouns.

## 8. Links to Dictionaries

---

[Definitions, Meanings, Synonyms, and Grammar by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com](#)

[Synonyms and Antonyms of Words | Thesaurus.com](#)

[Definitions, Meanings, Synonyms, and Grammar by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com](#)

## 9. Sources Used

---

English Style Guide: [English Style Guide \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)

CERN English Language Style Guide: [DRAFT \(cern.ch\)](http://cern.ch)

University of Oxford Style Guide: [University of Oxford Style Guide.pdf](#)