Style Guidelines for Consultants

Before starting any work please ensure that the document language has been set to ‘English (United Kingdom)’ and Spelling and Grammar has been turned on.

Please only use styles in the style gallery. These are the same styles in both this document and the template provided. Please always use Arial font for all content in this document. Please use the ‘Normal’ style for the body text, and only use ‘No Spacing’ for when you need to have no space between lines.

Please use the ‘Headings style’ for all numbered headings (1, 2, 1.1, 1.2 etc.) so that they appear in the table of contents. For the next level of headings please use ‘Sub-Headings’ style. These will not appear in the Table of Contents. If you require another lower level of headings then please use the style ‘Minor Headings’ – these will not appear in the Table of Contents either.

Please use the ‘Bullet Points’ style for all bullet points in this document as shown below:

- Bullet points
- Bullet points
- Bullet points

Tables, Figures, Graphs, Photos etc.

- Please use the following table style for all tables in your report.
- Please use the ‘Table Headings’ style for the headings, and then the ‘No Spacing’ style for all information within the table.
- All tables etc. must have a caption with a title, and must use the ‘Caption’ style. This will ensure that all tables etc. appear in the table of contents.
- All tables etc. must include a data source (e.g. Monitoring and Learning Plan, Final Evaluation Survey, VSLA Records etc.) in the caption, especially when the data source is not obvious.
- All graphs must have a heading, axes must be labelled, and units given
- Please use legends on graphs to make them easier to understand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heading</th>
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</tbody>
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Table 1: Use this style for table, figure, graph etc. captions
Guidance for writing style (Queensland Treasury, 2015)

The purpose of report writing is to communicate the findings of the research. The report should tell the whole story — what the objectives of the research were, how the data were collected, what the data say and what the implications of the findings are. Every individual has their own style of writing. While there is no single ‘right’ style for report writing, there are some basic principles that should be followed.

Plain English Report writing often involves communicating abstract and potentially difficult concepts (such as those involved in statistical modelling and analysis). Careful use of language is especially important in this context. Poor quality writing makes it difficult for the reader to work out the intended meaning, and can lead to the results being misinterpreted.

Use of plain English helps to ensure the report is easily understood by the target audience. Plain English emphasizes clarity, brevity, and the avoidance of jargon and technical language. While the use of technical language is appropriate for some audiences, it should never be assumed that all readers will understand all terms. If technical terms are included, they should each be defined. Provide definitions for terms such as statistical significance, confidence interval etc. in layman’s terms.

Plain English Examples (Queensland Treasury, 2015)

Original:

More men than women had goats. Men were also more likely than women to have higher incomes. Additionally, significantly higher proportions of men than women had leather seats.

Plain English:

Mazdas were more likely than Holdens to have:

- automatic steering
- airbags
- leather seats.

Original:

When the data are demarcated by age, it can be seen that the likelihood of purchasing lollipops is similar for all three age groups. There are no notable findings here.

Plain English:

The likelihood of purchasing lollipops is similar for all three age groups.
Guidance for writing about data in your report

Comparing survey results and subgroups using the confidence interval (Queensland Treasury, 2015)

It is correct to say that one result is lower (or higher) than the other only if the two results are statistically significantly different. If two results look different, but they are not statistically different, it is incorrect to state that one result is higher or lower than the other. It can be tempting to look at percentages and make comparison statements that are not supported by the data.

For example: Imagine that in a sample of 1,000 people interviewed, 20 reported having been the victim of a crime. The researcher was interested in finding out whether people who were victims of crime were as satisfied as the rest of the population with the police service. The results show:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with Police</th>
<th>% Very Satisfied/Satisfied</th>
<th>% Very Dissatisfied/Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim of Crime (n=20)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a victim of crime (n = 980)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Example Table 1 – Satisfaction with Police (Queensland Treasury, 2015)

It could seem appropriate to state that people who were victims of a crime were less likely to be satisfied with the police service (50%) than people who were not victims of a crime (60%). However, this does not take into account the confidence interval around the estimate. The 95% confidence interval shows the range within which we can be 95% sure that the true value lies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Very satisfied/satisfied</th>
<th>Approximate 95% Confidence Interval on the % Satisfied/Very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim of crime</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50 ± 22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a victim of crime</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60 ± 3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Example Table 2 – Satisfaction with Police (Queensland Treasury, 2015)

Even though there seems to be a sizeable difference (10%) on first glance, it can be seen that the 95% confidence intervals overlap. For victims of crime the result is anywhere between 27.5 and 72.5%. For those not a victim of crime the result is between 56.9 and 63.1.

It would therefore be incorrect to say that people who have been a victim of crime are less satisfied with the police service than people who haven’t been a victim of crime. Therefore we request that whenever a survey result is presented, the margin of error and n=X should
be written in brackets after a figure is given. For example, ‘36% (±4%, n=72) of women interviewed had completed primary education at a 95% confidence interval’.

Please note that this requires calculating the margin of error at the given confidence interval for every survey result. If in a section of text all margins of error use the same confidence interval than this can be stated at the beginning or as a footnote e.g. ‘All margins of error quoted in this paper/chapter/section/paragraph are using a 90/95/99% confidence interval’

Note: the confidence interval will be bigger for small sample sizes than for larger sample sizes. Extreme care must be taken in drawing conclusions about subgroups of a population when the number of units captured by the sample in the sub group is very small.

**Statistical significance vs practical significance (Queensland Treasury, 2015)**

Statistical significance refers to whether any differences observed between groups being studied are ‘real’ or whether they are simply due to chance. If the analysis reveals a statistically significant result, the next step should be to consider whether the result is of any practical significance. It is usually only worth commenting on statistically significant results that are of practical importance in the context of the research question

**Using time-periods when looking at values**

- When quoting a value, please ensure that is clear which time period the value applies to. For example:
  - With income state whether it is monthly, annual, or total for the duration of the project etc.
  - At baseline in May 2014 the CBOs had an average OCAT score of 2.7, however, by the final assessment in June 2016 this had increased to 3.4.

**Being clear about averages and totals**

- Be clear in stating when a value is an average from the sample and when it is a total value. For example ‘Income from courgettes was $2000 in 2017’ could mean that the project as a whole generated $2000 of income in 2017 from courgettes OR that the average income from courgettes per farmer was $2000 in 2017.
- Be clear with averages what you have divided by. Is it the total number of farmers, or the total number of farmers who farm courgettes?
- Please either say ‘Total income from courgettes was $2000 in 2017’ OR ‘The average income per project farmer was $2000 (N=400, ±$100) in 2017’ OR ‘The average income per farmer who farmed courgettes was $2000 (N=100, ±$300) in 2017’

**Using percentages (Queensland Treasury, 2015)**

It is misleading to present percentages, and especially changes in percentages, when the base for the percentage is very small.

**For example:** Imagine there are 10 respondents to an “agree/disagree” question in a survey. Nine respondents agree, and one disagrees. If percentages were to be quoted on such a small sample, they would show that 90% of respondents agree and 10% disagree. If just one respondent answered differently (i.e. if eight respondents agreed and two
disagreed), then percentages quoted would show that 80% of respondents agree and 20% disagree.

This looks like a large shift (10 percentage points), but in fact represents only one person changing their mind. Imagine there were 1,000 respondents to the same question, Nine hundred respondents agree, and 100 disagree. Percentages quoted would again show that 90% of respondents agree and 10% disagree. In order to obtain a shift of 10 percentage points in your quoted results, you would need 100 people to provide a different response.

Data users must be able to easily determine the base (i.e. the number of cases) on which percentages have been calculated. For this reason, as above always include the number of respondents and margin of error in brackets.

In the example it should be written: 90% of respondents agree (±18.5%, N=10) at a 95% confidence interval and 90% of respondents agree (±1.6%, N=1000) at a 95% confidence interval. Please note is the total number of respondents to the question, not the number of respondents with the mentioned response.

Generally, quoting percentages on less than 30 cases is considered to be misleading and is strongly discouraged. It is preferable to quote percentages when you have at least 100 cases.

Finally it is important to distinguish between percentage change and change in percentage points. In the above example there is a change from 90% to 80% which is a change in 10 percentage points. However this is not a 10% decrease in people who agree with the statement. In the example with 10 respondents there are initially 9 people who agree, and then this decreases to 8. The percentage change is (9-8)/9 x 100 which is 11%. So when looking at changes in percentage results be clear about whether you are reporting a percentage change or a change in percentage points.

Significant figures (Queensland Treasury, 2015)

Figures should be rounded as appropriate, so that the level of accuracy of the data is correctly represented. The significant figures of a number are those digits that carry meaning contributing to its precision. For example, if the standard error on a population estimate of 55,412 is 8,400 then there are two significant figures in the error, and the last significant figure is in the 100s place. Therefore, population values should be rounded to the 100s place. In this instance, the figure quoted should be 55,400, rather than 55,412.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Brief definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Interval</td>
<td>Provides a range of values around the estimate, within which the true value can be expected to fall. The smaller the confidence interval is for a particular estimate, the more precise the estimate is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relative standard error (RSE)</td>
<td>A measure of accuracy of a survey estimate — calculated by dividing the standard error by the estimate obtained — often expressed as a percentage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error</td>
<td>A statistical term for measuring the accuracy with which a statistic taken from a sample represents an entire population. The smaller the standard error, the more representative the sample will be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical significance</td>
<td>A statement about the likelihood of findings being due to chance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References/Citations/Data Sources

- When presenting data (quantitative or qualitative) in the text and in tables etc., always quote the data source, whether primary or secondary e.g. (beneficiary Survey; project documents; government statistics etc.), the data source must always be included in brackets within the sentence the data is presented.
- For data that comes from part of the final evaluation, either as primary data collection or as part of the document review please include in the following format (Document, Year). For example (KAP Survey, 2017), (OCAT, 2016), (Beneficiary Survey, 2018), (Monitoring and Learning Plan, 2018)
- Plagiarism is not acceptable. Any data, fact or statement coming from another individual/organisation/institution etc. must be referenced.
- Any data that comes from a published source should not be included in the document review section, but instead should be included in the reference list. Such data should be referenced in the APA style. For example (Jones, 2012), (Ayele, 2009).
- Any claims made in the text that do not come directly from the data collected as part of the evaluation e.g. Ethiopia is experiencing rapid population growth, Tanzania is increasingly challenged by climate change should cite a credible reference and referenced in the APA Style For example (Jones, 2012), (Ayele, 2009).
- The APA referencing style is the default style for Microsoft Word when you select ‘Insert Citation’ under ‘References’. For each reference please insert using this tool to ensure they appear in the referencing list at the end of the report. See below the information to include in a reference.

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**Before Submitting a Document**

Before submitting any document to Farm Africa, please ensure that you do the following

- Complete a spelling and grammar check using the Microsoft Word function. Ensure the check is completed with English (United Kingdom) as the selected language.
- Please go to every table etc. caption, right-click and select ‘Update Field’ to ensure the number of all tables etc. is correct
- Right click on the Table of Contents and select, ‘Update Field’ and then ‘Update Entire Table’ to ensure the Table of Contents is up to date.
- Right click on the List of Tables and Figures and select, ‘Update Field’ and then ‘Update Entire Table’ to ensure the List of Tables and Figures is up to date.
- Click on ‘Update Citations and Bibliography’ to ensure that the reference list is up to date – see example below
References

About Farm Africa
Investing in smallholder farming is the number one way to combat poverty in rural Africa. Farm Africa is a leading NGO specialising in growing agriculture, protecting the environment and developing businesses in rural Africa.

**AGRICULTURE** Developing agricultural expertise for long-term change.

**ENVIRONMENT** Safeguarding the environment for years to come.

**BUSINESS** Boosting business to drive prosperity.

[www.farmafrica.org](http://www.farmafrica.org)

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