

Writing & Publishing Document Templates (South African Context)

Research Proposals

- **Structure:** A typical proposal begins with a title page (with project title, author, affiliation), followed by an introduction or background, a statement of the research problem, research questions or objectives, and (if applicable) hypotheses 1. It then reviews relevant literature, explains the research design or methodology, and discusses expected significance/impact. Additional sections often include a work plan or timeline, budget, limitations, references, and appendices 1.
- **Visual/Layout:** Use a clear, academic style. South African guidelines (e.g. UJ) specify Times New Roman 12-pt font, 1.5 line spacing and 1" margins ³. Numbered headings for each section improve navigation. Include page numbers and a table of contents if long. Figures/tables can be at the end or within the text, all numbered and captioned. Follow any prescribed template (many SA universities provide a generic structure ² ¹).
- **Standards:** Proposals should be formal and polished. They often follow SA university style rules (e.g. Harvard or APA referencing) ³ . Check for any specific format set by the department or funder. Academic language, no slang, is required (tone similar to research papers). South African rules (and many funders) insist on plagiarism-free work and full citations ⁴ .
- **Use & Audience:** Researchers (especially honours, master's or doctoral students) use proposals to seek approval or funding. Entrepreneurs and NGOs also use similar "project proposals" to request grants. The audience is typically a supervisor panel, ethics board, or funding committee. A strong SA-focused example is the University of Pretoria guide, which emphasizes clear objectives and methodology for local postgraduate research 2.

Essay Templates (Academic Essays)

- **Structure:** Most SA universities prescribe a three-part essay: **Introduction**, **Body**, **Conclusion**. The introduction sets context and thesis, often defines key terms and outlines the essay's structure ⁵. The body is divided into paragraphs (each with a topic sentence and evidence), ideally organized into thematic sections or subheadings. The conclusion summarizes main arguments and ties back to the thesis ⁶. A short abstract or outline is recommended by some institutions (e.g. Rhodes University suggests drafting headings then an abstract) ⁷ ⁸.
- **Visual/Layout:** Use legible 12-pt font (e.g. Times New Roman or Arial) with **1.5-line spacing** ⁹

 10 . Leave at least 1" (2.5 cm) margins for comments. Essays often fit on one side of A4 per page
 10 . Use numbered headings or subheadings sparingly in long essays; short essays may have
 no headings apart from the introduction/conclusion. Italics for emphasis (rather than bold/
 underline) are standard ¹¹ .
- **Standards:** Academic tone is required no colloquialisms or slang 11. Present tense is typical unless describing past events. Citations must follow the specified style (South African institutions often use Harvard or APA; always reference sources fully). Proofread carefully SA guides stress correct grammar and logical flow 12.
- **Use & Audience:** Essays are used by students (secondary and tertiary) and sometimes professionals (e.g. policy papers). They are submitted to teachers, examiners or publication

editors. A clear argument and evidence demonstrate critical thinking; South African examiners expect concise writing and relevance to the question ⁵.

Funding / Grant Proposals

- Structure: A funding proposal (for grants, sponsors, NGOs or business loans) typically includes: a title/cover page with contact info; an executive summary or overview; need/justification (problem statement and target group); project description (goals, objectives, activities, timeline); expected results/impact; budget and sustainability plan; organisational background; and appendices (e.g. letters of support) 13 14 . For example, a South African NGO discretionary grant template breaks it into sections like "Project Relevance", "Project Description", "Expected Results", "Partnerships", "Sustainability", "Work Plan", "Evaluation", and "Your Organization" 13 14 .
- Visual/Layout: Proposals are often prepared in Microsoft Word or PDF with the organization's branding (letterhead or logo). Use readable fonts (11–12 pt) and consistent heading styles. Tables or charts (for budgets or timelines) should be neat and numbered. Each section should start on a new page or clearly marked. In South Africa, funders may provide a form or template (as with SETA grants ¹³) follow it exactly.
- **Standards:** A funding proposal is persuasive and factual. Use plain business language and avoid jargon. Internationally and in SA, it should include SMART objectives and sometimes a logical framework or indicators. Budget formats must follow funder requirements (some require specific line-item tables). South African funders often require audited financials of the organization as appendices.
- **Use & Audience:** Entrepreneurs, NGOs and researchers use proposals to request funding from government agencies (e.g. SETAs, the National Lotteries Commission) or private donors. The audience is grantmakers or corporate sponsors. The proposal must convince them of the project's value. A South African SME guide notes that proposals need a clear overview, organisational profile, project details (goals, timeline, assessment) and supporting documents (financials, governance) 15 16.

Business Plans

- **Structure:** A business plan is a comprehensive document for internal strategy or external funding. A South African municipal template lists: Executive Summary; Description of the business; Product/Service details; Market analysis; Competitor analysis; Operations (human resources, risk management); Financial plan (projections, funding needs) ¹⁷. It often begins with a **cover page** (business name, contact, date) and a **table of contents** ¹⁸.
- **Visual/Layout:** Typically 12–14 pt font with 1.5 spacing, and the company's branding. Include charts or graphs (market size, financials) for clarity. Use section headers (bold, numbered) and bullet points for lists (e.g. SWOT analysis). Keep the plan concise (20–30 pages) and put detailed financial tables in appendices. South African plans (for SMME or funding applications) should match industry norms many SA banks prefer digital (PDF) plans with full color charts.
- **Standards:** Business plans have a formal yet promotional tone. They should be fact-based and realistic. South African guidelines stress linking all parts to the company's mission and market needs ¹⁷. If seeking investment, adhere to legal requirements for financial disclosures.
- **Use & Audience:** Entrepreneurs and managers use business plans to chart strategy or attract investors/loans. The audience includes bank loan officers, investors, or boards. For example, a Knysna municipality template emphasizes highlighting financial viability ("convincing viable business case") 17.

Article Templates (Journalistic/Feature Articles)

- **Structure:** A media article typically begins with a **headline** (informative and catchy) and a **lead paragraph** summarizing the key points (the "5 W's: who, what, when, where, why") for news pieces ¹⁹. Additional paragraphs elaborate facts, quotes and background; a feature might start with a hook story or question. Subheadings can break up longer pieces. A concise conclusion or call-to-action may close the article.
- **Visual/Layout:** News outlets and magazines use multi-column layouts. For print, use serif fonts for body text and sans-serif for headings. Articles often include bylines (author's name and date) and captions for any photos. Online articles use similar structure, with possible embedded images/videos. Maintain consistent house style (e.g. SA publications follow SA Spelling or the GCIS editorial guidelines). GroundUp's guide recommends writing in plain language and using subheadings in long articles for readability 19.
- **Standards:** Journalistic style is factual and engaging. In South Africa, media follow AP style or local style guides (e.g. GroundUp's style prohibits plagiarism and requires fairness ²⁰, use of single space after sentences, British spelling). Quotes should be attributed, and acronyms (e.g. "SAPS", "ANC") defined on first use per local norms ²¹ ²².
- **Use & Audience:** Freelance writers, journalists and bloggers produce articles for newspapers, magazines or online outlets. The audience is the general public or specific readership (e.g. industry trade magazine). For example, GroundUp (a South African news site) advises that "for news reports, the first four paragraphs should tell the busy reader everything he or she needs to know" ¹⁹. Academic or professional articles (for journals) use a different structure (abstract, intro, methods, etc.) and are covered under research papers (see next entry).

White Papers and Policy Papers

- **Structure:** White papers (in industry/NGOs/government) are authoritative reports to inform or persuade on a specific issue. A typical structure is: title page; executive summary; an introduction stating the problem; background/research (data, literature); the proposed solution or policy recommendations; and a conclusion ²³. References or source citations are included. Unlike academic papers, the "solution" or recommendation is emphasized after thorough analysis.
- **Visual/Layout:** Use a professional, two-column layout or clear sections with graphics (tables, charts) to illustrate data ²⁴. Corporate branding (logo, color scheme) is common. Length can vary (SA government White Papers can exceed 20 pages), but content should be clearly organized with headings and figures ²⁵ ²⁶.
- **Standards:** Tone is formal and evidence-based. White papers avoid overt sales language even if produced by a company. They should cite credible sources (especially if meant for policymakers). South African government white papers (e.g. policy documents) follow legal style (all sections summarized at top) and plain language. Content must be accurate and balanced, as mandated for public reports ²⁷.
- **Use & Audience:** NGOs, think tanks or government departments issue white papers to propose policies or solutions. The audience includes legislators, stakeholders, and informed public. In SA, White Papers (e.g. on Science/Innovation) set long-term government direction and invite public comment. Business white papers (marketing-focused) aim at industry decision-makers, illustrating expertise. U.S. guides note that white papers are "deeply researched reports" meant to persuade with evidence, not just to advertise ²⁸ ²³ .

Grant Applications (Government/Donors)

- **Structure:** Similar to funding proposals, a grant application includes: cover page; executive summary; organizational background; needs/problem statement; project objectives; implementation plan; budget and financial plan; monitoring/evaluation; and annexes (legal docs, references) ²⁹ ¹³ . It should address the funder's criteria. Some South African grants also require signed declarations or official forms (e.g. SANAC uses prescribed forms ³⁰).
- **Visual/Layout:** Use the funder's prescribed format (often a PDF or web form). Otherwise, use professional formatting with clear section headings. Attach scanned certificates (e.g. NPO registration) as required. Ensure all data (tables, budgets) fit neatly on pages.
- **Standards:** Formal but persuasive. Emphasize how your project aligns with funder priorities. Follow the donor's requested font/style. In SA, many national funders (e.g. lottery, AGSA grants) require strict compliance with their application templates.
- **Use & Audience:** NGOs, schools, community groups, researchers and entrepreneurs apply for grants to support projects. The audience is a grant committee. The content must show credibility (often including audited financials, board info) and clear benefits to the target population.

Resumes (CVs)

- **Structure:** A South African CV is a concise summary of personal details and qualifications. Key sections include: **Personal Information** (surname, first names, ID number, age, contact details; SA guides even list marital status, health, driver's license) ³¹; **Career Objective/Goals** (brief statement of career aims) ³²; **Education and Qualifications**; **Employment History** (with roles, dates, responsibilities); **Skills** (e.g. languages, computer skills) ³³; **Awards/Certificates**; **References** (or "Referees", usually 2–3 people). The SA Department of Labour suggests ordering information as: career goals; personal info; education; languages; work history; interests; positions of responsibility; awards; references ³⁴.
- **Visual/Layout:** Often a one- or two-page document, left-aligned single-column. Use a professional sans-serif font (11–12 pt) and clear headings. Bullet points summarize duties/ achievements under each job. In South Africa, it is common (though not mandatory) to include a small photo at the top-left ³⁵. Do **not** overcrowd leave white space. Use a digital format (PDF or Word).
- **Standards:** CVs in SA can include details like ID number and health status (per official guidelines) ³¹, though this is optional in private sector. Always tailor the CV to the job by highlighting relevant skills ³⁶. Use reverse-chronological order for history. Proofread meticulously; CVs should have no errors ³⁷.
- **Use & Audience:** Job applicants (students, professionals) use CVs to apply for positions. The audience is HR or hiring managers. The goal is to demonstrate suitability. South African government sources even provide sample CVs and stress including referees ³⁸. A well-organized CV makes a positive impression during competitive recruitment.

Professional Portfolios

• **Structure:** A portfolio showcases work samples and accomplishments. Common sections (often in a binder or PDF) include: a summary statement/mission (career goals or personal philosophy); an expanded resume; sections by competency or project (e.g. "Design Projects", "Research Papers", "Presentations"); evidence of skills (certificates, test results); and supporting documents (published articles, awards, testimonials) ³⁹ ⁴⁰. For example, an occupational health article suggests including: career summary, mission statement, résumé, skills lists, and list of major accomplishments ³⁹ ⁴¹. Each work sample should have a brief description (context, your role, outcomes). A table of contents is useful.

- **Visual/Layout:** Portfolios can be hardcopy (with tabbed sections) or digital (PDF/website). Use high-quality paper or graphics. Include one consistent branding (name/logo). Each piece should be clearly labeled with date and context. Visual professions (design, photography) should feature color images of projects. For text content, maintain a clean layout: use headings, bullet lists and plenty of white space.
- **Standards:** There's no universal "official" format, but portfolios should be well-organized and professional. South African experts note portfolios allow a candidate to "expand on his/her CV" and provide tangible proof of skills ⁴². Unlike the plain style of a CV, a portfolio can use graphics, charts or colored paper to advantage ⁴³. All content must be honest (no plagiarism) and current portfolios are living documents.
- **Use & Audience:** Professionals in design, education, marketing, etc., use portfolios in interviews or grant applications. Academics and teachers also create teaching portfolios. Employers review portfolios to see evidence of competence. For example, the SASOHN journal notes portfolios help track professional development and demonstrate achievements 44 42.

Business & NGO Proposals

(These overlap with "Funding Proposals" above but focus on general business deals or partnerships)

- **Structure:** A business proposal (pitching services or joint ventures) usually contains: cover letter/page; title page; table of contents; **Executive Summary** (overview of the business/problem and proposed solution); **Company/Organization Overview**; **Project Plan or Scope** (what you will do, timeline); **Deliverables/Products**; **Budget or Pricing**; **Terms & Conditions**; and optional **Appendices** (e.g. case studies, team CVs). QuickBooks ZA outlines a "page-by-page" approach: cover page, TOC, overview, solution/deliverables, company info, pricing, legal, appendix ⁴⁵.
- **Visual/Layout:** Professional layout with company branding. Use a clean cover page (logo, proposal title, date). Numbered sections and a detailed table of contents help the reader navigate. Include charts or tables for pricing/financials. Keep it concise (often 5–10 pages) with highlights and an appendix for details
- **Standards:** Tone is formal and business-like. Do not use jargon. Emphasize benefits to the client. Use a professional font and consistent formatting. Unlike academic writing, some persuasion is expected (sell your solution), but claims should be supported by data or references (testimonials, past results). Always check legal requirements (e.g. anti-bribery clauses).
- **Use & Audience:** Companies or entrepreneurs use proposals to secure new clients or partnerships. The audience is business decision-makers or investors. Clarity on deliverables and costs is crucial. A clear proposal can differentiate from competitors and speed decision-making ⁴⁶.

Newsletters & Internal Publications

- **Structure:** A newsletter (employee, member, or customer newsletter) typically has: masthead (logo, issue name/date); an **editor's note** or overview; feature articles or news briefs (with headlines and bylines); recurring columns (events calendar, announcements); and a footer (contact info, disclaimers). Use a multi-column layout (two or three columns per page) for readability.
- **Visual/Layout:** Branding is key use the organization's color scheme and logo on each page. Include high-quality images or graphics with captions for visual interest. Headings and subheadings should be consistent. Many South African NGOs and companies produce printed or email newsletters; they often use templates (A4 or A5 size) with sections separated by rules or colored boxes. White space and bullet lists improve scan-ability.
- **Standards:** Tone depends on the audience (more informal for employees, more formal for donors). Spelling should follow South African conventions (e.g. "organise" not "organize"). Include clear dates and labels. If emailing, use responsive design.

• **Use & Audience:** Internal communications teams, NGOs and clubs often publish newsletters to inform members or staff. Newsletters keep stakeholders updated on activities, success stories, or news. For example, the Global Compact Network SA produced a newsletter covering company CSR responses, using consistent layout and sections ⁴⁷ ⁴⁸.

Magazines & Periodicals

- **Structure:** A magazine issue has a cover (headline image and main teaser), a table of contents, and sections for features, interviews, news, and columns. Editorial pages (letter from editor) often appear early. Each article has a headline, subhead, byline and sometimes pull quotes. Include page numbers and running headers/footers. For a magazine template, ensure at least one big feature story, plus shorter items (profiles, news bites).
- Visual/Layout: Magazines use multi-column layouts (usually 2–3 columns). Typography is more varied: decorative fonts for headings, legible serif/sans serif for text. Ample use of photography or illustrations is standard. South African magazine designers often produce A4 page layouts with vibrant colors (e.g. cover designs "Mzansi style") and high-end printing. Ad spaces or sponsorship notes may be included.
- **Standards:** Magazines have their own house style guides (e.g. spelling, hyphenation, caption style). The Government Communication style guide advises italicizing publication titles and using lower case for generic nouns ⁴⁹. Consistency in grammar and punctuation is important (GroundUp style, for instance, simplifies punctuation rules ²¹).
- **Use & Audience:** Print or digital magazines cater to target audiences (e.g. trade sectors, lifestyle). Publishers and editors follow layouts that balance text and graphics. The template ensures brand identity across issues (consistent color palette, logo placement).

Novels (Fiction Manuscripts)

- **Structure:** Novels have no formal "headings" besides Chapter titles. Structurally, writers often follow acts (e.g. three-act or Hero's Journey) or plotting outlines. A typical novel template will include an **Outline**, listing chapters with brief summaries of each scene. Manuscript formatting (for submission) is: Times New Roman 12 pt, double-spaced, with 1″ margins, and page headers with author/novel title and page numbers (common standard internationally).
- **Visual/Layout:** Draft novels are plain-text (no illustrations). Once published, design of the book (cover art, typography) follows publisher specifications. For writing purposes, there is no "layout" beyond a clean manuscript format.
- **Standards:** Formal publishing guidelines vary by publisher. In South Africa, novelists may follow international industry norms. Check local publishers' submission guidelines (e.g. Juta, NB Publishers) for specifics.
- **Use & Audience:** Novel templates help authors organize plot, characters and structure. Aspiring writers and creative writing students use them. The audience is readers of fiction. (No specific SA citation; this is general best practice.)

Non-Fiction Book Templates

- **Structure:** Non-fiction books (memoirs, self-help, business books, etc.) usually have: cover; title page; copyright; table of contents; preface/introduction; chapters; conclusion or epilogue; references/appendices if needed. Each chapter should have a clear subhead structure (possibly with subsections).
- **Visual/Layout:** Similar to novels, with crisp, readable layout. Non-fiction often includes figures/ charts or photographs. Use consistent font hierarchy for headings vs text. The cover should clearly convey the topic (with branding if organization-affiliated).

- **Standards:** If academic, adhere to style (APA/Harvard). For trade books, footnotes or endnotes may appear. Local South African context means consider copyright (check South African Copyright Act) for any images or quotes.
- **Use & Audience:** Professionals or experts use book templates to plan non-fiction manuscripts. For example, an NGO might write a report-style book and hire designers for layout. Students writing theses (a form of long non-fiction) follow academic formatting rules.

Press Releases

- **Structure:** Standard press release format starts with "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" and date. Then the **headline** (in bold), a **dateline** (City, Date usually in caps), and the **lead paragraph** summarizing the announcement. The body follows in inverted pyramid style: key details first, quotes from spokespersons, then background. End with a **boilerplate** ("About the Company/ Organization") and media contact details. South African guides (and global PR practice) expect all these elements.
- **Visual/Layout:** Usually one page (200–400 words). At top, include the organization's logo. Contact info (name, phone, email) is often in header or footer. Use a left-aligned, single-column format. Keep paragraphs short.
- **Standards:** Use AP/SA style (e.g. Southern African Press Assoc spelling: "maximize"→"maximise", capitalizing provinces/cities, etc.). Avoid hype; focus on newsworthiness. Provide data or quotes to substantiate claims.
- **Use & Audience:** PR/media departments in businesses, NGOs or governments issue press releases to journalists and news editors. The audience is media and through them the public. A good press release can secure news coverage. (No direct SA source cited; follows standard media relations practice.)

Memos and Internal Correspondence

- **Structure:** A memorandum typically begins with **To**, **From**, **Date**, and **Subject** lines. The body usually contains a brief introduction, the main points (often bullet-pointed or numbered), and any action items or requests at the end. Some organizations use a standard memo template (company letterhead).
- **Visual/Layout:** Use the company's memo header or letterhead. The body is left-aligned, single-spaced (with blank lines between paragraphs). Short, concise language is key. In a table or bullet list include any timelines or responsibilities.
- **Standards:** Formal internal tone (unless company culture is casual). Follow any internal style guide (some SA companies have corporate writing standards). Memos should be factual and clear they often serve as records of decisions.
- **Use & Audience:** Managers and staff use memos for announcements, meeting minutes, or internal notices. Audience is internal (company employees, board members). For example, the GCIS style guide treats minutes (similar to memos) as factual records with date, attendees, and concise points ⁵⁰.

Annual Reports (Company/NGO)

• **Structure:** An annual report documents an organization's yearly performance. Typical sections include: a **chairperson/CEO letter**, **overview of operations**, **governance structure**, **performance review** (often with KPIs or outcomes), and **financial statements** (audited). Annexures or notes may be appended. For government/NGOs, South African guidelines specify parts for general info, performance, governance, human resources, and financials ⁵¹. Each section should start with a clear heading.

- **Visual/Layout:** High-quality design reflecting the brand. Use infographics and charts for key data. The report is often printed in booklet form; glossy paper and full-color graphs are common. Cover and section pages carry the logo and theme. Use consistent typography and wide margins.
- **Standards:** Must comply with statutory requirements. In SA, public companies follow King IV/ IFRS and Companies Act disclosures. Government entities follow the PFMA (Treasury) format ⁵¹. The information must be accurate and balanced ²⁷.
- **Use & Audience:** Companies publish annual reports for shareholders, regulators and the public. NGOs issue them for donors and members. Government departments table reports to Parliament (as public record). The tone is formal and transparent.

Government/Policy Reports

- **Structure:** Formal reports (e.g. commissioned studies, policy reviews) usually include: title page, terms of reference (or executive summary) in brief, **table of contents**, an introduction (background and objectives), body sections (each with descriptive headings), **findings**, **conclusions** and **recommendations**, plus references and appendices ⁵². Each major item ("Findings", "Conclusions") is a standard section heading in SA official reports ⁵².
- **Visual/Layout:** Use the government department's letterhead or report template. Number all pages and sections. Use charts or tables to support data. The GCIS guide recommends summarizing each section in one sentence in an executive summary ⁵². Plain language is mandated (avoid technical jargon) for public documents.
- **Standards:** Follow official style guides (e.g. GCIS). Reports must be factually accurate and objective. The writing should be in the past tense for proceedings or findings ⁵². Proper citation of sources is required for credibility. Often, ministers' or authors' names appear on the title page.
- **Use & Audience:** Government analysts, auditors or consultants use these reports to inform policy-makers. The audience includes ministers, Parliament committees and the public. NGOs may also produce "government-style" reports (e.g. impact studies) using similar format to lend authority.

Op-Ed and Commentary

- **Structure**: An op-ed (opposite the editorial page) is a short persuasive essay in a newspaper. It begins with a bold **headline**, followed by an introductory paragraph that hooks the reader (often a personal anecdote or startling fact). The body develops an argument with evidence or examples, and the final paragraph offers a concise conclusion or call to action. Unlike news articles, op-eds express a clear opinion.
- **Visual/Layout:** Typically one column of text in print. In digital form, it may include a photo of the author. The author's name and affiliation (e.g. "– John Doe, Constitutional Law Professor") appear at the top or bottom. Use a 700–800 word length (common SA editorial limit).
- **Standards:** Tone is assertive but civil. Writers should state their credentials (why they're commenting). SA newspapers have specific guidelines (e.g. Daily Maverick, Mail & Guardian) often requiring original angles on current issues. Content must be concise and avoid technical jargon, aiming at educated lay readers.
- **Use & Audience:** Public figures, academics and experts write op-eds to influence public debate. The audience is newspaper or online readers. Publications often have submission guidelines for op-eds (word count, format); authors tailor pieces to the outlet's style.

Sources: South African university and government style guides and templates provide structure and standards for many of these documents ² ³ ³¹ ³⁴ ³⁹ . International resources (e.g. QuickBooks,

Writing Centers) offer general best practices ⁴⁵ ²³ that complement local norms. All documents above combine these sources with common industry practice to meet both local requirements and global best practice.

1 3 4 12 Zachman Framework for Project & Risk Management

https://www.uj.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/uj_febe_masters_doctoral_proposal_guidelines_final-draft.pdf

² Research Proposal Guidelines

https://www.up.ac.za/communication-management-division/article/2417100/research-proposal-guidelines

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15 16 How to Create a Business Proposal for Funding | SME South Africa

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²⁷ ⁵¹ westerncape.gov.za

https://www.westerncape.gov.za/treasury/files/wcg-blob-files?file=2025-01/dept-annual-report-guide_march-2023.pdf&type=file

²⁹ A Simple Step-by-Step Guide for NGOs on "How to write Proposals" – YD Co-Lab

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