

CAPE GATEWAY
CONTENT
MANAGEMENT
GUIDELINES

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CAPE GATEWAY CONTENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	5
1.1 Our Content Management System, Bee: the vision.....	5
1.2 What's special about our Bee?.....	5
1.3 BEE user tree	6
1.4 Importance of Web Authors.....	6
1.5 Importance of Custodians	7
1.6 Web Authors, Custodians and your organisational structure	8
1.7 Content Manager	8
1.8 Principal Custodian.....	8
1.9 One user one login.....	9
1.10 What prompts content updating?.....	9
CONTENT POLICY	10
1.1 Accuracy	10
1.2 No politics	10
1.3 Religion.....	10
1.4 Referring to race.....	10
1.5 Referring to disability	10
1.6 Linking to other sites	11
1.7 Polls	11
1.8 Bulletin boards /discussion forums/guest books	11
1.9 Crediting.....	11
1.10 Commissioned work and copyright.....	11
1.11 Photographs of people	12
1.12 Info on young people.....	12
1.13 Existing content.....	12
1.14 Contact information.....	12
1.15 Ban it: 'Site Under Construction'	12
1.16 Language.....	12
1.17 Images	13
1.18 Downloadable documents	13
WRITER'S GUIDE	13
APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY	14
APPENDIX B: APPOINTMENTS	15
APPENDIX C: PREFERRED FILE FORMATS	16
APPENDIX D: WRITER'S GUIDE	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cape Gateway portal is all about getting the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) to speak about itself – to tell its customers (e.g. citizens, investors, tourists) what it does, what services it offers, etc. It is probably one of the single largest communications exercises ever undertaken by the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC).

A central body, the Centre for E-Innovation, is coordinating this communications exercise, but the work is to be done in a decentralised manner: departments will be inputting their own information for direct publication on the Cape Gateway portal (the portal).

Why content management guidelines?

In this context, we need policies guiding *what* is said, and *how* it's said.

Roles and Responsibilities

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of users in relation to the content management system, Bee. Bee is to be used by departments to input their own information for publication on the portal. (Bee allows departments to put content on web pages without having to know programming.)

There are two types of Bee users: Web Authors and Custodians.

Web Authors

Each department is to appoint Web Authors, who must: identify information about their department/branch that should be on the portal; write content and make sure it's up to date; and make sure they send the content to the correct custodian for approval.

Custodians

Custodians have the same responsibilities as Web Authors, but with an important addition: they approve the content for publishing on the portal. The position of Custodian is thus very important and there is a high level of trust vested in the position.

There is no restriction on who can enter content by subject area (e.g. anyone can enter content on health). Custodians are, however, accountable for all content they approve.

Content Manager

The Content Manager's role is to give overall direction and support for the portal for instance in choosing Web Authors and Custodians, and in strategising the nature of the content to appear on the portal.

Principal Custodian

This person is ultimately responsible for all the content on the portal, though this function can be delegated (e.g. to departmental custodians).

Content Policy

This section is intended to guide the preparation of content for publication on the portal:

It explains what kinds of content are acceptable and not, e.g. religion, politics, etc.

Trilingual content is to be supported and promoted.

Content must be kept up to date.

In terms of copyright, the PGWC will allow use of material on the portal as long as it's credited.

Polls won't be used on the portal.

Where photographs of individuals are used, their permission must be sought.

Writer's Guide

This section sets out standards for writing and word usage on the portal. Writing for the Internet demands conciseness and structure. Usability demands plain English and avoiding government-speak.

It's also important for all departments to be using the same words to describe the same things. For instance, the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) will be used for admin + political arms; Western Cape Provincial Administration (WCPA) for admin only. Provincial Minister and Provincial Parliament will also be used.

CAPE GATEWAY CONTENT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Cape Gateway aims to give citizens easy access to government information and services via a web portal, a call centre and a walk-in centre. The portal is an information product – that is, it's a repository of information. In order to successfully fulfil its function, it needs to present consistent, high-quality information. The purpose of these guidelines is to help contributors to the portal make it do just that.

This document has three parts:

- **Roles and responsibilities:** what does it mean to be a Web Author or Custodian?
- **Content policy:** pointers on *what* to write/what not to write.
- **Writer's guide:** pointers on *how* to write.

Please note: This document will exist only in English until it's finalised. It will then be translated into Afrikaans and Xhosa.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 Our Content Management System, Bee: the vision

The fundamental purpose of Bee is to enable. It's there to give government officials and others a tool to publish content on the portal with a minimum of obstacles, while at the same time building accountability for content approved.

1.2 What's special about our Bee?

The main feature of Bee is that it's flexible. There aren't lots of inbuilt rules that restrict access to certain areas and functions. But there's:

1.2.1 One built- in system rule

The one built-in system rule is that:

- Web Authors can enter content.
- Custodians can enter content + approve it for publication on the portal.

1.2.2 Implications of the one built-in rule

As a Web Author, you can enter content on any topic, whether it falls under your department or not. But: you must use common sense when you send the content to a Custodian for approval. If it's a housing-related issue, then request approval of the content from the Custodian that looks after that area.

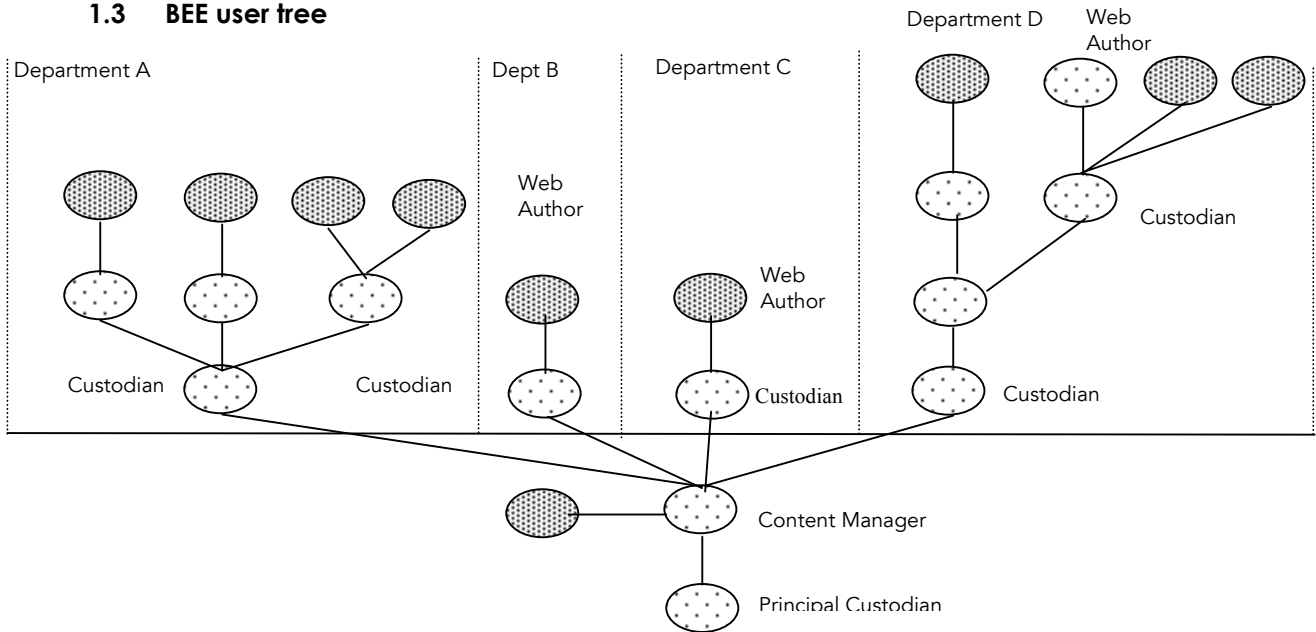
As a Custodian, make sure that you're the right person to be approving an item of content. If you're not, then reassign approval to the appropriate Custodian (you'll be able to do this via Bee). Remember that you're accountable for the content you approve, so it's important to assess if you're the best-qualified person to be approving that content.

1.2.3 How do we avoid anarchy?

There are three tools:

- Use common sense.
- Use these content management guidelines to guide what you do.
- Custodians have to understand and accept the responsibility delegated to them.

1.3 BEE user tree



This diagram shows:

- How users are created: start at the bottom and work upwards – Custodians create the users above them in the tree.
- The two user types (Web Author and Custodian).
- A tree of responsibility: the Custodian who set up a user is responsible for that user.

Note: the diagram is not a hierarchy. Where a Web Author has been created by a Custodian, they are not limited to getting approval from that Custodian.

1.4 Importance of Web Authors

Web Authors are the foundation upon which the portal rests – without them, the portal is empty, out of date and of no use to anyone.

1.4.1 Responsibilities of Web Authors

- Identify information about their department/branch that should be on the portal.
- Strategise how that information should be presented on the portal.
- Make sure that their departmental/branch information is always up to date.
- Write the content in keeping with the Writers Guide and Content Policy.
- Enter it onto Bee.
- See it through the approvals process with the right Custodian.
- Comment on the content of other Web Authors and Custodians when asked to.

Remember the implication of the one built-in rule: you can enter content on any topic, whether it falls under your department/branch or not. But: you must use common sense in choosing the Custodian to whom you send the content for approval.

1.4.2 How Bee will help

Bee allows the Web Author to:

- enter content
- decide where it should appear on the portal
- send the content for authorisation to the appropriate Custodian.

1.4.3 Choosing Web Authors

Each department is responsible for choosing its own Web Authors. Departments will ideally end up with many Web Authors, with each one responsible for a particular area (e.g. Health might have a Clinics Manager who is responsible just for updating a list of clinics and their services).

In the beginning, though, departments will probably have to start with fewer Web Authors, while everyone is getting used to Bee and the portal. Those people should:

- Have worked with publishing information, or at least understand information and how to present it.
- Have an in-depth understanding of the department (or at least a good enough knowledge and an ability to go out and find out the rest).
- Have good planning and organisational skills.
- Ideally be proficient in two of the three official languages of the Western Cape.
- Be customer driven, i.e. able to focus on what users want.
- Have good writing skills

1.5 Importance of Custodians

The position of Custodian is very important and there is a high level of trust vested in the position: Custodians can approve content anywhere on the portal (guided by any departmental or other policies set up to constrain which content areas they may operate in).

1.5.1 Responsibilities of the Custodian

The Custodian has the same responsibilities as a **Web Author**, plus:

- Choosing and setting up other Custodians in their area of jurisdiction (e.g. department/branch).
- Choosing and setting up Web Authors.
- Making sure users that they set up have Internet access.
- Approving content.

It's very important that when a Custodian sets up another Custodian or Web Author, the new user is given these Content Management Guidelines, and its implications are discussed with them. A new user should not be set up on Bee before they have been sent for training (contact the Content Manager about this).

When approving an item of content, the Custodian is responsible for assessing if they're the best-qualified person to be approving that content.

They must also make sure that the content is:

- accurate
- up-to-date
- relevant
- complete
- prepared according to this policy.

Custodians should not change life events or topics, as they are used to build the generated navigation (i.e. links) on the portal. They have been pre-populated in order to cater for as wide a variety of information as possible in a standardised way. Should any Custodian wish to add a life event or topic, they should create the item in Bee and send it for authorisation to the Content Manager.

1.5.2 How Bee will help

When a Web Author has entered an item of content on Bee, they use a function on Bee to request approval from the relevant Custodian. The request can happen in two ways:

- Bee Job Queue: unapproved content waits in the Custodian's approval queue on Bee; and/or
- Email: If the Custodian has chosen to receive email notification, they will be sent an email requesting approval.

Should the Custodian approve the content item, it gets published on the portal. If they don't, it can be:

- Reverted to the relevant Web Author with comments (e.g. a request for revision, or deletion).
- Passed to other Bee users for comment.
- Passed to a more relevant Custodian for approval.

For the appointment of other Custodians and Web Authors, Bee has a function that allows the Custodian to enter the new user's details, and send them their username and password.

1.5.3 Choosing Custodians

It's up to each department how they wish to allocate their custodial responsibilities. A department could choose to have a head Custodian, who would then set up other Custodians, who would then set up Web Authors beneath them. Another department might choose to have a single Custodian, who would then set up Web Authors under them.

It's important that each department decides how many Custodians they want, and what areas of content those Custodians are in charge of. This is a departmentally delegated responsibility; Bee will not restrict Custodians to certain areas. As mentioned in 1.6 below, departments can create their own policies outlining content areas for different custodians.

In terms of the criteria to select Custodians: they are the same as for Web Authors (see 1.3.3). But the department appointing the Custodian(s) must be comfortable allowing that person to approve content for publishing on the Internet.

For help with appointing Custodians and Web Authors, please contact the Content Manager.

1.6 Web Authors, Custodians and your organisational structure

As indicated above, Bee is very flexible. Its simple hierarchy means that it's adaptable to many organisational structures. Your department or directorate may allocate as many or as few staff as it wishes to these roles, and it can outline the roles and responsibilities of those people in a separate policy guiding Internet communications for your organisation. The Content Manager can help you to create that policy.

1.7 Content Manager

The Content Manager's role is to give direction and support.

In the area of direction, to:

- Create and update the Cape Gateway Content Management Guidelines.
- Monitor implementation of the Guidelines.
- Strategise the content to go onto the portal, including language variants.
- Point departments to gaps in their online content.
- Do quality control of content.
- Ensure accountability for content approved.

In the area of support, to:

- Help departments decide what to put online.
- Train users about their roles and responsibilities, how to write for the Web, and how to use Bee.
- Help users understand the implications of these content management guidelines.

1.8 Principal Custodian

The Principal Custodian is ultimately responsible for all the content on the portal, and has a role to play in quality control and ensuring accountability.

S/he cannot be expected to approve every content item. Hence this responsibility is delegated to Custodians.

1.9 One user one login

When you're issued a username and password for Bee, they're yours and yours only. Do not 'lend' them to other users to update or approve content. If someone needs to work on content on Bee, then a Custodian must issue them with a username and password – even if they're not a regular user.

1.10 What prompts content updating?

There are three prompts for content being updated:

1.10.1 Department-initiated

Departments should be updating their information and creating new content on a regular basis.

1.10.2 Customer-initiated

Requests for information will be made by customers via the portal, the call centre and the walk-in centre. Cape Gateway will pass requests to the relevant department for action.

1.10.3 Content Manager-initiated

The Content Manager will be constantly assessing the content of the portal and will request departments to update/create content.

CONTENT POLICY

This content policy is intended to guide the preparation of content for publication on the Cape Gateway portal.

1.1 Accuracy

Information entered into the portal must be accurate. You are writing on behalf of the Provincial Government – the material you enter on the portal is presenting our government to the whole world.

An important aspect of accuracy is that the content must be **up to date**. If for instance there is an old version of a form on the site, or an old social security benefit, there could be legal ramifications for the PGWC.

Remember that when you put information on the portal, it is as 'official' as if it was printed at the Government Printer or anywhere else. For example, a price list for personalised number plates on the portal has the same status as one printed in the *Cape Argus*.

1.2 No politics

Cape Gateway is apolitical and party political interests should not be represented on the site.

Policy cross-reference: "**Code Of Conduct For The Public Service**" sections C.2.7 and C3.7

1.3 Religion

The Cape Gateway portal seeks to provide information to a wide range of people. Content should be written so as not to alienate people of any religion. Where religious terminology or references are used, make them inclusive of all religions, as opposed to exclusive.

Policy cross-reference: South Africa's **National Constitution** clause on freedom of religion, belief and opinion clauses 15.1 (1) and (2)

1.4 Referring to race

Where it's necessary to refer to race, the portal will use the same words as **Statistics South Africa**:

black African
white
coloured
Indian

Note that African and Indian are capitalised as they are derived from proper nouns.

When referring to everyone that's not white, use 'black'.

Use these words as adjectives, not nouns:

- ✘ blacks in the Western Cape
- ✓ black people in the Western Cape

1.5 Referring to disability

Referring to disability is a difficult area, and there are a number of approaches. Here's a summary of the main points:

Avoid terms that group people as if they were identical, such as "the blind" and "the deaf". Try to use the word 'person' along with an adjective:

- ✘ the disabled
- ✓ disabled people/students

Avoid terms that evoke discomfort, pity, or guilt, such as “suffers from”, “stricken with”, or “afflicted by”:

- ✘ wheelchair bound
- ✓ wheelchair user

1.6 Linking to other sites

Hyperlinks are one of the wonderful features of the Internet – you can take the user to something on the Internet directly by giving good hyperlinks. Deep linking is good – i.e. link directly to the page you want to refer the user to, not just the home page of the site.

Do not link to sites that:

- Advocate illegal activities (e.g. taking drugs, theft, copyright violation, etc.).
- Promote pornography and violence.
- Contain and promote hate speech and racism.

As a general principle, think twice before linking to private sites. For instance, if you link to one property company, how can you justify not providing links to all property companies?

It's also important to check the links you put in your content regularly:

- It's part of keeping your content up to date.
- Sites can move or be redesigned, making the link obsolete.
- Government sites are prone to being hacked.

1.7 Polls

Polls on PGWC websites must abide by these Content Management Guidelines (e.g. no politics or religion).

1.8 Bulletin boards /discussion forums/guest books

Bulletin boards open the PGWC up to publishing content created by others on a PGWC-created website. This can lead to a range of problems, e.g. publishing of racist statements on the portal. Where a bulletin board is provided, it must be moderated by a PGWC member of staff or appointee.

It's also important that users are given answers and feedback on their postings, where those are solicited. It's bad practice to provide a platform for questions/comment/feedback and not to respond.

1.9 Crediting

Make sure you credit properly when referencing other people's material:

☞ Surname, first name. "Title", *Publication (if applicable)*, date, URL, "Accessed" + date accessed on Internet.

☞ Surname, first name. "Title", *Publication (if applicable)*, date, page.

1.10 Commissioned work and copyright

For material produced by outside consultants and contractors, check who owns the copyright (e.g. to a report). Copyright should be mentioned in the contract signed with the third party.

Make sure, when commissioning material to publish on your website, that you own the copyright. Make sure that specific provision is made for this in the commissioning contract.

For more on this, see the UK government's recommendations prepared by the **Office of the e-Envoy**.

1.11 Photographs of people

Seek the permission of any individual before using their photograph. People have the right to privacy and that includes their own image. Where the photograph is an incidental scene (e.g. a picture of a road) and there are people in it, it's not necessary to get their permission.

1.12 Info on young people

Pay special attention when dealing with info on young people/children:

- Ask parental permission to use an image of a young person.
- Never publish the personal details of children (e.g. email addresses, home addresses and telephone numbers) on the Internet.
- If a child is in statutory care, prior permission should be sought from the Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation before identifying a child in any way.

To read more on this, see the UK Department of Education and Skills' **recommendations**.

1.13 Existing content

Don't publish content that already exists on the portal!

1.14 Contact information

Any contact information entered (telephone or email) must be staffed (i.e. there must be someone qualified there to deal with the query).

1.15 Ban it: 'Site Under Construction'

If a section of your site is not published yet (i.e. not live on the portal), do not put an 'under construction' notice. If a section is not complete, leave it out altogether.

Exception:

Say you have an existing section, and the final policy paper is due on a certain date, it's acceptable to say:

- ☞ The final policy paper will be released on 10 January 2003 and will be published on this site soon thereafter.

1.16 Language

1.16.1 PGWC's current language policy

Policy cross-reference: The **Western Cape Language Policy** prepared by the Western Cape Language Committee in November 2001 applies to the portal. Applicable recommendations are that:

- The official languages of the Province are Afrikaans, Xhosa and English.
- Equal access to public services and programmes should be promoted by removing communication or language barriers.
- All legislation, official reports and resolutions of the Provincial Parliament and its committees must be made available in all three official languages.
- A bill introduced in the Provincial Parliament must upon introduction be available in at least two official languages, and those two languages should rotate equally between the three official languages.
- All official notices issued by the provincial government for general public information, must be issued in all three languages.
- Members of the public must be able to communicate with the PGWC in the language of their choice.

1.16.2 The portal and trilingualism

The portal is going to be presented in all three official languages, i.e. Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. The user will choose their first and second languages of presentation.

When the user requests a specific page, it will be presented to them in their first language of choice. If the content item for that page doesn't exist in that language, it will be presented in their second choice. If it doesn't exist in that language, it will be presented in the remaining language.

1.16.3 Entering different language versions on Bee

Bee has been built to facilitate the entering of content in all three languages. It is very important that when you enter content, you check whether it exists in another language first – so that you can enter the content as a translation of the existing content item, not a completely new item.

1.17 Images

Whether you upload an image to the portal or it's contained in a document, images must be optimised for the Web and be in .gif or .jpg formats. It's a good idea to limit the use of images as the Internet relies on speed (unlike print).

1.18 Downloadable documents

1.18.1 File size

Remove unnecessary images from documents to keep file size down. Make sure that images in documents have been optimised.

1.18.2 File names

Files names should not contain spaces; you can use an underscore_ instead of a space. Make sure that the file has an extension (e.g. your_file.txt).

1.18.3 File format


Users have to have to be able to view the files they have downloaded from the portal. Files should be in common file formats: see **Appendix C**.

WRITER'S GUIDE

The Writer's Guide aims to provide pointers on *how* to write for the portal, to make the content as user-friendly as possible. It also outlines standards for the content. It should be read in conjunction with the Cape Gateway Content Policy, which gives pointers on *what* to write for the portal.

The Guide is contained in **Appendix D**, as it is likely to change often.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

	indicates an example
x	indicates an example of what's wrong
✓	indicates an example of what's right
Cape Gateway content repository	the database(s) developed for the purposes of storing content
Bee	the application developed for the Cape Gateway content repository for the purposes of entering content into the repository
Bee users	Web Authors and Custodians
Content	written and graphical material published on the portal
Content item	a specific, identifiable unit of content on the portal (it will have a unique identifier on Bee)
e-Government	the use by government of information technologies (e.g. the Internet) that can transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. The aim is to: better deliver government services to citizens, improve interactions with business and industry, empower citizens through access to information, and more efficient government management. Benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions.
Enter content	to input content on Bee via the built-in forms
File	a content item that is accessible on the portal by downloading, i.e. it's not published on the portal in hypertext markup language (HTML)
PGWC	Provincial Government of the Western Cape, including all administrative and political organs
Portal	the website, to reside at www.capegateway.gov.za , which will be the official Internet presence of the PGWC
Publish content	to approve content via Bee, resulting in its publication on www.capegateway.gov.za

APPENDIX B: APPOINTMENTS

Principal Custodian: Harold Wesso
Content Manager: Katherine de Tolly
Usability Team Leader: Steve Vosloo

APPENDIX C: PREFERRED FILE FORMATS

PDF file: .pdf format

Text file: .txt and .rtf formats

Allowable but less optimal file formats

MS Word files: .doc formats. MS Word is commonly used in the PGWC, but not all portal users have MS Word. If possible, save the MS Word as a .txt or .rtf file (but check what happens to your formatting if you do, and adjust where necessary).

APPENDIX D: WRITER'S GUIDE

1. Writing for your audience

Always write with your audience in mind.

The portal's target market is very broad: it ranges from school children doing research, to pensioners seeking information, to overseas government officials.

Given that you're writing for such a broad audience, your writing must be clear, structured and concise, using simple, jargon-free language.

2. Keep it short and simple

Use fewer words instead of more – text should be around 50% shorter than the equivalent text in print. Studies have shown that users scan on the Web more than they read (see www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html for more on this issue).

Use simple words instead of complicated ones.

Use short, single-idea sentences.

Delete meaningless words:

✘ actually, basically, as such

3. Use plain English

Traditional government language is often inefficient and unfriendly. Plain, simple English is easier and faster to read, and you're far more likely to get your message across accurately. The Plain English Campaign has great **resources** on this topic, including a list of **words to avoid**.

4. Use structure

Many Web users scan pages before reading the whole article, to check if the information is relevant. To make your content useful to them, use structure.

- Give the content a meaningful title.
- Use regular subheadings to break up the text. Make them representative of the paragraphs that follow, though!
- Keep to one idea or concept per paragraph, even if this means the paragraph only contains one sentence.
- Use bulleted lists.
- Bold text can help highlight key words, but use it sparingly

5. Meaningful headings and sub-headings

Keep your headings useful and to the point. Avoid cute and funny:

✘ Retired – help is at hand!

✓ Where to get your pension

6. Heading styles

The Cape Gateway heading style is bold all caps:

☞ **HOW THE HIV TEST WORKS**

To get this in HTML, use this tag:

☞ `<div class="subheading"> HOW THE HIV TEST WORKS</div>`

The sub-heading style is just bold:

☞ **Getting Your Results**

To get this in HTML, use this tag:

☞ `Getting Your Results`

Capitalise the first word and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Don't capitalise conjunctions or articles (a, the):

- ✗ National report On DHIS data
- ✓ Farm Safety: Don't Be the Pick of the Crop

7. Bullet-point lists

These also help structure your text, and you should use them whenever appropriate.

✗ The Directorate Environmental Management aims to facilitate and develop integrated environmental planning and policy, ensure environmental impact management and sustainable development and administration of applicable legislation, and to develop and monitor the bio-diversity policy.

- ✓ The Directorate Environmental Management aims to:
 - Facilitate and develop integrated environmental planning and policy.
 - Ensure environmental impact management.
 - Promote sustainable development.
 - Ensure administration of applicable legislation.
 - Develop and monitor the bio-diversity policy.

8. Punctuation

Punctuation can be used to:

- Mark grammatical divisions.
- Reflect pauses and emphases in the spoken language.
- Show where part of a word has been left out.
- Clarify meaning.

Full stop

Use the full stop more rather than less. Long sentences are usually better broken down into a series of shorter sentences.

Comma

The comma can be used in many ways:

- To separate items or elements in a series.
- To mark off qualifying phrases which are not essential to the main meaning of the sentence. Qualifying phrases which are essential to the main meaning of the sentence, are not marked off.
- To mark off certain words or phrases which are argument signposts. The most common are: however, therefore, perhaps, of course, for instance, and too. When these other phrases are not used as argument sign posts, they should not be marked off by commas.
- To emphasise or clarify.

Be careful:

The comma should not be used to separate what are really two sentences:

- ✗ The plans should be submitted by hand, they should be accompanied by form A14.
- ✓ The plans should be submitted by hand, accompanied by form A14.

Semicolon

The semicolon may be used instead of a comma when two closely related statements need to be separated, but you want to show the link between the two.

- ✗ The roads of the Western Cape are very good, they have been built to the highest standards.
- ✓ The roads of the Western Cape are very good; they have been built to the highest standards.

Dash

It should be used to:

- Mark an aside or an interruption in the flow of a sentence.
- Introduce a humorous or ironic ending to a sentence.
- Mark a paraphrase or correction.

Apostrophe

Apostrophe s [’s] added to a singular noun indicates possession. Just an apostrophe is added to a plural noun.

Some very commonly used words are exceptions, e.g. theirs, ours, yours, its. Other exceptions are adjectives (games master, customs examination), the names of most trades unions (Food and Allied Workers Union), and the names of some Acts of Parliament.

When indicating the possessive of a proper noun that ends in ‘s’:

- ✗ James’
- ✓ James’s

Singular nouns ending in –s (e.g. bass): either ‘s or just ‘ is acceptable (i.e. bass’ or bass’s).

To make an acronym plural: don’t use an apostrophe unless the acronym ends in S

☞ many NHS’s

It’s = it is (think of the apostrophe replacing the missing ‘i’ from ‘is’)

Its = belonging to it

Be careful of the spell checker in MS Word – it doesn’t always give you the correct advice on this issue!

Quotation marks

When quoting directly (e.g. a person’s words, or from an existing text), use quotation marks:

☞ The Minister commented: "Poverty undermines the human dignity and self-respect of many of the people of the Western Cape."

Use quotation marks for the titles of articles on- or offline:

☞ Nielsen, Jakob. "Deep Linking is Good Linking", *Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox*, 3 March 2002, www.useit.com/alertbox/20020303.html.

Use italics for the titles of books, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, films, plays, long poems, long musical works, and television and radio programs.

☞ This article appeared originally in the *Cape Times*.

9. Beware of yesterday!

Be careful of "today", "tomorrow" and "yesterday". On the Web a piece of content may be read at any time (e.g. if it’s archived). Try to avoid using these words; if you do, qualify them with a date, e.g. "The Minister will today, 17 December 2002, open the new bridge over False Bay."

10. Use words consistently

Be consistent in the names you use for things across your content, where you are referring to the same thing:

✗ the Aids plan; the Aids programme

11. Gender-specific language

Content should be written to be as inclusive as possible. Keep your language gender-neutral.

Use the plural pronoun to remain gender-neutral:

- ✗ A doctor bills his patients.
- ✓ Doctors bill their patients.
- ✗ Give each student his paper as soon as he is finished.
- ✓ Give students their papers as soon as they are finished.

Or rephrase to remove pronouns:

- ✗ If the secretary is unavailable, please e-mail her.
- ✓ If the secretary is unavailable, please send an e-mail.

Where neither of these options is suitable, use their. It is acceptable to use their, even if the context is singular. His/her is a more clumsy construction:

- ✗ The user should restrict his/her viewing to office hours.
- ✓ A person can't help their birth.

This **website** has a good explanation and examples of the use of their.

Here's a list of words and their gender-neutral equivalents:

businessman = business person or executive
businessmen = business community
chairman = chairperson
cleaning lady = cleaner, housekeeper
fireman = firefighter
housewife = homemaker
maid = house worker or housekeeper
man-hours = person-hours or work-hours
man-made = synthetic, manufactured, machine-made
mankind = humanity, people, humankind
manpower = workforce, staff, personnel
male nurse = nurse
salesman = sales clerk or sales representative
spokesman = representative or spokesperson
workmen's compensation = worker's compensation

12. US vs UK English

In South Africa, we use a version more closely aligned with UK English. To help you stick to that, set your MS Word spellchecker to UK English (or South African English, if it's available).

Common misspellings are:

- ✗ organization, honor, catalog, meter, specialized, realize
- ✓ organisation, honour, catalogue, metre, specialised, realise.

For a fuller list of US vs UK English spellings, please see:

www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/~jphb/american.html
www.accomodata.co.uk/amlish.htm

13. Non-English Words

Non-English words should be italicised. Use non-English words sparingly when you write in English.

14. Use of Capitals

ALL CAPITALS should not be used – in Internet etiquette it's considered shouting! This does not apply if it's part of an existing name or title.

15. Acronyms

All caps are acceptable in acronyms. Remember, when using an acronym for the first time in an item of content, to spell it out in full followed by the acronym in brackets.

☞ The Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC)

16. Hyperlinks

The URL of the site linked to should not be written in the body text. Rather hyperlink the word(s) describing the site linked to (e.g. the site owner's name).

✘ The national Department of Home Affairs issues passports. Click **here** for more on this on their site.

✓ The national Department of Home Affairs **issues passports**.

Where you have to write out the URL, leave out 'http://'

✘ <http://www.gov.za>

✓ www.gov.za

When entering the HTML for a hyperlink, code it so that the website being referred to pops up in a new window:

☞ ``

target="_blank" makes the site pop up in a new window.

17. Underlining

Underlined text should be avoided as hyperlinks are generally underlined on the Internet. So if you underline your text, users may think that they can click on it to go to a related page. Rather make the text bold.

✘ The form must be completed in triplicate.

✓ The form must be completed **in triplicate**.

18. Word standards

Below are conventions adopted for the Cape Gateway portal.

Email

Use **email** (not e-mail).

E.g., etc. and i.e.

These should be spelt with full stops: e.g., etc. and i.e.

The Internet

Use the **Internet** as a noun and **internet** as an adjective.

HIV/Aids

✘ hiv/aids

✓ HIV/Aids

Online

The word should be written **online** (not on-line or on line).

Name of the Provincial Government

Use when referring to the whole provincial government (i.e. political and administrative):

✓ Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC)

✘ Provincial Administration of the Western Cape (PAWC), Western Cape Provincial Administration (WCPA)

Use when referring to the administrative part of the PGWC:

✓ Western Cape Provincial Administration (WCPA)

PGWC Structures/Roles

Use 'Provincial Minister'. For brevity's sake, use 'Minister' after the first instance.

☞ The Provincial Minister of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation in the Western Cape, Marius Fransman, is embarking on a child abuse campaign. The Minister indicated his deep commitment to the issue.

Use 'Provincial Cabinet' and 'Provincial Parliament' in the first instance, and 'Cabinet' and 'Parliament' thereafter.

Policy cross-references:

The **Constitution** of the Western Cape uses Provincial Minister, Provincial Cabinet and Provincial Parliament.

The **National Constitution** section 143. (1) indicates that: "A provincial constitution, or constitutional amendment, must not be inconsistent with this Constitution, but may provide for - provincial legislative or executive structures and procedures that differ from those provided for in this Chapter..."

The Web

Use the **Web** as a noun and **web** as an adjective.

Website

Use **website** (not web site or Web site).

19. Time

- ✗ 2pm
- ✓ 14:00

20. Date

- ✗ 2004/02/01, 02/01/2004
- ✓ 1 February 2004

21. Numbers

- ✗ 10,000, 10000
- ✓ 10 000

22. Telephone Numbers

Don't use dashes or parentheses:

- ✗ (021) 483-1234
- ✓ 021 483 1234

23. Address Format

When entering an information into an address field, keep it all on one line, separated by commas:

- ✗ 142 Long Street
Cape Town
8001
- ✓ 142 Long Street, Cape Town, 8001

24. HTML Standards

Any HTML you use must be good and clean. For everyday content entering, it's important to:

- Close your tags (e.g. list item; <p>paragraph text in here</p>).
- For tags that don't close (e.g. the line break tag), use
 - i.e. put in a space and forward slash after 'br'.
- Use the tag for bold, not .

- Use the tag for italics.
- Always put tags in lower case (e.g. not
).
- Nest your tags properly:
 - ✘ <i>bold</i> italic</i>
 - ✓ <i>bold italic</i>

For more on HTML, please go to www.bee.gov.za/styleguide.htm

25. Resources to Help You

Online dictionary and thesaurus: www.dictionary.com (careful of US spellings!); also dictionary.cambridge.org

Writing for the Web: www.useit.com/papers/webwriting.

How to write HTML: [Webmonkey](#)

26. Application to Convert Files to PDF Format

The PGWC has an email-based application for converting files to PDF format called Mail2pdf.

To use the application:

Email the file as an attachment to Mail2pdf@pgwc.gov.za

There is no need for a subject or text in the body of the email. (You can enter them to help you to track which files you've sent for conversion.)

The file will be emailed back to you in pdf format.

Rules of the Mail2pdf application:

- Filenames are limited to 20 characters.
- Only one attachment per email.
- File size is restricted to 5 MB.
- The system is entirely automated so replies should not be directed to Mail2pdf@pawc.wcape.gov.za.
- The following filetypes are supported:
 - DOC - Word
 - RTF - Rich Text Format
 - XLS - Excel
 - PPT - PowerPoint File
 - PPS - Powerpoint SlideShow
 - HTM - HTM file (Hyper Text Markup)
 - HTML - HTML file (Hyper Text Markup)
 - TXT - Text file
 - GIF - Graphic File
 - JPEG - Graphic File
 - JPG - Graphic File
 - BMP - Graphic File
 - TIF - Graphic File

You should get a response within an hour, depending on the queue for documents to be converted. If you've had no response after an hour you can assume that the Mail2pdf server is not working. Your document will be converted as soon as the server is working again, so it's not necessary to resend the document.

For persistent problems with Mail2pdf, please contact vbowers@pgwc.gov.za