# The language of forms: A discourse analysis of municipal application forms.

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the

Department of Linguistics, University of the Western Cape

Supervisor

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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis focuses on the genre of municipal documents (application forms) and the variety of written and visual languages that make up their corpus to reveal the various lexical semantics used in the forms as communication tool between individuals and the larger organisations. It was important to review not only how other researchers have dissected such documents, but also what they have used to study their corpus. The thesis also provides a thorough overview of literature pertaining to forms from the municipal and governmental sector as it relates to social semiotics, genre, corporate identity, branding and multimodality.

As there was not enough empirical data or research from the African or non-European perspective, a wider literature review was needed to enable me to use a number of complimentary models that could fit the study area. Drawing on a theoretical framework based on the fields of Social Semiotics (Kress 2010; 2014), Applied Linguistics (Brumfit 1996) and Visual Communication (Tam 2008) as well as analytical tools like the genre and multimodality model (GeM), as described in Bateman (2008) and the grammar of visual design (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006), branding and language ideology, the study offers an analysis of the language of particular forms used widely by the City of Cape Town (CCT).

The language of forms in essence is as unique as a dialogue held between two people to obtain information. Misunderstanding and communication can easily occur if the questions and sections are not formulated correctly. Although both the textual and visual modes were investigated, the aim was to uncover the corpora used on forms with which a basic set of standard words, phrases and sentences could be designed.

If the language of forms in a particular organisation like the CCT can be standardised, the amount of effort on the language practitioners will decrease, and the textual components can be made available in all three of the official languages (Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English) in as simple a language structure as possible.

Four forms from CCT's Water and Sanitation Department were separated and the findings emanating from the analysis were documented using a GeM model. The most significant finding of this study was that the non-textual aspects of the forms are just as significant as the word choices, or textual components. The reason for this is that these non-textual aspects form the reading map, which indicates the text flow from one line to the next. In addition, the textual analysis highlighted the importance of using standardised information on forms used by a metropolitan municipality that could easily be translated into the three official



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languages of the province. The use of standard wording on forms can create a sense of inclusivity and accessibility that could have far-reaching implications in society.

The findings and proposal emanating from this study should be valuable components in significantly improving the CCT's forms as essential tools of communication between the public and officials.

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**KEYWORDS**

Document/visual design

Genre and modality framework

Discourse analysis

Social semiotics

Language ideology

Plain language

Municipal forms

English

Afrikaans

isiXhosa

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# DECLARATION

I declare that *The language of forms: A discourse analysis of municipal application forms* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Signed: Natasjia Geldenhuys 24 May 2019

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---oOo---

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS** **PAGE**

ABSTRACT ..... i

KEYWORDS ..... iii

DECLARATION ..... iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... v

LIST OF FIGURES ..... xi

LIST OF TABLES ..... xiii

LIST OF ANNEXURES ..... xiv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ..... xv

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION SITUATING THE STUDY ..... 1

1.0 Introduction ..... 1

1.1 Overview ..... 1

1.2 Context and rationale for this study ..... 2

1.3 Background to the Study ..... 4

1.4 Statement of the problem ..... 7

1.5 Aims of the study ..... 12

1.5.1 Objectives of the study ..... 12

1.5.2 Research questions ..... 12

1.6 Hypothesis ..... 13

1.7 Significance of the study ..... 13

1.8 Methodology ..... 14

1.9 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework ..... 14

1.10 Organisation of the thesis ..... 14

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL, CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS 16

2.0 Introduction ..... 16

2.1 Theoretical framework ..... 16

2.1.1 Social Semiotics ..... 16

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

2.1.2 Applied Linguistics ..... 18
2.1.3 Visual Communication ..... 19
2.2 Conceptual framework ..... 20
2.2.1 Visual Literacy ..... 21
2.2.2 Corporate identity and branding components ..... 21
2.2.3 Mode, Modality and Multimodality ..... 22
2.2.4 Language Policies and Ideologies ..... 24
2.2.5 Plain Language ..... 25
2.2.6 Governmentality ..... 26
2.3 Analytical framework ..... 27
2.3.1 Genre ..... 27
2.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis ..... 28
2.4 Summary ..... 29
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ..... 30
3.0 Introduction ..... 30
3.1 Qualitative research design ..... 30
3.1.1 Sampling ..... 31
3.1.2 Selection criteria ..... 31
3.1.3 Data-editing and pre-analysis ..... 32
3.1.4 Data set ..... 34
3.2 Data analysis ..... 34
3.2.1 Discourse analysis ..... 35
3.2.2 GeM (genre and multimodality) model ..... 36
3.2.3 Plain language ..... 38
3.2.4 Corpus-based multimodal analysis as analytical framework ..... 38
3.3 Data-coding procedures ..... 40
3.3.1 Textual analysis ..... 41

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

3.3.2 Visual analysis ..... 44
3.4 Limitations of the research ..... 46
3.5 Ethical considerations ..... 46
3.6 Scope of the research ..... 47
3.7 Summary ..... 48
CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION OF FORMS ..... 49
4.0 Introduction ..... 49
4.1 Document production ..... 49
4.1.1 Form custodians ..... 52
4.1.2 The role of the Language Services Unit (LSU) ..... 53
4.2 Structure and design of forms ..... 53
4.2.1 The structure of the forms ..... 53
4.2.1.1 Function of forms ..... 54
4.2.1.2 Framing ..... 55
4.2.2 Design elements ..... 58
4.3 The textual analysis ..... 59
4.4 A GeM and Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of selected forms used by the Water and Sanitation Department of the CCT ..... 64
4.5 Form 1: Application for adjustment of sanitation charges (Annexure A) ..... 65
4.5.1 Structure of the form ..... 65
4.5.2 Textual analysis ..... 67
4.5.3 Visual analysis ..... 71
4.6 Form 2: Application for the installation water management (WM) device form (Annexure B) ..... 74
4.6.1 Structure of the form ..... 74
4.6.2 Textual analysis ..... 75
4.6.3 Visual analysis ..... 80
4.7 Form 3: Application form to increase the quota of water supplied (Annexure C) ..... 84

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

4.7.1 Structure of the form ..... 84
4.7.2 Textual analysis ..... 86
4.7.3 Visual analysis ..... 88
4.8 Form 4: Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device (Annexure D) ..... 90
4.8.1 Structure of the form ..... 90
4.8.2 Textual analysis ..... 91
4.8.3 Visual analysis ..... 93
4.9 Summary of findings ..... 95
4.9.1 Page layout ..... 95
4.9.2 Corporate identity as a header ..... 96
4.9.3 Page Flow ..... 97
4.9.4 Text flow ..... 99
4.9.5 Typography ..... 100
4.9.6 Function of headings ..... 101
4.9.7 Language use ..... 102
4.9.8 Impact of role-players on meaning making ..... 102
4.10 Summary ..... 103
4.11 Conclusion ..... 103
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 104
5.0 Introduction ..... 104
5.1 Summary of Findings ..... 104
5.2 Recommendations arising from this study ..... 105
5.2.1 Typography ..... 105
5.2.2 Lexicon ..... 105
5.2.3 Style choices ..... 106
5.3 Implications of the findings ..... 107

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

5.4 Larger relevance of this study ..... 108
5.5 The future of forms and the timeliness of implementation ..... 109
5.6 Conclusion: future studies into form linguistics ..... 110
BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 112

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Public Benefit and Non-Profitable Organisations Rates Rebate Application Form 2017-2018 (English).pdf ..... 9
Figure 1.2: Application for Services Form (New Connection).pdf ..... 9
Figure 1.3: Application form - Increase quota of water supplied.pdf ..... 10
Figure 3.1: File naming convention ..... 33
Figure 3.2: Hiippala's (2017:279) overview of research within the genre and multimodality framework. ..... 37
Figure 3.3: Proofreader's marks ..... 40
Figure 3.4: Separated textual layer for analysis ..... 43
Figure 3.5: Separated visual (non-textual) layer for analysis ..... 45
Figure 4.1: Current form production cycle ..... 50
Figure 4.2: Role-players in creating forms ..... 51
Figure 4.3: Sectional frame or block ..... 57
Figure 4.4: Closed block ..... 57
Figure 4.5: Floating block ..... 57
Figure 4.6: Lined block ..... 58
Figure 4.7: Staggered blocks ..... 58
Figure 4.8: Header of the Application for adjustment of sanitation volumetric charge (for domestic cluster) ..... 65
Figure 4.9: Textual analysis of the Application for adjustment of sanitation charges form ..... 67
Figure 4.10: Visual analysis of the Application for adjustment of sanitation charges form ..... 71
Figure 4.11: Header of the Application for installation of water management device ..... 74
Figure 4.12: Textual analysis of the Application for the installation water management (WM) device form ..... 75
Figure 4.13: Style changes ..... 78
Figure 4.14: Spacing of related information ..... 78
Figure 4.15: Yes/no options ..... 78
Figure 4.16: Visual analysis of Application for the installation water management (WM) device form ..... 80
Figure 4.17: Variety of block types in a single frame ..... 82
Figure 4.18: Grouping of related questions ..... 82
Figure 4.19: Placement of information ..... 83

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

Figure 4.20: Header of the Application to increase the current quota of water supplied .....84
Figure 4.21: Textual analysis of the Application form to increase the quota of water supplied .....86
Figure 4.22: Visual analysis of the Application form to increase the quota of water supplied .....88
Figure 4.23: Header of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device.....90
Figure 4.24: Spacing of text and blocks.....90
Figure 4.25: Textual analysis of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device.....91
Figure 4.26: Visual analysis of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device.....93
Figure 4.27: Irregular shaped blocks .....94
Figure 4.28: Lined block.....94
Figure 4.29: Interactional frame .....96
Figure 4.30: Metropolitan municipality with a multilingual logo .....97
Figure 4.31: Extract from the CCT Language Style Guide .....99
Figure 4.32: Standard font/typography.....100
Figure 5.1: Example of Indentation of blocks based on the length of the longest words in a sectioned text block.....107

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Function of forms ..... 54
Table 4.2: Noun combinations used on forms ..... 60
Table 4.3: Use of gender ..... 63
Table 4.4: Impact on text length based on typography changes ..... 101

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

## LIST OF ANNEXURES


| | |
|---|---|
| Form 1: Application for adjustment of sanitation volumetric charge | A |
| Form 2: Application for water management (WM) device form | B |
| Form 3: Application form to increase the quota of water supplied | C |
| Form 4: Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device | D |
| Textual analysis in Excel format | E |
| Draft compilation manual for the CCT document type: Forms | F |

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AILA | International Association of Applied Linguistics |
| AL | Applied Linguistics |
| AMA | American Marketing Association |
| CCT | City of Cape Town |
| CDA | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| CI | Corporate Identity |
| CPA | Consumer Protection Act, Act 68 of 2008 |
| HTML | Hyper Text Markup Language |
| ISCB | Integrated Strategic Communication and Branding |
| LSU | Language Services Unit |
| MS | Microsoft |
| MSA | Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000 |
| NCA | National Credit Act, Act 34 of 2005 |
| OCR | Optical Character Recognition |
| PDF | Portable Document Format |
| POPI | Protection of Personal Information Act, Act 4 of 2013 |
| SCB | Strategic Communication and Branding |
| WEF | World Economic Forum |

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# CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION SITUATING THE STUDY

## 1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an introduction and background information about the language of forms, and why they are distinct enough to be considered a stand-alone genre of documents. The chapter explains my motivation for doing the research and the overall aims, research questions and methodology, including my intended contribution to the city's style guides for its forms.

## *1.1 Overview*

On a daily basis a person has to complete some form or another, yet no-one pays attention to what created the need for the form and the format in which it was created. Although it has a functional value, a form is at most the first actual interaction a person has with a company or organisation. Forms are in essence a two-way communication tool, whereby the form itself acts as reminders of what information is still missing and helps the user whereby they have less information to supply or write.

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A form is a document with fixed text (that does not change), textual instructions and spaces (also called fields or placeholders) in which to write information. Forms, when completed, may be a statement, a request, an order or is used to gather information that is to be distributed to several departments within the organisation.

The interactional value of forms is generally overlooked as a form of communication while the visuality (visual design/cues) and language get very little attention compared to the multimodal elements on the form such as its font and branding. According to Holsanova (2012:251), there is a lack of empirical studies on how users interact with the visual and text designs of forms. This study is therefore significant because it will, among others, examine the advantages of using forms, the most prominent of which is that it aids in uniformity and obtaining the correct information consistently. Baxter (2008:6) also reflects Holsanova's view, and notes that, on the part of the form custodian: *"there is little technical difficulty nowadays in producing more helpful documents; the question is simply one of awareness and willingness".*



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Within the South African context, Cornelius (2015) has done a tremendous amount of research into the use of plain language on contractual documentation and will be used a reference material throughout this thesis. However, to my knowledge, no research has been done on the 'language of forms' itself or the design elements used in application form types. This research study therefore aimed to provide a critical analysis of a selection of municipal forms – specifically, application forms – found on the CCT's official website. Using discourse analysis and the grammar of visual design, the design of the forms was analysed in terms of two main factors:

i. the *structure* of the forms, which is dependent on two multimodal elements, namely text, followed by those spaces/boxes to be completed by the user;

ii. the *design elements* found on most official forms, e.g. logos, headers, footers and blank spaces.

## *1.2 Context and rationale for this study*

Forms have become so ingrained within the linguistic landscape of the governmental sector and society that the essential roles they play are often overlooked. What is clearly understood through reception studies, user acceptance testing and research is how they are perceived by the reader. What has not been adequately researched is how these documents are conceived and produced by parastatals, which lead to my interest of a production perspective based study.

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Having selected to work solely within the genre of municipal forms of the City of Cape Town (CCT), I have come to the realisation that forms from a single organisation are burdened not only to carry their brand values, but also to set the tone for all future interactions. Within the governmental sphere, any document, letter and form become part of the formal record of the interaction with members of the public, yet very few people are taught the interactive value and the historical significance of this documentation and how a well compiled a form can avoid miscommunication or a complete breakdown in communication.

The purpose of forms is to obtain correct information that will initiate a service to be delivered. Each party has their own objectives with the supply of information, and the requests for information. Forms can create distance between the official and the



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customer, and between the officials themselves and the "process" initiated by completing a form. This study primarily pays attention to the various textual components used in forms – the types of sentences, phrases, words and structures that are used to regulate these interactions.

Forms should be regarded as a complete text, but with the omitted text to be completed by the other party. Kress (2003:96) as cited by Bateman (2008:197), defines 'genre' as being *"one aspect of textual organisation, namely that which realises and allows us to understand the social relations of the participants in the making, the reception and the reading/interpretation of the text"*. Forms need to be regarded as much more than just the process of co-creation of content. They are used to initiate or establish a relationship with an external party which set the tone for further interaction. Printed forms provide no help to the reader in completing the forms besides the text next to the text blocks. In contrast, most electronic or web-hosted form has digital algorithm which can facilitate or even speculate on the content based on a corpus of text (frequently used words) by the user that partially completes the text blocks in an online form.

I use this as my starting point when considering forms as the product of government agencies, by studying the form production process. There is clearly a need for large city or government agencies with complex/diverse services delivery departments, to pay attention to the audience/customers' needs regarding the comprehensibility and accessibility of forms. Livingstone and Lunt (2013:84) cite Hodge and Kress (1988) who elaborate on the semiotic notion of the *"implied reader"* to explore the potential involvement in the co-production of texts. Forms therefore establish the means of analysing the respective positions of the two communicants involved: the writer of the form and the reader of the form.

A brief analysis of the forms currently used on the city's website and in hardcopy shows that they have certain properties in common:

- They are all of a specific size (A4 or A3 folded to A4) and are generally on a white background.
- Forms are locked into dyadic opposites, where the form content is co-produced between the city and the customer/reader. It becomes their first interaction or contact.



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No-one has control over the content provided by the customers, but text can be structured in such a manner as to elicit the desired response. A forms custodian is the person tasked with the commissioning, creation, management, maintenance responsibilities towards the forms' information. The departmental custodian oversees the maintenance and regularly checks whether the forms still meet the function for which they have been designed. This goes beyond the scope of just information management, but also protects the brand integrity and captures the essence of a good working relationship with the various departments that play a role in ensuring the uniformity of forms within the city.

Forms custodians act as a chain of command for the commissioning and decommissioning of forms. Their scope of knowledge allows them to have an awareness of customer needs and the system requirements for adding information so that a completed form can become a formal record. They have to ensure compliance to the city's legal processes, and facilitate requests based on the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000.[i] The problem is that form custodians are overly concerned with compliance, but sometimes fail to check the forms, and what they deem to be effective communication is not actually correct, as the produced forms are not effective to the customer who completes these documents.

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### *1.3 Background to the Study*

Based on the various public sector organizations, in the Municipal Systems Act, Act 32 of 2000 (MSA), the Act has very prescriptive rules for municipalities on engagement and communication with the public through forms. The rules are shown below:

> Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000) Chapter 4: Community Participation, Section 18, Communication of information concerning community participation, subsection 2(a) states that:
>
> *2) When communicating the information mentioned in subsection (1), a municipality must take into account-*
>
> *a) language preferences and usage in the municipality; and*
>
> *b) the special needs of people who cannot read or write.*



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Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000) Chapter 4: Community Participation, Section 21, Communications to local community, subsection 5(a) and 5(b) states that:

a) *When a municipality requires a form to be completed by a member of the local community, a staff member of the municipality must give reasonable assistance to persons who cannot read or write, to enable such persons to understand and complete the form;*

b) *If the form relates to the payment of money to the municipality or to the provision of any service, the assistance must include an explanation of its terms and conditions.*

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act, all forms in municipalities are supposed to be highly regulated in terms of content and formality, but through the study, it will become evident that the adherences thereto are not optimally implemented by the CCT. Although not a comparative study between municipalities, I have found in my initial evaluation and comparison that not one of the 8 South Africa's metropolitan municipalities under this legislation complies with this regulation.

I have been working as an information and communication specialist for the City of Cape Town since 1998. As part of my job, I work on the visual language of forms, which includes everything from branding to word selection during the conceptual, creation and life cycle stages of forms. Moving from a single department to a much larger unit with multiple departments, I am now trying to migrate all of their forms to the city standards in consultation with the various role players. While I was assisting a sister department, Solid Waste Management (which, like my own department has a total of 36 forms), it became very clear that no standard exists for the design and contents of forms across the municipality. Each department has their own identity and standards, which does not necessarily align itself to the corporate standards.

The language used in the city's forms was even more alarming, as it was not conforming to any standards set for corporate communication or sanctioned documentation for the city's customers. I therefore engaged in a discussion with the various role players such as the City's Language Services Unit language practitioners to understand the process from their side. I had numerous discussions with the production officers from the Integrated Strategic Communication and Branding



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Department, who made it clear that the word choices used on forms is not their responsibility. Their function is to ensure the production process which includes the execution of the city's brand on all outward facing documentation. Each form is commissioned as a single product and not as part of a collection of forms.

What makes my situation unique is my function as an information and communication specialist with a linguistic background. Combined with the fact that I also do desktop publishing / graphic design, I have a different view point on the creation process. To understand why there is disconnect between the internal role players and the external service providers who are procured to assist with the creation or production process, I created a process flow of the forms production cycle (see Figure 4.1, page 50).

The most prominent role players are involved in creating a form from conception to publication and printing each has their own agenda which does not always overlap. The person creating the form needs information, while the production officers want to get the job completed so they can send the text away for language editing and translation. After that, the text goes to a designer tasked with laying out the artwork according to brand guidelines supplied by the City. At no point is there a consultative process to evaluate both internal and external need for the forms. Having engaged with the various role-players throughout the municipality in establishing this form production cycle, I can only assume that most of the forms currently in existence on the City of Cape Town's website have not passed through one or all of the role-players mentioned in the production process.

Given my 'insider' role and the ease of access I had to the necessary data, it was therefore possible for me to do a corpus-based discourse analysis of the city's forms. In the consultation phase, as noted above, I held discussions with the Language and Translation unit practitioners who were tasked with translating the forms into multiple languages. Based on the findings of this study, I have offered to add a chapter to the City's style guide on forms and the process to follow in creating them. With the help of the city's language practitioners we hope to establish a baseline of plain language wording/terminology in English that can be used on municipal forms, which can then be translated with relative ease into isiXhosa and Afrikaans.



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The CCT municipality is starting to move into the Fourth Industrial Revolution through eGovernance projects. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) (2019), the Fourth Industrial Revolution brings with it a fundamental change in the way people and organisations will relate to each other.

From a historical point of view, in quoting Schwab (2017) the WEF has the following advice for governments regarding the Fourth Industrial Revolution:

> … the key technologies driving this revolution, discusses the major impacts on governments, businesses, civil society and individuals, and suggests ways to respond. At the heart of his analysis is the conviction that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is within the control of all of us as long as we are able to collaborate across geographies, sectors and disciplines to grasp the opportunities it presents.

Davison, Wagner and Ma (2005:282) cite Burn and Robins (2003) who state that "*eGovernment is not just about putting forms and services online. It provides the opportunity to rethink how the government provides services and how it links them in a way that is tailored to the users' need".* In order for the CCT to take this leap into the technology-driven era, it cannot like other governments just scramble to get online as quickly as possible. It has to pay attention to getting the basics right by looking beyond these converging technologies. They need to find ways to integrate and make services more accessible through entry documentation, such as forms, provided to the multi-cultural and multilingual diverse society of Cape Town.

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## *1.4 Statement of the problem*

I have studied the form creation chain (see Figure 4.2 on page 50) and noticed the absence of quality control. It is not enough to only look at the visual language of forms, but at the actual language used as well, with a clear idea of the ideal reader that will be asked to complete the form, including his/her language barriers and literacy levels. Current practices at the CCT appear to be in line with what Kress (2010:48) describes as a top-down approach, where the text is being chosen by the city and their officials and is locked in a power relationship rather than in a collaborative space, where the reader is just a recipient, and does not become a co-creator of the text that finally becomes the information/public record.



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The relationship between municipalities and the customer is a tenuous one at best, where blame gets shifted for non-conformance, yet the bureaucratic stance in the production of forms fuels the perpetuation of this relationship. The customer carries all the blame for non-conformance and I interact daily with disgruntled customers whose forms have been rejected by departments for not complying with the process or the correct form.

According to Kress (2010:48), *"top-down"* approaches occur where the elements are *"shaped by the contingent circumstances of those who make the text in its social setting".* All text used on CCT forms should conform to the *Language Style Guide and Language Policy* (version 5: February 2017 drawn up by CCT's The Language Services Unit) for guidance in compilation. Yet the absence of clear guidelines between the style guide and brand guidelines led to my particular interest in the linguistic components of forms.

The examples of forms in Figures 1.1 – 1.3 (pages 9 – 10) provide a brief visual excursion into the complexity of the problem with forms from various departments available on the CCT website when evaluated against the basic elements of forms composition namely, their function, framing and the document flow or design.

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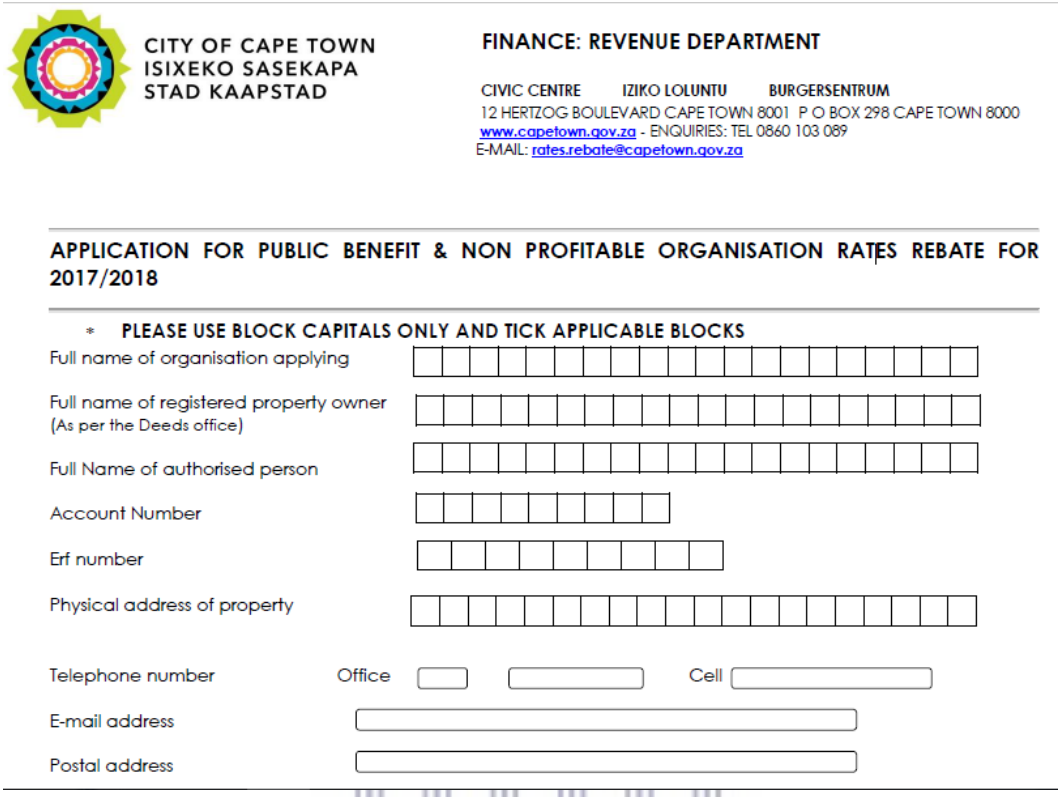
Figure 1.1: Public Benefit and Non-Profitable Organisations Rates Rebate Application Form 2017-2018 (English).pdf



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

**FINANCE: REVENUE DEPARTMENT**

CIVIC CENTRE IZIKO LOLUNTU BURGERSENTRUM
12 HERTZOG BOULEVARD CAPE TOWN 8001 P O BOX 298 CAPE TOWN 8000
www.capetown.gov.za - ENQUIRIES: TEL 0860 103 089
E-MAIL: rates.rebate@capetown.gov.za

**APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT & NON PROFITABLE ORGANISATION RATES REBATE FOR 2017/2018**

* **PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS ONLY AND TICK APPLICABLE BLOCKS**

Full name of organisation applying

Full name of registered property owner (As per the Deeds office)

Full Name of authorised person

Account Number

Erf number

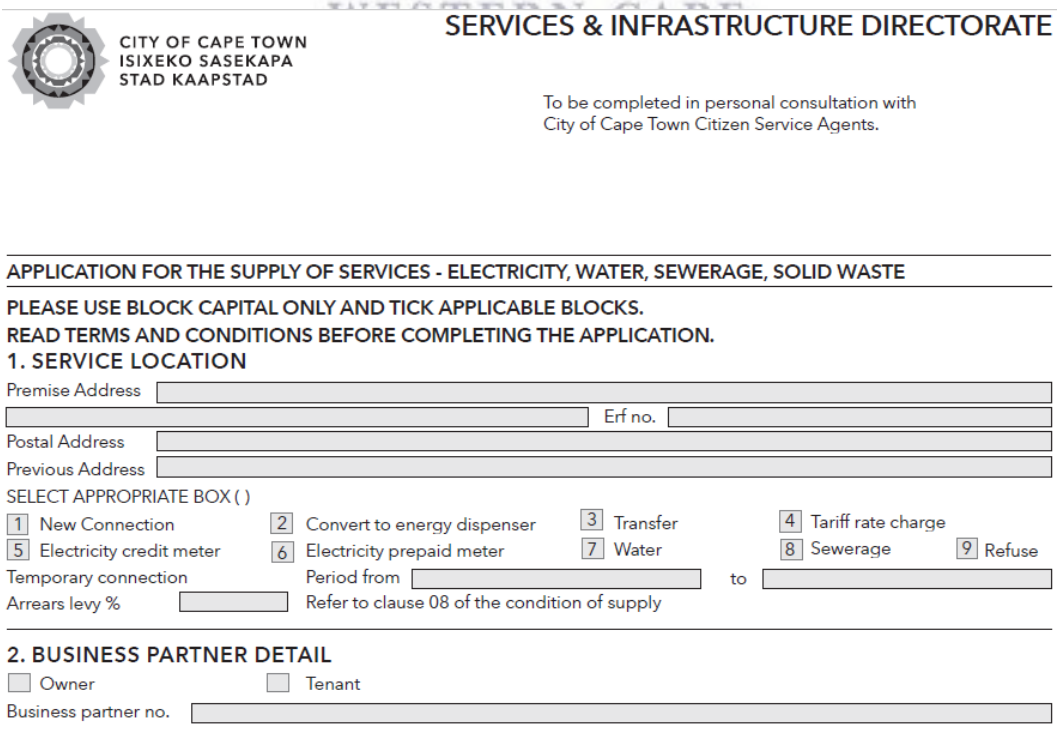
Physical address of property

Telephone number Office Cell

E-mail address

Postal address

Figure 1.2: Application for Services Form (New Connection).pdf



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

**SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTORATE**

To be completed in personal consultation with
City of Cape Town Citizen Service Agents.

**APPLICATION FOR THE SUPPLY OF SERVICES - ELECTRICITY, WATER, SEWERAGE, SOLID WASTE**

**PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITAL ONLY AND TICK APPLICABLE BLOCKS.**
**READ TERMS AND CONDITIONS BEFORE COMPLETING THE APPLICATION.**

**1. SERVICE LOCATION**

Premise Address

Erf no.

Postal Address

Previous Address

SELECT APPROPRIATE BOX ( )

1 New Connection 2 Convert to energy dispenser 3 Transfer 4 Tariff rate charge
5 Electricity credit meter 6 Electricity prepaid meter 7 Water 8 Sewerage 9 Refuse
Temporary connection Period from to
Arrears levy % Refer to clause 08 of the condition of supply

**2. BUSINESS PARTNER DETAIL**

Owner Tenant
Business partner no.



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Figure 1.3: Application form - Increase quota of water supplied.pdf

CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

UTILITY SERVICES: WATER & SANITATION
FINANCE AND COMMERCIAL

APPLICATION TO INCREASE THE CURRENT QUOTA OF WATER SUPPLIED

Please forward the completed application form to Water@capetown.gov.za or hand it in at your closest Municipal Contact Centre.

Motivation
Reason/Motivation for this increase: _____
_____
_____
_____
List all household names and identification numbers: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
A COMPULSORY SITE INSPECTION WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION PROVIDED.

Affidavit

I, the undersigned, ..... (Full name) ID No. .....,
do hereby under oath state the following:

1. The facts contained in this affidavit are within my personal knowledge, unless indicated otherwise, is to the best of my belief true and correct.

2. I am an adult male/female residing at: .....
..... (Insert full address)

3. Work Phone No ..... Cell No.....

Email Address .....

4. I am the owner of the property situate at: .....
..... (Insert full address)

Water Account Number ..... (Insert account number and attach copy of account to this Affidavit)

5. I confirm that there are .....(Insert number of persons in words and figures) normally accommodated at the above property.

These application forms for rebates and additional services for water are either directed to the Revenue department or the Utility Services departments of the city. All three forms can be considered as functionally equal in that they can be linked to the genre of application forms. The expectation in terms of register and framing is that the forms' content should be very similar although their reader base is very broad, ranging from a customer to organisations.

In analysing the textual components and language used on these forms, single words have a greater semiotic role than a lexical one. In the semiotic form, its meaning is derived from its letter pattern and consistent spatial orientation on a form. In addition to



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single words, there are also phrases and clauses, occasionally also definitions used as questions throughout the forms' textual components.

With each of these components used on forms, it requires of the person completing the form to have some background knowledge or a certain level of literacy to complete the form. The words are no longer standard, it is loaded with technical meanings, acronyms, place holder words (that stand in for a much larger body of knowledge). When considering the textual components, there is a great deal of re-occurring text which intertextually speaks to other documents; this places a greater burden on the consistency of the textual elements.

To understand the relationship and reoccurrence of individual words within the textual components of form I turned to definition of grammatical parts needed to produce phrases, clauses and sentences as defined by Mullany and Stockwell (2010:16):

> …for a phrase to be a noun phrase (NP), it must contain a noun as its head. There might be other words also in the NP, but the noun is the essential one.
>
> A verb is the essential head in a verb phrase (VP), which can also have an optional auxiliary preceding it, and an optional completor following it.
>
> …a sentence can be constituted by noun phrases and a verb phrase…

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Based on these definitions a clause within the context of a form is a meaningful group of words with a main noun or verb. On a form, such clauses or phrases can function as sentences, no matter how short the grouping is.

The city makes use of its own internal plain language guidelines (Version 1, April 2014). These guidelines should always be consulted and applied when compiling the questions used on forms, as this will aid in the standard wording to be used.

Most of the forms contain branding which identifies them as belonging to one organisation. As my field of investigation is only focused on governmental forms, with this case study looking only at municipal forms within the CCT, all forms should be measured against their brand guideline document. Subsequent to starting the study, I realised that the brand guidelines have no information to guide the production of forms for the city. Despite this void in the content of the branding guidelines, this study



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sought to determine how consistently they have been applied in order to create a coherent collection of forms.

## *1.5 Aims of the study*

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the problematic nature of the linguistic and multimodal resources used on official forms by government departments – in particular the City of Cape Town. The research study aims to contribute to an understanding of the linguistic and multimodal resources used by government departments on forms. The study concludes with a set of practical proposals on how such forms can be compiled and designed for optimal communications between government departments and customers.

### *1.5.1 Objectives of the study*

The objective of this study was firstly, to identify and analyse the following components of selected forms: the linguistic devices used, their affordances and how their creation is guided by national government (through language forums) and policies (like the national language policy). These high level documents do not always account for the practicalities of making entry documentation such as form more accessible to the public. Secondly, the study hoped to provide practical recommendations on how maximum communication can be achieved between government departments and end-users by improving the structure and content of such forms.

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### *1.5.2 Research questions*

The core question of this study is why this social process in the communication of particular forms belonging to the municipality is less than effective, and often leads to breakdowns in communication.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What can be learned from the current combination of the various linguistic and semiotic elements used in a selection of forms used by the City of Cape Town?
- How can a thorough textual analysis of existing forms contribute to our understanding of their most problematic elements?



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- Does the structure and content of the selected forms cause a breakdown in communication before the processing of information even begins for the end-user/client/customer?
- How can these issues best be resolved given the current manner in which forms are co-created by various parties in the City of Cape Town?

## *1.6 Hypothesis*

Based on my initial findings, it appears that the language used on forms is one of the elements which have received the least amount of attention over the last 10 years; therefore, this study is aimed at assessing the language used from the perspective of the customer instead of the creators of the forms. Even in light of the CCT's move to eGovernance, the municipality is not focused on the language use, but rather the user experience within this new environment. Through this lack of attention to the basic sign system, they are perpetuating the problems from paper-based systems into the digital interface.

My hypothesis is that the current structure and content of selected municipal forms lead to a breakdown in communication with customers. With due attention to adjusting the linguistic and semiotic elements on such forms, communication can be improved and lead to the successful completion of the forms in question.

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## *1.7 Significance of the study*

While conduction document audit and having worked through a number of spoilt forms from city district offices, I have found that the mistakes people are making were sometimes very minor. In these cases, they would simply strike through the information and submit the form for processing. I have also found that when a customer completes a form to such a point where they feel they have made too many mistakes (spoilt forms), they will then ask for a new form and start over. Over time I have tried to understand why these people have reached that point and which parts they found too difficult to complete.

A thorough analysis of the problematic elements on existing forms and adjusting both linguistic and semiotic content on such forms could aid the CCT to render a more efficient service to its customers. This would ensure that forms are compliant with the



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requirements and regulations of the Municipal Systems Act, as well as the basic human right of by presenting forms in people's home languages (in the case of CCT, the official languages being Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English) in as simple a language structure as possible.

In a municipal environment, the various names for a customer are used interchangeably with that of ratepayer, client, citizen, and customer. For the sake for this research, I used 'customer' throughout to refer to the ideal reader of municipal documents even though the data itself might refer to the customer by any of the other names.

### *1.8 Methodology*

The research methodology for this comparative study is a qualitative exploration of the textual and non-textual content to be found on the documentation type, namely forms of metropolitan municipalities.

### *1.9 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*

Theoretically, the thesis is situated within the fields of Social Semiotics, Applied Linguistics and Visual Communication, and conceptually it examines concepts such as visual literacy, multimodality, intertextuality and branding. Some attention is also given to language ideologies, given the default language preferences of the CCT. The analytical framework is provided by Genre (to analyse particular patterns and established viewpoints in documents) and Critical Discourse Analysis (to determine the production, distribution and consumption by the target audience).

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### *1.10 Organisation of the thesis*

In Chapter 1, I provide an introduction and background information about the language of forms, what makes them distinguishable from other document formats, and why they should be regarded as a stand-alone genre of documents. The chapter also provides my motivation for doing the research and the overall aims, questions, methodology including the intended contribution to the city's style guides.

As the research is influenced by a number of linguistic fields, Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of available literature covering visual literacy, ideology, stylistics, and terminology as part of a broader theoretical, conceptual and analytical framework.



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Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used in the study. Here the approaches used in the selection and analysis of particular CCT forms are presented.

In Chapter 4, the forms are individually assessed in terms of their structure, information, word choice, tone, manner of address, branding element used and how the flow of information is presented. The existing forms are compared intertextually with other forms used throughout the municipality.

Chapter 5 recaps any significant areas of concern, but provides the conclusions and a summary of the findings. These findings highlight any areas for future research into the structuring of forms or what can be done to create user-friendly official forms.

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# CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL, CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

## 2.0 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the genre of municipal documents (forms) and the variety of written and visual languages that make up their corpus. It is important to review not only how other researchers have dissected such documents, but also what they have used to study their corpus. The chapter has three main sections, the theoretical, conceptual and analytical frameworks respectively. It seeks to provide a thorough overview of literature pertaining to forms from the municipal and governmental sector as it relates to social semiotics, genre, corporate identity, branding and multimodality.

## *2.1 Theoretical framework*

The study is situated within an overarching theoretical framework consisting of the fields of Social Semiotics, Applied Linguistics and Visual Communication. It is in the interrelationship of these three fields that I locate the study of how forms communicate through both textual and non-textual elements.

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### *2.1.1 Social Semiotics*

Social Semiotics is the central theoretical framework for this study, and it is important to understand the concept of 'Semiotics'. Basically, Semiotics is the study of signs. For Saussure (1916), a sign consists of two parts – the signifier and the signified. While 'the signifier' is the actual physical part of the sign, or the material from which it is made up of, 'the signified' is the actual (arbitrary) meaning the sign has. Thus, a small circular object made of gold may be the physical manifestation of an item, while the meaning of that object may be 'traditional wedding ring'. Saussure's interpretation of signs differed from an earlier interpretation of signs by Peirce (cited in Nöth, 1990:42), who argues for a *"triple connection of sign, thing signified, cognition produced in the mind"*. In other words, Peirce builds on how a person mentally (and even emotionally) responds to a particular sign. Peirce (1867, cited in Bock, 2014:63-4) also classified signs into three categories: icons (signs which closely resemble their referent, e.g. photographs); indexes (signs where there is a direct connection between signifier and signified, e.g. the symbol of a woman on the



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door to the women's toilet); or symbols (where there is a completely arbitrary relationship between the signifier and signified, as is the case with human language). Semiotics is defined as the study of all sign systems (Bock, 2014:54), be it verbal, visual, auditory, material or even a blend of these modes, which is termed multimodal semiotics.

In contrast to Saussure's understanding of an *arbitrary* relationship between signifier and signified, Kress (1993) argued for a *motivated* relationship between these two elements, which suggests the presence of agency. This leads us to his definition of *social semiotics*, which Kress (2010) describes as the convergence of the physical and multimodal spheres of signs, as can be found on many forms. Central to social semiotics is the concept of 'mode', defined by Kress (2014) as 'a set of socially and culturally shaped resources for making meaning' that has distinct 'affordances'. According to Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016:131) the task of social semiotics is to identify the agency of social actors involved in the communication and which social or power relationship exists between them. On these grounds, all signs are motivated and influenced by the relationship between the various social actors. Social semiotics as a field of study was pioneered by Gunther Kress and Bob Hodge in the early 1980s in Australia, building on critical linguistics, semiotics, social theory and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Van Leeuwen (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996) joined them in their research, bringing inspiration from music and film studies.

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With regards to this study, an official form, in the first instance, is a multimodal sign comprised of verbal (words, clauses and sentences) and non-verbal semiotic resources (visual, layout, lines and blocks) (Kress, 2010) which must communicate meaning clearly to its end user – in the case of this study, the customer of the CCT. The form as a document type has a clear set of linguistic elements that identify it as a form such as its layout, orientation (portrait), words on the left margin with dot leaders, lines or blocks for the reader to complete. The logo and the positioning of the form title, department names and the visual breaks between sections all form part of the linguistic elements or 'affordances' (to use Kress's term) that could be used to define a document as a form.

As a measure of the current status of forms as a social semiotic resource, Baxter (2008:6) states that what is currently transpiring is that *"unfriendly or unusable*



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*documents… often have a disturbing effect: their consumers blame themselves for not being able to understand them".* This touches on the larger social semiotic shortcomings of using forms that are not written for the society or readers that rely on them to interact with the municipality. Baxter's statement supports the movement towards plain language as used in this definition:

> A communication is in plain language if it meets the needs of its audience – by using language, structure, and design so clearly and effectively that the audience has the best possible chance of readily finding what they need, understanding it, and using it. (Cornelius, 2015:8)

Through the production of forms in plain language within the municipal sphere, we connect the customer with the information or services they seek.

### *2.1.2 Applied Linguistics*

Brumfit (1996:93) provides a comprehensive description of Applied Linguistics (AL) as an interdisciplinary field when he writes that it is "*the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue*." He continues by saying that Applied Linguistics cannot be limited to just language or linguistics, as societal language problems are never simply focused on language only. The International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA, 1992:2) supports Brumfit's definition by stating that Applied Linguistics is "*a means to help solve specific problems in society...Applied Linguistics focuses on the numerous and complex areas in society in which language plays a role*". As with social semiotics, municipalities should pay close attention to their language use in order to close the communication gap between their customers and themselves. The fields that Brumfit refers to include Language Teaching, Phonology, Semantics, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Literacy and Language Acquisition. My study on the language of forms as a real-world issue for most people certainly falls within this field, given the linguistic elements that I am analysing as part of the meaning-making affordances of a form.

It is important to clarify the relationship between Applied Linguistics and Social Semiotics as fields helping to shape the theoretical framework for this study. Kress (2015:66) describes the differences between these two frames as follows:



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> *First*, the 'world now' differs in fundamental ways from the world in which AL started its life. *Second*, disciplines are ever more encumbered by weight from their past. *Third*, the social, cultural, political, economic and technological world of the origin of AL is unrecognizable now, in any of its major contours; with consequences for its purposes, aims and its ethical possibilities... conceptions of 'communication' which held sway in the early years of AL have changed out of recognition: away from a clear location in 'language', fragmented now across a wide domain of social and semiotic means, resources and practices.

In brief, then, we have moved beyond language in speech and writing as explanations for what constitutes communication, into a world where language alone would never be able to carry the complex meanings of contemporary society. To understand the language of forms, therefore, we need to take cognisance of both language and social semiotics. However a form in the first instance communicates visually as a 'complete sign' which encompasses both signifier and signified, and therefore we also need to look at Visual Communication as a frame.

### *2.1.3 Visual Communication*

The final field completing the theoretical framework for this study is Visual Communication. Tam (2008:1) defines this field as follows:

> Visual communication is all around us. It is a survival skill that we tend to take for granted. We do not have to visit an art gallery, read an art/design book to experience visual communication. We use visual communication to navigate and understand the world. Packaging, signs, logos, bills, receipts, leaflets, books, mobile phones, appliances, advertisements, . . . to name but a few, are all examples of visual communication. A watch or clock is a classic example of visual communication that we have grown used to depend on every day. Whether consciously 'designed' or not, they play an important part of shaping our very existence. Indeed, 'noticing' or being aware of design is not an essential criterion for a piece of visual communication to fulfil its function.

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From a Visual Communication point of view the affordance and function of design in forms have become so *invisible* that we no longer attend to their communication value in the way a page flows or is read.

Holsanova (2012:252) cites Bucher (2007) who states that even though, in late-modern communication, there is a primary focus on visuality and modality, readers' interaction with the visual and written modalities remain under-researched. She proposes new methods to study visual communication from a receptive point of view, using methods such as content analysis and social semiotics using eye-tracking measurements. Therefore *"Perception and interpretation of visuals can be seen as an interactive meeting between recipient, the multimodal message and the situation context"* (Holsanova, 2012:252). Given this point of view, the interplay between the visual and textual elements in a typical form is important, as the reader has to play an active role in making meaning from this interplay of elements.

Bucher (2011:123) argues that the most prominent representatives of communication modes in design are the typography, colours, graphics, pictograms or operational signs. It is clear that we need to understand not just the text, but also the specific arrangement of the individual text elements within the layout or the prompting words to tick something or complete a block. The key to visual communication or visual literacy is who the person that reads the words or looks at the design must be able to decode or understand what is presented very quickly and be able to act upon it without undue effort.

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## *2.2 Conceptual framework*

The conceptual framework for this thesis draws, firstly, on literacy, particularly the type of visual literacy a reader would need to make sense of forms. I also discuss the concepts of corporate identity and branding, mode, modality and multimodality in relation to forms of different types. I have included language policy, language ideologies and plain language, given that this study looks at the language of forms in a multilingual city like Cape Town. Given that the research is based on a municipality as a government organ, it is also important to discuss the concept of governmentality.



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### *2.2.1 Visual Literacy*

Educational institutions have traditionally taught textual literacy (reading and writing). Yet visual literacy has been neglected in an increasingly visually-oriented society. As Bleed (2005:3) asserts, visual media is an integral part of how we work, entertain, communicate and educate. "*In the 21st century the ability to interpret and create visual, digital and audio media is a form of literacy as basic as reading and writing"*. He further states that the visual literacy required of us are just as important as textual literacy. This view is also shared by Redish (1985) as cited by Cornelius (2015:7) whereby the focus is not only on the *"linguistic aspects of the text, but also on* the *visual elements that may influence the readability and reception of a text".*

Given that forms are often the first formal dialogue between organisations such as the municipality and the customer seeking assistance, the importance of visual literacy cannot be understated. A municipal form is therefore not only a document, but goes beyond just its functional purpose by also creating a visual image of the organisation and aims to establish rapport between officials and customers; it either confirms or defines the perception the customer already has of the municipality. Therefore, it has the potential to set the tone for all future interaction. One might also assume that the customer/reader recognizes the particular corporate identifiers of the organization with which s/he is interacting – the so-called branding of the organization. From a corporate identity and branding perspective, Iedema (2003) states that forms rely strongly on these corporate identifiers to place them within their service-orientated role. The design elements or branding components (Iedema, 2003) are the modalities which incorporate things like the layout, orientation of corporate identifiers (CI) such as their logo and other brand elements.

### *2.2.2 Corporate identity and branding components*

Branding gives the reader a distinguishing identifier through the communication of all the visual elements contained in the corporate identity. The brand, emblem or logo carries the most weight, as it is the starting point from where the reader knows who they are dealing with. It becomes the face and identity of the organisation it presents.

According to Tam (2008:2), branding or brand identity from a designer's perspective is to understand the lifestyle and behaviour of the target market and to develop a



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visual identity system that communicates the values of the brand. He, however, stresses that *"A brand experience is more than a logo".*

The city's internal document titled, *Using our language: City of Cape Town Brand Guidelines. Version 3, 2014, page 5* mirrors Tam's view on brand identity. It states that:

> A brand identity comprises all those rules that govern the construction of a company's logo, branding, and marketing communication and provide the framework to be followed when any new elements are generated The CI manual has been developed to enable the city to build more powerful, consistent and meaningful brand communication at every customer touch point.

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as *"a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme."* They base their definition on the customer's ability to recognise the explicit logo, fonts, colour schemes and symbols associated with the organisation. The brand represents in essence the values, ideas, and persona of the organisation.

According to Jarrett and Gaffney (2009:5) a brand is also encapsulated in the arrangement of text, and the overall appearance on forms; both of these elements are used on forms to establish rapport and trust with the reader.

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Van Leeuwen (2004:56) emphasises the need for conformity and role models in maintaining social practices, the municipality's corporate identity and branding is maintained through the rules of conformity. Whereas the written ruled through the recommendation and best practice guides, language style guides and language policies. *"Even though it appears to provide much freedom of choice and does not present itself as a form of social control, it does give us clues… how to talk, how to think about current issues."* (Van Leeuwen, 2004:56).

### *2.2.3 Mode, Modality and Multimodality*

Bock (2014:42) defines 'mode' as the different semiotic resources used for meaning, both verbal and non-verbal. Kress and van Leeuwen propose that modality is *"to some extent"* realized *"in the form of the message itself,"* as the text provides cues



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about the reliability of messages, guiding receivers in deciding whether what is seen or heard is *"true, factual, real, or […] a lie, a fiction, something outside reality"* (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006:154). According to Hodge and Kress (1988:124), modality "*refers to the status, authority and reality of a message, or to its ontological status, or to its value as truth or fact."*

*Multimodality*, according to Kress (2010) is the range of options available for the communication of signs in any culture – *"the different semiotic resources used for making meaning, both verbal (writing, speech) and non-verbal (image, gesture, gaze, posture, music, colour, discarded objects, and so on)"* (cited in Bock, 2014:69). It is this communicative function of signs that leads Kress (2010) to argue that communication in all modes is a part of a *social* process. Saussure also argued that a sign's *"meaning depends on its relation to other words within the system"* and that we have to always be mindful words as signifiers and their significance change over time. Bezemer and Kress (2008) as cited by Archer (2012:411), state that multimodality is the resource through which people attribute meaning to the signs used in printed format. Holsanova (2012:252) states that multimodality can be analysed from both the production and reception perspective (Bucher, 2012). This study only allows for the production perspective to be researched as it is a textual analysis. In order to study the reception perspective, there are a number of legislative requirements, such as the POPI act that must be attended to first.

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The meaning derived from text is thus not universal but *co-created* by the individual recipients by factors affecting their means of integrating various modes of representation (Holsanova, 2012). According to Van Leeuwen (2005:53) from a semiotic systems point of view, although forms are a natural occurrence, these existing text structures are sometimes imposed on us by the mere fact of their existence.

A multimodal analysis of forms looks at the various modes (text, language, colour, configuration and illustration/images) used in its compilation, and what they contribute to the readers' understanding of the form (Geldenhuys, 2016:15). It can be deduced from all these definitions that multimodality is viewed as the relationship between the writer and the 'ideal reader' as part of their representations. The choice of



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modality can therefore be seen as a reflection of the writers' social processes and ideologies blended into their embeddedness and affiliation with the municipality.

### *2.2.4 Language Policies and Ideologies*

Dyers and Abongdia (2010:120) contend that, in organizations and societies, language ideologies have become so ingrained over time that they find expression in actual language practices, how people use language, their language choices and also their socio-political position regarding particular languages. Brumfit (1997:91) rightly states that *"language is not an object that is incidentally embedded in practices… but that an object that consists of that embedding"*. Language use sets the stage within which the customer has to perform. The odds are stacked against the customer should they only be presented with the CCT's corporate language (English) and not their home language.

From all the policies and guidelines available to officials, the one component is central to their argument, namely that the customer or reader's point of view is the most important. This is also reflected by Davison, Wagner and Ma (2005:282), citing Burn and Robins (2003) who state that *"government must develop a far more sophisticated view of the people it is there to serve and devolve real power [. . .] as an integral part of its approach to eGovernment and provide more freedom of information".* Only by placing the power back into the hands of the customer through multilingual or plain language documents will they address the imbalance of power and redress social inadequacies.

Fairclough (2003:9) views ideologies as '*representations* of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation.' As well as occurring as representations in texts, ideologies can also be 'enacted' in the ways that we interact socially, in our institutions and organisations.

A social approach to the study of texts means that we must study not just texts on their own but also the *interactive processes of meaning-making* of which they are a part. Forms will typically have been through the hands of communication specialists, designers and legal analysts to ensure that the city is communicating effectively with



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the public. More importantly, such specialists are likely to *"strategize their own interests whether these are internal communications or communications directed towards the public"* (Scollon, 2008:2). From a production perspective, Bucher (2012) considers a form as the outcome of a creative process that passes many gatekeepers (each with particular language ideologies) in an organisation such as the municipality.

In Nel's (2014:131) analysis of compliance to language policies, she notes an underlying ideology amongst practitioners: although all language practitioners are bound by a language policy, they do not actively enforce multilingualism or the use of plain language on all outward facing documents. The CCT language policy has been in place since 2014, but as Nel found, there is an assumption that "*practical actions will automatically follow*" approaches to documents within the municipality.

Language options are considered 'a nice to have' and not a language right. Afrikaans and isiXhosa are being marginalised in official communication through the strict adherence to English as the municipality's corporate language. Furthermore, customers are possibly not even aware that they have the right to communication in their home language.

### *2.2.5 Plain Language*

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The definition of plain language extracted from the CCT Guide for using plain language, version 1 dated April 2014, correlates with the Consumer Protection Act (Act 68 of 2008) and the National Credit Act (Act 34 of 2005) and the definition of Cornelius (Cornelius, 2015:8) on page 30. Below is the CCT's definition of plain language:

> Though the content must be reader-friendly, it does not mean you're 'dumbing down', using 'baby language' or being patronising, it simply means that you want to get your readers to understand. By means of plain language you reach people who cannot read well or who don't have much time to spend on reading.
>
> Plain language looks at the message from the reader's point of view.

From a plain language perspective, the use of common terms is meant for a non-specialised reader; for instance, where a higher level word such a *participant* is used



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as opposed to *person*. The choice does not alter the meaning, but it ensures that the reader does not feel excluded based on the word choice of the author/creator of the form. The text has to remain grounded in factual and simple language to avoid ambiguity. The level of abstraction (Chandler, 2005:72) when using written text on forms is what moves the reader away from their frame of reference and causes misunderstanding of the logical types to which words belong. One has to always consider the potential meaning as understood by the customer and not the actual meaning when working with the textual components of forms.

The importance of plain language within the South African context, and in the context of multilingualism cannot be overemphasised, as the language used on monolingual forms (especially municipal or government forms) is often not the mother-tongue of the customer completing the form. The language of forms even alienates English mother-tongue speakers if the forms are not provided in plain language, which can then lead to a breakdown in communication on a multitude of levels.

### *2.2.6 Governmentality*

Governmentality is a concept based on Michel Foucault's lecture series in 1978 and 1979 dealing with knowledge and power. The main tenet of governmentality is that organs of state and social institutions (such as schools, hospitals) have the ability to shape people in such a way that they self-manage without further interventions. The power play in government documents like forms is not always explicitly stated or attended to by customers, as it is embedded in the language used on forms and documents.

Customers understand the function and role of a local government's in society and actively seeks out information to obtain services. According to Lemke (2016: 81), from a governmentality perspective, it:

> … is not pure, neutral knowledge that simply "re-presents" the governed reality. Rather, it is an element of government itself that helps to create a discursive field in which exercising power is "rationalized." This occurs via, among other things, the delineation of concepts, the specification of objects, and the provision of arguments and justifications.



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Against this backdrop, information becomes knowledge and a municipality as the third sphere of government relies on the recording of information obtained from customers' forms to help them shape and maintain the social fabric.

Tollefson (2011:371) further defines governmentality as "*the full complexity of administrative, legal, financial, institutional, and professional forces, practices, and techniques that regulate individual and group behavior."* Therefore, the focus of this study is not only on the linguistic elements contained on forms, but also the social and human interactions between the customer and the local government in which the documents facilitate and formalise their interaction. Foucault's concepts of governmentality have had an impact on interdisciplinary fields such as genre and critical discourse analysis.

## *2.3 Analytical framework*

This study made use of the following two analytical frameworks: Genre and Critical Discourse Analysis.

### *2.3.1 Genre*

As stated by Bhatia (1993:13), genre is:

> A recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s).

As a contextual approach, genre – a 'patterning of patterns' according to Bateman (2014:241) – is use to describe a type of document in accordance with its structural characteristics, style, lexical items and language used. Although Bateman's work on genre (2008) has been significant to show how genres have changed over time, forms as a distinct genre within the grouping of document has remained rather stable. Scollon (2008:22) quotes what Bourdieu calls *'genesis amnesia'* in this regard – forms



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have existed for so long, that we no longer know why they look like they do, but we are continuously perpetuating their look and feel on paper and within the digital environments. Genre as a phenomenon, is a patterning of patterns according to Bateman (2014:241).

Forms relate to a particular genre of communication which Livingstone and Lunt (2013:83) state as being "*both a set of [still evolving] textual codes and conventions and as a social "contract" specifying the mutual expectations, and even possibilities between broadcaster and audience or better between production format and participation framework*". They also (ibid:79) emphasise the need to expand the analytical repertoire of semiotic analysis from the print era (genre, discourse, mode and literacy) to be cognisant to recognising the implications for the shift in emphasis from verbal to visual literacy, and to have an understanding of multimodal communication.

### *2.3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis*

According to Dyers and Wankah (2012:232), most definitions of CDA "*emphasize that it analyses the relationships between various forms of discourses and both abstract and concrete structures of power*". They cite Wodak (2001:2) who sees CDA as being particularly concerned with the relationship between language and power. The "critical" component of CDA is there to uncover and analyse the way in which discourse gets structured to maintain relationships of power, domination and social relations, especially social inequality.

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CDA as an analytical tool aims to critically and systematically analyse *"a 'regime of practices' - practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect."* as stated by Foucault in Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1991:74).

In the case of this study, I am also examining this relationship between the CCT and the customers they serve. Using Critical Discourse Analysis as part of my analytical framework, both the social context of the forms (textual), as well as the relationship between the internal document features, the external social environment and structures in which the texts were produced, are thoroughly examined.



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A CDA approach is primarily problem-orientated and interdisciplinary according to Wodak (2007:15). Within a problem-orientated analysis, we have to be socially aware of what an organisation's documents project what they say about the relationship of power between such an organisation and its customers. In post-apartheid South Africa, critical discourse analysis can be seen as a socially transformative to address historical social inequalities, whereby the municipality make forms more accessible through the implementation of multilingualism and plain language.

## *2.4 Summary*

The literature review provided in this chapter was divided into three sections, namely: Theoretical Framework (section 2.1), Conceptual Framework (section 2.2) and Analytical Framework (section 2.3).

The theoretical framework explored the fields of social semiotics, applied linguistics and visual communication and how these are interlinked in terms of the study.

From a conceptual framework it was imperative to include visual literacy as the forms are produced for an ideal reader, within the context of the municipal environment. Therefore, their corporate identity and branding, and modes and modalities used on their documents will be looked at. Within the governmental sphere, municipalities have certain responsibility when it comes to the protection and representation of all languages within their control. The language policies and extensions towards plain language were also discussed.

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Since a local government and municipality is an important social structure in the daily lives of the people within their geographical area, both Genre and Critical Discourse Analysis provide the analytical framework for this study. Currently the forms of the municipality do not show evidence of the practice of plain language although the policy exists. This dynamic will be investigated in chapter 3 and 4.

A wider review was needed to enable me to use a number of complimentary models with the aim to fit the study area through descriptive and explorative research described in chapter 3. The exploration and examination of the selected dataset to look for potential relation between the variables was essential in identifying patterns and compilation of a list of words on the document type (genre) of forms.



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# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approach followed throughout the research, which is situated within the analytical framework presented in the previous chapter – Genre and (Critical) Discourse Analysis. The methodology is presented in terms of the research design, data, sampling, methods and size as well as the analytical tools used for the analysis of the data.

## *3.1 Qualitative research design*

A qualitative explorative research approach was used in the exploration of both textual and non-textual components on the municipal forms. Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that cuts across various disciplines, fields and subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:3; Du Plooy 2013:30). In this research an interpretive approach was used to gather an in-depth understanding of the role of human behaviour and its influence on the production process in crafting forms. I chose a qualitative research design as the insight gained through this approach would provide a more in-depth view of how municipal forms are used to communicate with their public. Qualitative research focuses on the interpretation of the data and is expressed in words rather than a numerical value.

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Henning (2018:40) states that when only qualitative methods are used it is usually within the interpretive tradition or critical theory. I have not followed a critical theory approach as the municipality is already locked in a power relationship (or monopoly) with the public. Customers have no choice but to choose the municipality as service provider if they reside within their geographical location. South African newspaper reporting on failures in service delivery shows this power struggle between the municipality and customer.

A quantitative analysis of the data would have required a much larger sample of forms from various departments which would have enabled me to determine the prevalence, length and breadth of the lexicon used on forms by compiling a list of words, clauses and sentences. The qualitative approach to data analysis was therefore more appropriate for this particular study.



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### *3.1.1 Sampling*

Baker (2015:99) describes the selection of a small sample with a restricted number of texts as being a specialised corpus belonging to or restricted to one genre, such as forms belonging to governmental or municipal documents. Within the municipal document genre of forms, each department has its own unique style of writing considering that its audience or ideal readers are oriented towards the services that they access. It was best to select a purposeful sample from the corpus of documents of the municipality. The forms are not significantly different to be considered a sub-genre, but they do reflect a certain degree of awareness of their readers.

The decision to focus on the Water and Sanitation Department's forms was taken as they are currently the most frequently accessed forms by people from various social and demographic backgrounds due to the drought. The current drought affects every sector and person living in Cape Town and no discrimination is made on the basis of who uses the forms. The implementation of the restrictions and was the access to water above the 50 litre limit under restriction level 6b[1] requires each sector to apply for exemption or special permission.

An open invitation was made following my presentation at the municipality's language forum on the language of forms for departments to engage with me as a researcher on forms within their control. On the 4th of January 2018, a representative from the municipality's Water and Sanitation Department's Information Management and Business reporting unit, provided me with a spreadsheet of all the forms currently used by their department which is also listed on the CCT website. The sampling was therefore unbiased and purposefully selected to form part of the study.

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### *3.1.2 Selection criteria*

Municipalities change their tariffs and fees annually on the 1st of July. The period after a change in tariff necessitates an updating of forms that contain fees for the new financial year; such forms are for rebates and taxes. Therefore, the selection criteria were that all forms selected had to be linked to the obligated financial change in tariffs.

[1] https://www.thesouthafrican.com/level-6b-water-restrictions-cape-town/



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Another criterion that ensured an even further reduction in the number of forms was the fact that Cape Town is currently experiencing its worst drought in almost 100 years, with the city implementing water restrictions since 2005. The restrictions intensified in 2017 and 2018 to prevent Day Zero – the day the taps would run dry (Dolley, 2017). Water and Sanitation is the one department that is the service delivery arm of the water network to customers. As the water restriction levels intensified, there was a need for the forms to be updated more frequently as the tariffs were adjusted with each deepening restriction level. These levels of restrictions indicated to consumers how much water they were allowed to use and when. Under level 6b, every customer was only allowed 50 litres of municipal water per person per day.

For this study, only four municipal application forms were selected from the list of forms provided by the municipality's Water and Sanitation Department's Information Management and Business reporting unit.

The four forms are:

- Application for adjustment of sanitation volumetric charge (Annexure A)
- Application for water management (WM) device form (Annexure B)
- Application form to increase the quota of water supplied (Annexure C)
- Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device (Annexure D)

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### *3.1.3* Data-editing and pre-analysis

Organising the textual data into an MS Excel spreadsheet revealed more problems than originally anticipated; with the result that time was spent having to separate the data into usable sections. The textual disparities arose because a large number of the forms being analysed were in fact simply scanned versions of paper forms, with no selectable text. Others were fully digital forms.

What I found in my initial survey of the forms on the CCT website is that not all forms remained digital from start to publication. This adds more complexity for the customer who may be able to complete the form digitally but is faced with a flattened image file in PDF format. The forms that were OCR'd as part of this study highlighted the problem not only for the proficient customer, but also for the visually



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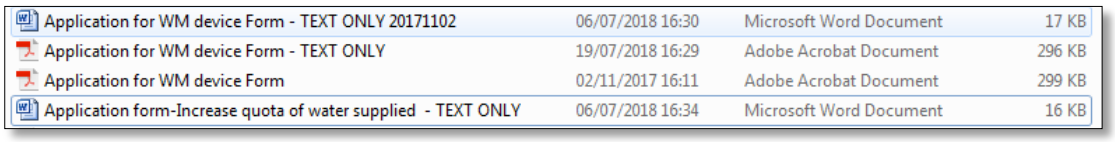
impaired customer who relies on text readers, where there are no searchable texts in the flattened image file.

The first page of the 'APPLICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE' (Annexure B) contained selectable text, the second page was scanned and not a digitally rendered copy. The second page's text had to be digitised through optical character recognition (OCR) software. The results were that some text were not recognised adequately and had to be manually corrected during the analysis as the proximity of certain letters like, n+i would result in an m. Also, if a lowercase L and i were adjacent to each other it would yield a double L (ll), similarly an i+t use would also result in the double L (ll).

As part of the pre-analysis of the data a lot of data clean-up had to be done in order to work with each individual set of data. This was mainly done in Adobe Acrobat Professional using the edit format function of the program. The edit function was used to select all the text to be deleted to leave only the semiotic elements or non-textual elements behind. The form was then saved with the same name and the suffix on the filename 'GRAPICS ONLY'. The original file was then opened again, the process was repeated, but now the non-textual elements were selected and deleted leaving only the textual components behind. The form was then saved in MS Word format with the suffix on the filename being 'TEXT ONLY'. The file naming is demonstrated in Figure 3.1: File naming convention below.

In order to distinguish the files from each other, the file were labelled as per the file naming convention indicated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: File naming convention




As the number of documents that make up the collection of municipal forms is substantially large (1102 as of 23 August 2017), it is inconceivable to analyse all the forms within the municipal collection without the aid of sophisticated software such as *Atlas.ti* or using Bateman's html-based GeM (genre and multimodality) model (2008). To set up the annotational markers within GeM would be too time



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consuming for a small-scale study due to the extensive html-coding required for the web based GeM model to recognise the textual and non-textual elements in forms. A small scale study such as this one would require only a representative or small sample of forms from one metropolitan municipality. I therefore opted to use the layering techniques employed in the GeM model by separating the textual and non-textual elements into layers to study the four forms, by annotation and coding manually.

A copy of each of the original forms was printed, so that when the digital extraction of text and visual elements began, I could stay true to the visual representation and text flow (Hiippala, 2014:116) from one line to the next and from each column to the next. All the forms were placed next to each other to get a holistic view of the forms making up the Water and Sanitation Department's forms. Each form was given an alphabetical symbol and each page was given a number. For instance, the "Application for water management devices" were labelled A1, whereas the "Application form - Increase quota of water supplied E" form has two pages and were labelled as C1 for page one and C2 for page two.

### *3.1.4 Data set*

The data set is comprised mainly of the text found in four municipal forms. On forms the text does not stand on its own, but is presented together with other visual elements, and the interplay between these will be included in the analysis. Given that my primary focus is the language and style of the forms, I also mapped their occurrences through the entire document (form) and how the word selections were made in comparison to the lexical meaning of the word. The placeholder blocks ensure that customers can identify a form to belong to the document genre of forms. As a non-textual element, these placeholders will not be analysed.

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## *3.2 Data analysis*

An inductive genre-analysis of municipal forms was done from a multimodal perspective. The analysis focused on both the generic elements of the forms (move-structure) as well as their stylistic features how non-verbal modes such as space, positioning, colour and framing are used in the forms also formed part of the analysis.



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The words that make up the textual components of forms can be seen as language in use with all the rules that govern grammar and syntax, yet they are also produced by an individual or a group of individuals that have their own language ideologies subconsciously embedded in the actual forms that were analysed in this study.

Concentrating only on the four selected application forms within the municipal environment of one of the South Africa's larger metropoles, references are drawn from their design, look and feel to illustrate the key differences between other forms in the corpus such as in Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 on page 10. I have chosen explorative research into the subject matter, as there has not been much research into the genre of governmental forms or organisational forms.

As it is a text based analysis without human participants, it is more reflective and lends itself more adequately to a qualitative approach which is able to visually identify the various modes used on the application forms and qualitatively describe them in terms of their mode to determine if the research aims, objectives and assumptions can be confirmed. Another key component that I am interested in is the process of production as an outcome of the study.

The best and most manageable way to consider the multimodal and linguistic data of the forms was to make use of qualitative corpus-based discourse analysis. Therefore, the first step was to isolate the textual components on the forms. To generate the data required under this research design, I needed to break each form into its various layers that would give me the opportunity to work on each mode or semiotic resource separately at first to establish themes for analysis.

A number of textual components also form part of the visual 'navigation system' on the selected form. It was therefore also important to review each form as a collective whole.

### *3.2.1 Discourse analysis*

Textual analysis is often regarded as a micro linguistic study comprised of smaller units of language such as meaning (semantics) and the order of words as part of sentences and clauses (syntax). Through discourse analysis, my interest extends beyond just the study of words to include all the textual and non-textual elements in the forms being analysed.



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The language used on forms can be seen as language in use or as social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997), therefore the study also drew on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method not only to analyse how the text on the forms was shaped, but also how it conditioned the reader as co-creator of the forms which finally became public record. CDA shapes the dialectical relationship between the municipality and their readers/customers through which the language used on the forms frames all future interactions. As Jones (2012:33) states, the discourse analysts must go beyond the linguistic forms and patterns to gain a better understanding of how these artefacts (application forms) are used within an actual social context.

As a skilled reader, I drew on this basic understanding of the implied meanings in order to document, sort and analyse the various elements in the data set with the aim of deducing their implicit or explicit codes within the social context of a municipality.

### *3.2.2 GeM (genre and multimodality) model*

I used the methods employed in the GeM framework/model, as it can be replicated on a smaller scale study, but annotation and coding needed to be done manually.

Bateman (2014:32) indicates that the GeM framework sets out to:

> … develop a framework that would let us account for consistencies in visual style (including layout and typographical decisions) in terms of an extended notion of multimodal genre – the essential idea here being that, just as genre is traditionally seen as bringing constraints to bear on selections made within the linguistic system in terms of lexicogrammatical, semantic and rhetorical patterns (cf. Swales 1990), then a multimodal account of genre might similarly exercise constraints on selections within layout structures on their typographical and spatial realisation, and on the transformation processes between layout structure and rhetorical organisation.

This is at the core of forms; a conscious selection is made by the author/designers of a form not just on the basis of the textual but also on the non-textual. In order to uncover these selections, I took each form and analysed the structure, information, word choice, tone, manner of address, images used, what is said and what information is available. Bateman's GeM (genre and multimodality) model (2008) was considered



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for the last portion of the analysis when all the elements were considered together as a whole and could be annotated as such.

The basic GeM framework of  Bateman as Hiippala (2017:279) describes in steps 1 and 2 in the Figure 3.2 below in applying the GeM framework is to separate the two dimensional document form into its various layers to identify patterns and structures shared amongst the documents being analysed. The only step not included in my analysis was step 3, as integral to the GeM model is to annotate the documents using a web based system. Due to the scale of my study, I have opted to do step 3 manually and code by hand.

Figure 3.2: Hiippala's (2017:279) overview of research within the genre and multimodality framework.

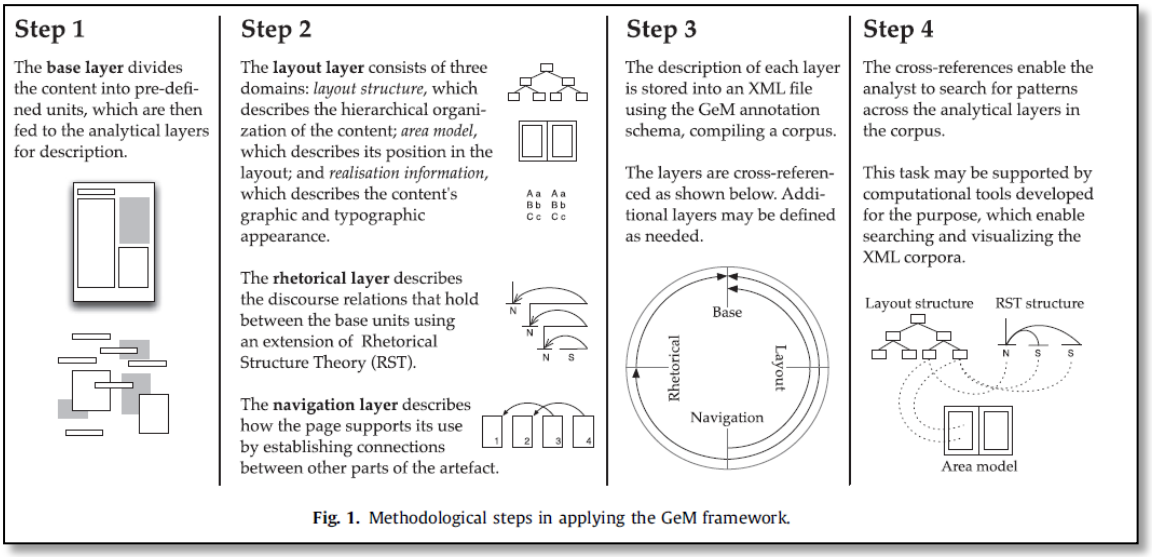

Fig. 1. Methodological steps in applying the GeM framework.

Therefore, I considered the GeM model relevant in the review of the rest of the municipal forms. Based on the GeM model, every document has identifiable layers or structures which could be separated and catalogued on its own due to the features they have in common. Hiippala (2017) arrived at his overview by separating tourism brochures into three layers, namely the layout (structure) layer, rhetorical layer and the navigational layer.

On forms the layout and navigational layers work together to create the page flow and the rhetorical or textual layer becomes the text flow from one frame or block on a form to the next.



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The best and most manageable way for me to analyse the multimodal and linguistic data on the forms in question was to make use of corpus-based discourse analysis to analyse the textual layer as per step 4 of the GeM framework. Therefore, the first step was to isolate and separate the textual components on the forms. To generate the data required under this research design, I needed to break the forms into its various layers that gave me the opportunity to work on each mode or semiotic resource separately at first to establish themes for analysis.

On some forms the textual components were totally absorbed in the non-textual frame or blocks, which formed part of the visual 'navigation system' on the selected forms. It was therefore important to review the documents as collective wholes and classify some textual elements to belong to both textual and non-textual layers.

### *3.2.3 Plain language*

Within the collection of the municipality's forms, their text and application of language was standardised by their internal language services unit. Using a systematic analysis my aim was to gain greater insight into the construction and rules that could be applied during the creation process (production perspectives). The aim of the research was to establish a list of words, phrases and sentences used within the collection of municipal application forms.

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In order to create this list, I needed to collect and analyse the features of the data. If all the forms within the genre can be recorded, then a method of linguistic investigation like corpus linguistics can be used for the investigation of many kinds of linguistic questions as it has been shown to have the potential to yield highly interesting, fundamental, and often surprising new insights about language in use.

### *3.2.4 Corpus-based multimodal analysis as analytical framework*

Corpus-based multimodal analysis empirically evaluates the various elements on forms and critiques the multimodal assumptions of this study against the theoretical background of the social semiotic theories of meaning (Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016:122)



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According to Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016:121) and Bateman (2014:238) the use of a corpus-based multimodal analysis is in response to multi-modal studies which only analyse a small number of texts with limited empirical grounding on which the findings can be generalised. Although the scale of this case study is limited, it lays the foundation as a systematic analysis for a much larger scale study across all language groups and governmental organisations involved in the genre of governmental or municipal forms. It will become evident throughout chapter 4 and 5, how the use of this analytical framework will inform future studies into this genre.

Bateman (2014) as the leading proponent in developing the genre and modality (GeM) framework emphasises that all research into a new genre must be tested against a corpus of artefacts. Since there have been hardly any studies into the genre of the document type of forms, any future study would need to be developed within the GeM framework so that patterns can be identified in the textual composition of larger quantities of digital data and analysed in terms of their multimodal structure.

In electing to use corpus-based multimodal analysis in my exploration of the data, my aim is to uncover the relationship between the textual and non-textual (visual/image) elements on the four forms selected.

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The research components investigated through this study primarily pays attention to the various textual components used in forms. Each text fragment can be classified according to three types of text structures, namely, single words, phrases and sentences.

Some text on a form cannot be decontextualized as it only has relevance within the context of form. For example, a reference is made to the ‘the City’ in instances where the CCT logo is present. It only changes to the full name ‘City of Cape Town’ when there is reference to more than one city or when referring to the legal and financial entity which is the municipality.

Other factors that I considered was the influence of the personal ideologies of the producer of the form, and whether the styling and word choices could be attributed to them as an author (and their literacy) or the organisation as a whole.



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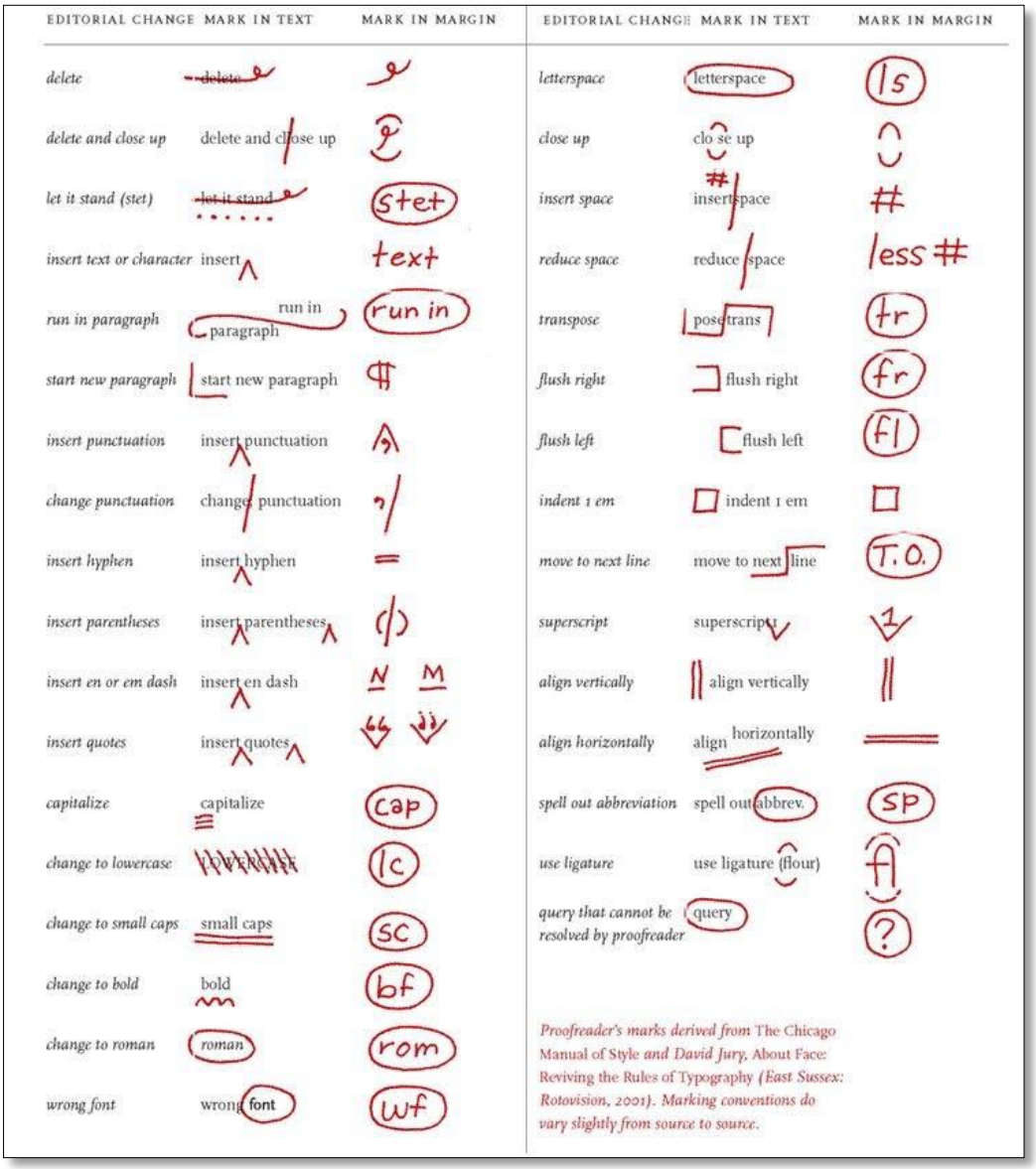
### *3.3 Data-coding procedures*

Where I noticed significant stylistic or textual changes during the process of analysis, I used proofreading marks derived from The Chicago Manual of Style to annotate the typographic inconsistencies and language errors or text not used as described in the CCT language style guide.

Most of the annotations on the textual components which were not marked according to the proof reading marks system were then grammatically tagged based on my knowledge and intuition of working with forms. Figure 3.3 below captures these proofreading marks.

Figure 3.3: Proofreader's marks



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The notes were made in different coloured pens and the colour coding that was used on the forms was as follows:

- Blue – making notes on textual and non-textual elements being used unusually
- Red – proofreader's markings
- Purple – block, line or dot leaders, measurements
- Green – corporate identifiers, headings or visual elements that broke up sections on the form

Our capacity to decode and act on the implicit and explicit codes used and deployed in forms relies heavily on each person's visual repertoire (Blommaert 2013:38). Governmental organisations that are fundamentally ingrained in society should play a role in building on this visual repertoire.

In order not to overly rely on my own visual repertoire in the coding of the data, I asked a colleague in my office to use the same colour coding described above. The annotated and coded data were very similar, which can be ascribed to the fact that we are both internal to the organisation. It would be of value to pursue another coder from outside the organisation and compare these findings.

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### *3.3.1 Textual analysis*

The textual analysis involved the selection of all words, phrases and clauses contained in the personal information and property sections of the application forms. This was used to compile a dataset that can be analysed against the research questions on how user-friendly these official forms are. The texts from each of the four forms were selected separated into a visual and textual layer in the Adobe portable document format (pdf). The text from the textual layers was copied into an MS Excel spreadsheet (Annexure E).

The text was copied into the first column and descriptive notes regarding the accompanying visual companion was copied into the second column of the spreadsheet. Some of the forms cannot be presented in a linear fashion as not all the words on the left fall into a column; some questions or phrases stood next to each other and would therefore create an adjacent column in the spreadsheet. For the sake of the analysis the text in the second columns was then copied to the same column as



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the text in the first column. This affected the sequencing from top to bottom and left to right.

The same was done with tick blocks with multiple options. Question like yes/no were put in one block as there was no difference between what came first – yes or no. Unless another form had it the other way round it, was commented on in the descriptive notes. It was then also annotated on a hardcopy of the forms in the applicable colour.

An example of the separated textual elements in PDF format is given in Figure 3.4 on page 43.

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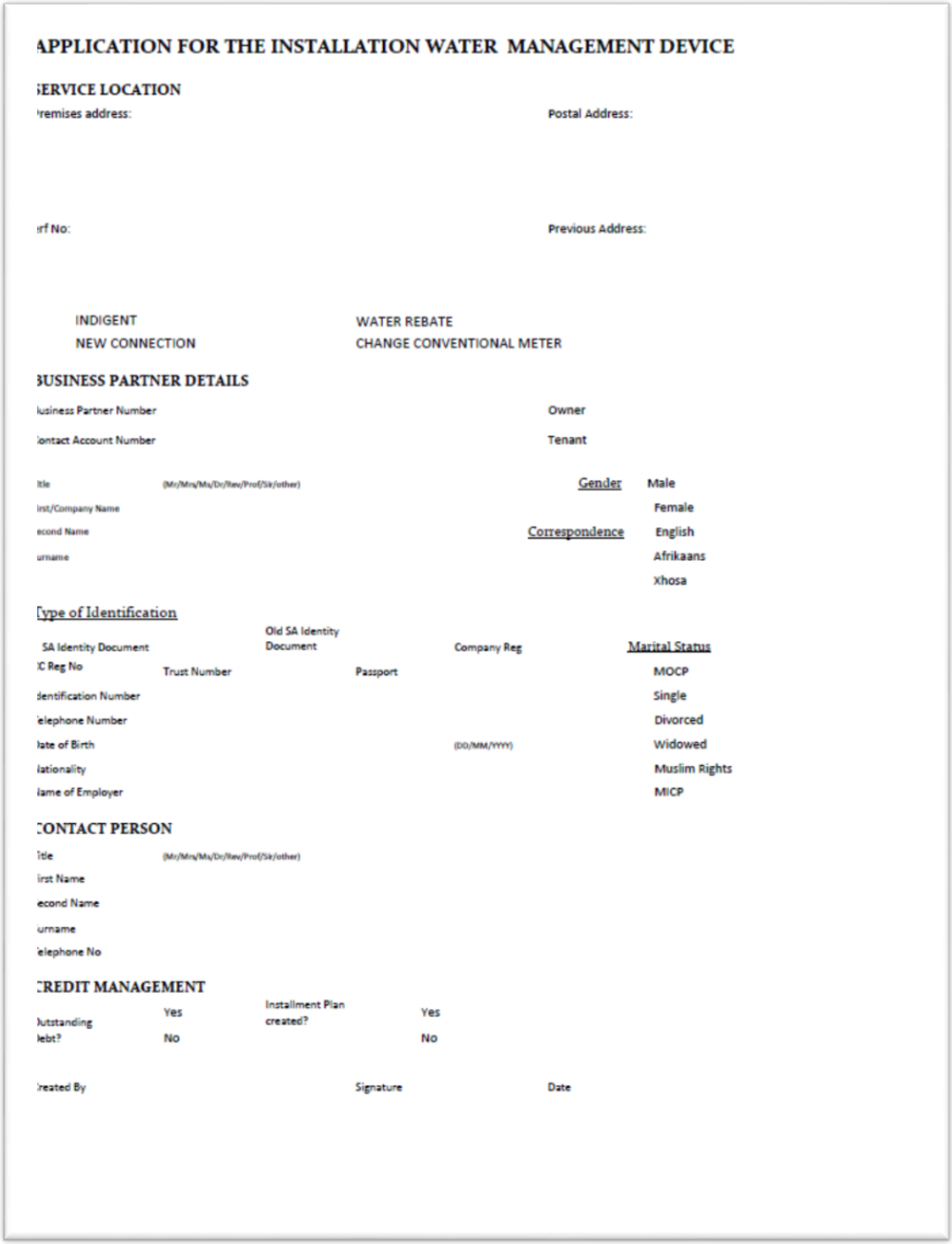
Figure 3.4: Separated textual layer for analysis



APPLICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE

SERVICE LOCATION

remises address:

Postal Address:

rf No:

Previous Address:

INDIGENT
NEW CONNECTION
WATER REBATE
CHANGE CONVENTIONAL METER

BUSINESS PARTNER DETAILS

usiness Partner Number
ontact Account Number
Owner
Tenant

tle (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir/other)
rst/Company Name
econd Name
urname
Gender: Male, Female
Correspondence: English, Afrikaans, Xhosa

Type of Identification

SA Identity Document
C Reg No
Old SA Identity Document
Trust Number
Passport
Company Reg
Marital Status: MOCP, Single, Divorced, Widowed, Muslim Rights, MICP
dentification Number
elephone Number
ate of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY)
ationality
ame of Employer

CONTACT PERSON

tle (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir/other)
irst Name
econd Name
urname
elephone No

CREDIT MANAGEMENT

utstanding ebt? Yes / No
Installment Plan created? Yes / No

reated By
Signature
Date



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### *3.3.2 Visual analysis*

It was more difficult to analyse the visual elements (see Figure 3.5: Separated visual (non-textual) layer for analysis on page 45) as there is no standard for the analysis to use within this genre. Tam (2008:4) defines text in terms of visual communication as follows: *"Typography (designing with text) gives visual form to written language. Typography is therefore an extremely complex set of signs."* This implies that textual elements can also be coded as a non-textual element if it was incorporated within a block.

This complexity was also mentioned by Baker (2015:99) when discussing written corpora. The formatting information of textual elements has to be coded or noted manually, as most corpus based research does not account for the formatting of text, such as the size, bolding or underlining of text and the colour contained on forms. Some textual elements remained as they are for this reason considered as part of the visual system on one level, namely to break up the form into micro spaces by being either larger, bold or a different font.

To show the visual elements on the form, I identified branding and structural elements based on their definitions within social semiotics and the visual arts. Using Adobe Acrobat Professional, any element not considered as part of the visual mode was removed. The forms were reprinted and labelled in the same manner as for the textual mode. Some textual elements remained, as they are considered as part of the visual system on one level, when they are written using different sizes or fonts.

The branding elements were not critiqued in terms of their correctness on a single form's application but rather across all four forms for consistency within the genre. Lines and blocks were measured in millimetres, left to right and top to bottom as the convention for Western writing styles dictate.

Having a clean document without the two modes combined showed how much each of the modes depends on the other to create a meaningful whole document. Without the visual elements, the textual elements became monotonous and it took greater effort on my part (and therefore inherently the reader) to read each word, clause and sentence. A reader would need both modes together in order to comprehend that the document presented to them is indeed a form.



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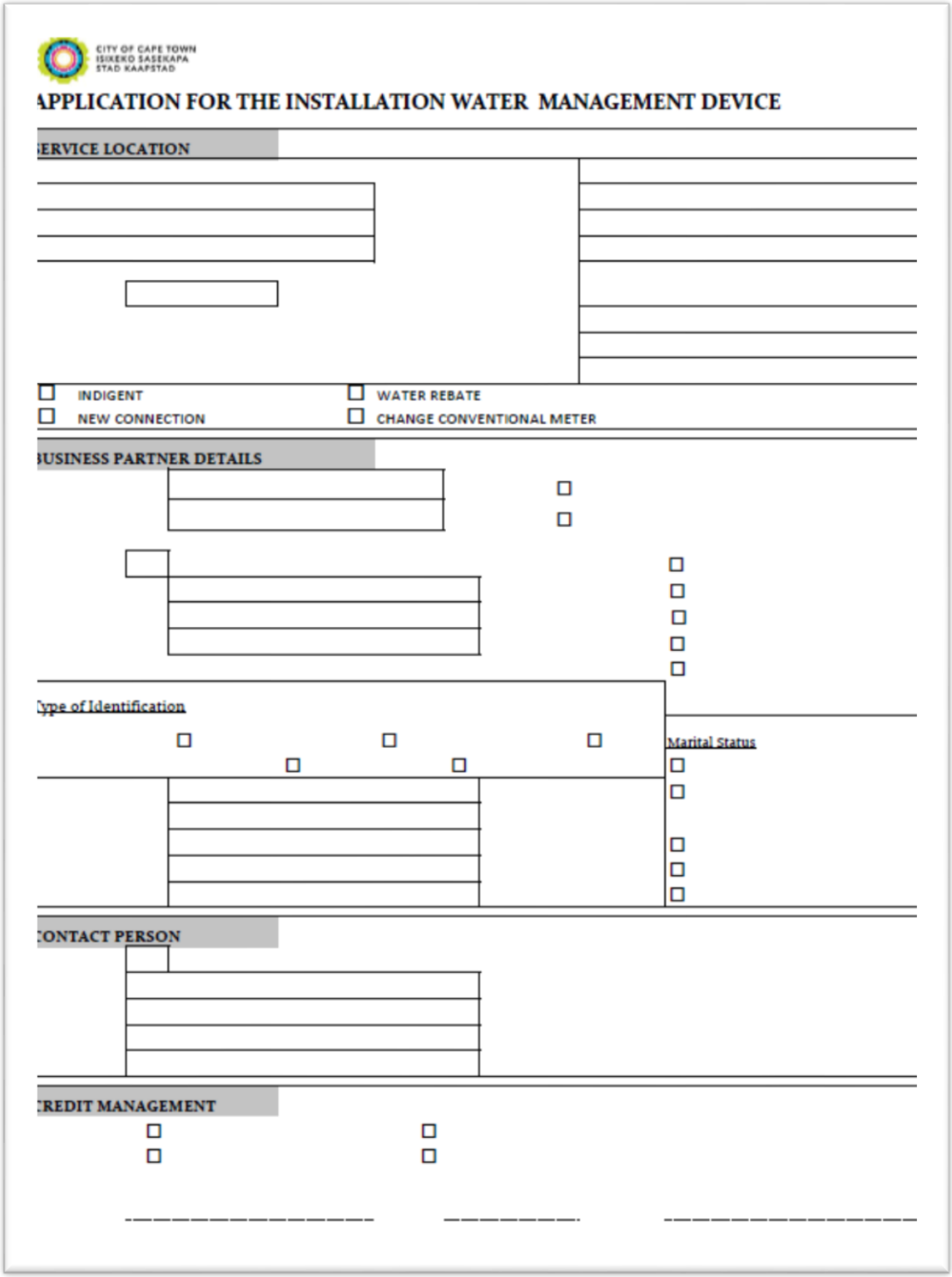
An example of the separated visual elements in PDF format is given in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5: Separated visual (non-textual) layer for analysis



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### *3.4 Limitations of the research*

The structure of forms is set up as a method to collect information from customers. Forms that are not in digital format, such as scans of hardcopy forms were excluded from the research unless they had a particular significance.

The benefits of online forms are that, in an ideal world, they can be adapted to questions and work on a process of elimination, which lessens the information overload on the user. However, large societies with limited access to online resources or illiterate people still rely heavily on hard copy forms.

Although there are a number of forms available in all three languages of the Western Cape, the discourse analysis used only English forms. The outcome of a word list in English will however influence the development of a standard word list for the use on application forms in isiXhosa and Afrikaans.

### *3.5 Ethical considerations*

The corpus comprises outward facing documentation in the document repository on the CCT's website (www.capetown.gov.za), and therefore these forms are already in the public domain. In light of this, there were no major ethical issues impacting the research. I have however taken every precaution necessary to treat any information ethically and with necessary academic standards for the study to be considered ethically sound.

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Declaring my research interests as an employee of the city was necessary. Beyond this necessity, the only privileged information I had compared to other researchers was the internal perspective on how forms come into existence, which provides a unique insight in terms of social semiotics.

The reason why I did not choose a reception orientated study of forms was due to the permissions required, and the protection of information in terms of The Protection of Personal Information Act, Act 4 of 2013 ("PoPI act")[2]. The PoPI legislation basically considers personal information supplied on a form to be "*precious goods*" and therefore aims to bestow the owner of that information certain rights of protection and the ability

[2] https://www.acts.co.za/protection-of-personal-information-/act



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to exercise control over it. The amount of redaction of personal information required in terms of this act will render any human participant's contribution to this study unusable. There are no human participants in this study, so no ethical clearance was needed from the UWC Ethics Committee.

I discarded any forms that I had authored as part of my involvement in the production of forms for the city. I have factored in all of the constraints uncovered as part of the annual survey conducted on customer forms within my department. As a form of good governance my involvement need to be declared upfront, as I am actively involved in the study of public records containing customers' personal information. In addition to these factors I have applied a great deal of the finding of this study in the updating of these forms in the municipalities document repository.

The research was unfunded but supported by the CCT's Language Services Unit in order to utilise the outcomes and findings as part of the formal improvement of language planning, policies and implementation. The findings will be taken up in the style guide and training will be provided to all role players about the importance of perfecting the construction of forms within the municipal genre. Permission for this study was obtained from the Head of the Language Services Unit.

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### *3.6 Scope of the research*

Given that the case study is contextually bound to the genre of municipal documents, its findings can only be generalised to governmental forms. Municipalities are moving towards the private business models in their approach to communication. They are influenced more and more by what happens in the private sector on a local and global scale. The structure of forms is a way of obtaining information from reader/customers.

In an ideal world that will work, but in large societies with limited access to online resources or illiterate people, they still rely heavily on hard copy forms.

Departments within the municipality have to budget for language planning and training, language policy development and implementation, language resources and language audits in order to meet the obligations outlined above. At the outset the study highlighted the need for an addition to the style guide of the CCT and creation of a



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standard terminology / word list for basic information that will relieve the pressure on language practitioners and translators.

## *3.7 Summary*

In summary, this chapter has provided a detailed overview of the methodology adopted for this study. It has set the boundaries within which the analysis in chapter 4 was to be conducted, in order to answer the research questions of Chapter 1. Although both the textual and visual modes are being investigated, the aim is to uncover the corpora used on forms with which to build a basic set of standard words, phrases and sentences.

The next chapter presents the evaluation of the forms in the study in terms of their structure, textual and non-textual (visual) elements. Under the findings, I report on a number of themes observed in the sample of forms and is then presented in a number of figures and tables.

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# CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION OF FORMS

## 4.0 Introduction

This Chapter provides the answers to my four research questions, which are repeated here:

- What can be learned from the current combination of the various linguistic and semiotic elements used in a selection of forms used by the City of Cape Town?
- How can a thorough textual analysis of existing forms contribute to our understanding of their most problematic elements?
- Does the structure and content of the selected forms cause a breakdown in communication before the processing of information even begins for the end-user/client/customer?
- How can these issues best be resolved given the current manner in which forms are co-created by various parties in the City of Cape Town?

However, the chapter does not follow these questions in the order in which they are presented. In the first section of this chapter (4.1), my focus is on the final research question – the problematic nature of how the CCT forms are co-created by various parties. Section 4.2 addresses the third research question on the structure and content of the selected forms. Section 4.3 answers the second research question on the textual analysis, and finally section 4.4 addresses research question 1. Answering the research questions in this order allowed me to provide the broader framing of the analysis first, before a detailed breakdown of all the elements in the forms in my sample could be presented.

## *4.1 Document production*

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the application form allowed me to understand the factors that cause a disconnect between the internal role-players (officials) and the external service providers (designers, contracted language practitioners) in the creation and production processes illustrated in the production cycle in Figure 4.1 on page 50.



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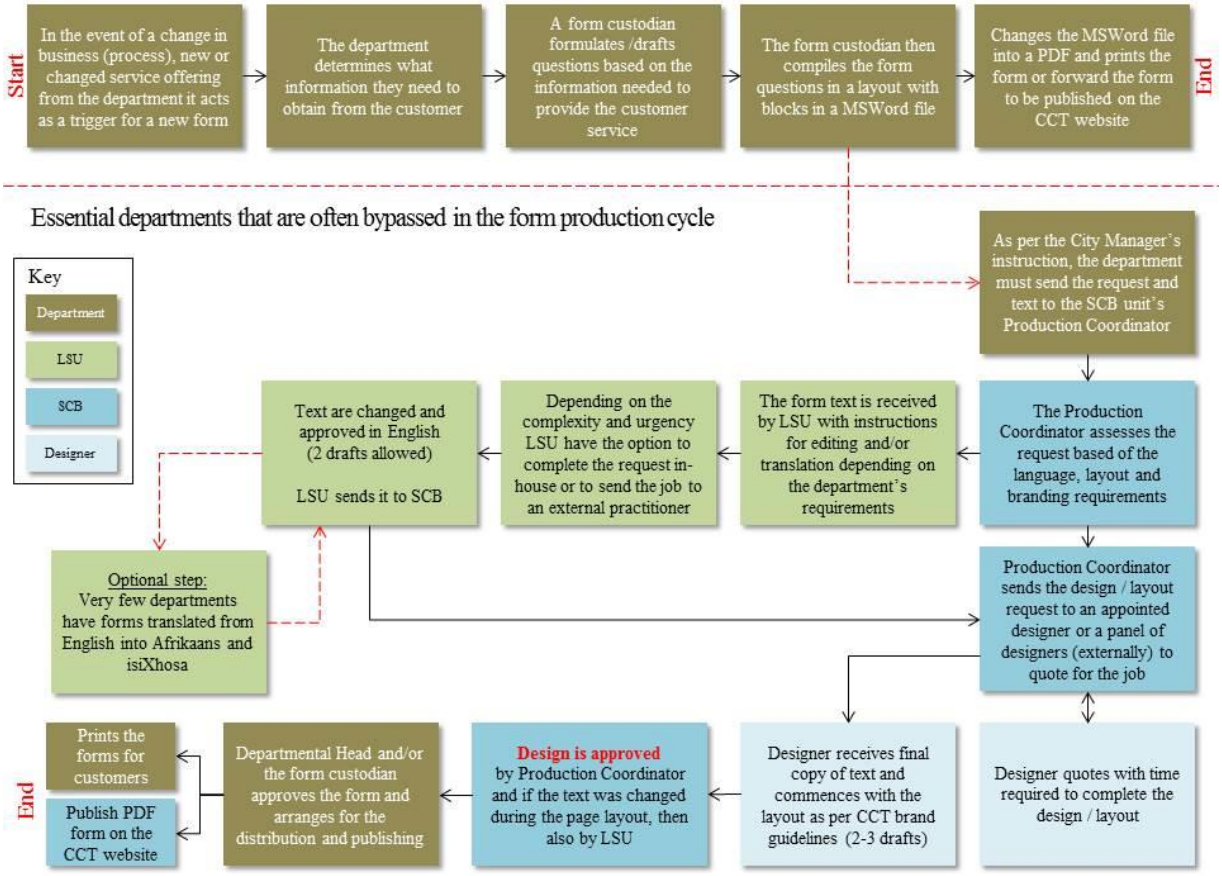
In the production cycle (Figure 4.1), there are two scenarios given. The first is the process that appears to have been followed by the Water and Sanitation department's form custodians in producing the four forms included in the study. The second scenario is the process that is the ideal or correct procedures to follow. The complete production cycle require all the role-players identified to create a customer friendly form in plain language.

Figure 4.1: Current form production cycle




Holsanova (2012) emphasises Bucher's (2012:252) sentiment that in order to consider visual communication and multimodal research, multimodality should firstly be analysed from both a production and reception perspectives, before considering the frame, composition and textual components of forms. Based on my analysis, there are three critical groups of individuals involved in the production of municipal forms.



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The three primary role-players involved in creating forms in the document production cycle includes: the Strategic Communication and Branding department (SCB), Language Service unit (LSU) and the various departments' form custodians.

The most prominent role-players (Figure 4.2) involved in creating a form are depicted in Figure 4.1: Current form production cycle on page 50, together with the cycle it goes through from conception and creation to publication and printing. The department that is creating the form needs information, while the production offices send the text away for language editing and translation. After that, the text goes to an internal or outsourced designer tasked with laying out the artwork according to brand guidelines supplied by the municipality.

The SCB departments production coordinators have the option to in-or-outsource the design of forms, due to the volume or urgency involved, the majority of forms are outsourced to independent designers. These designers have the municipalities design or corporate identity document at their disposal, but this document does not contain any guidelines for the municipal forms.

The identified role-players in Figure 4.2 below can choose in which format (MS-Word or PDF) to produce the forms. However, when the documents are placed on the website for use by customers, the SCB department's Digital Communication unit require them in PDF format.

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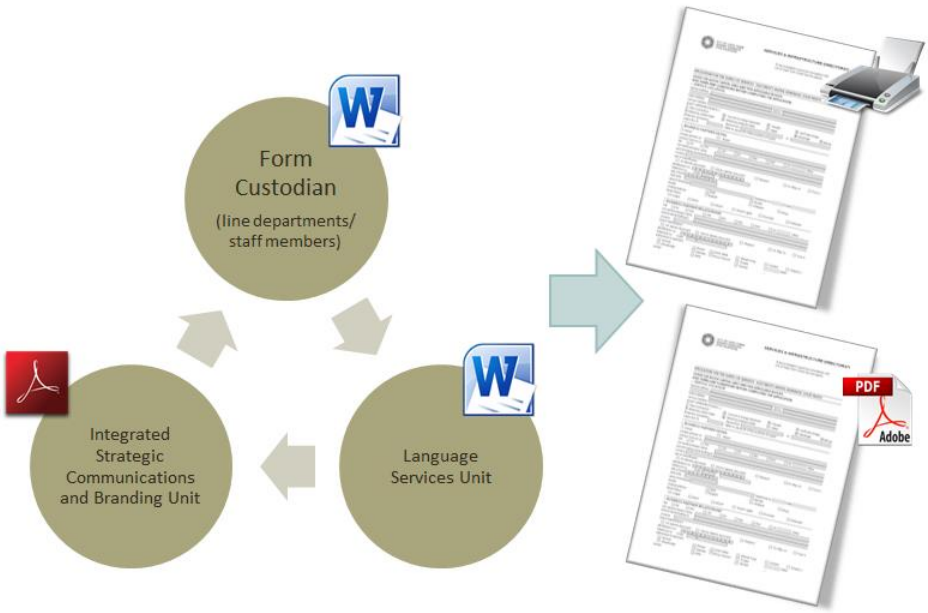
Figure 4.2: Role-players in creating forms



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The question that arises out of the analysis of who the various role players in the production of forms are, is: who is ultimately responsible for the final layout of the document or form? This is often confused with the identity of the person who has created the wording (in MSWord) or the design that we read or see and the person who is merely the mechanical producer of the layout of the form in Adobe InDesign or Adobe Professional as a two-dimensional material object.

It became fairly evident through the analysis that within one department there is not only one contributor. This compounds the problems in the production cycle as every individual contributor (and department) writes in a different style or manner. The individual staff member's word choices become permanent fixtures within forms if they are not checked and corrected by the city's language service units.

Since every form talks to every other form, they should be viewed as a group of documents, and not belonging to one department but to the municipality as a whole. All departments have some type of handover between them in order to function as co-dependant organisation such as a municipality.

The next two sub-sections offer more clarity on the roles of the departments form custodians and Language Services unit in the production of forms.

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### *4.1.1 Form custodians*

From a production perspective, the city's form custodians are the persons tasked with the commissioning, creation, management and maintenance of the forms, and have key responsibilities for the information contained on the forms.

Their role in the creation process extends beyond the scope of just information management, but also to the protection of brand integrity. Hence, they need to maintain a good working relationship with the various departments that play a role in ensuring that the forms continuously meet the standards set by the municipality.

These persons act as a chain of command for the commissioning and decommissioning of forms. Their scope of functional knowledge is sufficiently wide enough to have an awareness of the customer needs and the system requirements for adding information to become a formal record. They have to ensure compliance to



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the municipality's legal processes, and facilitate the access to information act requests and protection of personal information (POPI act). They are the primary sign or meaning makers if measured against Bezemer and Kress's (2008:170) definition of a meaning maker. *"In a social semiotic account of meaning and meaning making, producers as well as users … are regarded as meaning makers or sign makers."*

### *4.1.2 The role of the Language Services Unit (LSU)*

The language services unit's responsibility extends beyond that of merely language practitioners, they are placed in the organisation to assist with the implementation of South Africa's Language Policies on a local level. This role cannot be abdicated, but if they are not consulted in the process of production, they cannot fulfil their role as protectors of the three languages.

As copy-editors the language practitioners make the necessary amendments and corrections to do with grammar, spelling, language usage and punctuation, and ensure that the house style is adhered to. Copy-editing takes place to ensure clarity, conciseness, comprehensibility and consistency.

Proofreading is always seen as a follow-up process whereby the texts are finally approved before implementation on any document or form. The proof-readers will check the proof for errors, omissions, typographical and other obvious errors.

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## *4.2 Structure and design of forms*

In this sub-section I analyse the *structure* and *design* of the forms. This section therefore answers my third research question, namely: *Does the structure, design and content of the selected forms cause a breakdown in communication before the processing of information even begins for the end-user/client/customer?*

### *4.2.1 The structure of the forms*

The structure of the forms I analysed is dependent on two multimodal elements, the textual/language component, and the spaces/boxes users have to complete on the forms. Analyses of the forms currently on the municipality's website and in hardcopy have shown that they have certain properties in common. All the forms are of a specific size (A4 or A3 folded to A4) and are generally on white background/paper.



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Forms are locked into dyadic opposites, where the form content is co-produced between the municipality and the customer/reader. It is their first interaction or contact. No-one has control over the content provided by the customer, but form text can be purposefully selected and the layout can be structured in such a manner as to elicit the desired response.

#### *4.2.1.1 Function of forms*

I made use both genre and CDA to analyse the selected four forms in terms of their structure, information, word choice, tone, manner of address, images used, what is said and what information is available.

My research has shown that most forms can be classified according to their functions into one of the following categories, as put forth in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Function of forms

| **Form type** | **Function of the form** |
|---|---|
| Application (for services) forms | There may or may not be a previous record. It may be the start of a new process or interaction between the municipality and the customer. These forms are linked to paid services and are public records. |
| Information or registration forms | The information does not constitute a long term record nor is it linked to any information recording system. It is used to supply information as a form or receipt. These are generally kept for non-paying services. |
| Survey forms as part of consumption of services studies | A survey form is structured the same as an information form, with the difference being that the information is kept for a specific purpose and once statistically recorded, the information it contains is discarded once the report is finalised. |
| Accounting forms | These forms have to conform to acts and regulations such as Financial Intelligence Centre Act (38 of 2001) (FICA) and The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication - |



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| | |
|---|---|
| | related Information Act (RICA) which applies to a person as a legal entity. They generally require another governmental institution or regulated industry to consent or confirm their status. |
| Affidavits and declarations | Structured as a form, but it is more a statement of affairs from the outside person towards the organisation. The form is used to standardise the responses in terms of the legal requirements. |
| Update of personal records forms | A general information or biometrics update of information that pertains to the person as an individual or as part of a partnership. |

All four of the forms in the study are functionally equal in that they can be linked to the document genre of municipal application forms. These applications forms for rebates and additional services for water are either directed to the Revenue department or the Utility Services departments of the city. The provision of water is considered a basic human right, therefore, the expectation in terms of register and framing is that the forms' content should be very similar although their reader base is very broad, ranging from a customer to organisations.

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The advantages of forms above a verbal conversation and recording of the facts are that they provide consistent information, with visual reminder of what information still has to be supplied. Not only is it convenient, it also requires less information to be written. With uniformity during the processing period, information which is collected in writing can also be re-examined later. In a digital format, forms also offer greater security by including a signature field to allow someone to take responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided.

#### *4.2.1.2 Framing*

Framing is similar to a picture framer mounting a canvas on a specific size. Framing creates or sets the expectation on the reader of what they need to complete on the form. According to Bezemer and Kress (2016:76) framing refers to the visual



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arrangement of different modes in a single text: this confinement of information into one group becomes the frame.

What I have found is that the positioning of information on the form is one of the most important elements influencing the communicative power of the document (Ries and Trout, 2001). This can be visible through the register of the form by using wording consistent with the ideal reader. The colours, fonts and header are used to indicate that applicable sections or blocks are used to define the reading area.

Framing creates the internal unity within the document itself and creates distinct break or boundary between the different sections within the same form.
The designers of forms specifically choose which elements to ring fence or block off from the next. On the analysed forms these breaks are in most cases achieved by creating a block around the text to group them together. The framing devices are used to establish boundaries between the textual and non-textual elements on forms *"by marking the boundary itself or by creating contrasts between the framed elements at the particular level" (*Bezemer and Kress, 2016:76).

The most important purpose of framing is to define what the customer needs to read and where they have to participate. Although the brand identity falls within the page frame of the document, it does not fall within the interaction frame of the document. Similarly, the text placed on the outside of placeholder blocks creates the separation between official and reader/customer. The expectation from a documentation point of view is that within one organisation the basic framing would be clearly defined. These might include the sectioning of text, outlined blocks around sectioned text and the empty placeholder blocks being colour coded grey for official and clear blocks for the customer. In terms of the page layout, I did not consider the amount of physical space each frame or section occupies, only noted their existence within the document layout.

Frames and framing are important as they aid the reader with the identification of a document to belong to the group of documents called forms which signifies that they can become involved in the co-creation process.



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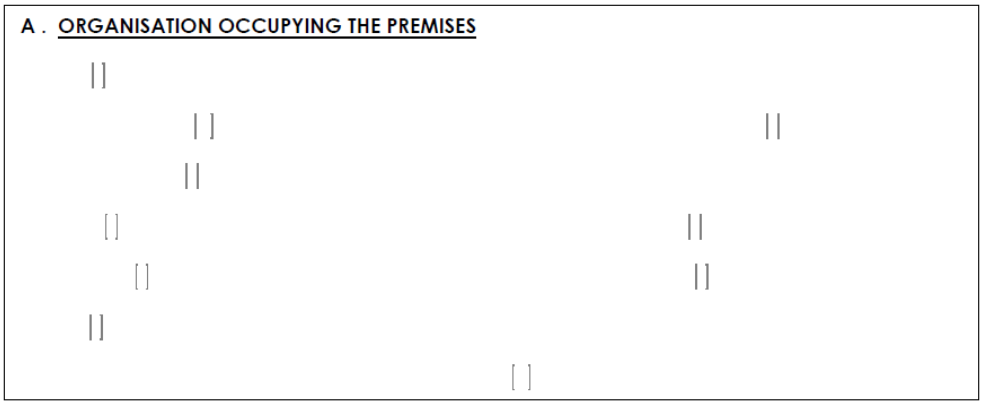
Below are some of the framing and block types I identified in the data.

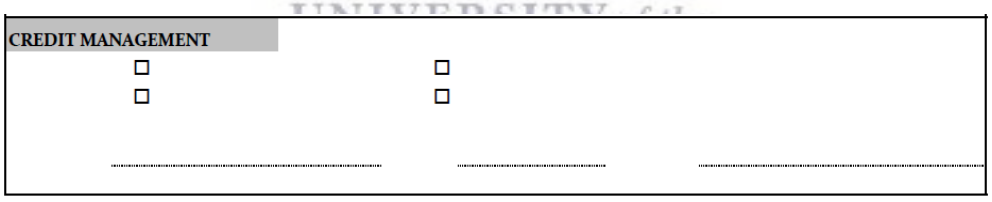
Sectional frame or block as illustrated in Figure 4.3 below contains a section heading that contain text that indicates a move from one section of information to the next. It does not touch or overlap with other sectional frames.

Figure 4.3: Sectional frame or block



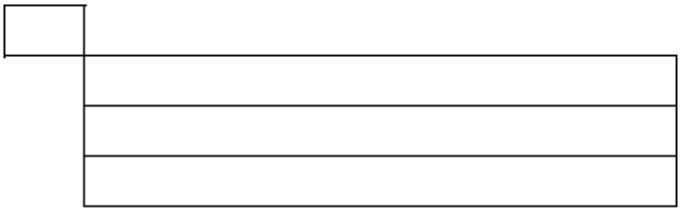

Closed block as illustrated in Figure 4.4 below has no other lines present in the block, but with the capitalised letters and grey backing thereof, it appears to be a sectional frame. It however does not conform to all the rules of a sectional frame.

Figure 4.4: Closed block




The floating block as illustrated in Figure 4.5 below is a block which does not touch another block and is not connected to the outer sectional frames.

Figure 4.5: Floating block





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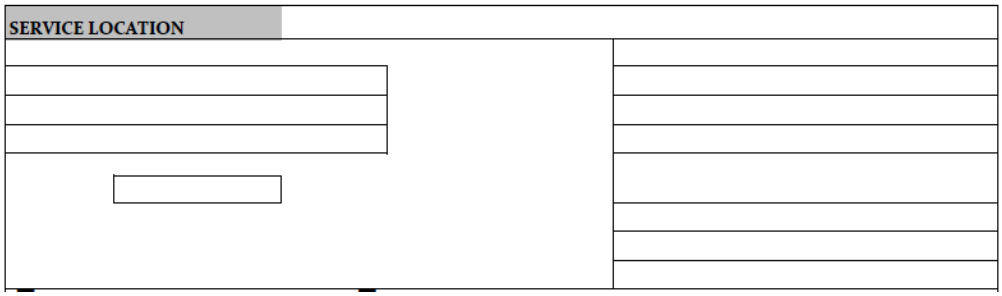
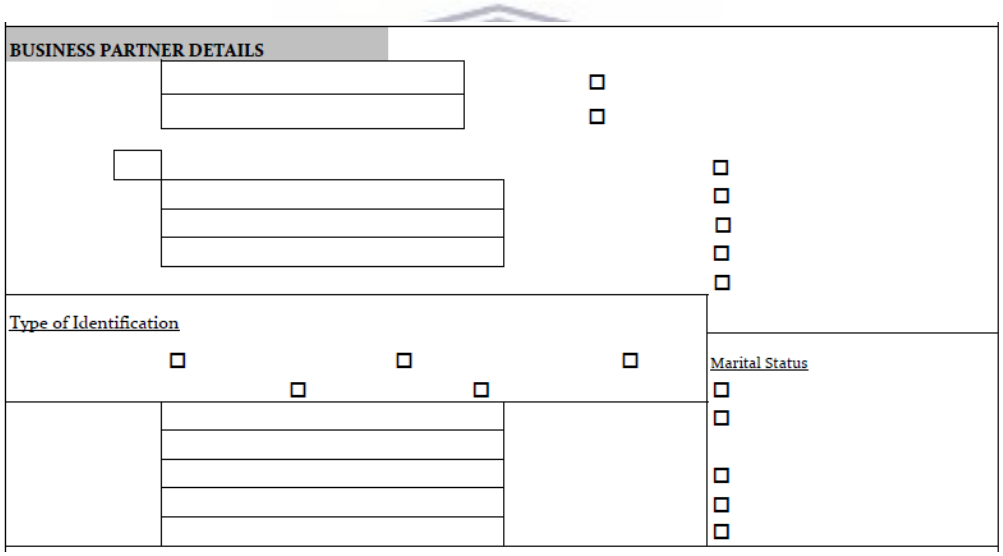
Lined block as illustrated below in Figure 4.6 have horizontal lines which creates the illusion of a separate block within a sectional frame.

Figure 4.6: Lined block




A staggered blocks as illustrated below in Figure 4.7 contains one or many blocks with an irregular shape, neither square nor rectangular within one sectional frame.

Figure 4.7: Staggered blocks




### *4.2.2 Design elements*

Having considered the structure of the forms I analysed, I now focus on design elements found on most official forms such as logos, headers, footers and blank spaces. By examining the forms from the point of view of a grammar of visual design, the amount of attention to design correlates with the importance of the document (Scollon 2008:13). In most cases forms become part of official documents and/or public records, yet they are not given the same stature or status as formal policies or processes. Their ranking is regarded as secondary rather than primary information in the communications chain with communities. Changing the design and layout of



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forms can signify a change or shift in the hierarchy of documents or serious nature of the content.

Modality also incorporates aspects like the layout, orientation of corporate identifiers such as their logo and brand elements. These all form part of the visual layout or non-textual elements on the forms. A form containing branding should conform to the organization's brand guidelines for forms with a minimum base of information that identifies it as belonging to one organisation. The municipal forms I studied needed to conform to the Language Style Guide and Language Policy, but it was the absence of clear guidelines between the style guide and brand guidelines that led to this research. In studying the form creation chain (Figure 4.1, page 50); the absence of quality control became clear. There was too much focus on the visual language of the forms and too little on the actual language used on forms, with a clear idea of who the person is that will be asked to complete the form, his/her language barriers and literacy levels.

Among the four forms, no consistent use of the design elements was found. In addition, some other visual elements caused confusion in terms of page and text flow on the forms. These inconsistencies included the use of dot leaders, lines or blocks interspersed with text. My analysis in section 4.9 provides further evidence of these problematic design elements.

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## *4.3 The textual analysis*

This section addresses the second research question: *How can a thorough textual analysis of existing forms contribute to our understanding of their most problematic elements?*

I found in my analysis that the textual components and language used on the municipality's forms are the largest contributors to the complexity of forms. The fact that single words are viewed more as semiotic forms than lexical components, and that words are joined with unrelated concepts, make them problematic.

The meanings of the semiotic forms are derived from the letter patterns and consistent spatial orientation on a form. In essence there are three types of textual components use



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on forms, namely single words, phrases and clauses. Occasionally definitions are also used as questions throughout the forms' textual components.

There are words on forms that have an explicit meaning attached to them like 'name', which cannot be misconstrued to mean anything other than what their lexicon intends. Occasionally these single words that stand in for a whole sentence are combined into phrase so that their meaning moves into a state of flux, as indicated in the explanation below:

> *Name* used as a noun, on its own is classified as *"a word or set of words by which a person or thing is known, addressed, or referred to."* According to the lexicon it would be understood to mean a personal name as given to them at birth or by their own choice.
>
> *Family* used as a noun, on its own is classified as *"a group of people related by blood or marriage."*
>
> However, when the word *Name* is combined with another word such a *Family* to produce 'Family name' on a form, the reader has to have the acute knowledge to understand the word combination to mean their *Surname* without having to rely on further instructions.

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In some cases, the words are used on their own, but can be combined which would affect the answers provided. I have grouped these words and their combination group in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Noun combinations used on forms

| *Name* used as a noun, means *"a word or set of words by which a person or thing is known, addressed, or referred to."*<br>Combinations are indicated by a + |
|---|
| • First + name, Second + name, Name + of applicant<br>• Surname, Family + name, Company + name, Registered + name<br>• The use of Name and Surname together is less common<br>• Title abbreviations for each Dr. Prof. Adv. Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss, Master and in the municipal genre may also contain the two abbreviations: Ald. for Alderman and Cllr. for Councillor. |



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| *Identification / identity* used as a noun, *"a means of proving a person's identity, especially in the form of official papers."*<br>Combination are indicted by a + |
|---|
| • Identity number, identification + number or short form ID,<br>• Less frequently some forms ask the reader to distinguish between Old SA + identity number, and SA Identity+ number.<br>• Identity+ document is also occasionally used.<br>• Passport numbers |

| *Telephone* used as a noun, means *"a system for transmitting voices over a distance using wire or radio, by converting acoustic vibrations to electrical signals."*<br><br>Note:<br>All the variations listed below fall in the category of transmitting either voice or digital information over an electric or electronic medium. |
|---|
| • Telephone, telephone+ number or short form Tel.<br>• Facsimile (very seldom used as such anymore), Fax<br>• Cell, Cell+ phone, or mobile+ phone<br>• Contact number is starting to be used more with the decline in using fixed telephone connections |

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Addresses are shaped for people with formal addresses; it does not make provision for informal settlement addresses, and with the diminishing of the South African Postal Services, the prevalence of street and post box addresses have diminished, whereas e-mail addresses have been added consistently on reviewed forms. The draw-back of e-mail is that people can change it more often than a physical address, so the tempo at which information becomes out-of-date is greater.

| *Address* used as a noun, means *"the particulars of the place where someone lives or an organization is situated."*<br><br>Note:<br>Email address is not meant to be a physical or geographical location, a string of characters which identifies a destination for email messages or the location of a website. |
|---|
| • Address, with two official sub categories street+ address and postal+ address<br>• Previous+ address, premises+ address are also used<br>• Street name or Name of street |



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- Street no.
- Name of building
- City
- Post box
- Postal code
- E-mail + address

Other variations of addresses include:

- Owner or owners address
- Tenants address
- Applicant address
- Ratepayer address
- Account holders address

There are even greater variations of addresses amongst sectors within the municipality.[3]

In terms of CDA, there is also a social effect that stems from text, a less immediate individual effect: they shape our identities as customers (e.g. men or women), where the man's information is still asked before a woman's. The listing order of male first followed by female is still indicative of historical male dominance as can be seen on form 2: Application for water management (WM) device form (Annexure B) and Table 4.3: Use of gender on page 63. Within the collection of forms on the CCT website, it does appear that the gender order of male first followed by female are used on most of their forms.

[3] Each specific area of work within the municipality also occasionally has subset or variations of the above, for example clinics and medical offices use: Patient's address, Patient name, Account holder's address. The metropolitan police use: Victim's address, Victim's name, Perpetrator's name or Suspect's name.



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Table 4.3: Use of gender

| |
|---|
| *Gender* used as a noun, means *"the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones)."*<br>Note:<br>These binary options are starting to become problematic on especially medical forms as the person might not self-identify with the two gender options provided. |
| • Female and Male or just F/M preceded by the word Gender |

Date of birth followed with DD/MM/YYYY to signify the order in which the numbers/digits are to be provided. In both Afrikaans and English, the standard of DD/MM/YYYY or DD/MM/JJJJ can be used, but isiXhosa does not have an abbreviated form. In my discussions with the Language Services unit, I asked what would be an alternative if one would want to stay true to the format for isiXhosa. Their response was that for isiXhosa the English version would need to be used. These letters then move over to the visual language rather than the written language.

The use of 'Yes' and 'No' with their abbreviated Y and N encapsulated in a tick box was also potentially problematic, but the Language Services Unit recommended not using the abbreviated form to avoid confusion for some readers.

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Although the CCT has made the decision to only use the British English in the style guide, they have adopted certain words due to their financial system that uses American English terminology and words for example:

- Rates account number
- Billing address
- Case number or case ID

This is used purely for the benefit of the data capturer or official who actually interacts with the system, and not for the customer, who might find these terms confusing.

In the following section 4.4, I provide a detailed breakdown of how the above findings were reached following a GeM and Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of the four forms that formed my sample. This section also addresses the first research question.



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## *4.4 A GeM and Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of selected forms used by the Water and Sanitation Department of the CCT*

This section provides answers to my first research question: *What can be learned from the current combination of the various linguistic and semiotic elements used in a selection of forms used by the City of Cape Town?*

However, the analysis also shows how the findings in sections 4.1 - 4.3 were arrived at. The analysis used a simplified version of Bateman's Genre and Modality (GeM) framework (2008) combined with corpus-based discourse analysis to understand the relationship between the textual and non-textual components / modes used on the four forms of the Water and Sanitation department. In other words, the analysis considers both the structural and design elements of the forms that were analysed.

My first task was coding the textual elements, used the writing style guide, plain language guidelines and language policy to do a first pass scan of what would be regarded as a mistake or constraints on the four forms. Secondly, I needed to separate the two modes into two layers, a visual or non-textual layer and a textual layer annotated for a systematic corpus-driven analysis as described in the GeM model. Over the next few pages I provide these two modes, and then follow it with a complete discussion of each form.

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## *4.5 Form 1: Application for adjustment of sanitation charges (Annexure A)*

### *4.5.1 Structure of the form*

The function of the form should be clearly understood from the title within the header on the first page. The form title below in Figure 4.8 is: 'APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SANITATION VOLUMETRIC CHARGE (for domestic cluster)'.

Figure 4.8: Header of the Application for adjustment of sanitation volumetric charge (for domestic cluster)

| **APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SANITATION VOLUMETRIC CHARGE** (for domestic cluster) | CITY OF CAPE TOWN ISIXEKO SASEKAPA STAD KAAPSTAD |
|---|---|
| WDMS_P-R_Form_011 | External Copy |

The function of the form as defined by the CCT website is as follows:

> Your sanitation charges are based on how much water you use and are calculated according to a percentage based on the type of property concerned. However, in special cases, the city may approve a different percentage rate at which sanitation is charged. If you would like to apply for an adjustment in percentage sanitation volumetric charge, you can follow the process outlined below.[ii]

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The form does not get used by a single residential or single family home, but is intended for a complex or estate. In the phrase 'for domestic clusters', the definition of the word 'domestic' as an adjective means 'home'. There are various types of homes that are part of a cluster of houses, but do not necessarily mean a complex or living estate. The wording on the website together with the form does not guide the person having to complete it sufficiently. A short definition below the title would remove a great deal of confusion.

The form is produced in A4 portrait size with the front page of the form dedicated to obtaining information from the customer, the back page is use for a declaration or affidavit, with more than a third dedicated to municipal of office requirements and assessments.



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The non-verbal modes such as space, positioning, colour and framing as used in the forms also formed part of the analysis. An expectation in terms of register and framing is that this forms' content should be very similar although their reader base is very broad, ranging from a customer to organisations. The double square brackets [ ] make the form feel incomplete, as the reader would want to click between the two brackets and start typing, this sadly does not happen when the form is used in the electronic format. The form also does not provide the customer with lines on which to write their text. The only section that does provide lines is dedicated to the officials and is indicated in the grey block.

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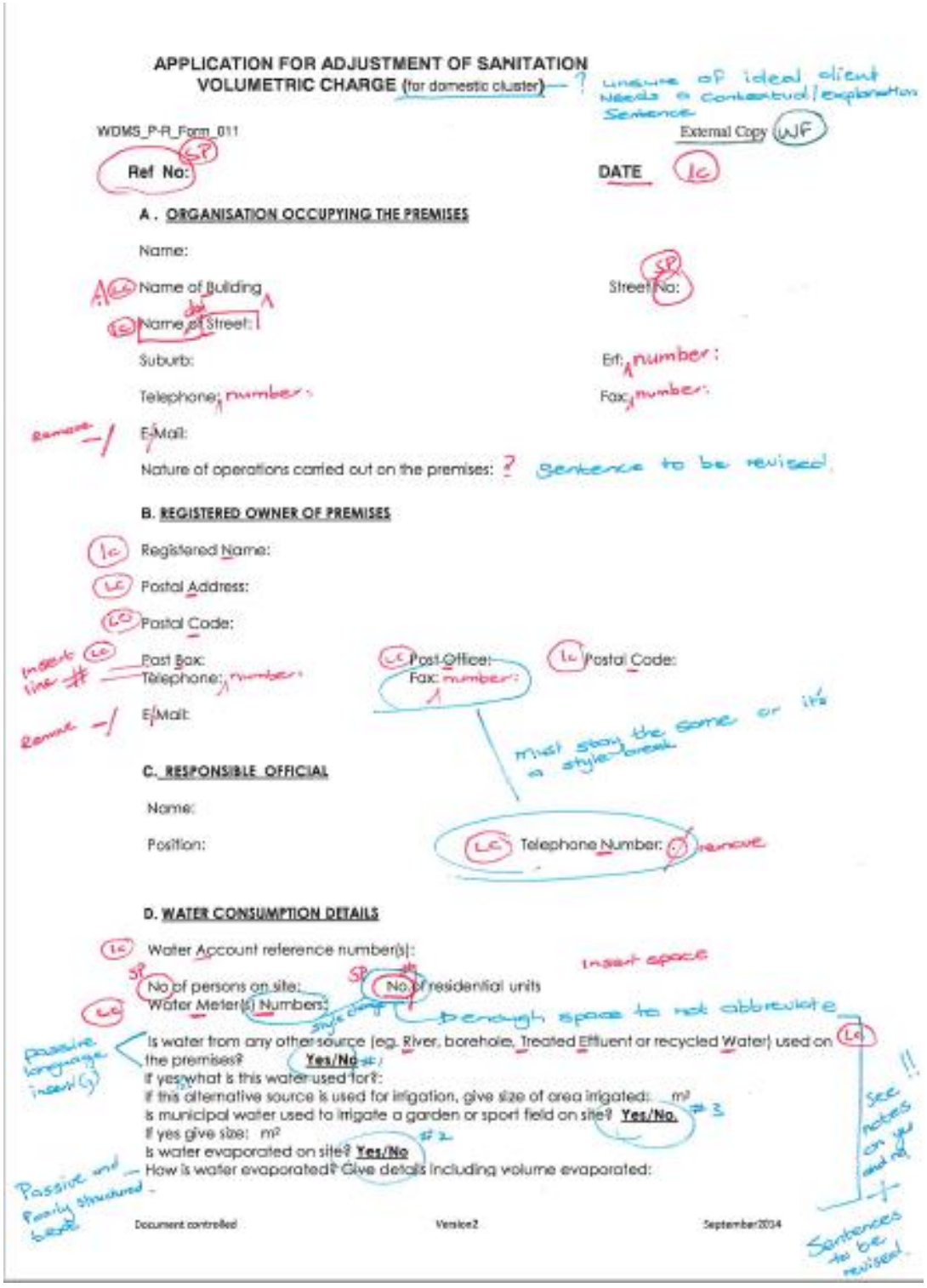
### *4.5.2 Textual analysis*

In Figure 4.9 below, the textual analysis of the Application for adjustment of sanitation charges form shows the annotated mark-up of text found in the form.

Figure 4.9: Textual analysis of the Application for adjustment of sanitation charges form



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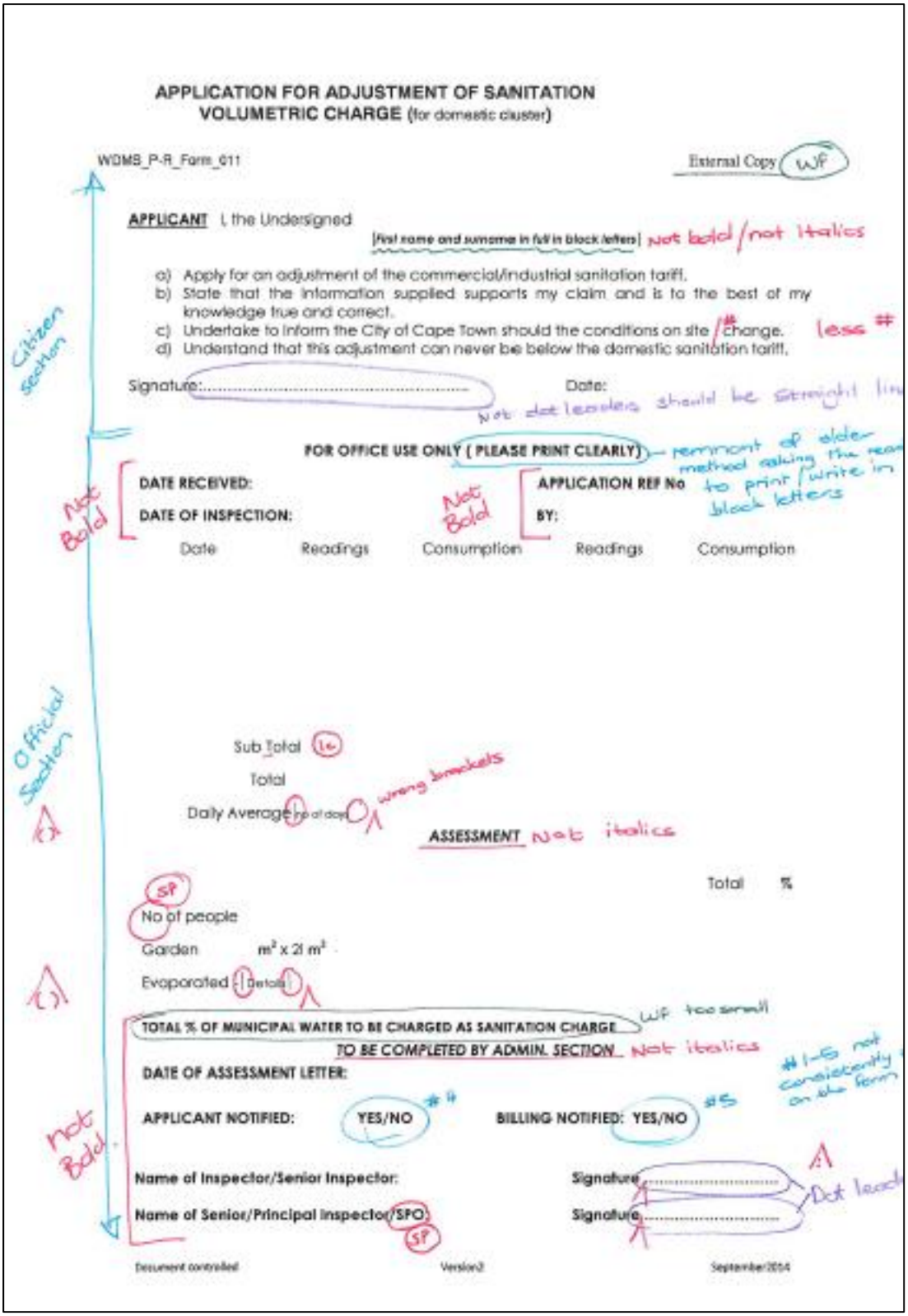

APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SANITATION
VOLUMETRIC CHARGE (for domestic cluster)

WDMS_P-R_Form_011

External Copy

APPLICANT I, the Undersigned

(First name and surname in full in block letters)

a) Apply for an adjustment of the commercial/industrial sanitation tariff.
b) State that the information supplied supports my claim and is to the best of my knowledge true and correct.
c) Undertake to inform the City of Cape Town should the conditions on site change.
d) Understand that this adjustment can never be below the domestic sanitation tariff.

Signature:..... Date:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY ( PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

DATE RECEIVED:

DATE OF INSPECTION:

APPLICATION REF No

BY:

Date | Readings | Consumption | Readings | Consumption

Sub Total

Total

Daily Average (no of days)

ASSESSMENT

Total %

No of people

Garden $m^2$ x 2l $m^2$

Evaporated (details)

TOTAL % OF MUNICIPAL WATER TO BE CHARGED AS SANITATION CHARGE

TO BE COMPLETED BY ADMIN. SECTION

DATE OF ASSESSMENT LETTER:

APPLICANT NOTIFIED: YES/NO

BILLING NOTIFIED: YES/NO

Name of Inspector/Senior Inspector: Signature:.....

Name of Senior/Principal Inspector/SPO: Signature:.....

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Under section A and B, the word *Telephone* is used on its own, but in section C onwards it is used with the additional word *Number*. Although the word is wrongly capitalised, it is in the correct word order.



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The author also switches from using the word *number* to the abbreviated form *No* with and without a full stop (.). An example where this is highly visible is in section D as shown below:

*No of persons on site:*
*No.of residential units*

In the declaration the author uses an a) to d) alphabetical list; where on most other forms containing a declaration or affidavit the authors do not use number- or alphabetical listings for each sentence. They do start each sentence on a new line which has the same effect as the numbering of lists.

When the author's construct sentences to have a yes/no answer, it has to be evaluated in terms of binaries or absolutes. An example of an absolute question which contains a binary would be: *Do you have DIABETES, yes / no.*

Although the questions under section D does have these absolutes, a lot more data can be maintained for research or additional services by restructuring the question from *'Is water from any other source (eg. River, borehole, Treated Effluent or recycled Water) used on the premises?'* which is followed by the binary of yes/no. A more effective question set would be to restructure the question to *'Which other water sources are used on the premises'* and use in-line tick boxes before each option of: ☐ *River* ☐ *Borehole* ☐ *Treated effluent* ☐ *Recycled water*. I would even go as far to suggest that an open ended option (such as ☐ *Other*) could be added, as water under the drought conditions were trucked in from other provinces.

This would make the sentence that follows on it more efficient and direct by removing '(~~*If yes*~~) *What is this water used for?'*

The author also switches register by using *'premises'* and then using *'site'*. The technical explanation of what a site is and what a premise is, is very clear. However, to the reader it might not be clear, so the author should choose only one, and when the additional one does have reference, a clarifying sentence must be provided with the word.



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The same would apply to the following two sets of questions, which I am numbering to indicate in the next section how they are combined.

1. If this alternative source is used for irrigation, give size of area irrigated: $m^2$
2. Is municipal water used to irrigate a garden or sport field on site? Yes/No.
3. If yes give size: $m^2$
4. Is water evaporated on site? Yes/No

5a. How is water evaporated? 5b. Give details including volume evaporated:

The question should have been structured:

1. + 2. On the premises (or site) are there any gardens or sport fields that are irrigated? Yes/No
1. + 2. The area is irrigated using ☐ municipal water ☐ alternative water sources.
3. + 4. Give the size ($m^2$) of the area under irrigation: $m^2$
4. + 5a. + 5b. If water is evaporated on the site, provide more details and include the volume of evaporation:

Nothing is lost in the set of restructured questions, but what is gained is clarity without the overuse of Yes/No.

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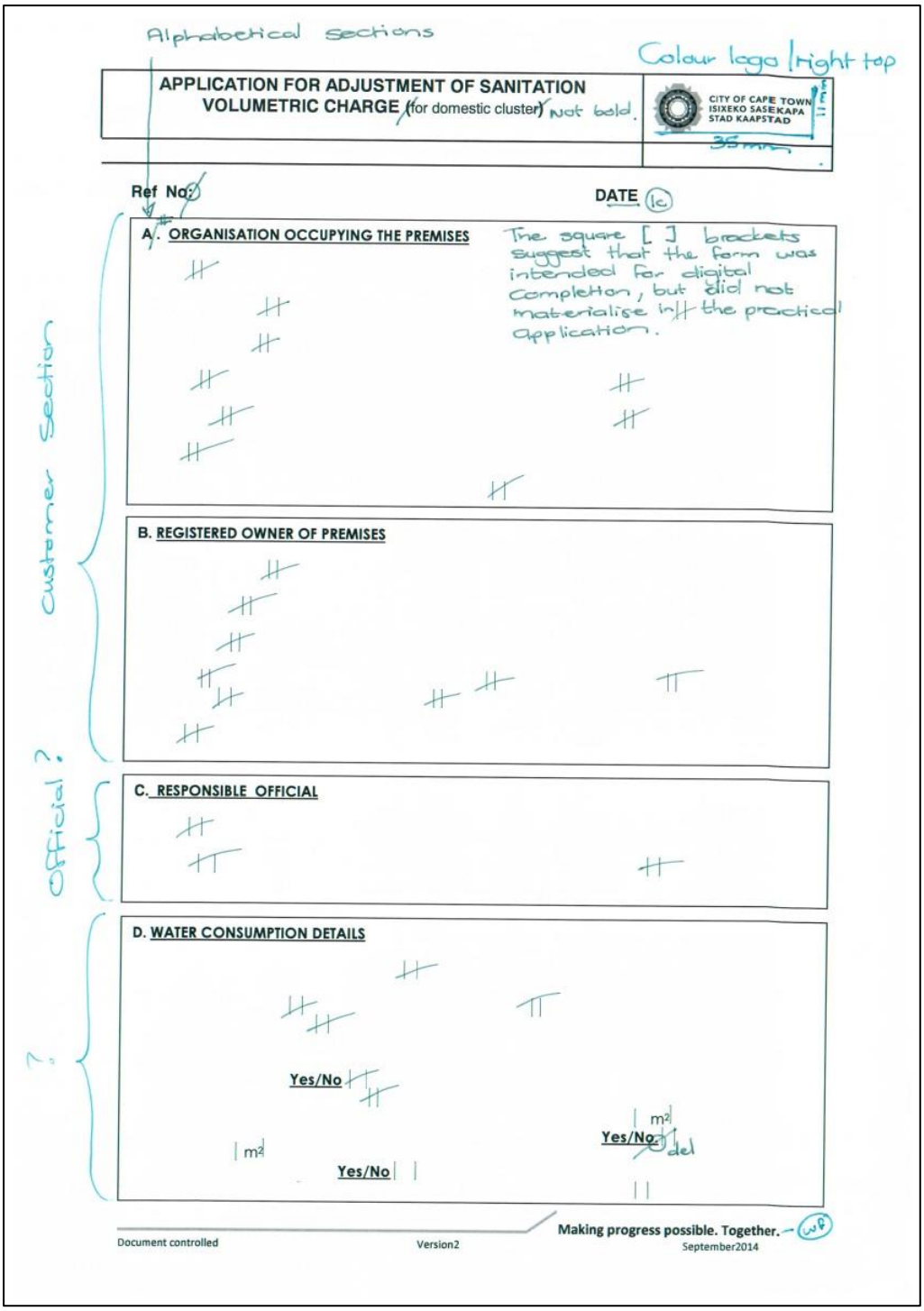
### *4.5.3 Visual analysis*

In Figure 4.10 below, the visual analysis of the Application for adjustment of sanitation charges form shows the annotated mark-up of non-textual elements found in the form.

Figure 4.10: Visual analysis of the Application for adjustment of sanitation charges form



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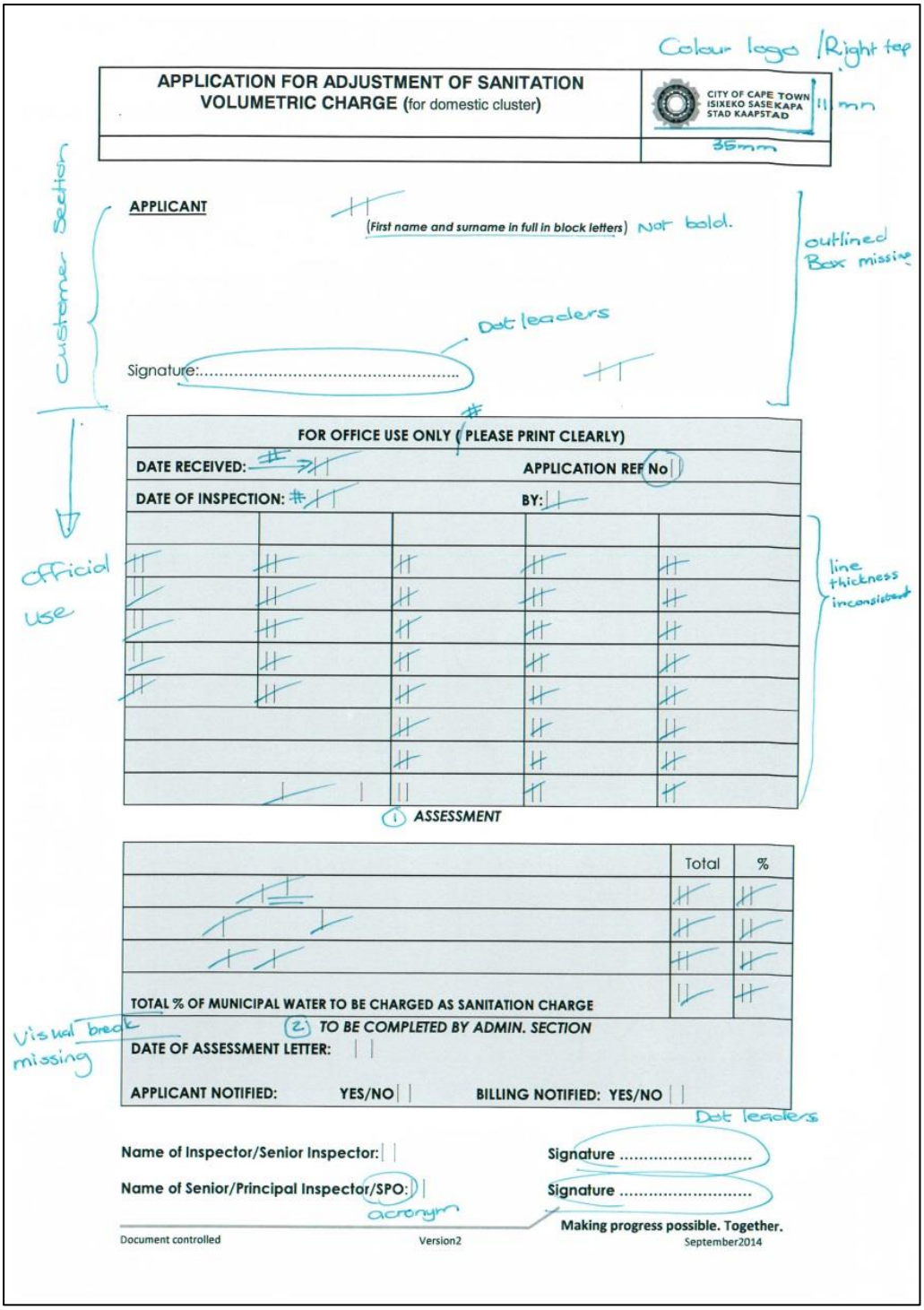


Visually the customer section of the form is indicated with white blocks and the 'official use' in a grey block. What is confusing here is that the header sequences of A, B, C and D include an official block under section C. The text used for the sections is written in upper case, which moves them from purely textual to the visual. The headers, combined with the block outline break the form into a section which defines the information belonging to that group.



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With section C.RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL, it is not clear if the customer has to complete the responsible official details. It is also not clear who this responsible official is, is the person an official of the municipality or another organisation. This would raise questions, so should there be a pre-consultation between the customer and the municipality? To whom should the form be given on submission? This is unclear to the customer.

Logically section C could be closer to the grey block or later in the sequence. Changing the sequence by moving section C to page 2 and the declaration to page 1 would frame the document correctly. The customer's information would then be contained on page 1 and the official's requirements and sections on the second page.

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## *4.6 Form 2: Application for the installation water management (WM) device form (Annexure B)*

### *4.6.1 Structure of the form*

The sequencing of information and the flow within the document is consistent with the function of a service application form is reflected in the form's name. The form title within the header below in Figure 4.11 is: 'APPLICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE.' What is missing from the title is the words 'of a' to be grammatically correct, and this omission forces the reader to re-read the title.

Figure 4.11: Header of the Application for installation of water management device

**APPLICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE**

The function of the form as defined by the CCT website is as follows:

> If you don't qualify for indigent support, but wish to install a water demand management device meter in order to manage your consumption, you can download and complete the Water Management Device Installation Application Form in the document downloads section below and submit your application to the nearest city Walk-in Centre.[iii]

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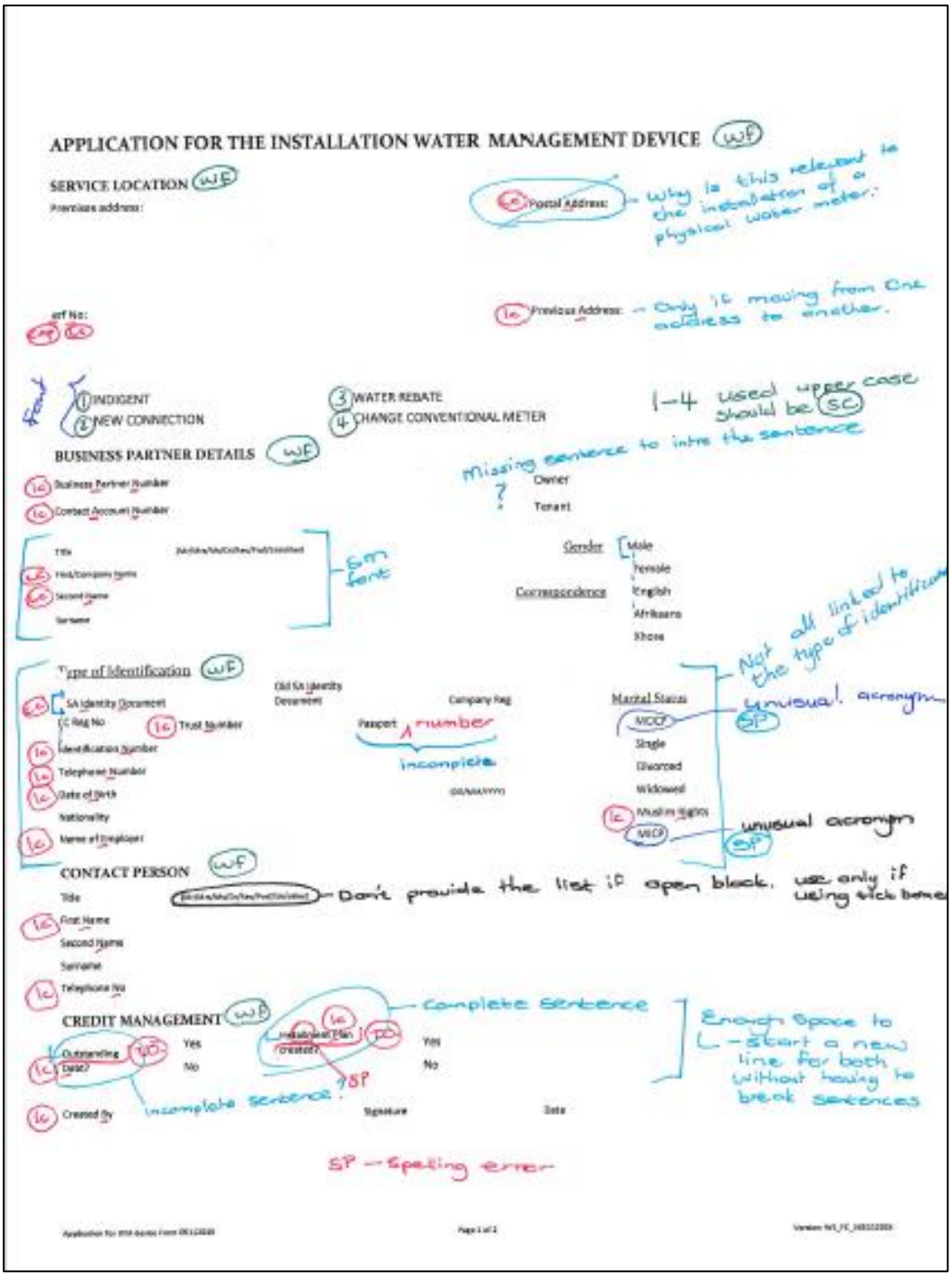
### *4.6.2 Textual analysis*

In Figure 4.12 below, the textual analysis of the Application for the installation water management (WM) device form shows the annotated mark-up of text found in the form.

Figure 4.12: Textual analysis of the Application for the installation water management (WM) device form



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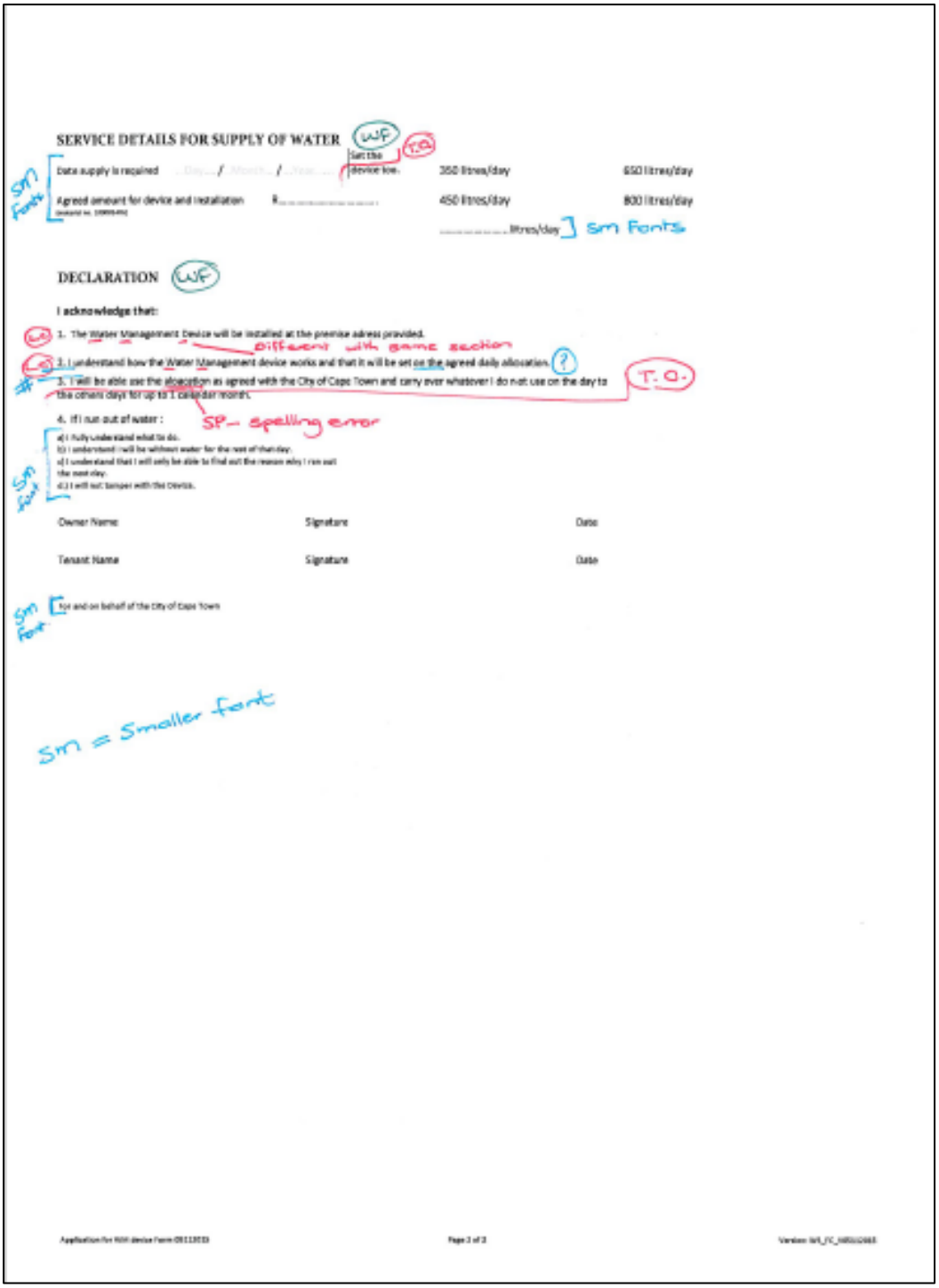

SERVICE DETAILS FOR SUPPLY OF WATER

WF

Sm Fonts

Date supply is required ... Day ... / Month ... / Year ... Set the device low. 350 litres/day 650 litres/day

Agreed amount for device and installation R..... 450 litres/day 800 litres/day

..... litres/day ] Sm Fonts

DECLARATION WF

I acknowledge that:

1. The Water Management Device will be installed at the premise adress provided.

Different with same section

2. I understand how the Water Management device works and that it will be set on the agreed daily allocation. ?

3. I will be able use the allocation as agreed with the City of Cape Town and carry over whatever I do not use on the day to the others days for up to 1 calendar month. T.O.

4. If I run out of water :

SP – spelling error

a) I fully understand what to do.
b) I understand I will be without water for the rest of that day.
c) I understand that I will only be able to find out the reason why I ran out the next day.
d) I will not tamper with the Device.

Sm Font

Owner Name Signature Date

Tenant Name Signature Date

Sm Font

For and on behalf of the City of Cape Town

Sm = Smaller font

The textual analysis clearly showed from the number of spelling errors, irregular acronyms and style changes (sentence case to capitalisation of every word) on the form that it did not pass through the Language Services Unit of the city.

The sequencing of marital status and the use of unusual acronyms or abbreviations are even more confusing. I regard myself as *form* literate and it took me a while to understand what is meant by the abbreviations MOCP and MICP. Not even the search



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engine Google could provide me with an explanation for these abbreviations. What I have contextually deduced from these two acronyms to mean is: *'married in community of property'* and *'out of community of property'*. However, they are not placed below one another but separated by other text which further exacerbates the comprehension effort when reading.

In terms of CDA, which focuses on issues of power, domination and social inequality, the use of formalities such as 'titles' still aims to classify people in terms of their social standings.

Formalities should no longer be as relevant on forms as they used to be in previous eras. In a multicultural context such as South Africa, the gender of a person cannot readily be surmised from their name or surname alone. Should it still be required to have a title to distinguish between male and female, the two categories can be reduced to 'Mr' and 'Ms'. However, I think the use of an open text *Title* block is enough without having to provide all the options such as, *'(Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir)'* as used on this form. Presenting an open-ended block with no prescriptive terms, for the person who prefers to be called by their title, such as a medical doctor or an academic professor would still have this option.

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With the document being locked down in PDF, without the option to edit the text, a person who cannot complete the form online will then only have the option to print the form. This would then make the '*...Day…. /...Month… / ...Year……'* difficult to complete. The text is frequently not made transparent enough, which forces the customer to write over the in-line text of the dot leaders, over or above it, or worse through the text.

An observation I made was that when a tick box is followed by text options in uppercase creates it can create confusion as it is not consistent with the style of other tick boxes on the same form, and it also does not fit the heading categories. An example of such a style break is visible in Figure 4.13 on page 78, the fonts, size and style differs from all other modalities.



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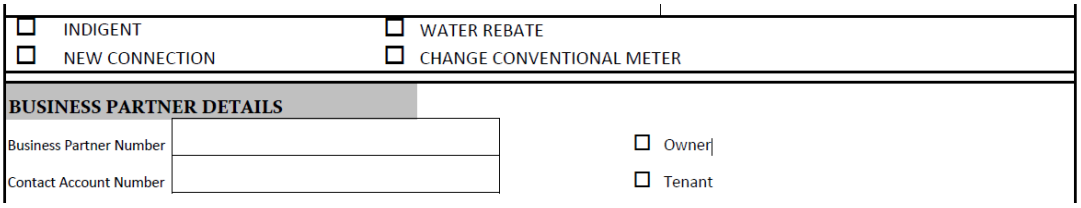
Figure 4.13: Style changes




The sequencing is from left to right within the same frame with the date of birth (see Figure 4.14 below). The formats in which it must be written are given after the block to be completed. This would lead to a mistake if the customer did not read the whole line of the question and did not follow the number sequence of the municipal system.

Figure 4.14: Spacing of related information

The problem with tick boxes that the text that precedes them provides too little information for a person to make a decision. In the example below (Figure 4.15), if there is uncertainty such as with 'Outstanding Debt?' to write out the whole sentence:

Figure 4.15: Yes/no options

What affects the completeness of a form is the ambiguity a reader is faced with when they are confronted with question and only have a yes/no answer. Where a question only has a yes/no answer, but leads to another question, the sentence structure should be reviewed to combine them. An example would be, *'If you have outstanding debt, has an instalment plan been created?'*

When comparing this form to others from the same department, the repetition or similarities in the content of the forms, leads me to believe that the author is not always the same person. The use of *'number'* and the abbreviated form *'No./no'* is not consistently used throughout the document.



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This form contains a number of spelling errors even on frequently used words like ad(d)ress. Installation has two L's, where instalment only has one L. The difference in meaning of using the word installation versus instalment would have been corrected.

Instalment is: *'A sum of money due as one of several equal payments for something, spread over an agreed period of time.'*

These mistakes would have been easily picked up is the services of the language services unit was used or even just peer-reviewed by a colleague.

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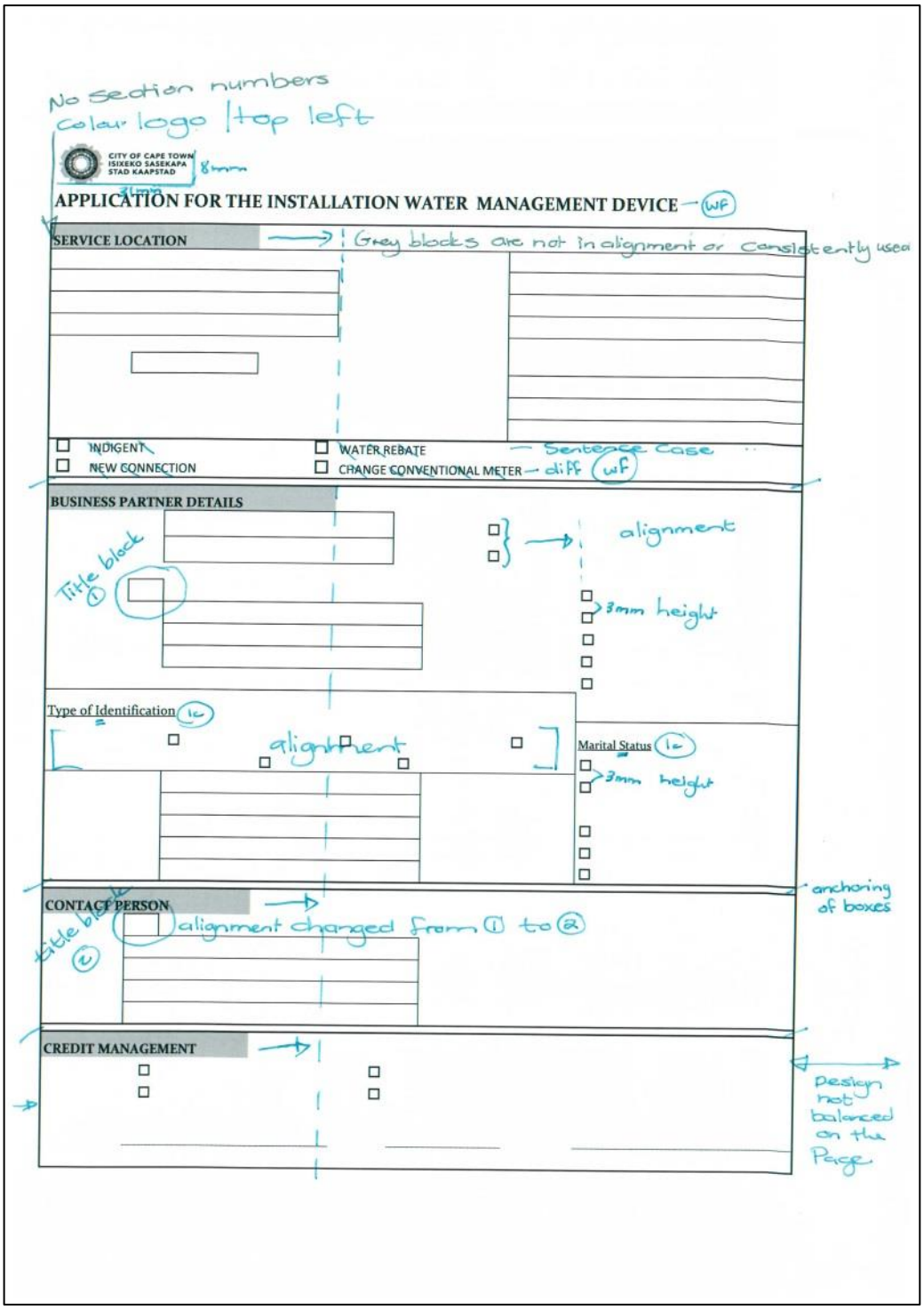
### *4.6.3 Visual analysis*

In Figure 4.16 below, the visual analysis of the Application for the installation water management (WM) device form shows the annotated mark-up of the non-textual elements found in the form.

Figure 4.16: Visual analysis of Application for the installation water management (WM) device form



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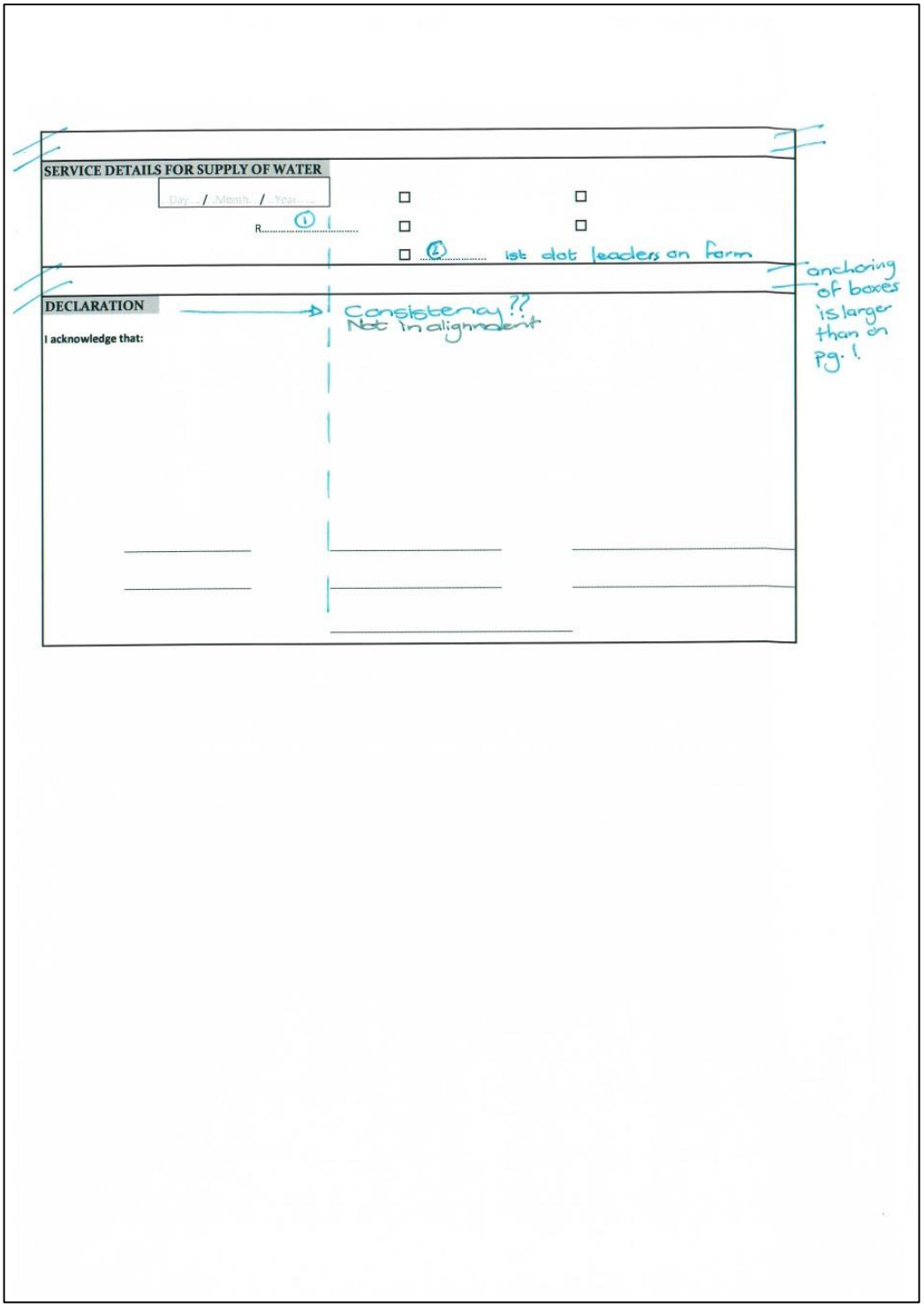


The non-textual elements used on this form that causes the most disruption to the page and text flow is the change of framing from one block to the next. The form makes use of all the various block types, namely:

- **Closed block**, where no other lines are present in the block, which then becomes a sectional frame.
- **Floating block**, is a block which is not connected to the outer sectional frame.



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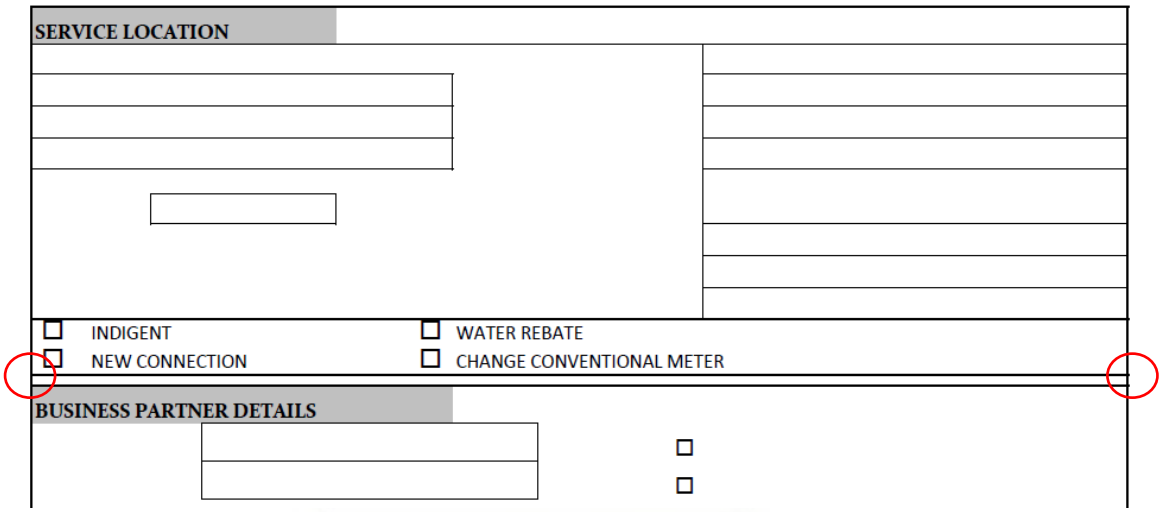
- **Lined block**, horizontal lines which creates the illusion of a separate block within a sectional frame.
- **Staggered blocks**, is one or many blocks with an irregular shape, neither square nor rectangular within one sectional frame.

The only block type not used on this form is the **sectional frame/block** type since all their blocks either overlap or touch the adjacent block by connecting their lines as illustrated in Figure 4.17 below.

Figure 4.17: Variety of block types in a single frame

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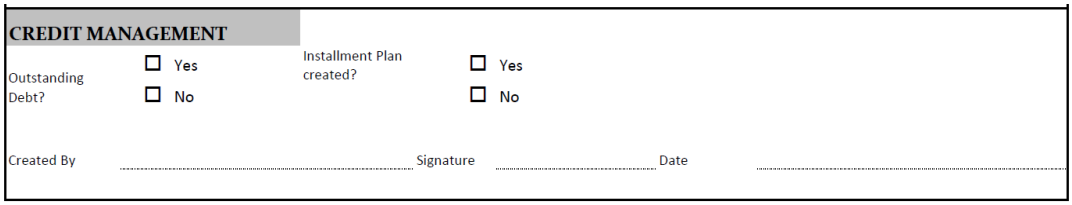
Grouping or framing of related text, such as selection boxes must be as close to the related information as possible. The problem with tick boxes in Figure 4.18 below is that there is little or no instruction text provided.

Figure 4.18: Grouping of related questions




In the sample above it would be immensely frustrating having completed the entire form, and just before signing the form into submission, that a customer realises that a debt plan has not been created and the current form cannot be submitted until this crucial step is completed. In addition, no further guidance is provided if the answer should be 'Yes' to outstanding debt and 'No' to an instalment plan.



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If there is uncertainty such as with the 'Outstanding Debt?' question, I recommend providing a full sentence:

> Do you have outstanding debt with the City?
>
> Has an instalment plan been created for you?

Where a question (with a tick box) only has a yes/no answer, but leads to another question, the sentence structure should be reviewed to combine them. An example would be, 'If you have outstanding debt, has an instalment plan been created?' If the answer to this question is 'no', it should provide the reader with clear guidance on what further steps need to be done in order to proceed with the current application.

Grouping of related information must be within the same frame. If the postal addresses are requested for correspondence purposes, then the question about correspondence language preference should also be grouped together (note the problem created in this regard in the form in Figure 4.19). The order in which the languages are ranked is an indication where the individual or the organisation deems isiXhosa to fit as a language demographic. Also the wording for correspondence should be written with instructions such as, '*please indicate to which address correspondence is to be sent'* with the follow up question, '*Indicate your language preference for correspondence.'*

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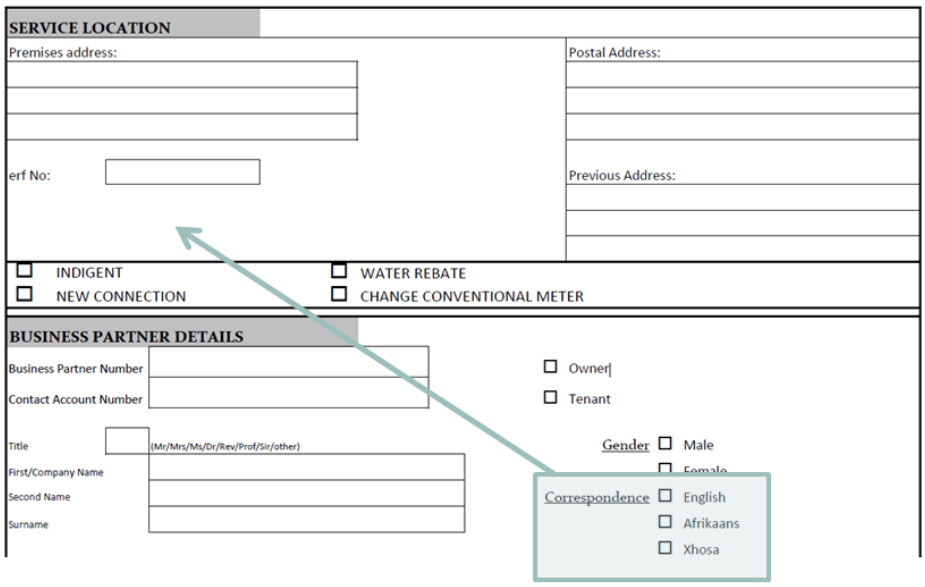
Figure 4.19: Placement of information



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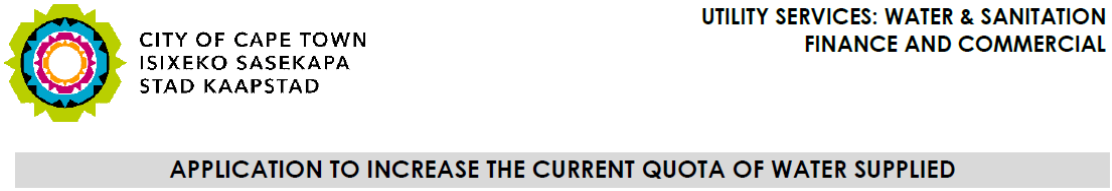
## *4.7 Form 3: Application form to increase the quota of water supplied (Annexure C)*

### *4.7.1 Structure of the form*

In contrast to the previous two forms analysed, the function deduced from the title of this form is confusing. Although the title of the form in the header below in Figure 4.20 is clearly defined: 'APPLICATION FORM TO INCREASE THE QUOTA OF WATER SUPPLIED', the function is not what would be expected when measured against the functional description on the CCT website:

> Residents who have valid reasons for higher water consumption than the quota stipulated in the water restrictions (i.e. more than four people living permanently on the property, or medical reasons) need to submit a completed affidavit form.[iv]

Figure 4.20: Header of the Application to increase the current quota of water supplied

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The incongruence is caused by the titles, textual components and sequencing used on the form. When the function of the form is measured against the functional definition of forms in point 4.2.2.1, the form is structured more as an affidavit or declaration. The reason for this classification is the fact that the form must be validated by a Commissioner of Oaths, and contains the words 'Affidavit' as a heading. This form can be therefore safely be classified as an affidavit/declaration which must be signed by the applicant.

The form is produced on a single-sided A4 portrait size page which is dedicated space for the customer to complete their information. The only 'office use' reference is whether the application has been 'Approved or Declined'. There is however, no space provided for a reason for the application being approved or declined, which leads me to believe that the form does not go back to the customer and that a separate document is used as a feedback mechanism. With a minor change on the form, the form can serve a dual purpose as application and response. The benefit to the customer would



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be that in the event of their application being declined, they could re-submit the form without having to start collecting the information again.

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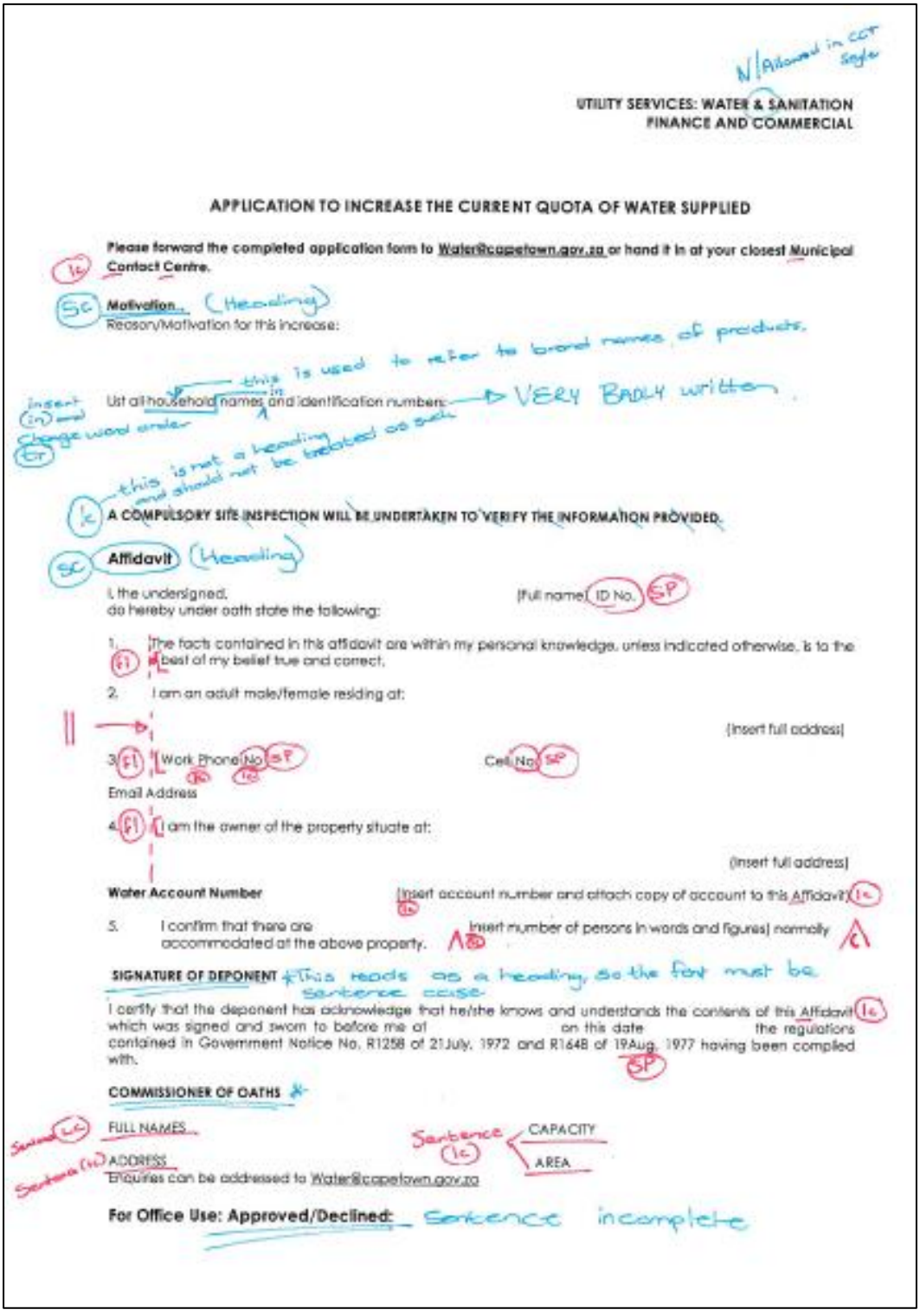
### *4.7.2 Textual analysis*

In Figure 4.21 below, the textual analysis of the Application form to increase the quota of water supplied shows the annotated mark-up of text found in the form.

Figure 4.21: Textual analysis of the Application form to increase the quota of water supplied



UTILITY SERVICES: WATER & SANITATION
FINANCE AND COMMERCIAL

APPLICATION TO INCREASE THE CURRENT QUOTA OF WATER SUPPLIED

Please forward the completed application form to Water@capetown.gov.za or hand it in at your closest Municipal Contact Centre.

Motivation (Heading)
Reason/Motivation for this increase:

List all household names and identification numbers:

A COMPULSORY SITE INSPECTION WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION PROVIDED.

Affidavit (Heading)

I, the undersigned, [Full name] [ID No.]
do hereby under oath state the following:

1. The facts contained in this affidavit are within my personal knowledge, unless indicated otherwise, is to the best of my belief true and correct.
2. I am an adult male/female residing at:

[Insert full address]

3. Work Phone No. Cell No.
Email Address
4. I am the owner of the property situate at:

[Insert full address]

Water Account Number [Insert account number and attach copy of account to this Affidavit]

5. I confirm that there are [Insert number of persons in words and figures] normally accommodated at the above property.

SIGNATURE OF DEPONENT

I certify that the deponent has acknowledge that he/she knows and understands the contents of this Affidavit which was signed and sworn to before me at on this date the regulations contained in Government Notice No. R1258 of 21July, 1972 and R1648 of 19Aug. 1977 having been complied with.

COMMISSIONER OF OATHS

FULL NAMES
ADDRESS
CAPACITY
AREA

Enquiries can be addressed to Water@capetown.gov.za

For Office Use: Approved/Declined:



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Form 3 does not rely on single words but more on complete sentences to which the customer completing it has to respond. The form does not make use of section headers or subsection to indicate the shift from one section or framed set of questions to the next. There are, however improvements that can be made through the use of plain language.

Based on the analysis, there are a number of stylistic and language errors which could have been avoided if the person consulted the style guide of the city. For example, the use of an ampersand (&) is strictly forbidden, with the exception of the use in words or acronyms of names like the V&A Waterfront. The use of acronyms has also been actively discouraged.

What is significant is the switching of register from lower case or sentence case text up to the Commissioner of Oath section, which signifies that the author or designer of the form places (power shift) the commissioner in a higher order of importance that the person asked to complete the form.

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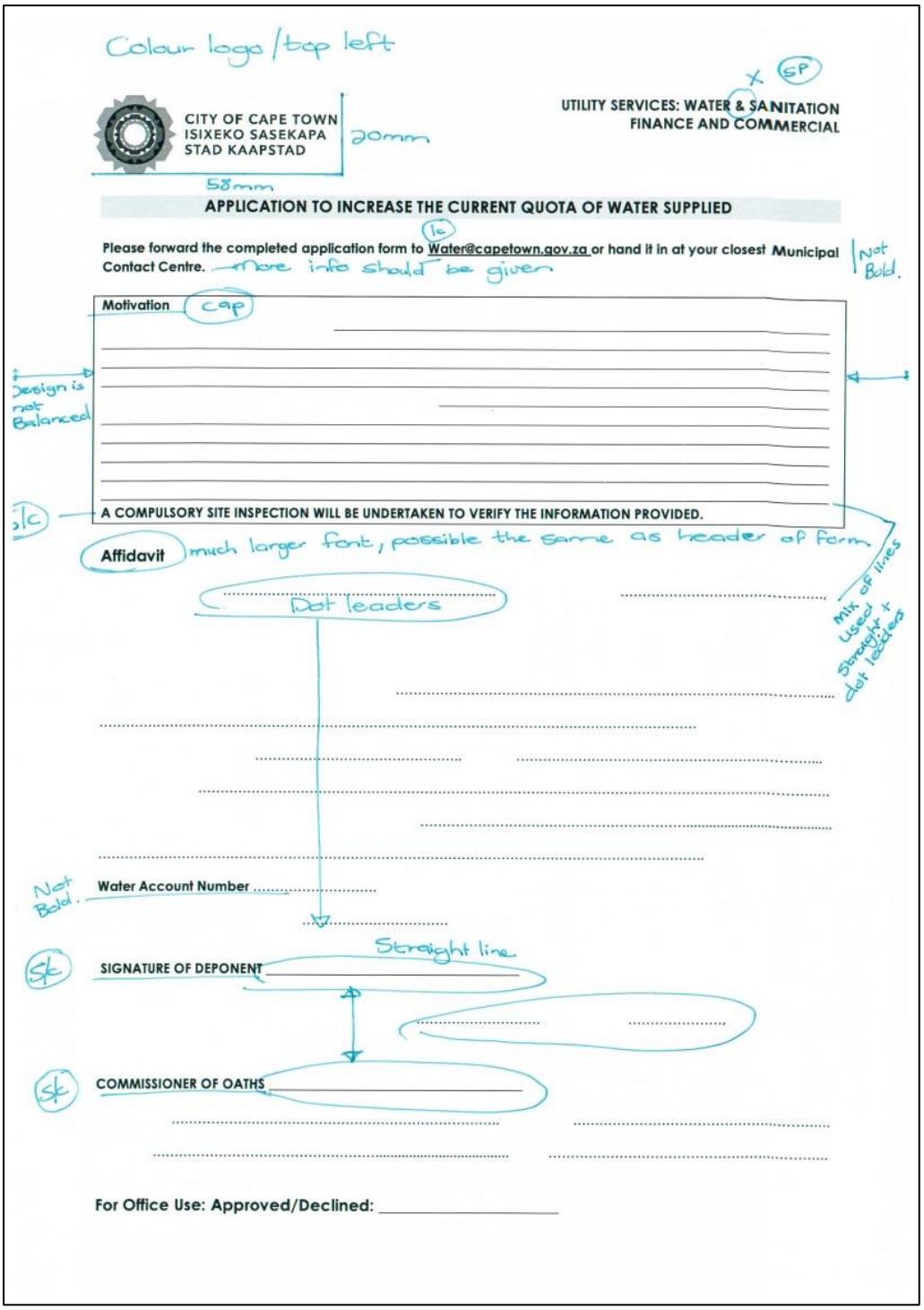
### *4.7.3 Visual analysis*

In Figure 4.22 below, the visual analysis of the Application form to increase the quota of water supplied shows the annotated mark-up of non-textual elements found in the form.

Figure 4.22: Visual analysis of the Application form to increase the quota of water supplied



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In comparison with the other analysed forms, the layout of form 3 is the most confusing as the only section that is clearly framed is the motivation section which leads the reader to believe that it is the most important section of information to be supplied. The *Motivation* section was included in a sectional frame or block but excludes all the information of the *Affidavit* which is to be completed by the same person.

The reasoning behind this is unclear as the motivation should follow the personal information of everyone in the household and their identification numbers. The logical page flow should have been the personal information of the person asking for the additional water allocation, followed by a motivation and the details to substantiate why they are making the request. The legally binding statement under oath, namely the affidavit should have been elevated or highlighted by an outlined block to be completed before the Commissioner of Oaths.

Pertinent information like the 'Water Account Number' is highlighted in bold text similar to other headers and section headings as indicated below:

| |
|---|
| **Water Account Number** ..... (Insert account number and attach copy of account to this Affidavit) |
| 5. I confirm that there are .....(Insert number of persons in words and figures) normally accommodated at the above property. |

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This account information is asked towards the end of page as part of the affidavit, this feels out of place within the numbered text as it also aligns to the left and is not indented like the rest of the text of the affidavit.

I believe that the form has been through many adaptations, as the creators make use of both straight lines (lined block) in the motivation section and the signatures of the deponent and the commissioner of oaths. Dot leaders are used between the texts of the affidavit section and not anywhere else on the form. The use of dot leaders is a remnant of the typewriter era where the use of lines in composition would not be at the disposal of the creator.



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## *4.8 Form 4: Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device (Annexure D)*

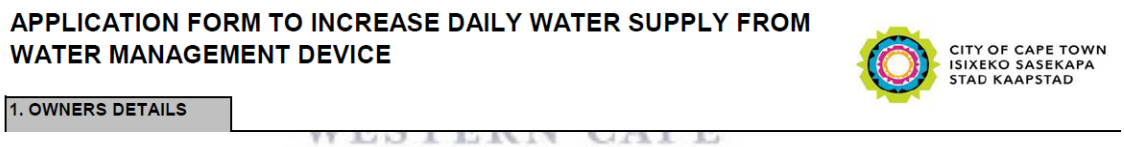
### *4.8.1 Structure of the form*

The function of the form should be clearly understood from the title within the header on the first page. The form title in Figure 4.23 below is: 'APPLICATION FORM TO INCREASE DAILY WATER SUPPLY FROM A WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE'.

The function of the form within the header as defined by the CCT website is as follow:

> When you install a water management device (WMD), you are limiting the amount of water you use per day to a specific amount. Once you reach that limit, the device will stop releasing water and will reset the next morning to provide another prescribed allocation. You can increase the daily amount by following the process below.[v]

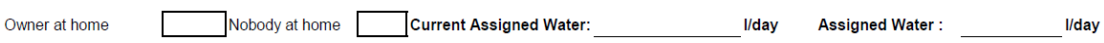
Figure 4.23: Header of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device




The fact that the first Section heading encroaches on the open space of the title is visually disturbing. It takes away from the white space that is ingrained in the CCT's visual language. Despite this, the form is much neater than the previous 3 forms in the analysis.

The alignment of text in section 1 is very disruptive and exacerbated with the use of a colon (:). The alignment remains a problem with this document, where text and placeholder blocks or lines are far apart from one another. In Figure 4.24 below, this becomes laborious on the reader as the word 'Owner at home' is far from the blocks, with the immediate text basically touching the block, which would visually indicate that they are pairs.

Figure 4.24: Spacing of text and blocks



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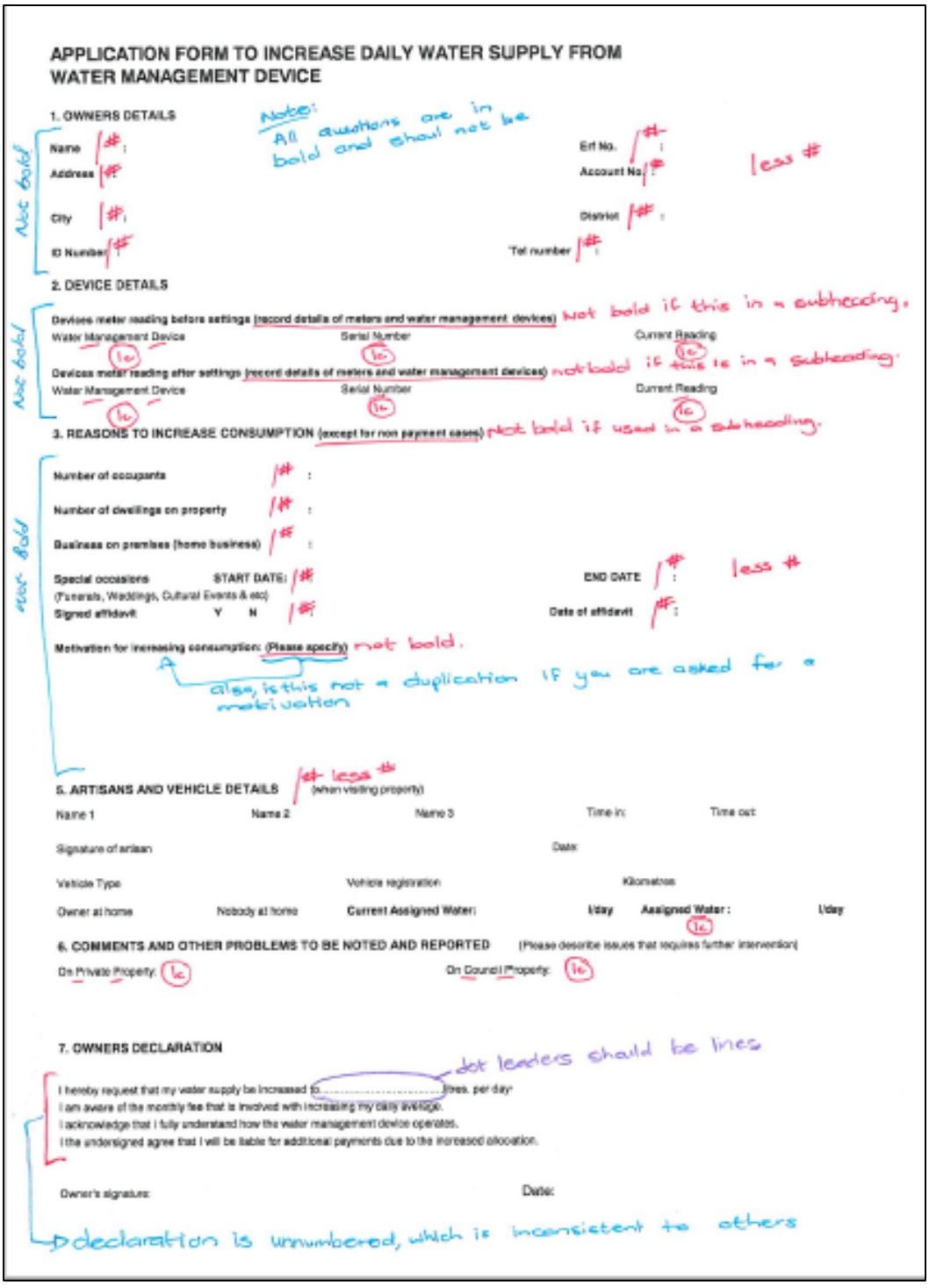
### 4.8.2 *Textual analysis*

In Figure 4.25 below, the textual analysis of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device shows the annotated mark-up of text found in the form.

Figure 4.25: Textual analysis of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device



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The text in Form 4 is difficult to read with the majority of the text in bold that affects the fluidity of reading in addition to capitalising every word in Section 2.

What is different on this form compared to the other forms, is that most of the text is written out in clauses and sentences and does not just rely on words, for example, 'Special occasions' has text below it that gives examples: *(Funerals, Weddings, Cultural Events & etc).* The form author makes use of a writing style that conflicts with the rules set out in the CCT language style guide with the use of ampersands (&).

Based on the content analysis, only section 1, the motivation under section 3 and the Owner's declaration of Section 7 relates to the information a customer would need to complete. Although certain sections clearly state who should complete it such as 'Section 5 Artisans and vehicle details (when visiting property)', it is not visually clear which sections are for the officials and which are for the customer.

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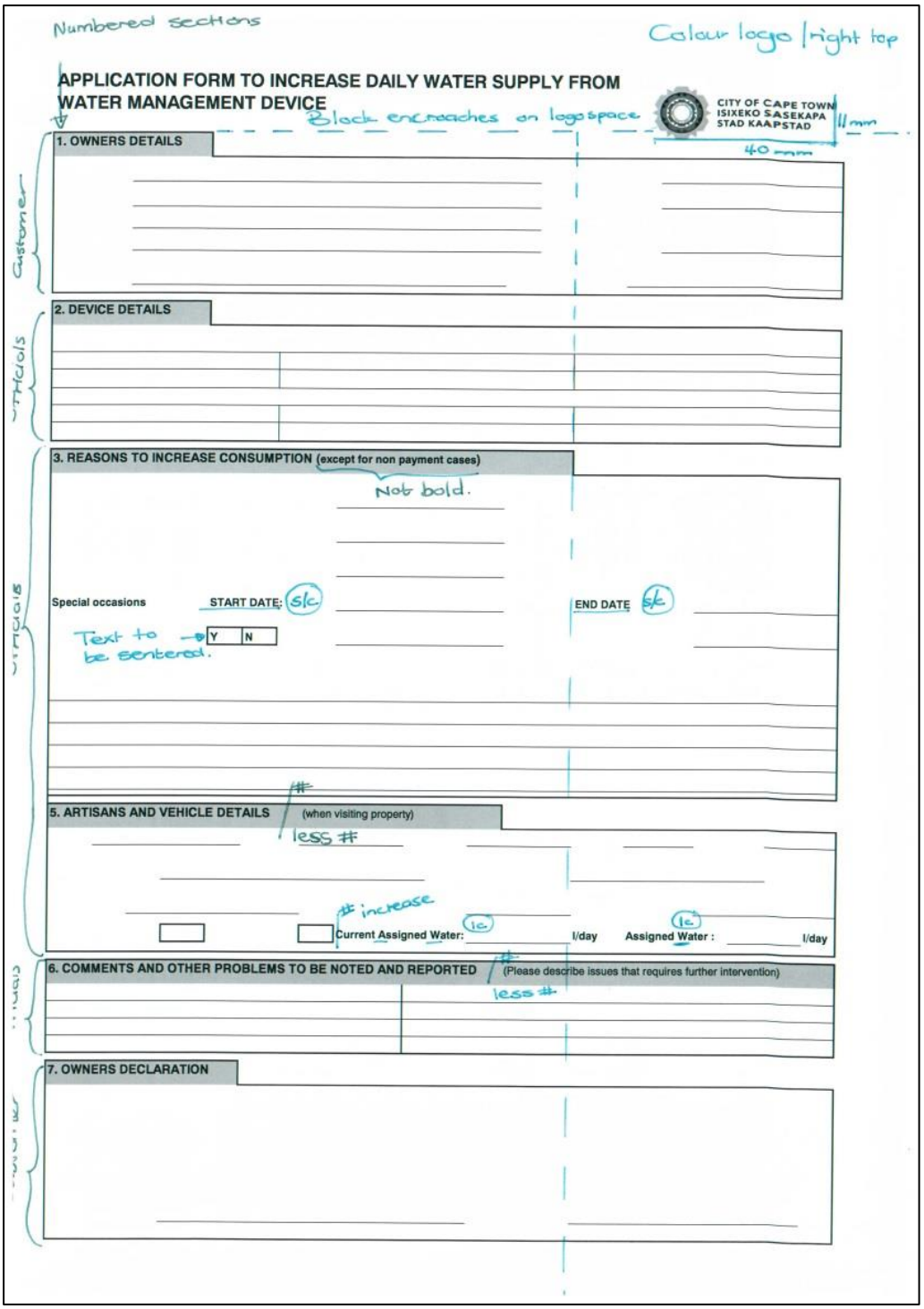
### *4.8.3 Visual analysis*

In Figure 4.26 below, the textual analysis of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device shows the annotated mark-up of non-textual elements found in the form.

Figure 4.26: Visual analysis of the Application form to increase daily water supply from a water management device



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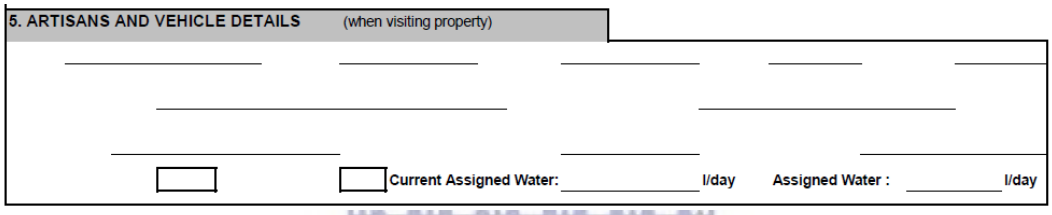
Beyond the word choices highlighted in the previous section, the visual comparison between this form and the 'Application for the installation water management device' form (Annexure B) shows that there are no design or visual similarities between them in terms of framing, typography and layout. These two forms are however contextually linked to each other through the use of the word '*water management device'*.

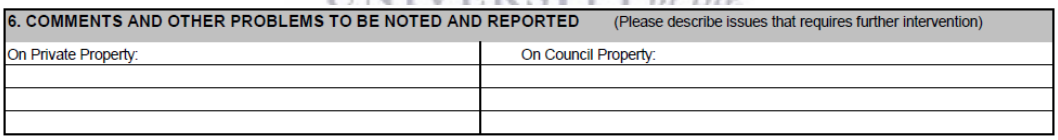
Although the author makes use of closed blocks, the blocks on the form are mostly irregular shaped due to the inclusion of the grey section header into the frame of the block as illustrated in Figure 4.27 below.

Figure 4.27: Irregular shaped blocks




This is, however, not universally applied, as the lined block of subsection 6 again has a regular shape as illustrated in Figure 4.28 below.

Figure 4.28: Lined block

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## *4.9 Summary of findings*

What I have found is that both textual and non-textual elements are equally important in how the forms in my sample communicate. The problem, however, lies with the compositionality of the form as a two dimensional space. There are four key components that contribute to this problem, namely: sequencing, clustering or grouping, relatedness and completeness of information.

The groupings of questions are similar to following a conversation, where a person has to stay within the discussion before moving on to the next question in the conversation. A person simply cannot jump in or ahead by presenting a new topic or question before closing off the discussion (on forms the question) before it. The same 'conversational' rule applies to forms.

In order for the reader to follow the 'conversation' or text flow on a form, each question has to logically follow the question before it or within the same sectional grouping or cluster. The sequence in which the information is provided on the page layout affects how completely or readily accessible the information is to the reader.

A summary of my finding as indicated in 4.1 – 4.3 is as follows:

### *4.9.1 Page layout*

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The most important purpose of framing or page layout is to define what the customer needs to read and where they have to participate. Similarly, the text placed on the outside of placeholder blocks creates the separation between official and reader/customer.

The analysis of the four forms gave me insight into their visual composition as A4 sized documents within a two dimensional space. Visually the page is divided into two areas, the header containing the branding and corporate information and the interactional space for customers as indicated in Figure 4.29 on page 96.



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Figure 4.29: Interactional frame

The interactional space is made up of text and placeholder blocks, using a variety of sized blocks and makes use of lines, dot leader, and solid lines, thick or thin lines. Although lines and blocks are not defined in the visual language guide, it is complimentary to the visual identity of the CCT.

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### *4.9.2 Corporate identity as a header*

As stated before, although the brand identity/logo falls within the page frame of the document, it does not fall within the interaction frame or space used by the customer. The logo is only one element of the brand identity and is located within the header of the page layout as illustrated in Figure 4.29 above.

On the application forms analysed, the brand identifier or logo is only placed on the first page; subsequent pages rely only on the typography and placeholder blocks to show consistency and coherence within the same form.

What is interesting to note, of the 8 metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, only two of cities have a multilingual logo, namely City of Cape Town and Mangaung



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Municipality. Both cities make use of a visual element combined with textual elements, and reflect the three primary languages of their provinces in their logo. In addition to the English written name of the City of Cape Town, they also use Xhosa and Afrikaans as illustrated in Figure 4.30 below.

Figure 4.30: Metropolitan municipality with a multilingual logo

What I do find interesting about the language order in their logo is that in none of the census information is English the dominant language of the province. The municipality places a strong emphasis on their language policies which stipulates the official municipal languages and administrative languages to be used. As a lexical style choice, the placement of English above all other languages still points to the historical prominence where only English and Afrikaans had officials (high level) status as a higher ranking language than isiXhosa.

Within the CCT visual language (corporate identity or branding) guide it clearly defines which logo to use and where it should be placed on all forms of external communication and documents, with the exception of forms.

All four forms in this study used the full colour rosette and text logo as indicated in Figure 4.30 above. All four forms analysed had the CCT logo within the header space of the form. Two forms had the logo on the left top corner and two had the logo on the top right corner of the A4 page. Based on my findings, none of the forms in this study complied with any corporate guidelines on the permission to use, usage and placement of the logo within the header or footer of the layout.

### *4.9.3 Page Flow*

Based on the genre and modality (GeM) framework, forms have both a page-flow and a text-flow that make use of the entire two-dimensional layout space to organize its contents. Only through the use and combination of the various modes within the framing of the document does a form become identifiable as a form.



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What stood out for me is that currently no author or form custodians within the municipality have access to desktop publishing software. Therefore, they do not have access to the visual language style guide. Compared to the language style guide and plain language guidelines, all officials have access to these documents. It is therefore useful to take a look at the index of the municipality's language style guide, which aims to provide officials with the acceptable standards and norms used by the city in their written communication. The style guide addresses the following topics:

- Active and passive language
- Word choices
- Spelling (British English)
- Punctuation
- Abbreviations, and the caution to not use abbreviations on forms besides those contained in a standard dictionary

The index of the style guide (see Figure 4.31 on page 99) gives a complete breakdown of all the standardisation officials have to pay attention to when creating any forms.

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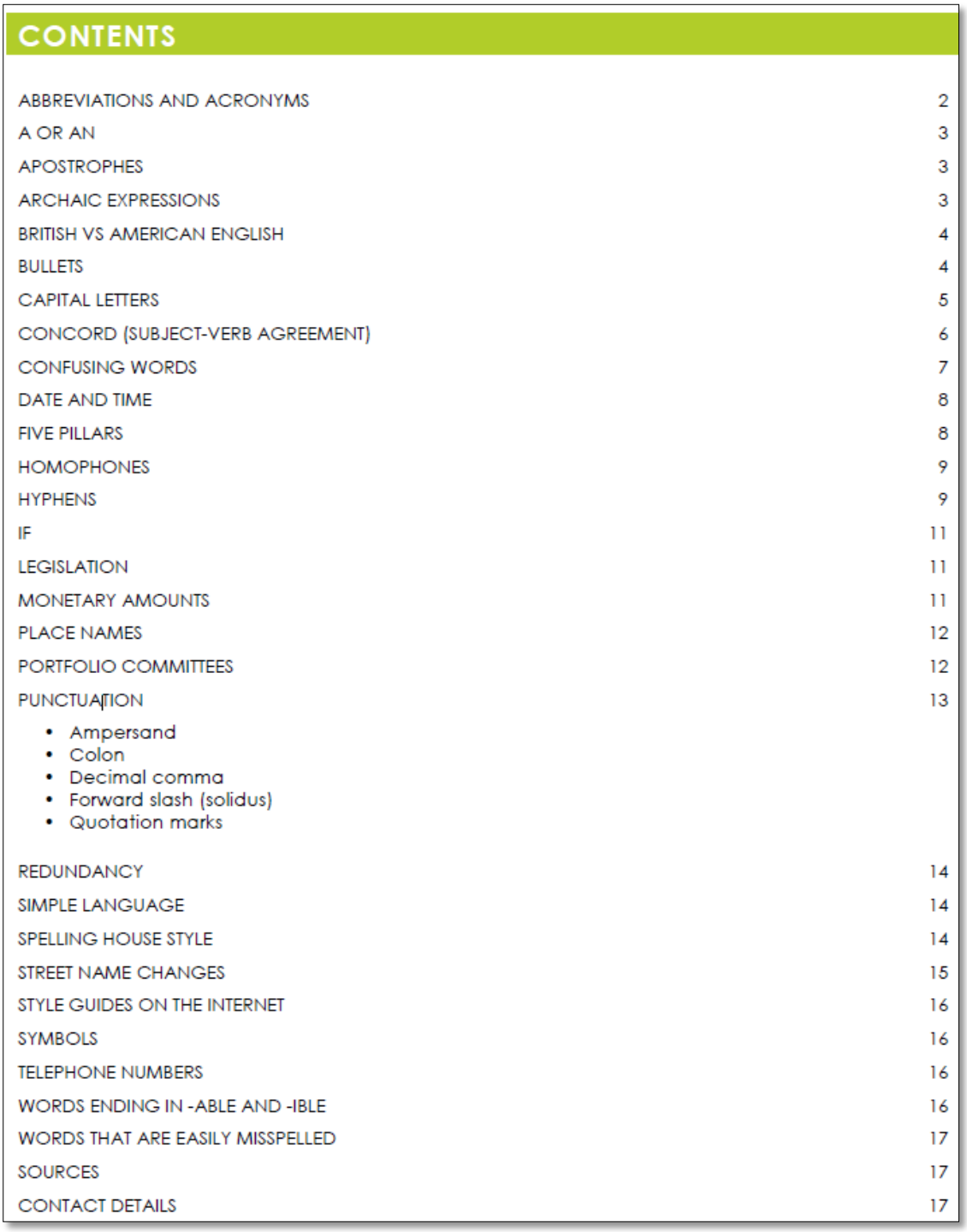
Figure 4.31: Extract from the CCT Language Style Guide



CONTENTS


ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS 2
A OR AN 3
APOSTROPHES 3
ARCHAIC EXPRESSIONS 3
BRITISH VS AMERICAN ENGLISH 4
BULLETS 4
CAPITAL LETTERS 5
CONCORD (SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT) 6
CONFUSING WORDS 7
DATE AND TIME 8
FIVE PILLARS 8
HOMOPHONES 9
HYPHENS 9
IF 11
LEGISLATION 11
MONETARY AMOUNTS 11
PLACE NAMES 12
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES 12
PUNCTUATION 13
- Ampersand
- Colon
- Decimal comma
- Forward slash (solidus)
- Quotation marks

REDUNDANCY 14
SIMPLE LANGUAGE 14
SPELLING HOUSE STYLE 14
STREET NAME CHANGES 15
STYLE GUIDES ON THE INTERNET 16
SYMBOLS 16
TELEPHONE NUMBERS 16
WORDS ENDING IN -ABLE AND -IBLE 16
WORDS THAT ARE EASILY MISSPELLED 17
SOURCES 17
CONTACT DETAILS 17


### *4.9.4 Text flow*

The Western reading system, information is read, left to right and top to bottom. This reading style has a significant impact on how forms are structured in the South African context. The text start on the left and is read from top to bottom. This also has an influence on the grouping of related items.



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Beyond the left top corner placement of branding and logo usage, the Corporate Communication unit only had stylistic recommendations about the consistency in the use of fonts or typography.

### *4.9.5 Typography*

All text together with their size, spacing, indentation, and font type in terms of the visual design is referred to as the typography. As indicated previously, the font on its own does not constitute the full typography and by using text within a grey block as part of the framing of a section, this shifts their function from purely textual to visual.

Walker (2014) suggests that there is a gap that can be filled by fostering a collaboration between authors and designers (who use typography) and applied linguists, which would have a significant impact on the linguistic aspects of language if it can be facilitated. The typography has an impact on the reader, therefore it must be considered as a vital component of the written language by non-expert designers or creators of forms.

The CCT has two official fonts, AvenirNext and Century Gothic as illustrated in Figure 4.32 below. The latter of the two is an open font that comes with Microsoft products and could be used by anyone in the organisation. AvenirNext font family, however, is a Macintosh product, or could be bought for designers working in a Microsoft environment. It clear that the intention is not for departments to produce externally facing documents without oversight. Documents that are checked by the various role-players in the production process should comment on the size of fonts and font type used on forms.

Figure 4.32: Standard font/typography

I find it problematic that the only typography addressed in the language style guide is the use of capital letters, while the use of the other three variations is excluded. The influence of these variations on text length is shown in Table 4.4 on page 101.



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Table 4.4: Impact on text length based on typography changes

| | |
|---|---|
| Lower case | the number we can use to contact you. |
| Sentence case | The number we can use to contact you. |
| Capitalisation of every word | The Number We Can Use To Contact You. |
| Upper case | THE NUMBER WE CAN USE TO CONTACT YOU. |

Typography affects the readability of a form, as typography guides the reader through the page- and text-flow of the document by strategically using 'UPPER CASE and lower case' text.

Based on my analysis, the municipalities continuously default to 'Sentence case' but this is also not consistent on the same form or even amongst the four forms from the City of Cape Town's Water and Sanitation Department.

### *4.9.6 Function of headings*

Headings (uppercase text) are used to break the form into smaller/micro spaces with information that relates to the heading.

It is important to remember that the reader does not look at the information in the same as the way person who created it. The framing helps the reader to focus on what is important to them. Although this have not been tested, the function of sectional headings is to provide the reader with a quick scanning method of which sections to complete, before they return and attend to the questions as textual element and the placeholder blocks for their responses or answers.

Common mistakes on forms can be avoided if a form within the municipal environment displays some form of consistency across their whole collection. It can also be that readers approach forms over-confidently or are familiar with the content and therefore skip over important text and placeholders. Their reliance stems from their understanding of section headings. Therefore, section headings should be present on all forms, to be concise but not cryptic in order to help visually literate readers not to skip important sections. This would also be of great benefit to readers who are not necessarily optimally visually literate to follow the natural text and document flow.



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### *4.9.7 Language use*

In my analysis I have found that language use on form must be able to create meaning and comprehension for the customer must be paramount. Therefore every lexical choice should be consistently applied in order to be viewed as semiotic within the frame of a municipal form. Although the language services unit does not always provide an oversight role on every form, the attempt at standardising the language used on forms should be influenced by them before any workshops or training within the rest of the organisation can take place.

As stated in section 3.2.3 on plain language and in section 4.1.2 about the role of the language services unit's responsibility extends beyond language use, they have to also assist with the implementation of South Africa's Language Policies on a local government level by promoting language diversity.

Prior to the discussion about what the visual language on forms entail, neither the language practitioners nor the productions officers from Corporate Communication regarded these as important or part of their scope of work.

### *4.9.8 Impact of role-players on meaning making*

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I am concerned about the disconnect between policies, guidelines and the municipal systems act, as these guiding documents are not new; they have been in existence for 5 or more years, yet they have not been incorporated into every possible sector of the municipality. From a language policy viewpoint, the fact that multilingualism is not actively integrated or promoted in entry documentation such as forms should be raised as a red flag.

Additionally, not all officials in the municipality are burdened with their obligation of writing in plain language or extending language equality across all three languages. Although the reasons for this may be varied, I am convinced by the research finding that officials either do not know about the language policies, language services unit or they think that it is too complex to create documents in all three languages.

Martin and Waring (2018:1302) who have studied the impact of governmentality within hospitals as social institutions found that when experts, similar to the role-players highlighted in my study, fail to integrate their functions in the creation



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process, the discourse exuded as a result has far reaching implications for the customers and society. These experts *"…silence is problematic given a desire to understand not just the construction of the texts of government but their (perhaps inconsistent, incomplete) impact on subjects, organisations and communities."* (Martin and Waring, 2018:1302)

What is clear is that the form creation process is not a function that can be covered by one person or group of individuals, even from the same department. The creation of forms should be seen as a collaborative process whereby each role-player contributes their expertise about the textual and non-textual elements used on the form and their knowledge about the ideal reader or customer.

### *4.10 Summary*

In summary, this chapter has provided an analysis of the textual and non-textual elements within the structure of the form itself. The lack of consistency across all four forms analysed highlighted the need for a structured approach to form creation as a process, not only as the output into a form format. Additionally, the impact it has on the reader should always be at the forefront regardless of who creates the form.

### *4.11 Conclusion*

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As stated in the conceptual and analytical frameworks, the analysis in this case study is limited. It was an attempt to lay the foundation for a more systematic analysis on a much larger scale across all language groups and governmental organisations involved in the genre of governmental forms. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the case study, conclusions and recommendations for further research.



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# CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of a summary of the case study of the selected municipal application forms. This chapter outlines the key contributing factors that affect the readability of any document within the form genre, such as their typography, lexicon and style choices. This is followed by a discussion on a few salient points that have implications for the findings, pitfalls and the larger relevance for people wanting to apply the findings in any other governmental sectors. Since the case study is limited, there are a number of future research opportunities highlighted in the closing of this chapter.

## *5.1 Summary of Findings*

Based on Social Semiotic and Visual Communication frameworks, the most significant finding of this study was that the non-textual aspects of the forms are just as significant as the word choices of the textual components. Every element contained on a form is part of the sign system we all use to navigate our environment. Although text and placeholder block might be considered arbitrary, these two elements are the sign system used within the layout of a form. Together they create a reading map which indicates the text flow from one line to the next that can be decoded by the reader.

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Jarrett and Gaffney (2009:5) have focused on three layers when considering governmental forms, namely relationship, conversation and appearance. I can concur with what they have found, namely that the root of the problem lies in the relationship between the reader and the task imposed upon them of having to complete a form. Their opinion is that most governmental forms have an unpleasant appearance, and although the way a form looks can be improved, it does not make people understand them any better.

Critical discourse analysis highlighted the power of discourse embedded in a seemingly insignificant document such as a form. Martin and Waring (2018:1303) state that *"…the power of the discourse itself resides not in its abstract, 'textual' state, but in its reconstitution through the actions and interactions of the professional community. It follows that governmental power, such as it is, thus rests on its ongoing reconstruction through the intersubjective work of those it seeks to affect."* With each of the



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components used on forms, it requires of the reader completing the form to have some background knowledge or a certain level of literacy to complete it.

It is important to state that any standardisation effort by a municipality on a metropolitan scale could break down barriers and promote the use the three official languages within their province. When the readers are empowered through the use of their mother-tongue or plain language, it creates a sense of inclusivity and accessibility to services.

Section 5.2 provides a list of recommendations on exactly how this inclusivity can be achieved.

## *5.2 Recommendations arising from this study*

A thorough textual analysis of forms revealed that most forms make use of a shared lexicon that can be even more simplified by applying the principles of plain language. By creating a word list or sentence options for the application forms in all three languages, would result in standardised content on municipal forms. This will relieve the burden on language practitioners by not having to continuously translate the same content for every form custodian.

Almost all municipal forms including those analysed in this study and to my knowledge (with a few exceptions) have these two sections: Section A: Property and Accounting Information, and Section B: Personal Information.

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### *5.2.1 Typography*

Another factor is the way people read, which sometimes also extends beyond just the visual literacy component to include reading attention and form-fatigue, which is the reader losing interest due to the length of the form. From a visual language or stylistic view as discussed in Chapter 4, and illustrated in Figure 4.32 on page 100 the importance of a standardised approach to typography cannot be more emphasized.

### *5.2.2 Lexicon*

All the words that make up the lexicon or language of forms have been compiled into a first draft of a training manual for the municipality which is attached as annexure F. The first draft has been amended by the language practitioners of the city's language



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service unit. They have also translated the key words list into all three languages of the identified Section A: Property and Accounting Information and Section B: Personal Information text. This training manual will be workshopped with all individuals who have been identified within the city as form custodians.

What was interesting to note on during the standardisation discussion was the issue around proper punctuation as the majority of text on a form is used in a statement format. A form is basically the closure of a dialogue where the reader responds to the question by completing the sentence. The use of a question mark (?) should therefore be reserved for full sentences and/or open-ended questions where the text is on a separate line to the open-ended text blocks, or items that are listed as bullets.

Although the texts on forms are used in a statement format, it does not have a full stop (.) at the end of a sentence, unless it is a grammatically complete sentence, this is both an observation and a recommendation. Text that is used in a statement format that is followed by a placeholder block does not contain a full stop. Should the text form a complete sentence followed by a placeholder block on the next line, then the sentence should contain a full stop.

### *5.2.3 Style choices*

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The function of the form normally determines the sequence of information provided. Each section must be considered as a complete block of questions that can function on its own. This is a recommendation for translated/multilingual forms, and is not something that stems from the analysis of the English forms in this study. Since the text in all three languages differs, the design must be worked out to accommodate all three languages without affecting the text block length.

This will ensure that when the language on the form is changed, the layout of the page remains stable and the length does not change significantly. However, if this variation in text length is too big, then the closest alternative would be to break and stack the longer clauses and phrases directly beneath each other. As a non-native speaker, I would like to caution creators of forms in three languages to not simply break up isiXhosa sentences at inappropriate points as this can affect the understanding of the text and readability of text.



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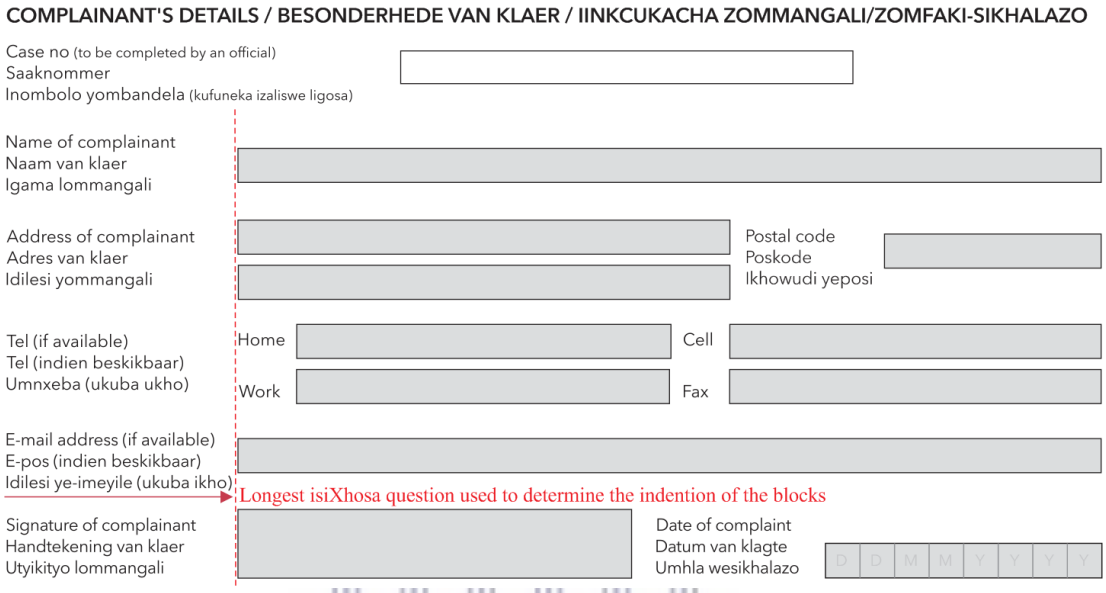
The example as presented in Figure 5.1 below was taken from the Development Management contravention complaints form of the city, which was designed as an affidavit in three languages:

Figure 5.1: Example of Indentation of blocks based on the length of the longest words in a sectioned text block




In Figure 5.1, the alignments of the blocks are determined by the length of the longest word among the three languages. Although application for services forms are not created in three languages on the same page as in the example, the same principle applies for each individual language form version. This is more for aesthetics and to ensure that the form visually looks the same without placing over emphasis on one language.

Beyond the findings and determinations from the various style guides, all conscious choices going forward must be documented for future form custodians and/or added to the municipality's the language guideline and their corporate identity style guide.

## *5.3 Implications of the findings*

Three important implications arise from this study:

Firstly, from a production perspective, it is clear that there is not one person who can cover all three components of form production, viz. functional content, linguistic elements and stylistic elements. The form compilation manual (Annexure F) is intended



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to try and merge the three streams into one, as the language practitioner cannot comment on stylistics, nor can the corporate designers effectively comment on the language used. Then above all, the average governmental official who provides the contextual or functional content on the form is even in a worse position than the other two. Yet, in most cases, the production process is left solely in the hands of average governmental officials with no oversight by the language practitioner or the corporate design team as experts in their fields.

Secondly, throughout the research I was made aware that the municipality and customer are frequently locked in an unequal power relationship struggle. It would be far more beneficial if the power balance could shift to a more equal partnership, in which for example, all customers had access to forms in their home languages.

Finally, based on the analytical framework of both genre and critical discourse analysis within the larger theoretical framework of Social Semiotics, there are a number of inventory rules that must be established according to Van Leeuwen (2005:54). The most important of these five rules are *"impersonal authority",* of which there are two "*the authority of the written word and the authority of tradition*". In his view the rules cannot be sustained if there is no sense of order and regulation.

I have a slightly different view on this, as within the municipal environment, the language policy and style guides are seen as formal policy and procedure documents which are approved by a full Council meeting, therefore as long as the municipality exists, these rules will exist. The concern I share with Van Leeuwen (2005) is that there must be consequences built into these explicit rules of the language policies and that documents, such as forms cannot be implemented without the control and execution of officials. This is what gives the formal language policies their power, as they become the rules on which the reader and customers depend. The municipality, therefore, should act within its power to enforce language diversity and inclusivity.

### *5.4 Larger relevance of this study*

Every conceivable business uses a type of form throughout their daily operations, no matter how small. The research scope may be enlarged to a much wider scale to all governmental sectors and possibly extend to private sector businesses. The uniqueness of forms is sufficient to be a separate genre, but they are located within the wider genre



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of documents; there will be commonalities, but also specific question sets that are unique to their business.

The finding within the genre of forms can be simplified into training material for teachers that can be added to the national curriculum in grades 8 to 12 under Home Language or First Additional Language or to the optional subject called Business Studies. At tertiary level the course content of subject modules in the school of government or languages can be expanded upon. We need to expand the awareness and knowledge about the integral and far reaching implications forms have on our modern lives. It touches every aspect of our modern existence without us consciously paying attention to these forms of dialogue.

## *5.5 The future of forms and the timeliness of implementation*

According to Van Leeuwen (2005:53), the rules of semiotic systems are not just objectively there, but become the natural law or act as procedures hardwired into documentation and technology. Through the establishment of a municipal document genre of forms, one thing will remain true for forms; *"They are made by people, they come in different kinds, and they change over time."* (Van Leeuwen, 2005:53) This view is also shared by Kress (2015:49) who rightly says that what is currently regarded as 'normal' is rapidly changing.

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Municipalities are progressively changing to online form submission, whether it is a scanned copy of the application form, digital forms with electronic signatures or fully functioning online forms. The complexity only deepens as the paper versions are not even fully understood, yet the changeover has started. The CCT is at the forefront in South Africa with online form submission within the municipal sector.

What I have observed during the research process is that in the future websites would have evolved the tools, as the websites have become the hosts of the forms and the form itself. A good example of this is the South African Revenue Services (SARS) eFiling system, the ITR12 Income tax return for individuals, were a paper based form that have now been imbedded in the website environment but with the look and feel of a paper based form to ensure taxpayers trusted the system. As a means of collecting data, forms have essentially remained the same linguistically. The word choices have



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not changed, even though they no longer have the same cost for printing space constraints that paper-based forms previously had. Even with the cost/print constraints of space eliminated, it has now become more about word economy than space allowance/economy.

As Van Leeuwen (2005:55) points out, the new form of writing required in a digital environment or online forms will need the making and enforcing of rules. These rules of, choice of words, correct spelling and their grammatical composition will be automatised. In South Africa with a large market not having access to computers, but more and more users having access to applications (apps) on their smart phones. It is therefore imperative that the textual components be fully understood before being migrated or moved over onto a digital platform. The word choices we make on paper based forms will become even more important for readability and adaption, such as switching of preferred languages within phone apps.

In other words, although the form base is consistent, once it is completed no two forms are alike as the co-creator (customer) still has to fill in the blanks.

## *5.6 Conclusion: future studies into form linguistics*

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The benefit of Applied Linguistics is that we have the opportunity to address real world problems by having followed a disciplined approach to facilitate the change. Although change can be effected from this study, there is still more room for longitudinal and empirical based studies into the language of forms from both a production and reception point of view. This would be necessary before compiling and creating a final training manual.

In order to have a better understanding of form literacy, linguistic variations and literacy in general, it would be of benefit for future research to look at which point a person stops reading. In other words, where in the sentence has a person gained enough information to move over to action and are ready to start writing. With word recognition, some words or clauses on forms would shift to become ‘sight words’ as a sign. These sight words are not read but rather identified with its full meaning within the context.



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By creating a register of sight words that can be taught to customers in order to eliminate confusion and empty spaces, the impact of form length and form-fatigue on the person completing can be mitigated.

The benefit of identifying these sight words, through the use of eye-tracking technology would be of great benefit in order to move forward as organisations and municipalities are entering the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In South Africa, the digital divide will play a significant role until the technology has become more accessible or affordable across all levels of society. Schwab from WEF (2019) placed the responsibility for change on people in power positions and the formal citizens to *"shape a future that works for all by putting people first, empowering them and constantly reminding ourselves that all of these new technologies are first and foremost tools made by people for people."* In South Africa, the digital divide will play a significant role until the technology has become more accessible or affordable across all levels of society.

Research from a plain language perspective focused on the reception of municipal forms would involve getting people's opinions about the content and layout of forms without necessarily completing the forms or adding personal information that would involve the POPI Act. These findings from a reception study would be able to affirm the findings and recommendations of this study.

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The key for governmental change is therefore more in line with Baxter (2008:6) in reflecting Holsanova's view that: *"there is little technical difficulty nowadays in producing more helpful documents; the question is simply one of awareness and willingness"*. The commitment to clear communication between governmental organisations and their public relies on this willingness to change.



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[i] http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/acts/2000-002.pdf
[ii] http://www.capetown.gov.za/City-Connect/Apply/Municipal-services/Water-and-sanitation/Apply-for-a-sanitation-charge-adjustment
[iii] http://www.capetown.gov.za/City-Connect/Apply/Municipal-services/Water-and-sanitation/Apply-for-a-Water-Management-Device
[iv] http://www.capetown.gov.za/City-Connect/Apply/Municipal-services/Water-and-sanitation/Apply-for-exemption-from-water-restrictions
[v] http://www.capetown.gov.za/City-Connect/Apply/Municipal-services/Water-and-sanitation/Apply-for-a-water-consumption-increase



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| APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SANITATION VOLUMETRIC CHARGE (for domestic cluster) | CITY OF CAPE TOWN ISIXEKO SASEKAPA STAD KAAPSTAD |
|---|---|
| WDMS_P-R_Form_011 | External Copy |

**Ref No:** [ ] **DATE** [ ]

**A . ORGANISATION OCCUPYING THE PREMISES**

Name: [ ]

Name of Building [ ] Street No: [ ]

Name of Street: [ ]

Suburb: [ ] Erf: [ ]

Telephone: [ ] Fax: [ ]

E-Mail: [ ]

Nature of operations carried out on the premises: [ ]

**B. REGISTERED OWNER OF PREMISES**

Registered Name: [ ]

Postal Address: [ ]

Postal Code: [ ]

Post Box: [ ] Post Office: [ ] Postal Code: [ ]
Telephone: [ ] Fax: [ ]

E-Mail: [ ]

WESTERN CAPE

**C. RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

Name: [ ]

Position: [ ] Telephone Number: [ ]

**D. WATER CONSUMPTION DETAILS**

Water Account reference number(s): [ ]

No of persons on site: [ ] No.of residential units [ ]
Water Meter(s) Numbers: [ ]

Is water from any other source (eg. River, borehole, Treated Effluent or recycled Water) used on the premises? **Yes/No** [ ]
If yes what is this water used for?: [ ]
If this alternative source is used for irrigation, give size of area irrigated: [ ] $m^2$
Is municipal water used to irrigate a garden or sport field on site? **Yes/No.** [ ]
If yes give size: [ ] $m^2$
Is water evaporated on site? **Yes/No** [ ]
How is water evaporated? Give details including volume evaporated: [ ]



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| APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SANITATION VOLUMETRIC CHARGE (for domestic cluster) | CITY OF CAPE TOWN ISIXEKO SASEKAPA STAD KAAPSTAD |
|---|---|
| WDMS_P-R_Form_011 | External Copy |

**APPLICANT** I, the Undersigned [ ]

(***First name and surname in full in block letters***)

a) Apply for an adjustment of the commercial/industrial sanitation tariff.
b) State that the information supplied supports my claim and is to the best of my knowledge true and correct.
c) Undertake to inform the City of Cape Town should the conditions on site change.
d) Understand that this adjustment can never be below the domestic sanitation tariff.

Signature:…….. Date: [ ]

| **FOR OFFICE USE ONLY ( PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DATE RECEIVED:** [ ] | | **APPLICATION REF No** [ ] | | |
| **DATE OF INSPECTION:** [ ] | | **BY:** [ ] | | |
| Date | Readings | Consumption | Readings | Consumption |
| [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| Sub Total | | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| Total | | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| Daily Average [no of days] | | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

***ASSESSMENT***

| | Total | % |
|---|---|---|
| No of people [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| Garden [ $m^2$ x 2l $m^2$ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| Evaporated - [Details] | [ ] | [ ] |
| **TOTAL % OF MUNICIPAL WATER TO BE CHARGED AS SANITATION CHARGE** | [ ] | [ ] |
| ***TO BE COMPLETED BY ADMIN. SECTION*** | | |
| **DATE OF ASSESSMENT LETTER:** [ ] | | |
| **APPLICANT NOTIFIED: YES/NO** [ ] **BILLING NOTIFIED: YES/NO** [ ] | | |

**Name of Inspector/Senior Inspector:** [ ] **Signature** ……

**Name of Senior/Principal Inspector/SPO:** [ ] **Signature** ……



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CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

# APPLICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE

## SERVICE LOCATION

| Premises address: | Postal Address: |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| erf No: | Previous Address: |
| | |
| | |
| | |

☐ INDIGENT ☐ WATER REBATE
☐ NEW CONNECTION ☐ CHANGE CONVENTIONAL METER

## BUSINESS PARTNER DETAILS

Business Partner Number
Contact Account Number

☐ Owner
☐ Tenant

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir/other)
First/Company Name
Second Name
Surname

Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

Correspondence ☐ English ☐ Afrikaans ☐ Xhosa

Type of Identification

SA Identity Document ☐ Old SA Identity Document ☐ Company Reg ☐
CC Reg No ☐ Trust Number ☐ Passport ☐

Identification Number
Telephone Number
Date of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY)
Nationality
Name of Employer

Marital Status
☐ MOCP
☐ Single
☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed
☐ Muslim Rights
☐ MICP

## CONTACT PERSON

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir/other)
First Name
Second Name
Surname
Telephone No

## CREDIT MANAGEMENT

Outstanding Debt? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Installment Plan created? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Created By ..... Signature ..... Date .....

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## SERVICE DETAILS FOR SUPPLY OF WATER

Date supply is required ...Day.... /...Month... / ...Year..... Set the device too.

☐ 350 litres/day ☐ 650 litres/day

Agreed amount for device and Installation R.....
(material no. 100002476)

☐ 450 litres/day ☐ 800 litres/day

☐ .....litres/day

## DECLARATION

**I acknowledge that:**

1. The Water Management Device will be installed at the premise adress provided.

2. I understand how the Water Management device works and that it will be set on the agreed daily allocation.

3. I will be able use the aloacation as agreed with the City of Cape Town and carry over whatever I do not use on the day to the others days for up to 1 calendar month.

4. If I run out of water :

a) I Fully understand what to do.
b) I understand I will be without water for the rest of that day.
c) I understand that I will only be able to find out the reason why I ran out the next day.
d.) I will not tamper with the Device.

Owner Name ..... Signature ..... Date .....

Tenant Name ..... Signature ..... Date .....

For and on behalf of the City of Cape Town .....

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WESTERN CAPE



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CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

**UTILITY SERVICES: WATER & SANITATION**
**FINANCE AND COMMERCIAL**

## APPLICATION TO INCREASE THE CURRENT QUOTA OF WATER SUPPLIED

**Please forward the completed application form to Water@capetown.gov.za or hand it in at your closest Municipal Contact Centre.**

**Motivation**

Reason/Motivation for this increase: _____

_____

_____

_____

List all household names and identification numbers: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**A COMPULSORY SITE INSPECTION WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION PROVIDED.**

### Affidavit

I, the undersigned, …… (Full name) ID No. ……, do hereby under oath state the following:

1. The facts contained in this affidavit are within my personal knowledge, unless indicated otherwise, is to the best of my belief true and correct.

2. I am an adult male/female residing at: ……

…… (Insert full address)

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3. Work Phone No …… Cell No……

Email Address ……

4. I am the owner of the property situate at: ……

…… (Insert full address)

**Water Account Number** …… (Insert account number and attach copy of account to this Affidavit)

5. I confirm that there are ……(Insert number of persons in words and figures) normally accommodated at the above property.

**SIGNATURE OF DEPONENT** _____

I certify that the deponent has acknowledge that he/she knows and understands the contents of this Affidavit which was signed and sworn to before me at ……on this date ……, the regulations contained in Government Notice No. R1258 of 21July, 1972 and R1648 of 19Aug, 1977 having been complied with.

**COMMISSIONER OF OATHS** _____

FULL NAMES…… CAPACITY……

ADDRESS…… AREA……
Enquiries can be addressed to Water@capetown.gov.za

**For Office Use: Approved/Declined:** _____

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Annexure D

# APPLICATION FORM TO INCREASE DAILY WATER SUPPLY FROM WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE

CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

## 1. OWNERS DETAILS

**Name** : _____ **Erf No.** : _____

**Address** : _____ **Account No.** : _____

_____

**City** : _____ **District** : _____

**ID Number** : _____ **Tel number** : _____

## 2. DEVICE DETAILS

**Devices meter reading before settings (record details of meters and water management devices)**

| Water Management Device | Serial Number | Current Reading |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

**Devices meter reading after settings (record details of meters and water management devices)**

| Water Management Device | Serial Number | Current Reading |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

## 3. REASONS TO INCREASE CONSUMPTION (except for non payment cases)

**Number of occupants** : _____

**Number of dwellings on property** : _____

**Business on premises (home business)** : _____

**Special occasions** **START DATE:** : _____ **END DATE** : _____
(Funerals, Weddings, Cultural Events & etc)

**Signed affidavit** **Y** **N** : _____ **Date of affidavit** : _____

**Motivation for increasing consumption: (Please specify)**

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## 5. ARTISANS AND VEHICLE DETAILS (when visiting property)

Name 1 _____ Name 2 _____ Name 3 _____ Time in: _____ Time out: _____

Signature of artisan _____ Date: _____

Vehicle Type _____ Vehicle registration _____ Kilometres _____

Owner at home ☐ Nobody at home ☐ **Current Assigned Water:** _____ **l/day** **Assigned Water :** _____ **l/day**

## 6. COMMENTS AND OTHER PROBLEMS TO BE NOTED AND REPORTED (Please describe issues that requires further intervention)

| On Private Property: | On Council Property: |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |

## 7. OWNERS DECLARATION

I hereby request that my water supply be increased to……litres. per day
I am aware of the monthly fee that is involved with increasing my daily average.
I acknowledge that I fully understand how the water management device operates.
I the undersigned agree that I will be liable for additional payments due to the increased allocation.

Owner's signature: _____ Date: _____

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| Electronic file name | FORM 1 - Application for adjustment of Sanitation Charge.pdf<br>Annesure A | Notes | FORM 2 - Application for WM device Form.pdf<br>Annexure B | Notes | Form 3 - Application form-Increase quota of water supplied.pdf<br>Annexure C | Notes | FORM 4 - Application_for_consumption_increase_English.pdf<br>Annexure D | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Form data | **APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SANITATION VOLUMETRIC CHARGE (for domestic cluster)** | Form title | **APPLICATION FOR THE INSTALLATION WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE** | Form title | **APPLICATION TO INCREASE THE CURRENT QUOTA OF WATER SUPPLIED** | Form title | **APPLICATION FORM TO INCREASE DAILY WATER SUPPLY FROM WATER MANAGEMENT DEVICE** | Form title |
| | WDMS_P-R_Form_011 | | Version: WS_FC_V05112015 | | Please forward the completed application form to Water@capetown.gov.za or hand it in at your closest Municipal Contact Centre. | Instruction | 1. OWNERS DETAILS | Section heading, numbered and capitalised |
| | External Copy | | SERVICE LOCATION | Section heading | Motivation | Sub heading in the only frame on the page | Name: | |
| | Ref No: | | Premises address: | : used | Reason/Motivation for this increase: | | Erf No. | |
| | DATE | | Postal Address: | : used, capitalised all words | List all household names and identification numbers: | List of names to including the applicant. | Address : | |
| | A . ORGANISATION OCCUPYING THE PREMISES | Section heading | Previous Address: | : used, capitalised all words | A COMPULSORY SITE INSPECTION WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION PROVIDED. | End of closed block | Account No. : | |
| | Name: | | erf No: | : used, inconsistency of capitalisation | Affidavit | Freestanding text, bold as if it's a section heading | City | |
| | Name of Building | | INDIGENT | Font indicates section heading but is a tick box heading | I, the undersigned,<br>…… (Full name) ID No. ……, do hereby under oath state the following: | First line of affidavit with dot leaders | District | |
| | Street No: | | WATER REBATE | Font indicates section heading but is a tick box heading | 1. The facts contained in this affidavit are within my personal knowledge, unless indicated otherwise, is to thebest of my belief true and correct. | Second line of affidavit as part of the numbered sequence. | ID Number : | |
| | Name of Street: | | CHANGE CONVENTIONAL METER | Font indicates section heading but is a tick box heading | 2. I am an adult male/female residing at:<br>……<br>……..<br>……<br>…… (Insert full address) | Third line of affidavit as part of the numbered sequence, however includes numbered sequence. | Tel number : | |
| | Suburb: | | NEW CONNECTION | Font indicates section heading but is a tick box heading | 3.Work Phone No …….. Cell No……..<br>Email Address<br>…… | Fourth line of affidavit as part of the numbered sequence, however includes numbered sequence. | 2. DEVICE DETAILS | Section heading, numbered and capitalised |
| | Erf: | | BUSINESS PARTNER DETAILS | Section heading | 4.I am the owner of the property situate at:<br>……<br>…<br>……<br>…… (Insert full address)<br>**Water Account Number** ……(Insert account number and attach copy of account to this Affidavit) | Fifth line of affidavit as part of the numbered sequence, however includes numbered sequence. The words **Water Account Number** is highlighted in bold text. | Devices meter reading before settings (record details of meters and water management devices) | |
| | Telephone: Fax: | | Business Partner Number | | 5.I confirm that there are ……(Insert number of persons in words and figures) normally accommodated at the above property. | Sixth line of affidavit as part of the numbered sequence, however includes numbered sequence. | Water Management Device | |
| | E-Mail: | | Contact Account Number | | SIGNATURE OF DEPONENT<br>_____ | 2nd person to write and sign | Serial Number | |
| | Nature of operations carried out on the premises: | | Owner | *Are you a tenant or property owner?* Is used on other forms, could be used here. | I certify that the deponent has acknowledge that he/she knows and understands the contents of this Affidavit which was signed and sworn to before me at ……on this date ……, the regulations contained in Government Notice No. R1258 of 21July, 1972 and R1648 of 19Aug, 1977 having been complied with. | This text actually aligns itself to the commissioner of oaths text to follow, but appears to follow the deponent's signature. | Current Reading | |
| | B. REGISTERED OWNER OF PREMISES | Section heading | Tenant | *Are you a tenant or property owner?* Is used on other forms, could be used here. | COMMISSIONER OF OATHS<br>_____ | 3rd person to write and sign | Devices meter reading after settings (record details of meters and water management devices) | |
| | Registered Name: | | Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir/other) | | FULL NAMES…… | | Water Management Device | |
| | Postal Address: | | First/Company Name | | CAPACITY…… | | Serial Number | |
| | Postal Code: | | Second Name | | ADDRESS…… | | Current Reading | |
| | Post Box: | | Surname | | AREA…… | | 3. REASONS TO INCREASE CONSUMPTION (except for non payment cases) | Section heading, numbered and capitalised |
| | Post Office: | | Gender | | Enquiries can be addressed to Water@capetown.gov.za | | Number of occupants | |
| | Postal Code: | | Male | | For Office Use: Approved/Declined: _____ | | Number of dwellings on property | |
| | Telephone: | | Female | | | | Business on premises (home business) | |
| | Fax: | | Correspondence | | | | Special occasions | |
| | E-Mail: | | English | | | | (Funerals, Weddings, Cultural Events & etc) | |
| | C. RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL | Section heading | Afrikaans | | | | START DATE: | |
| | Name: | | Xhosa | | | | END DATE | |
| | Position: | | Type of Identification | | | | Signed affidavit | |
| | Telephone Number: | | SA Identity Document | | | | Y | |
| | D. WATER CONSUMPTION DETAILS | | Old SA Identity Document | | | | N | |
| | Water Account reference number(s): | | Passport | | | | Date of affidavit | |
| | No of persons on site: | | Identification Number | | | | Motivation for increasing consumption: (Please specify) | |
| | No.of residential units | | Telephone Number | | | | 5. ARTISANS AND VEHICLE DETAILS (when visiting property) | Section heading |
| | Water Meter(s) Numbers: | | Date of Birth | | | | Name 1 | Office use only |
| | Is water from any other source (eg. River, borehole, Treated Effluent or recycled Water) used on the premises? | | (DD/MM/YYYY) | | | | Name 2 | Office use only |
| | Yes/No | | Nationality | | | | Name 3 | Office use only |
| | If yes what is this water used for?: | | Name of Employer | | | | Time in: | Office use only |
| | If this alternative source is used for irrigation, give size of area irrigated: | | Company Reg | | | | Time out: | Office use only |
| | $m^2$ | | CC Reg No | | | | Signature of artisan | Office use only |
| | Is municipal water used to irrigate a garden or sport field on site? | | Trust Number | | | | Date: | Office use only |
| | Yes/No. | | Marital Status | | | | Vehicle Type | Office use only |

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| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| If yes give size: | | MOCP | | | | Vehicle registration | | Office use only |
| $m^2$ | | Single | | | | Kilometres | | Office use only |
| Is water evaporated on site? | | Divorced | | | | Owner at home | | Office use only |
| Yes/No | | Widowed | | | | Nobody at home | | Office use only |
| How is water evaporated? Give details including volume evaporated: | | Muslim Rights | | | | Current Assigned Water: | | Office use only |
| APPLICANT I, the Undersigned | | MICP | | | | l/day | | Office use only |
| (First name and surname in full in block letters) | | CONTACT PERSON | Section heading | | | Assigned Water : | | Office use only |
| a) Apply for an adjustment of the commercial/industrial sanitation tariff. | | Title | | | | l/day | | Office use only |
| b) State that the information supplied supports my claim and is to the best of my knowledge true and correct. | | (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr/Rev/Prof/Sir/other) | | | | 6. COMMENTS AND OTHER PROBLEMS TO BE NOTED AND REPORTED | | Section heading, numbered and capitalised |
| c) Undertake to inform the City of Cape Town should the conditions on site change. | | First Name | | | | (Please describe issues that requires further intervention) | | Office use only |
| d) Understand that this adjustment can never be below the domestic sanitation tariff. | | Second Name | | | | On Private Property: | | Office use only |
| Signature: | | Surname | | | | On Council Property: | | Office use only |
| Date: | | Telephone No | | | | 7. OWNERS DECLARATION | | Section heading, numbered and capitalised |
| FOR OFFICE USE ONLY ( PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY) | | CREDIT MANAGEMENT | Section heading | | | I hereby request that my water supply be increased to.....litres. per day | | |
| DATE RECEIVED; | | Outstanding Debt? | | | | I am aware of the monthly fee that is involved with increasing my daily average. | | |
| APPLICATION REF No | | Yes | | | | I acknowledge that I fully understand how the water management device operates. | | |
| DATE OF INSPECTION: | | No | | | | I the undersigned agree that I will be liable for additional payments due to the increased allocation. | | |
| BY: | | Installment Plan created? | | | | Owner's signature: | | |
| Date | | Yes | | | | Date: | | |
| Readings | | No | | | | | | |
| Consumption | | Created By | | | | | | |
| Readings | | Signature | | | | | | |
| Consulption | | Date | | | | | | |
| Sub Total | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | SERVICE DETAILS FOR SUPPLY OF WATER | Section heading | | | | | |
| Daily Average no of days | | Date supply is required | | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT | | ...Day.... /...Month... / ...Year..... | | | | | | |
| Total | | Set the device too. | | | | | | |
| % | | 350 litres/day | | | | | | |
| No of people | | 450 litres/day | | | | | | |
| Garden | | 650 litres/day | | | | | | |
| $m^2$ x 2l $m^2$ | | 800 litres/day | | | | | | |
| Evaporated - Details | | .....litres/day | | | | | | |
| TOTAL % OF MUNICIPAL WATER TO BE CHARGED AS SANITATION CHARGE | | Agreed amount for device and Installation R..... | | | | | | |
| TO BE COMPLETED BY ADMIN. SECTION | | (material no. 100002476) | | | | | | |
| DATE OF ASSESSMENT LETTER: | | DECLARATION | | | | | | |
| APPLICANT NOTIFIED: | | Owner Name | | | | | | |
| YES/NO | | Signature | | | | | | |
| BILLING NOTIFIED: | | Date | | | | | | |
| YES/NO | | Tenant Name | | | | | | |
| Name of Inspector/Senior Inspector: | | Signature | | | | | | |
| Signature | | Date | | | | | | |
| Name of Senior/Principal Inspector/SPO: | | For and on behalf of the City of Cape Town | | | | | | |
| Signature | | I acknowledge that: | | | | | | |
| | | 1. The Water Management Device will be installed at the premise adress provided. | | | | | | |
| | | 2. I understand how the Water Management device works and that it will be set on the agreed daily allocation. | | | | | | |
| | | 3. I will be able use the aloacation as agreed with the City of Cape Town and carry over whatever I do not use on the day to the others days for up to 1 calendar month. | | | | | | |
| | | 4. If I run out of water: | | | | | | |
| | | a) I Fully understand what to do. | | | | | | |
| | | b) I understand I will be without water for the rest of that day. | | | | | | |
| | | c) I understand that I will only be able to find out the reason why I ran out the next day. | | | | | | |
| | | d.) I will not tamper with the Device. | | | | | | |
| | | Application for WM device Form 05112015 | | | | | | |
| | | Page 2 of 2 | | | | | | |
| | | Version: WS_FC_V05112015 | | | | | | |

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CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

# City of Cape Town

# DOCUMENT TYPE: FORMS

# Compilation manual

DRAFT

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Version 1, dated 11/02/2019

http://etd.uwc.ac.za/

## 1. INTRODUCTION

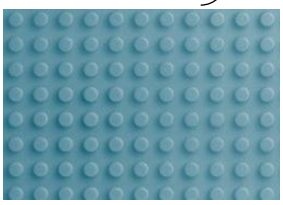
People need to complete some form or another on a regular basis. As a municipality we have to pay attention to the structure, layout and format of forms as besides its functional value, a form may be the first actual interaction with our citizens.

Forms standardise and clearly set out the information required and save time by enabling the customer to write less. A definition of what a form is might help you when compiling forms:

### 1.1. Basic elements of forms

> *A form is a document with fixed text (that does not change), textual instructions and spaces (also called fields or placeholders) in which to write information. Forms, when completed, may be a statement, a request, an order or used to gather information that is to be distributed to several departments within the same organisation.* (Geldenhuys 2018)

**Building blocks of forms**



| **Textual** (written text) | **Non textual** (visual or design) |
|---|---|
| • Words, clauses and sentences<br>• Punctuation<br>• Choice of case and size of lettering<br>• Bullets<br>• Lines<br>• Flow of wording between sets of questions | • Branding<br>• Font<br>• Typography (bold / colour)<br>• Page breaks<br>• Headings<br>• Blocks and place holder boxes<br>• Flow between question sets |

**Digitization**

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### 1.2. Function forms

Forms can be classified according to their functions into one of the following categories:

| Form type | Function of the form |
|---|---|
| Application (for services) forms | There may or may not be a previous record. It may be the start of a new process or interaction between the municipality and the citizen. These forms are linked to paid services and are public records. |
| Information or registration forms | The information does not constitute a long-term record or is linked to any information recording system. It is used to supply information as a form or receipt. These are generally kept for non-paying services. |
| Survey forms as part of consumption or services studies | A survey form has the same structure as an information form, with the difference being that the information is kept for a specific purpose and once the report is finalised and the statistics recorded, the form or information it contains is discarded. |
| Accounting forms | These forms have to conform to legislation and regulations such as the Financial Intelligence Centre Act (38 of 2001) (FICA) and The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-related Information Act (RICA) which apply to a person as a legal entity. These generally require another governmental institution or regulated industry to consent or confirm their status. |
| Affidavits and declarations | Structured as a form, but it is more a statement of affairs from the outside person towards the organisation. The form is used to standardise the responses in terms of the legal requirements. |
| Update of personal records forms | A general information or biometrics update of information that pertains to the person as an individual or as part of a partnership. |

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The advantages of forms are that they provide consistent information, with a visual reminder of what information still has to be supplied. Not only is it convenient, it also requires less information to be written. Uniformity during the processing period will ensure that information collected in writing can be re-examined later. In a digital format, forms also offer greater security by including a signature field to allow someone to take responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided.

## 2. TEXTUAL ELEMENTS OF FORMS

### 2.1. Standard font and typography

The City has two official fonts, AvenirNext and Century Gothic.

Font: Century Gothic
Font: AvenirNext

The latter of the two is an open font that comes with Microsoft products and could be used by anyone in the organisation. AvenirNext font family however is from Macintosh and is only bought for designers working in a Microsoft environment permitted to design forms.

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WESTERN CAPE

Typography affects the readability of a form, as typography guides the reader through the page layout; therefore use the 'UPPER CASE and lower case' text as indicated. Also see Figure 5 for the placement and correct font sizes on the visual design layout of the CCT form template.

### 2.2. Choice of case on forms

The only typography addressed in the language style guide is capitalisation for the sake of uniformity in the City, as typography is not strictly a language issue. Note the effect of the different cases on text length:

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**Figure 1: Impact on text length based on typography changes**

| | |
|---|---|
| Upper case | THE NUMBER WE CAN USE TO CONTACT YOU. |
| Lower case | the number we can use to contact you. |
| Sentence case | The number we can use to contact you. |
| Capitalisation of every word | The Number We Can Use To Contact You. |

## 2.3. Titles and headings

The title or heading of the form must not be more than two lines of text, therefore succinct but not cryptic. Capitalised letters (ALL CAPS) are reserved for the heading of the form (CAPS AND BOLD, 13pt) which would always be written between to horizontal lines (0.2 pt); an example of the heading is below:

**APPLICATION TO LEASE / BUY MUNICIPAL LAND**

Section headings start with the word **SECTION** and an alphabet letter (**A – Z**) in capital letters (CAPS AND BOLD, 9pt), an example of a section heading is below:

**SECTION A: BUSINESS INFORMATION**

Alphabet letter (A – Z) listing was chosen as a form should not have more than 26 separate sections.

If the form fits on a single A4 sheet, then the word **Section A (to Z)** is not used in the section heading.

The use of subsection headings is to create an internal structure within the blocks of questions. Subsection headings can be numbered numerically and are written in sentence case (9pt) not bold. All other text should be left-aligned using sentence case only.

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## 2.4. Words, sentences and clauses

In order not to translate all the basic form content into all three languages, two sections have been standardised.

- SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION
- SECTION B: PROPERTY AND ACCOUNTING INFORMATION.

It should be emphasis that not all forms require all the fields listed on the next couple of pages. These should be seen as building blocks within the structure of a form.

All other sections (Section C onwards) are unique to the purpose of the form. Each department uses a specific set of questions depending on the function of the form.

**Note:** During the workshop, it would be useful to everyone to compile a list of words and sentence that are only used within that department.

**Words**

Single words that stand alone or act as a whole sentence:

| **SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION** | | | **Usage notes** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **English** | **Afrikaans** | **isiXhosa** | |
| Surname | Van | Ifani | List surname before name. |
| Maiden name | Nooiensvan | Ifani yaphambi komtshato | Use only when applicable |
| Full name(s) | Volle name | Amagama agcweleyo | |
| Title | Titel | Itayitile | Do not provide a list of title abbreviations; provide an open block for customer to write their title. |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Name of applicant | Naam van aansoeker | Igama lomfaki-sicelo | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Business name | Besigheidsnaam | Igama leshishini | |
| Company name | Maatskappynaam | Igama lenkampani | |
| Registered name | Geregistreerde naam | Igama elibhalisiweyo | |
| Trading name | Handelsnaam | Igama lorhwebo | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Identity number | Identiteitsnommer | Inombolo yesazisi | Only use the abbreviated form, **ID,** if there is not enough space. |
| Passport number | Paspoortnommer | Inombolo yepasipoti | |
| Nationality | Nasionaliteit | Ubumi | |
| Telephone number | Telefoonnommer | Inombolo yomnxeba | Only use the abbreviated form, **Tel.** is there is not enough space. |
| Fax number | Faksnommer | Inombolo yefeksi | Only use the abbreviated form, **Fax** is there is not enough space.<br><br>The City is moving away from facsimiles. Use only if the department still supports this communication method. |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Email | E-pos | I-imeyile | |
| Cell number | Selfoonnommer | Inombolo yeselula | Only use the abbreviated form, **Cell** If there is not enough space. |
| Contact number | Kontaknommer | Inombolo yoqhagamshelwano | Contact number can be used instead of **Tel. or Cell** Should a second number be requested, then use Alternative contact number. |
| Alternative contact number | Alternatiewe kontaknommer | Inombolo yoqhagamshelwano engenye | |
| Contact person | Kontakpersoon | Umntu emakuqhagamshelwane naye | |
| Gender | Geslag | Isini | |
| Female | Vroulik | Ibhinqa | |
| Male | Manlik | Indoda | |
| Date of birth | Geboortedatum | Umhla wokuzalwa | |
| Date | Datum | Umhla | |
| **DD/MM/YYYY** must be used to signify the order in which the numbers / digits are to be provided in digit blocks. | | | |
| DD/MM/YYYY | DD/MM/JJJJ | DD/MM/YYYY | English and Xhosa DD/MM/YYYY, Afrikaans, DD/MM/JJJJ. |

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| SECTION B: PROPERTY AND ACCOUNT INFORMATION | | | Usage notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **English** | **Afrikaans** | **isiXhosa** | |
| Address | Adres | Idilesi | Unless you want two addresses, then only use **Address**. CCT only has two official sub-categories: Physical address and Postal address |
| Physical address | Straatadres | Idilesi yendawo | |
| Postal address | Posadres | Idilesi yeposi | |
| Building name | Gebounaam | Igama lesakhiwo | The text must be preceded by **Postal address** or **Physical address** as a subheading. |
| Suburb | Voorstad | Ummandla | |
| City | Stad | ISixeko | |
| PO Box / Private bag | Posbus / Privaatsak | PO Box / Private bag | |
| Postal code | Poskode | Ikhowudi yeposi | |
| Premises address | Perseeladres | Idilesi yesakhiwo | |
| Previous address | Vorige adres | Idilesi yangaphambili | |
| Street name | Straatnaam | Igama lesitrato | |
| Street number | Straatnommer | Inombolo yesitrato | Do not abbreviate |

Note: On surveys the order has to be Street name and number to minimise capture errors and enhance data analysis by using the common street name as denominator amongst data sets.

Physical address is better to use, as not all property in South Africa is technically in a street, but still has a physical space they occupy. (Currently the City's Corporate GIS Department is investigating the coordinate system called "Just three words")

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Owner address | Eienaar se adres | Idilesi yomnini | Please note that there is no plural indication. A preceding sentence must also be included. |
| Tenant address | Huurder se adres | Idilesi yomqeshi | |
| Ratepayer address | Belastingbetaler se adres | Idilesi yomhlawuli-ndleko | If you are using owner's address, do not also use ratepayer's address as they should be the same address. |
| Applicant address | Aansoeker se adres | Idilesi yomfaki-sicelo | |
| Municipal account holder address | Munisipale rekeninghouer se adres | Idilesi yomnini-akhawunti kaMasipala | Only use **Municipal account holder** together with **Municipal account number.** |
| Municipal account number | Munisipale rekeningnommer | Inombolo ye-akhawunti kaMasipala | |
| Erf / erven number(s) | Erfnommer(s) | Inombolo/iino mbolo zeziza | Only use the abbreviated form, **Erf / Erven no**, if there is not enough space. |
| Erf | Erf | Isiza | Only use **Erf** and **Erven** separately in circumstances, such as Subdivisions when one parent erf are portioned into many erven. |
| Erven | Erwe | Iziza | |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Farm number | Plaasnommer | Inombolo yefama | |
| Extent | Grootte | Ubukhulu | |
| Business partner details | Sakevennoot-besonderhede | Iinkcukacha zehlakani kwezoshishino | |
| Business partner number | Sakevennootnommer | Inombolo yehlakani kwezoshishino | |
| Business partner number as reflected on your municipal account | Sakevennootnommer soos wat op dit op u munisipale rekening voorkom | Inombolo yehlakani kwezoshishino nje ngoko ibonakalisiwe kwi-akhawunti yakho kamasipala | |
| Reference number | Verwysingsnommer | Inombolo yereferensi | Do not abbreviate |
| VAT number | BTW-nommer | Inombolo yerhafu-ntengo | Do use the abbreviated form of number |
| Municipal account number | Munisipale rekeningnommer | Inombolo ye-akhawunti kaMasipala | |
| Account number | Rekeningnommer | Inombolo ye-akhawunti | |
| Signature | Handtekening | Isignitsha | |

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**Complex sentences**

| SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION | | | Usage notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **English** | **Afrikaans** | **isiXhosa** | |
| Marital status | Huwelikstatus | Ubume bomtshato | Only two official sub-categories, see the notes below |
| Married | Getroud | Utshatile | |
| Not married | Ongetroud | Awutshatanga | |

Marital status was only legally required on forms until 1984 when legislation required a female to disclose her marital status as the husband had certain marital rights which did not extend to the wife automatically.

Forms which are not linked to a contractual obligation between the municipality and the individual as legal entity would only require the person to indicate whether they are **married** or **not married**.

Should the form carry a contractual obligation, then the various marital classifications in the table below are important. There are more than 4 options; therefore the suggestion is to ask the person to rather specify according to which regime they are married. There are no acronyms for these options, so they have to be written out in full.

| English | Afrikaans | isiXhosa |
|---|---|---|
| Married – In community of property | Getroud binne gemeenskap van goedere | Utshate ngohlobo lokwabelana ngezinto (eyakho yeyam) |
| Married – Out of community of property | Getroud buite gemeenskap van goedere | Utshate ngohlobo lokuba kungabelwana ngazinto (eyakho yeyakho) |
| Antenuptial contract | Huwelikskontrak | Ikhontrakthi yaphambi komtshato |
| Antenuptial agreement | Huweliksooreenkoms | Isivumelwano saphambi komtshato |
| Muslim marriage | Moslemhuwelik | Umtshato wobu-Muslim |
| Traditional marriage | Tradisionele huwelik | Umtshato wesiNtu |

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The housing registration form asks customers to also indicate their dependants.

| English | Afrikaans | isiXhosa |
|---|---|---|
| Married with dependants | Getroud, met afhanklikes | Utshate unabo abaxhomekeke kuwe |
| Married without dependants | Getroud, sonder afhanklikes | Utshate ungenabo abaxhomekeke kuwe |
| Single with dependants | Enkel, met afhanklikes | Awutshatanga unabo abaxhomekeke kuwe |
| Single without dependants | Enkel, sonder afhanklikes | Awutshatanga kwaye awunabo abaxhomekeke kuwe |

| SECTION B: PROPERTY AND ACCOUNT INFORMATION | | |
|---|---|---|
| **English** | **Afrikaans** | **isiXhosa** |
| Are you the tenant or the property owner? | Is jy die huurder of eienaar van die eiendom? | Ingaba ungumqeshi okanye ungumnini propati? |
| Tenant | Huurder | Umqeshi |
| Owner | Eienaar | Umnini |
| Choose your preferred language for correspondence: | Dui jou voorkeurtaal vir korrespondensie aan: | Khetha ulwimi ongathanda ukuncedwa ngalo: |
| I prefer my correspondence in | Ek verkies korrespondensie in | Ndikhetha ukuncedwa nge- |
| Afrikaans | Afrikaans | I-Afrikansi |
| English | Engels | IsiNgesi |
| Xhosa | Xhosa | IsiXhosa |
| Other, please specify | Ander, spesifiseer asb. | Olunye ulwimi, nceda ulubalule |

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## 3. GENERAL INFORMATION

Although we have provided you with the translation for **Other, please specify**, we ask that you do not overuse the word 'please', rather be direct and specific about what you ask. An example would be: **Other, please specify**. It should just be **Specify** or **Specify other**.

The use of a **colon (:)** at the end of a sentence would be correct in a transcription of a dialogue or preparation of a document other than a form. The use of the colon fulfils a very different function on a form.

The municipality have standardised the use of a colon only as a closed text option for items that are listed as bullets, for example:

Indicate your preferred language for correspondence:

- ☐ Afrikaans
- ☐ English
- ☐ Xhosa

Should the text be written on a single line (in-line text options), the preceding sentence would change to:

I prefer my correspondence in Afrikaans ☐ English ☐ Xhosa ☐

**Note** that the tick box comes after the options in the second example given.

The majority of text on a form is used in a statement format. A form is basically a dialogue where the reader responds to the question by completing the sentence. The use of a **question mark (?)** should therefore be reserved for full sentences and / or open-ended questions where the text is on a separate line to the open-ended text blocks, or items that are listed as bullets.

Although the text on forms is used in a statement format, it does not have a **full stop (.)** at the end of a sentence, unless it is a grammatically complete sentence.

The use of the **forward slash (/)** always means 'or'. Therefore if you are using two options next to each other, as in the example below, please remember to not create a space before and after the forward slash. When there is the question of spacing before and after a slash. Take 'and/or': 'Property owners and/or

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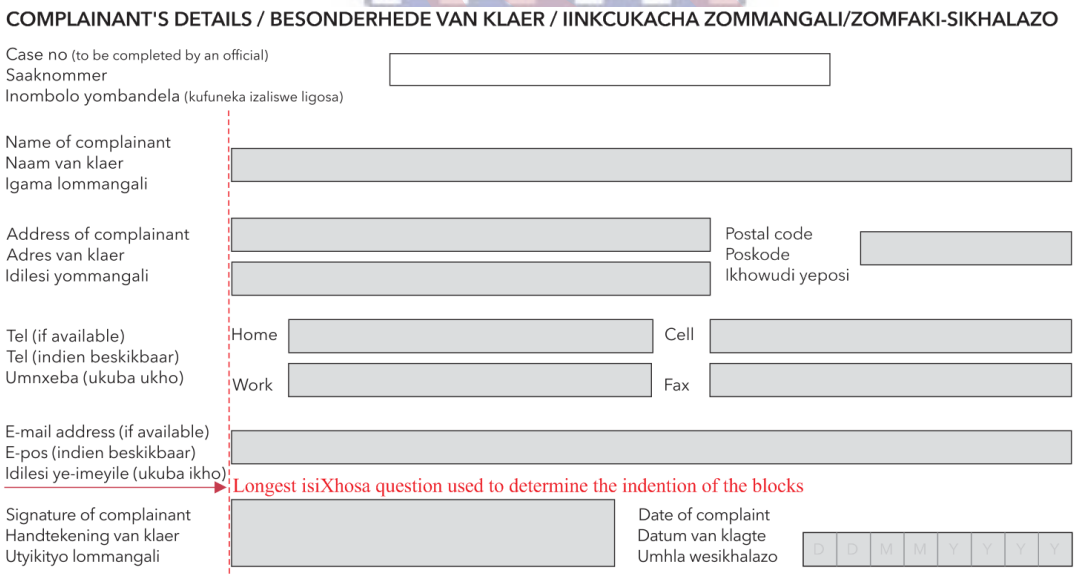
tenants must accept responsibility.' There are no spaces before and after the slash if only one word is used on either side.

However, in cases of more than one word, then leave a space: 'The Blitzboks will be playing at the Cape Town / Coetzenburg Stadium', in other words at one of these stadiums. Brackets and not a forward slash must be used to indicate a plural alternative: 'book(s)'.

Each section must be considered as a complete block of questions that can function on its own. Since the text in all three languages differs, the design must be worked out to accommodate all three languages without affecting the text block length or page layout.

The example below was taken from the Development Management contravention complaints form which was designed as an affidavit in three languages:

**Figure 2: Indentation of blocks**




The alignments of the blocks are determined by the length of the longest text among the three languages. Although application for services forms are created in three languages on the same page, the same principle applies. This is more for aesthetics and to ensure that the form visually looks the same without overemphasising one language.

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The most important compilation note is that no matter what is being done on a form, the key is consistency and uniformity. Work with the reader in mind, and make use of all the departmental and City resources for quality.

**Declaration and affidavits**

On forms containing a declaration or affidavit, each sentence starts on a new line, which has the same effect as numbered lists.

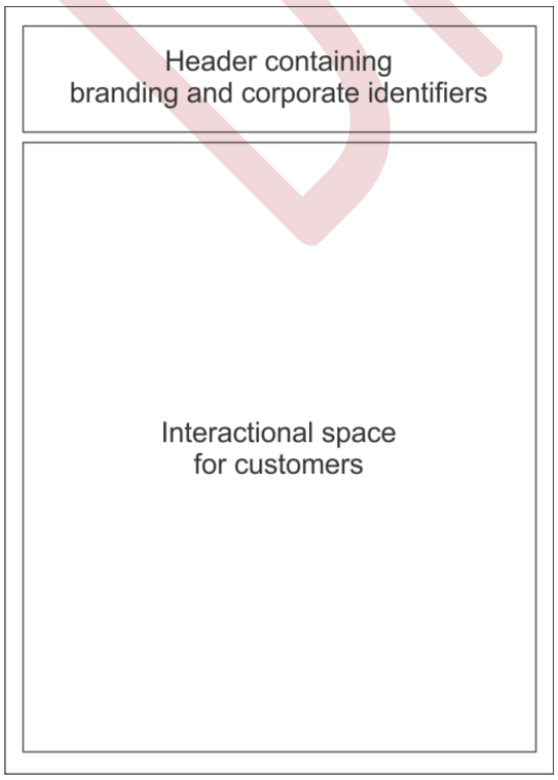
The use of an affidavit that has to be validated by a commissioner of oaths has to be carefully considered to not add to the administrative red tape which involves multiple governmental departments such as SASSA or SAPS.

## 4. NON TEXTUAL ELEMENTS OF FORMS

### 4.1. Page layout

The most important purpose of the page layout is to define what the customer needs to read and where they have to participate by completing placeholder blocks.

Visually representation of page 1 of the City's forms is provided below. The page is divided into two areas, the header containing the branding and corporate information which may not be altered and the interactional space which contains the various sections for customers to complete




**Note:** See Figure 5 for a complete layout of a CCT form.

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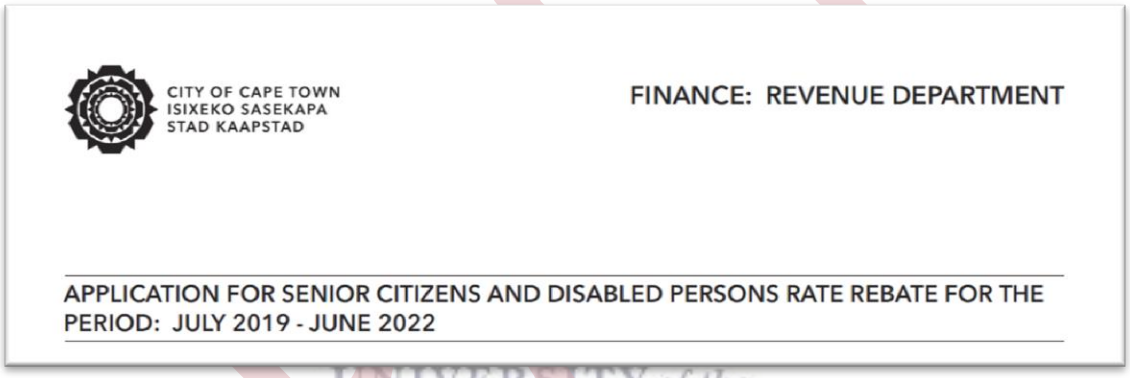
### 4.2. Header

The following was established as the standard header and footers on forms:

- Department name in uppercase, right aligned, and in line with the logo.
- Open space, 3 cm from the top edge of the form.
- A solid horizontal line, 2pt size with the form name in upper case followed by another solid horizontal line.
- The date the form was last amended and form name / number must appear in Century Gothic, 6pt size, 10 mm from the bottom of the page as a footer. (Also see version control in section 4.7)

**Figure 2: Indentation of blocks**

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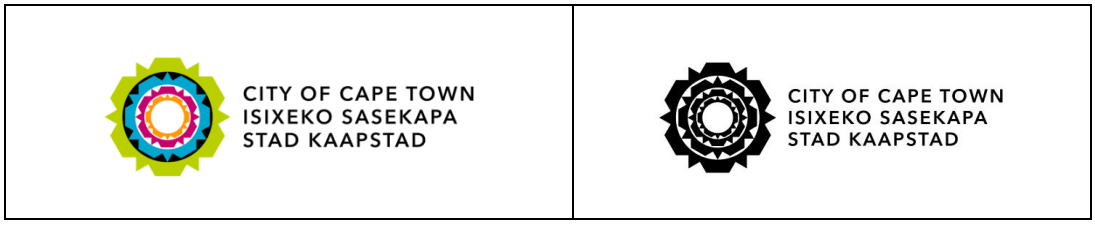
### 4.3. Branding

The City of Cape Town's visual language (Corporate identity or branding) is clearly defined regarding which logo to use and where it should be placed on all correspondence and documents and forms.

The solid black rosette and text logo must be placed in the top left corner of the first page of the application form and not be repeated on any other page of the same document.

**Figure 3: Corporate logo variations**

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The logo and the use thereof is determined by the purpose and on what it is printed. If unsure about the use of the logo, please mail logo@capetown.gov.za.

It was found that when a colour logo appears on documents, the individual feels compelled to print the document or form in colour, while there is no need for it to be in colour.

The use of the black logo is encouraged as not every commercial printer prints true Pantone™ colours or even spot colours. To prevent this distortion, only the black logo is used on forms.

### 4.4. Blocks and placeholder blocks

Placeholder blocks are a minimum of 6 mm high, and tick box dimensions are 6 mm (h) x 5,5 mm (w). CCT's preference selection mark for tick boxes are X or a ✓, no larger than 9pt size.

In most instances, tick boxes precede the words in the tick list as in the example below:

The exception to the ordering a tick box is when the tick box follows a question and provide many options in one sentence, such as in the example below regarding marital status.

**Caution:** Please consider the placement and spacing between the tick box and text carefully as it becomes difficult to read if the spacing changes constantly on one form.

The visual style guide does not make allowance for the use of sectional blocks or frames around text, as these can become visually disturbing if not consistently

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applied on all City forms. There are however some exceptions, such as the return address added at the end of some forms.

The two types of blocks that may be used is a **Closed block** (full page width) with no other lines within the block, or a **Floating block** which does not touch the edge of the page as in the example below:

Mail your completed application form together with the necessary documents to
PO Box 655, Cape Town, 8000 or hand it in at your nearest customer service office or
email it to Rates.Rebate@capetown.gov.za.
If you have any questions regarding this application, please contact us on 0860 103 089.

### 4.5. Numbers within placeholder blocks

The City no longer asks customers to complete forms in block letters therefore all placeholder blocks are open with no text dividing lines. The use of **blocked placeholders** should be restricted to number sequences with an unchangeable number of characters. This also acts as self-checking mechanism for the customer when completing the forms, and the officials when receiving the forms.

**Blocked placeholders** would include identity numbers (13 digits), business partner numbers (11 digits), telephone number (10 digits) or dates (8 digits). The municipality's systems are set up to capture dates in the following eight number sequence: DD/MM/YYYY. The text within placeholders is 8pt size in 20% black text. In English and Xhosa the letters are DD/MM/YYYY and in Afrikaans, DD/MM/JJJJ.

| Date | D | D | M | M | Y | Y | Y | Y |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

The recording of a date of birth in close proximity to the identity number is one of the most common mistakes made on application forms. The reason is that the order would be reversed from the natural sequence of the identity number's 6 number sequence (**CCMMDD** XXXX XXX) for the date of birth compared to when a person writes their date of birth as **DD/MM/CCYY**. The easiest solution would be to ask the date of birth before the identity number as it doesn't require the reader to concentrate on the correct sequencing of information.

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### 4.6. 'Yes / No' within placeholder blocks

The abbreviated Y and N in a tick box is potentially problematic and therefore not recommended to avoid confusion for some readers. 'Yes' and 'No' questions are also absolutes and their use must be carefully considered. If the 'Yes /No' leads to a follow-up question, the question has to be rephrased.

The block dimension is slightly altered to 6 mm (h) x 6,5 mm (w) to type the word out in full. The block dimension is long enough to accommodate the isiXhosa, which is the longest of the three languages.

| **SECTION B: PROPERTY AND ACCOUNT INFORMATION** | | | **Usage notes** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **English** | **Afrikaans** | **isiXhosa** | |
| Are you the bond holder of the property? | Is jy die verbandhouer van die eiendom? | Ingaba nguwe ohlawula ibhondi yale propati? | |
| Yes | Ja | Ewe | Do not abbreviate with Y, N and N/a unless there is not enough space. |
| No | Nee | Hayi | |
| Not applicable | Nie van toepassing nie | Awuchaphazeleki | |
| Unsure | Onseker | Awuqinisekanga | |
| Comments | Kommentaar | Izimvo | |

If the form has long lists of 'Yes/No' questions, make use of a question table with the options at the top of the subsection.

The following example of a question table was taken from the Development Management Conveyancer Certificate:

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**Figure 4: Question table**

**3. LIST OF RESTRICTIVE TITLE CONDITIONS** **Please note:** If any clause is selected, Addendum A needs to be completed for each property.

| Categories | Title deed and clause number of restrictive conditions. Conveyancer to provide details of any necessary interpretation of conditions. | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Title deed number | Clause number | Interpretation |
| Use of land | | | |
| Building lines | | | |
| Height | | | |
| Number of dwellings | | | |
| Bulk floor area | | | |
| Coverage / built upon area | | | |
| Subdivision | | | |
| Servitudes that may be registered over or in favour of the property | | | |
| Other restrictive conditions limiting development | | | |

## 4.7. Version control and footnote

Version control at the bottom of the page is to track the document name and the date it was put into circulation. It also provides an audit trail for the revision and update of these finalised versions. Review of the form should be once annually in July (winter recess) when the new tariffs come into effect or December when the City goes into full recess.

The additional items to be included in the footnote are the LSU reference number provided by Language Services to indicate that the document has been checked and aligned to the CCT style guide, plain language guidelines and conforms to the norms and standards of the City. The letter before the LSU reference number indicates in which financial year the translation was done, the 2019/2020 number starting from 1 July 2019 onwards starts with L0000. The file name as it will be displayed on the City's website and document centre is also included.

Last amended date: 2018.08.30 (K0771) PM001 - Property application form - 30082018

The version control and footnote text is given in 50% grey and not black text.

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### 4.8. Form layout

The city uses A4 portrait page as standard layout. Ideally forms should not be longer than one back-to-back printed A4. Should a form be severely space-constrained, use the abbreviated versions under point. 2.4. Words, sentences and clauses. If the form does become 3 or more pages, please number the page in the same line as the version control and footnote text (50% grey).

An example would be where there is information the customer must know when completing the form, but the officials do not need to re-read it with every application, move this information to the last page of the form or a 3rd page which is set to non-printing pages in Adobe, LiveCycle or Adobe Experience Manager.

### 4.9. Form custodians / Line departments

As form custodians you are the persons tasked with the commissioning, creation, management and maintenance of the forms, and have the key responsibilities for the information contained on the forms.

Your role in the creation process extends beyond the scope of just information management, but also to the protection of brand integrity. Consequently, you need to maintain a good working relationship with the various departments that play a role in ensuring that the forms continuously meet the standards set by the City. You become the link between the various departments and the Digital Communication section when publishing the form online.

### 4.10. Language Services Unit

The language services unit's responsibility extends beyond that of merely language practitioners to also include translation services.

As copy-editors the language practitioners make the necessary amendments and corrections to do with grammar, spelling, language usage and punctuation, and ensure that the house style is adhered to. Copy-editing takes place to ensure clarity, conciseness, comprehensibility and consistency.

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You have to approve the English version of your form text, before you can proceed with the translation from English to Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Always use the reference number you received from the English language edit when communicating your need for the text to be translated. Depending on the length of your document, it may take 30 hours or more.

Proofreading is always seen as a follow-up process whereby the texts are finally approved before implementation on any document or form. The proof-readers will check the proof for errors, omissions, typographical and other obvious errors.

### 4.11. Corporate Communications

Form custodian or departments requesting assistance with form compilation and layout must contact the Production Support Officers in Corporate Communications.

Their function is to oversee and manage the production process which includes the execution of the CCT brand on all outward facing documentation. Every form is produced as a single and standalone product designed by a desktop designer. Not all the designers are internal to the organisation, so clear instructions must be provided on who the ideal customer is.

The Digital Communication (or eCommunication) branch also fall under Corporate Communication, therefore to ensure consistency and proper handover from one branch to the next, it is important to state upfront to the Production Support Officers whether the form will be printed or hosted online. There is no difference in the design phase, but all the actions that are highlighted in section 5 must be taken into account when the form is hosted on the CCT website.

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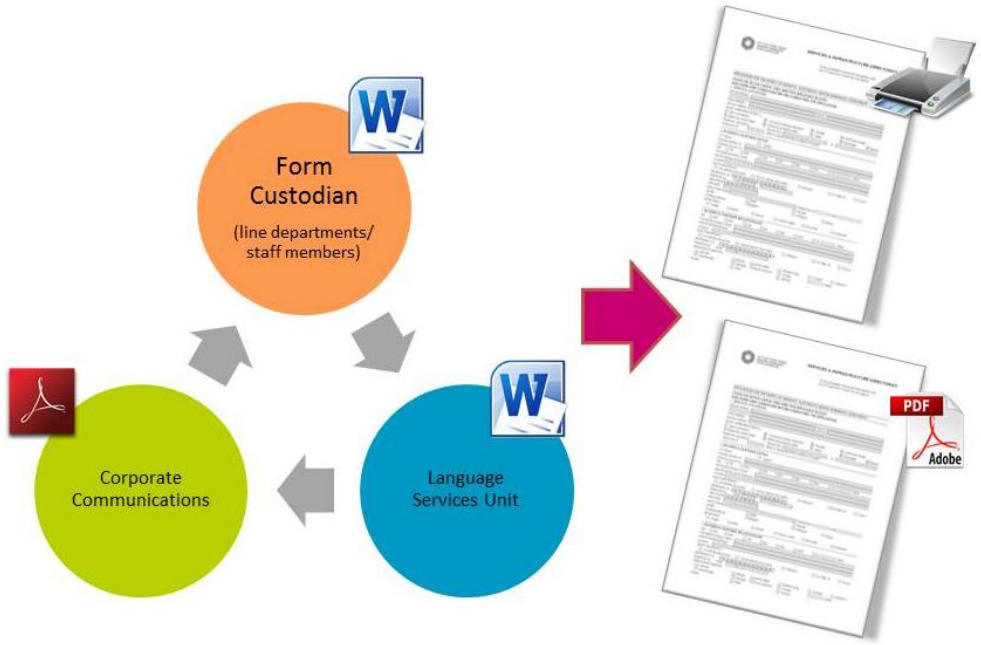


### 4.12. Publication and signoff

**Internal forms**

Forms internal to the organisation make use of an MSWord template (available from E-communications) and are hosted on the intranet or SharePoint sites. Although a template is provided, the same standard that applies to external forms also applies to internal documentation and forms.

**External forms**

All external facing forms intended for the public must be designed and laid out by the E-communications section to ensure quality and consistency. The Communications Department will work with the form custodian to ensure that all technical / departmental requirements are met in English before sending the form to Language Services for language approval and translation.

Once approval is received, the form will be digitised with form fields and hover text (for technical terminology) to adapt to the electronic environment together with business optimisation for that allows e-signatures and the dynamic switching to other languages

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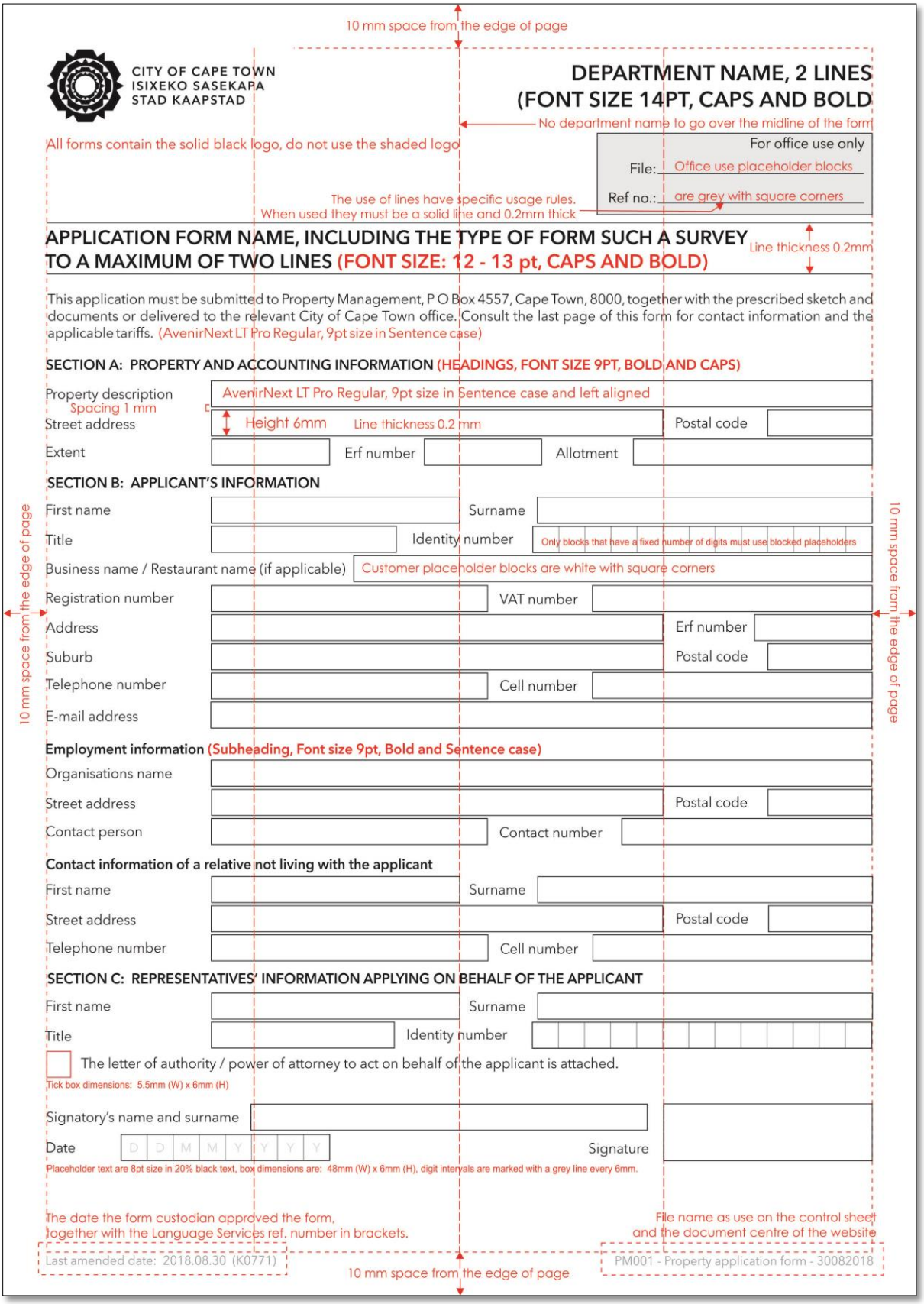
**Figure 5: Page-layout and flow of information of CCT form**

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5. **FORM DIGITISATION CHECKLIST** *(only applicable to Digital Communications)*

| **VISUAL** | |
|---|---|
| All customer tick and space holder blocks are square | |
| All customer blocks are a minimum of 6 mm high | |
| All the necessary blocks align | |
| Internally or externally facing design | |
| **TEXT AND LANGUAGE** | |
| Text is consistent with the training manual | |
| Language checked? Are there translations versions of the form? | |
| Headers are consistent with training manual | |
| Footer consists of all relevant control information and references, date published and language reference number. | |
| **LIVECYCLE DESIGNER / ADOBE EXPERIENCE MANAGER** | |
| All open text boxes have been created with a customer font (Arial, 9pt) | |
| All tick boxes have been assigned to belong in a radio button group or placed as a stand-alone tick box | |
| Tabbing order has been set | |
| Have words with terminology clarifications been added as hover buttons? | |
| Submit or email button have been added | |
| Form saved according to file naming convention for the internet | |
| Form made editable in Adobe Acrobat | |
| Version control in place | |



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