

# Normalisation

The terms normalisation, regularisation and standardisation of orthography are used synonymously. Yet at least three somewhat different meanings should be kept apart:

**1. (historically)** Normalisation takes place when the orthography (or other aspects of the language) of a [text](#) is changed in order to make it correspond to a certain standard. This happened to early (i.e. pre-classical) Greek and Latin texts, which underwent a process of orthographic modernisation in the classical or later periods. It also happened during the Roman Empire to certain Greek texts not originally written in classical Attic Greek, when Attic forms and inflection sometimes replaced other forms.

This also happened in the High Middle Ages to some texts which had been written or copied in the early Middle Ages. The language in some Latin and Greek texts which were copied in the early Middle Ages has in some cases been altered considerably during the transmission due to “[vulgarisation](#)” of the language of the original text. From around 800 AD there was a renaissance for classical studies in both Byzantium and in the West (in the West due to the Carolingian reform). As a result, the general knowledge about the classical forms of language improved during the following centuries. In the manuscripts to certain texts, we can see that some [scribes](#) tried to improve the language in the texts – especially in texts which had been “vulgarised” during the early Middle Ages. In the West, there was in the 10th and 11th centuries sometimes even a tendency to “correct” certain linguistic features, which were quite normal in late literary Latin, and to replace them with the corresponding classical expressions.

Certain texts – many technical handbooks but also some texts written by known historical persons – are thus affected by both “vulgarisation” (in the early Middle Ages) and “normalisation” (in the High Middle Ages). Cf. [vulgarisation](#).

## References

- Coleman, Robert. 1999. “Vulgarism and normalization in the text of *Regula Sancti Benedicti*.” In *Latin vulgare – Latin tardif V: Actes du V<sup>e</sup> Colloque International sur le latin vulgare et tardif, Heidelberg, 5–8 septembre 1997*, edited by Hubert Petersmann and Rudolph Kettmann, 345–356. Bibliothek der klas-sischen Altertumswissen-schaften, N.F. 2: 105. Heidelberg: Winter.
- Haverling, Gerd V. M. 2008. “On Variation in Syntax and Morphology in Late Latin texts.” In: *Latin vulgare – Latin tardif VIII: Actes du VIII<sup>e</sup> Colloque International sur le latin vulgare et tardif, Oxford, 6–9 septembre 2006*, ed. Roger Wright, pp. 351–360. Hildesheim: Olms Weidmann.
- Pasquali, Giorgio. 1952. *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*. 2nd ed. Firenze: Le Monnier. || See pp. 17 fn 2, 18, 118–123, 142, 189.
- Reynolds, Leighton Durham, and Nigel G. Wilson. 1974. *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press. || See p. 41.

[GH](#)

**2. (modern)** In editions of classical as well as of mediaeval texts, the orthography is often normalised (see: [analysis of forms](#)). Although there are variations in this practice, the tendency seems to be that Latin texts especially from antiquity, are being edited with a regularised orthography, and to a less extent also Latin texts from mediaeval times. The question of normalised Latin texts has been debated on numerous occasions, notably in the journal *Symbolae Osloenses* (vol. 76), in which Heinz Hofmann argues strongly for normalisation, while Hans Helander argues for keeping the orthography of mediaeval Latin texts unchanged (Helander 2001).

As for vernacular texts from the Middle Ages, there is generally no standard orthography, so these editions tend to keep the orthography of the main manuscript. See, however, the discussion of Old High German normalised orthography in the entry on [Lachmann's method](#). For Old Norse texts (i.e. Old Icelandic and Old Norwegian), a fairly strict standard orthography was developed in the 19th century. Many Old Norse editions, e.g. in the *Íslensk fornrit series*, use this normalised orthography (commonly referred to as “normalortografi” in the Scandinavian languages). This normalised orthography is also the one found in standard grammars and dictionaries of Old Norse. The delineation of Old Norse orthography is discussed at some length by Ludwig F. A. Wimmer (1877, pp. v–xxvii).

A special case of normalisation is the one used in [eclectic editions](#) based on sources with varying orthography. In these editions, a uniform orthography is usually chosen. Often, it is the orthography of the main manuscript ([copy text](#)) on which the edition is based, but especially in the case of Old Norse texts, it can be the normalised orthography referred to above.

## References

- Helander, Hans. 2001. “Neo-Latin Studies: Significance and Prospects.” *Symbolae Osloenses* 76: 5–102.
- Wimmer, Ludvig F. A. 1877. *Oldnordisk læsebog med anmærkninger og ordsamling*. 2nd ed. København: Chr. Steen & Söns forlag.

[OH](#)

**3. (in collation)** In the course of the preparation of the witness's data in collation, especially when using [computer-assisted methods](#) to study the [transmission](#), certain orthographic features of the text – such as the use of capital letters, use of ‘v’ instead of ‘u’, ‘c’ instead of ‘t’ and the versatile use of ‘e’, ‘æ’ and *e caudata* ( ) – may need to be unified, since such features are subject to much variation in the manuscript traditions. This may be referred to as “normalisation”. It is done for instance by Roelli and Bachmann 2010.

## References

- Roelli, Philipp, and Dieter Bachmann. 2010. “Towards Generating a Stemma of Complicated Manuscript Traditions: Petrus Alfonsi's Dialogus.” *Revue d'histoire des textes* N.S. 5: 307–321.

[GH](#)

## In other languages

DE: Normalisierung, Regularisierung  
FR: normalisation, régularisation  
IT: normalizzazione, regolarizzazione

[GH, OH](#)