

# WSCUC Style Guide

Effective September 1, 2013

## Purpose and Use

The purpose of this guide is to help institutions, team members, and staff members write reports following the WASC Senior College and University Commission's (WSCUC) editorial style and usage conventions. Following a single writing style allows WSCUC to have a more uniform way of presenting information in all of its documents and materials as well as ensuring all content is grammatically consistent.

## Guidelines for Writing Reports

In writing reports for WSCUC:

- take into account multiple audiences: 1) the Commission; 2) the institution; 3) future teams; 4) the public;
- use formal language, avoiding the use of personal names and the words "we" (use "the team" or "the institution") or "you" ("the institution" or "the university");
- write clearly and concretely with a tone that is professional, constructive, and objective; and
- avoid acronyms (without explanation), educational jargon, or code words that only people within the institution or possessing specific expertise will understand.

## Team Reports

In writing the team report:

- follow the WSCUC template;
- refer to Accreditation Standards and Criteria for Review, but avoid stating that the institution is in compliance with a Standard. Compliance is a judgment for the Commission to make. (The team may say that it reviewed the institution under a Standard and found that the institution had responded to previous concerns, or had made progress, or that the team did not discover any issues or concerns);
- make the team report evaluative rather than descriptive;
- ensure that each team member's section has its own coherence;
- make certain the tone reflects that of the Confidential Team Recommendation and parallels the content of the exit meeting;
- evaluate the institution in light of its own mission and of Accreditation Standards;
- avoid imposing expectations based on experience at other institutions;

- avoid imposing the standards or requirements of other accrediting associations or of governmental agencies;
- refer to the institution’s report, its response, its findings, and other evidence, linking what the team learned to what the institution presented;
- make commendations and/or recommendations based on evidence from the institution that has been substantiated by the review or visit;
- limit major recommendations (generally 3 to 8) to the problems and opportunities facing the institution (it is the institution’s responsibility to work out solutions);
- highlight the strengths of the institution and what it is doing well;
- avoid revealing the Confidential Team Recommendation within the body of the report; and
- avoid making comments and suggestions related to personalities within the institution, even if they incorporate praise.

## Academic Terms and Usage

### Degrees and Affiliations

When academic degrees are referred to in general terms, such as doctorate, doctoral, bachelor’s, or master’s, they are not capitalized.

Example: *The institution offers 63 bachelor’s degrees.*

Initials for degrees should be as follows; no spaces or periods within:

AB	MAT	MEng	MPH	PhD
BA	MArch	MF	MLA	
BS	MCP	MFA	MS	
MBA	MD	MJ	MSW	

Licenses and associations also do not take periods: CPA, LCSW, AAAS, APA, ABA.

### Departments and Disciplines

Capitalize disciplines only when referring to specific courses or departments.

In a first reference, use Department of Archaeology, but you may use archaeology department or archaeology in subsequent references.

Example: *The course assessment plan that was shared is for Archaeology 100 in the Department of Anthropology.*

Example: *General Education includes courses in anthropology, sociology, and psychology.*

Majors and minors are lowercase (but proper names as subjects are always capped):

Example: *The major in linguistics is scheduled for its program review in two years.*

### Titles

Do not capitalize the following titles unless they are in front of specific names: governor, president, provost, chancellor, vice chancellor, dean, chair, director, coordinator, professor.

Example: *The president scheduled a strategic planning meeting.*

Example: *President Clarkson suddenly announced his resignation.*

## Courses

Capitalize course titles but do not italicize or enclose in quotes.

Example: *All seniors must take Research Methods in Sociology as part of their degree requirements.*

## General Writing Style

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

Use abbreviations only after the full phrase or title has been used in the document, and the same abbreviation should be used consistently throughout the document. In general, do not use abbreviations or acronyms that the reader would not quickly or easily recognize.

Write out all months and dates:

Example: *May 5, 2013* not 5-5-13

Generally, omit periods in acronyms unless the result would spell an unrelated word. Use all capitals, but not periods, in longer abbreviations when the individual letters are pronounced (NCAA, APA, NEA, SAT scores).

Write out the full names of offices and institutions before using initials, adding initials in parentheses if you intend to use them alone in subsequent references:

Example: *The California State University System (CSU) is a leader in high-quality, accessible, student-focused higher education. With 23 campuses, almost 437,000 students, and 44,000 faculty and staff, CSU is the largest and the most diverse university system in the country.*

All words that often are shortened in less formal usage should be spelled out:

Examples: *laboratory, mathematics, television, telephone, street, avenue, building, Tuesday, September, California.*

Abbreviations can be used for CEO, CAO, CFO, CIO, and COO.

Spell out references to a page or pages being cited.

Example: *pages 36-37, not pp. 36-37.*

### Abbreviations for federal organizations and acts:

The U.S. Department of Education may be abbreviated as ED but not as DOE (which is the abbreviation for the Department of Energy). Once the full name has been used in a document, it may also be referred to as the Department. Other common federal examples include the following: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### Bulleted and Numbered Lists

Use bulleted lists for information that has no apparent order.

Use numbered lists to communicate hierarchal or chronological order.

## Capitalization

Capitalize nouns that constitute the unique identification for a specific person, place, or thing.

Example: *Located in the Bay Area, the institution draws its faculty from Silicon Valley.*

### Capitalizing titles:

Capitalize the first and last words of the title and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and subordinating conjunctions (if, because, as, that, and so on). Articles (a, an, the), coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor), and prepositions, regardless of length, are lower case unless they are the first or last word of the title.

Example: *Rules for Capitalizing the Words in a Title*

In titles and headings, capitalize all major words in hyphenated compounds unless they are preceded by a prefix or follow a musical key symbol

Examples: *Long-Range Development Plan, Precollegiate Academy, E-flat Concerto.*

Plurals of generic terms after proper names are capitalized

Examples: *San Francisco and Alameda Counties, University and Shattuck Avenues, Departments of Chemistry and Physics (but physics and chemistry departments).*

### Words that should, and should not, be capitalized:

appendix. Do not capitalize appendix or appendices in running text.

Example: *See appendix C for further information.*

Bachelor of Arts degree, Bachelor of Science degree. But bachelor's degree.

Board. Do not capitalize.

Example: *The Whittier College board of trustees. The team noted that the board members were aware of the issues at hand.*

college. Do not capitalize college unless it is in the full name of the institution.

Example: *California College of the Arts offers a MFA in Design. The college also offers a MFA in Comics.*

county. Capitalize only if preceded by the name of a specific county.

Examples: *Sacramento County. The county government is influential in that part of California.*

Curriculum Committee.

Doctor of Philosophy. But doctorate.

federal.

Example: *The program relies on federal funding.*

figure. Do not capitalize figure or figures in running text.

Example: *See figure 4.1.*

Master of Arts degree, Master of Science degree. But master's degree.

Northern California.

president. Lowercase when following a name or when used in place of a name.

Examples: *Lawrence Larson was the third president to step down in three years. The president gave no reason for the decision.*

section. Do not capitalize section or sections in running text.

Example: *The topic is discussed in section 3.*

Southern California.

table. Do not capitalize table or tables in running text.

Example: *See table 8.2.*

twenty-first century.

university. Do not capitalize "university" unless it is in the full name of the institution.

Example: *University of the Redlands recently revised its GE program. Students at the university were eager to learn about new courses that would be offered.*

workers' compensation law.

## Hyphenation

See the Word List for correct hyphenation of additional frequently used words.

Onsite / offsite (no hyphen)

Nonprofit (no hyphen) / For-profit (hyphenated)

Lower-division / upper-division (hyphenated)

Decision-making (hyphenated when used as an adjective, and not hyphenated when used as a noun)

Example: *The institution's decision-making process versus the process of the institution's decision making...*

Long-range planning (hyphenated when used as an adjective, and not hyphenated when used as a noun)

Example: *The institution is undergoing long-range planning versus the institution is planning for the long range.*

Online (no hyphen)

## Dates and Times

Academic year: 2018-2019 or 2018-19

Fiscal year: capitalize Fiscal Year when writing about a specific fiscal year

Example: *Fiscal Year 2018, or FY 2018-2019*

Semester and year: fall semester 2022 or fall semester (no caps)

Quarter and year: winter quarter 2022

Month and year: September 2022 (no comma)

Month, day, year: September 10, 2022

Decades: Preferred styles: 1980s (no apostrophe), the nineties (not 90s or 90's).

Seasons are not capitalized: the spring of 2016, spring 2016.

Use a.m. and p.m. or A.M. and P.M., not AM, am, PM, pm, or other variations. Keep formats consistent. To indicate duration of time, use "to" between the hours in text, but an en dash in calendar or tabular entries.

Example: *The retreat ran from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The meeting will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Class times are 11 a.m.-noon, 4 - 5 p.m., and 9:30 a.m.- 3 p.m.*

## Gender

Do not use *he, she, his, or her* unless gender is essential to meaning.

Do not use *s/he* or *his/her*; avoid the use of *he or she*, or *his or her* if possible.

A plural construction often prevents problems.

Example: *Professors can teach five courses a semester if they so choose.*

(Note: Be careful not to mix singular and plural.)

Use *chair* rather than *chairman, chairwoman, or chairperson*.

## Geographic Regions

Use lower case compass points when describing a section of a nation, state, or city unless denoting widely known sections, such as Southern California, Northern California.

Other accepted uses: *the Bay Area, the West Coast*.

## Numbers

Course numbers, grade-point averages, unit and monetary values, scores, percentages, compound numbers, and decimal fractions may be indicated with numerals.

Examples: *Of graduating seniors, 45% of those with GPAs of 3.8 and above were planning to attend graduate school.*

Spell out zero through nine in ordinary text, and spell out any number that begins a sentence.

Example: *seven, 17, 700, 7,000.*

Example: *Nineteen freshmen were involved in the study.*

Use commas with all numbers above 999: 1,000, \$13,500, 500,000.

For amounts of a million or more, use figures when referring to monetary amounts, but follow the regular rule for other quantities.

Examples: *\$8 million but eight million people; \$16 million, 16 million people. (But: \$40-million campaign)*

In a series, treat all numbers the same.

Example: *The faculty includes 4 Pulitzer Prize winners, 136 members of the National Academy of Sciences, and 85 members of the National Academy of Engineering.*

Spell out ordinals through ninth: ninth grade, 21st century, 25th anniversary.

Use numbers to represent ages.

Example: *The majority of freshmen entered the university at the age of 18.*

## Frequently-Used Word List

<p>                     accreditation                      Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)                      Accreditation Visit (AV)                      acknowledgment                      action letter                      adviser                      advisory                      African-American (adj.)                      Asian-American (adj.)                      assistant chair                      campus: use "institution" instead                      Candidacy (as a category of accreditation)                      Capacity and Preparatory Review (CPR)                      catalog (-ed) (-ing)                      church-related: use "faith-based"                      co-author (or coauthor)                      co-chair                      co-education / coeducational                      Commission (capitalized when referring to specific Commission)                      Commission action letter                      committee names are capitalized (e.g., Library Steering Committee)                      consolidated worksheet                      course work (but fieldwork)                      co-worker                      Criteria for Review (CFR / CFRs)                      criterion (singular); criteria (plural)                      cross-cultural                      CSU system                      database                      ED = U.S. Department of Education                      Educational Effectiveness (EE)                      Educational Effectiveness Framework (EEF)                      Educational Effectiveness Review (EER)                      Eligibility (as a category of accreditation)                      email                      e-portfolio                      ex officio                      faith-based: use instead of "church-related"                      fax                      fieldwork                 </p>	<p>                     for-profit                      full-time (adj.)                      fundrais(er) (-ing)                      governing board                      general education (GE)                      grade-point average  <i>Handbook of Accreditation</i> (title of text, so italicized)                      home page                      Initial Accreditation                      Interdisciplinary                      Interim Report                      internet                      institution: use instead of "campus"                      institutional report / proposal                      Institutional Review Process (IRP)                      institution-wide                      K-12                      long-standing                      long-term                      lower-division                      millennium                      modeling                      multicultural, multimedia, multidisciplinary                      multi-year                      nationwide                      noncompliance                      nonexistent                      nonprofit                      nonresident                      nonstudent                      Notice of Concern, not formal Notice of Concern                      note-taking                      off-campus (adjective)                      off campus (prepositional phrase)                      Offsite Review (OSR) – "Offsite" one word, no hyphen                      on-campus (adjective)                      on campus (prepositional phrase)                      online                      Order to Show Cause                      panel                      part-time (adj.)                      policy-maker                 </p>
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<p>         postdoctoral          preprofessional, preregister president          pre-visit (adj.)          Probation (as a category of accreditation)proposal          Reaccreditation (as a category of accreditation) report (or team report)          rubric          RSVP          Sanction (as a category of accreditation) self-study          Show Cause (as a category of accreditation) sociocultural, socioeconomic          Special Visit          staff, as in WSCUC staff liaison          stakeholder          Standards of Accreditation (or Standards) startup          statewide          student athlete (n.)          Summary of Lines of Inquiry          team (or “evaluation team” but not “visiting team”)          team report          term          theater (except if a proper name: Greek Theatre)          underrepresented          university-wide          upper-division          U.S. Department of Education = ED          vita (singular); vitae (plural)          Warning (as a category of accreditation)          WSCUC and other acronyms, identified first in the text, are capitalized          work-study          worldwide          World Wide Web, the web          website, webmaster, webcast          X-ray          zip code          \$40-million campaign       </p>	<p><b>WSCUC COMMITTEE NAMES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Policy and Procedures Committee</li> <li>• Eligibility Review Committee (ERC)</li> <li>• Interim Report Committee (IRC)</li> <li>• Structural Change Committee</li> <li>• Substantive Change Committee (SCC)</li> </ul>
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