

STATEMENT STYLE GUIDE

DOCUMENT TITLES

1. Titles of published documents:

- Formal titles are italicized, but dates or other adjectives preceding or following the official titles are not italicized. For example:
 - The 2014-2015 *Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Technology Programs*
 - The 2014-2015 *Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual*
- Italics are not used for emphasis.

CAPITALIZATION

1. Categories of ABET findings:

- The words “Deficiency”, “Weakness”, “Concern”, and “Observation” are capitalized when referring to ABET findings in order to distinguish this terminology from generic use of the same terms. For example:
 - “ETAC of ABET is concerned about continued financial support ...,” but “This finding remains a Concern until ...”
 - “The program advisory committee determined that there were weaknesses in the ability of graduates to ...”, but “the program addressed all Weaknesses cited in the previous ETAC of ABET evaluation ...”

2. Draft Statement, Final Statement, Self-study Questionnaire, Self-study Report, and Interim Report: These are capitalized when referring to a particular ABET-related document.

For example:

- “The Draft Statement was amended to include the program response ...”, but “a written statement provided by the Office of the Dean indicated that ...”
- “The 2012-2013 Interim Report provided evidence that this finding had ...,” but “The program has made progress in addressing this finding ...”
- “The August, 2013, Final Statement included three institutional findings ...”

3. Program names and degree titles: Capitalize only when referring to the full formal and official name or title.

- “The Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering Technology is awarded to ...”, but “The baccalaureate degree in civil engineering technology has been ...”
- “The chemical engineering technology program has four full-time faculty members ...,” but “The Bachelor of Science in Geomechanical Engineering Technology offers two options ...”
- “The Department of Engineering Technology offers programs in electrical engineering technology and manufacturing engineering technology....”

4. Administrative units of an institution: Use capitalization only when referring to the full formal name of the unit.

- “The engineering technology department has a small budget that...” (note that this is not the full formal name)
- “The Civil Engineering Technology Department has a small budget that...” (official formal name is “Civil Engineering Technology Department”)

5. Course names and disciplines of study:

- Do not capitalize when referring to the generic name of a discipline of study such as: electrical engineering technology, computer science, mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, statistics, etc.
- The names of specific languages are capitalized:
 - “Students are introduced to report writing in the first English composition course”
 - “Students in this program are encouraged to take at least an introductory course in conversational Arabic”
- Capitalize official course titles, but do not capitalize references to the discipline of study:
 - “The last course in the sequence is MAT 312 Matrix Methods,” but “Students are introduced to matrix methods in the”
 - “Although the subject matter is covered in Electrical Circuits I,” but “Students are introduced to electrical circuits in the second semester”

6. Program educational objectives, program outcomes, and student outcomes:

- In general, do not capitalize when referring to the program educational objectives, program outcomes, and student outcomes.
 - “The program provided evidence that all student outcomes were”
- Capitalize when they are part of a criterion’s name.
 - “Criterion 3. Student Outcomes states that”

TERMINOLOGY

1. “Credit hours”: Use the terms “semester hours” or “quarter hours,” rather than the ambiguous term, “credit hours,” unless the context of the sentence provides that information:
 - “The typical faculty teaching load is 12 semester credit hours,” or
 - “Each faculty member teaches 12 credit hours per semester.”
2. “Faculty”:
 - The word “faculty” is
 - A singular collective noun. For example: “The faculty is responsible for laboratory equipment maintenance”
 - An adjective as in “The faculty workload consists of”
 - The term “faculty member” refers to an individual.
 - It can be singular
 - “Each faculty member must complete an evaluation of”
 - “A faculty member reported”
 - It can be plural
 - “All faculty members in the department have attended”
 - “Six of the 12 faculty members are tenured.”

3. **“Data”** and **“datum”**:
 - “Data” is an adjective or a plural noun, the singular form of which is “datum.”
 - Noun: “Data are routinely collected to measure progress on”
 - Adjective: The data collection system does not include”
4. **“Criteria”** and **“criterion”**:
 - “Criterion” is singular and “criteria” is its plural form.
 - “The term “criterion” is capitalized when referring to a specific section of ABET criteria, either with or without the full title of that section.
 - “Criterion 2. Program Educational Objectives states that ... and the Criterion further requires” (In both cases, the capitalized word “Criterion” is referring to Criterion 2.)
 - “Criterion 2 and Criterion 3 have some common elements. These Criteria both require that”
5. **“Internet”** and **“the Web”**:
 - The words “Internet” or “Web” are capitalized when used as nouns but not when used as adjectives.
 - “Students have ready access to the Internet, and several courses in the program are internet-based.”
 - “Students have ready access to the Web, and several courses in the program are web-based.”

FINDINGS

1. **Findings** in general: Findings in a Draft Statement are conclusions and recommendations to the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission (ETAC) by a Team Chair (TC) and a Program Evaluator (PEV).
 - Findings must be based on conclusions from evidence that the PEV and TC have determined to be credible and significant.
 - If evidence is not credible or cannot be substantiated, it should not be used as the basis for a Deficiency, Weakness, or Concern (DWC) finding.
 - Findings must be based on evidence from enough sources to confirm the breadth and magnitude of the issue. DWC findings should avoid undue dependence on the opinions of a single individual or a small group of individuals unless it can be determined that the source is representative of all parties affected.
2. References to **individuals**
 - Activities or contributions of an individual must not be used as the basis for a finding.
 - Names of individuals or titles that identify individuals must not be used in findings.
 - Findings in Draft Statements and Final Statements must not identify individuals or particular groups of individuals as the sources of negative information in a context that could make those individuals or groups vulnerable to retribution.
 - Poor: “According to students interviewed in the 10:00 a.m. MET 336 course ...” or “according to the faculty member who uses the automation laboratory ...” or “members of the advisory committee attending the Monday luncheon said that”
 - Better: “Evidence from students indicated that ...,” or “Evidence indicated that the automation laboratory ...,” or “Anecdotal evidence from employers indicated”

3. Attributing opinions, recommendations, conclusions

The content of a Draft (or Final) Statement is officially from the ETAC. Evidence and conclusions should be written to reflect that point of view. Avoid attributing opinions, conclusions, or recommendations to other individuals or groups of individuals besides the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission.

Poor: “The program evaluator discovered that”

“The team noticed that”

“The team chair discovered that”

Better: “Evidence indicated that”

“ETAC of ABET notes that”

4. Credibility of evidence: If the sole source of evidence represents only a small fraction of the affected population, it should be treated as either “anecdotal” or “hearsay” and should normally not form the basis for a DWC finding. However, this type of evidence can sometimes serve as the basis for an Observation suggesting that the program (institution) investigate to determine whether the limited evidence is indicative of a larger and more significant issue.

5. Unnecessary detail or wording: If wording does not add to or clarify the finding, then the unnecessary wording should be deleted.

Poor: “During the Monday luncheon on the first day of this visit, this program evaluator had the opportunity to engage two alumni in a conversation about the quality of the graduates of this program. Both of those graduates feel that”

Better: “Anecdotal evidence indicated that some alumni feel that”

6. Written Deficiencies, Weaknesses, or Concerns must

- provide enough detail that the program or institution will know precisely what is inadequate and what must be accomplished to meet criteria.
- provide enough detail to give ETAC commissioners
 - all evidence needed to justify the level of finding, and
 - an explanation of what was missing
 - an explanation of the evidence needed to resolve the finding
 - the information needed to determine whether an Interim Review should result in a report or a visit.
- provide enough detail that a PEV or TC conducting an Interim Review will
 - understand the evidence needed to resolve the finding
 - be able to determine the progress that has been made since the original finding was written.
- use the terms “required” or “must”
 - all actions needed to resolve a Deficiency, Weakness, or Concern findings are “must” or “required”
 - avoid use of “recommended” or “suggested” or “expected” in Deficiency, Weakness, or Concern findings—these terms are not used in criteria and have no specific meaning in a Deficiency, Weakness, or Concern finding
- provide evidence that is needed to resolve the finding. However, findings cannot:
 - require actions that are more specific or more detailed than those stated by criteria.
 - require a program to create or implement a specific course.
 - refer to a course (or courses) as *satisfying* a student outcome prescribed by General Criteria or Program criteria; instructional elements of a course may *address* an

outcome, but only the assessment of student performance can demonstrate whether a program outcome has been achieved.

- require a program or institution to hire a faculty member. It is the program’s responsibility to demonstrate that they have an adequate number of faculty members to perform the faculty responsibilities defined in criteria.
- say a program has an inadequate number of faculty members without first identifying the specific faculty responsibilities (based on criteria) that the program is failing to accomplish.
- require a program to hire a laboratory technician or other support personnel. It is the program’s responsibility to demonstrate that adequate laboratory support is being provided; and it is the program’s prerogative to determine how that is done.

7. Format of a Finding:

- Refer to the appropriate guidance forms for the proper format of a finding or a Draft Statement
 - T402 Draft Statement Outline for General Reviews (GR)
 - T401 Sample Draft Statement (GR)
 - T412 Draft Statement Outline for Interim Reviews (IV-IR)
 - T411 Sample Draft Statement (IV-IR)

8. Numbering of Findings

- Number each finding under a level of finding (Deficiencies, Weaknesses, Concerns, and Observations) starting with the number “1.”
- If there is only one finding under a category, omit numbering. See examples in the T401 or T411.

CRITERIA AND POLICY REFERENCES

1. Findings: Each DWC finding must begin with a citation of the applicable criterion or policy.

- “Criteria: Criterion 2. Program Educational Objectives states”
- “Policy: ABET Policy II.B.1. requires that”
- In referring to more than one Criterion, use,
 - “Criteria 1 and 2” or “Criterion 1 and Criterion 2”
- In referring to more than one policy, use
 - “Policy II.B.1. and Policy II.B.2.” or “Policies II.B.1. and II.B.2.”
- Take care that the text that introduces the quote does not create a redundancy with wording in the quoted passage.
 - Poor: Criterion 4. Continuous Improvement requires that, “The program must regularly use appropriate” [the ‘requires’ is redundant with the ‘must’]
 - Better: Criterion 4. Continuous Improvement states, “The program must regularly use appropriate” or “Criterion 4. Continuous Improvement requires that each program “regularly use”
- Take care that the text that introduces the quote does not create a conflict with the wording in the quoted passage
 - Poor: Criterion 4. Continuous Improvement recommends that, “The program must regularly use appropriate” [‘recommends’ conflicts with ‘must’]

2. Quotations:

- The text between quotation marks must accurately reproduce the source, including capitalization and punctuation.

- Excerpted text that is truncated should indicate missing text by the use of an ellipsis (three periods ... and a space before and after the ellipsis points). Required punctuation (such as a period) is placed after the ellipsis points. For example:
Criterion 3. Student Outcomes states, “The program must have documented student outcomes that”
- Paraphrasing can be used alongside quoted text, but the paraphrased text must be outside the quotation marks.
 - Criterion 3. Student Outcomes characterizes narrowly defined activities as “those that involve limited resources”
- When truncating quoted text, preserve all text that
 - is relevant to the issue under discussion, and
 - provides the context necessary to understand the quote.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

1. Acronyms:

- In general, the use of acronyms should be avoided; however, acronyms may be used when referring to:
 - The professional societies that ABET comprises: ASCE, ASME, CSAB, AIChE, ASHRAE, etc.
 - The names of the commissions of ABET: ASAC of ABET, CAC of ABET, EAC of ABET, ETAC of ABET
- Write out the full name of programs, departments or institutions. Do not use acronyms
 - OK: “The Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology Department”
 - OK: “The University of California at San Diego has”
- Acronyms are acceptable in referring to courses if those acronyms are part of the official course name:
 - OK: “Students are introduced to mathematical modeling in MET 301 Finite Element Methods...”
 - Poor: “The MET course in finite elements includes....”
- The first in-text reference to an acronym should always be written out followed by the acronym written in capital letters and enclosed with parentheses.
 - Program educational objectives (PEOs)
 - Program outcomes (POs)
 - Student outcomes (SOs)

2. Abbreviations

- In general, avoid using abbreviations in accreditation statements.

NUMERICAL VALUES

1. For numbers greater than or equal to 10, use numerals. For example, “There were 37 graduates of this program in”
2. For numbers less than 10, spell out the numerical value. “For 2014-15, there were seven full-time faculty positions”
3. If a number is the first word in a sentence, always spell it out. “Thirty-seven students graduated from this program”

HYPHENATION

Use hyphenation to clarify certain phrases that use multiple adjectives for a single noun:

- upper-level courses, lower-division courses
- tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty
- two-year cycle
- full-time faculty, part-time faculty
- nine-hour teaching loads
- Self-Study Report, the Self-Study
- high-level connections, low-level connections
- up-to-date
- 2014-2015 visit or 2014-2015 cycle
- Web-based materials
- on-campus courses, off-campus courses
- semester-credit-hour, quarter-credit-hour

GUIDELINE FOR EDITING DRAFT STATEMENTS

“Value: ABET will provide products and services that are inherently useful to its constituencies and will gauge their usefulness through direct feedback. ABET evaluation teams will strive to provide a valuable exchange of information for the continual improvement of educational programs and engage in meaningful and practical application of its accreditation practices.” ---from ABET’s Quality Promise

Editing is the final assurance that institutional constituents of ABET are receiving consistent, high-quality professional advice and consultation. Therefore, editing is the most important responsibility of a commission Executive Committee member.

The Final Statement is the culmination of a process that requires a large expenditure of time and resources by an institution that expects something of value in return. The direct cost paid to ABET by an institution is substantial (at least \$3000 per team member for visit and about \$1700 per program for an Interim Report evaluation in 2014-15), and the Statement is the consultant report for which that expenditure has been paid. Therefore, the Final Statement should convey the highest standards of professionalism, collegiality, credibility, and value while assisting programs in their efforts to meet ABET accreditation criteria. The purpose of the editing process is to assure those attributes are properly and consistently developed in all Statements issued by Commissions of ABET.

The Editing Process

Objective of the Editing Process: To produce a professional-quality report that

- Summarizes results of an evaluation of academic programs,
- Provides the guidance needed for those programs to meet ABET accreditation criteria,
- Provides professional advice on program improvement.

Outcomes Expected of the Editing Process: Each Statement will be

- Accurate
- Concise
- Clear
- Logical
- Consultative
- Collegial
- Complete
- Structurally effective
- Grammatically correct
- Consistent within itself
- Consistent with ABET criteria and policy
- Adequately descriptive of what is needed to comply with criteria or policy

Editing Responsibilities: Editors will modify Draft Statements as needed to achieve

- Completeness
- Clarity of wording
- Consistency of style
- Grammatical correctness
- Adequacy of explanation

Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission – ABET

- A distinct focus on
 - Overall program quality and improvement rather than details of process
 - Outcomes rather than resources and inputs
- A document free of confrontational, adversarial, or argumentative text
- Findings (DWC) that are
 - At a level appropriate to the evidence
 - Consistent with criteria and the spirit of continuous improvement
 - Logical evidence-conclusion relationships
 - Significant
 - Based on evidence
 - Clearly the opinions of the Commission rather than the opinions of individuals or small groups of individuals
 - Based on evidence rather than supposition, speculation, or opinion
 - Focused on criteria, not individuals
 - That provide complete, concise, and ambiguity-free explanations of the evidence needed to resolve the finding

Editors will:

- Eliminate grammatical and syntax errors, such as
 - Sentence fragments
 - Run-on sentences
 - Punctuation
 - Spelling
 - Capitalization
 - Short, choppy sentence structure or long, complicated sentence structure
- Correct errors or voids in logic, such as
 - Ambiguity
 - Poor finding-criteria correlations
- Correct errors in
 - Names of degrees (Must be exactly as shown on RFE)
 - Names of institutions (Must be exactly as shown on RFE)
 - Names of ABET documents
 - “Criteria for Accrediting _____ Programs”
 - “Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual”
- Achieve a consistent style,
 - Proper ‘boilerplate’ text where applicable
 - Appropriate quantity and quality of introductory information for institution and each program
 - Proper formatting of findings
 - Proper format in citations from criteria or policy