

Grammar and Punctuation Guide for EAC Statements to Institutions

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Academic Terms and Years

Use lower case for academic terms, e.g., fall 2011, spring 2012, summer 2013. Identify academic years as 2014-15, not 2014-2015.

Academic Programs and Departments

Always refer to academic programs in lower case, e.g. the electrical engineering program. The exact, official name of the program shown on the RFE should be used in all documents.

Department names should be capitalized only when using the official title of the department, e.g., the Department of Chemical Engineering. Use lower case letters when using the unofficial title, e.g., the chemical engineering department.

Acronyms

Minimize use of acronyms for word combinations. Use only if the combination is used more than twice in a program statement. Identify the acronym only if you use it later in the program statement. For example, do not write the electrical engineering (EE) department and then not refer to the EE department later in the program statement.

Apostrophes

An apostrophe is used to show possession: the program's budget. For most words that end with a letter other than "s," an apostrophe and then an "s" are used to indicate the possessive form: this student's lab grades are outstanding, we are very impressed with the freshmen's work. Both singular and plural words that end with the letter "s" should have only an apostrophe after the last letter: syllabus', classrooms'. Do not use an apostrophe and an "s" after a single word that ends in "s": caucus', not caucus's.

Apostrophes never make a word plural, but they may be used to mark the plural of single letters and abbreviations with internal punctuation: dot your i's, she got straight A's on her report card, M.A.'s, Ph.D.'s. Do not use an apostrophe in forming plurals of decades: the '70s, the 1980s, not the '70's, the 1980's.

Do not use contractions.

Capitalization

Capitalize as little as possible. Capitalize when the criteria do so. Capitalize specific (proper) names.

DO CAPITALIZE: Department of Mechanical Engineering, the State of Tennessee.

DO NOT CAPITALIZE: mechanical engineering program, vice president for academic affairs, spring, summer, fall, winter, state budget.

Certifications and Degrees

Professional engineer is lowercase in most text. The abbreviation is P.E. with periods. Bachelor's and master's should be lowercase in most text. For degree acronyms such as B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. use the exact, official acronym used by the program as shown on the RFE including the use or lack of punctuation. Ph.D. always precedes P.E. and is separated by a comma. For example, George D. Peterson, Ph.D., P.E.

Refer to a P.E. as a "licensed professional engineer." References such as "registered professional engineer," "registered engineer," and "registered professional engineering" should not be used in

statements. NCEES has advised ABET that the term "registered" is no longer utilized by most member boards and has been replaced by the term "licensed."

Colon

One side of a colon (either one) must contain a complete sentence. Include one space after the colon if what follows is not a complete sentence. Include two spaces after the colon if what follows is a complete sentence.

Commas

The serial comma rule is in effect. For example, put one here, here, and a period here.

With the exception of compound sentences, commas are used in sets of at least two. Full dates (those that include the year) should be followed by a comma if they do not complete the sentence: The Annual Meeting takes place on October 28-29, 2010, and will be attended by some 200 people.

The same is true for locations. Full location names (city/state, city/province, or city/country) should be followed up with a comma if they do not complete the sentence: I am traveling to Lafayette, LA, this spring. Has anyone ever been to Istanbul, Turkey, in December?

Course Descriptions

Always capitalize the name of a specific course when you are referring to an official title: "The course titled Electrical Power Systems has an excellent balance of theory and lab work."

Refer to a specific course by title and number with the number first, followed by a comma and then the course's name. Full course names (number/name) should be followed up with a comma if they do not complete the sentence. For example, "EE360, Electrical Power Systems, has an excellent balance of theory and lab work."

Use lower case letters when referring to a course by subject matter only: "The electrical power systems course has an excellent balance of theory and lab work."

Criteria Identification

Refer to the published accreditation criteria for a specific cycle with capitalized, italic letters, such as *2009-2010 Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Programs*. Refer to the criteria in general with lower case, non-italic letters, such as the engineering accreditation criteria. Do not capitalize the word "criteria" when it stands alone. Refer to a specific criterion with capital letters, such as Criterion 2.

Faculty

The word faculty is collective and is considered singular. Use "faculty members" when referring to groups of individuals. "The faculty is well-qualified, but all faculty members advise undergraduates."

Dates

Full dates (those that include the year) should be followed by a comma if they do not complete the sentence: The Annual Meeting takes place on October 28-29, 2010, and will be attended by some 200 people.

e-mail (always hyphenate)

Fundamentals of Engineering Exam or Examination

Use the NCEES practice of referring to their examinations as exams: Fundamentals of Engineering Exam and Principles and Practice of Engineering Exam. If you refer to an exam several times, refer to

it the first time, for example, as Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) Exam and then afterwards as the FE exam.

Group Names

Words such as club, committee, council, group, and society are collective and are considered singular. Always capitalize the formal name for these words, such as the Precollege Outreach Committee or the Industry Advisory Council. Do not capitalize these words when used alone: “The committee has worked diligently on the project.”

Hyperlinks

Provide the entire hyperlink, including the http:// or https://.

Internet (always capitalized)

Italics

Use italics for titles only when a document is published for wide distribution: *2014-2015 Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual*.

Locations

Full location names (city/state, city/province, or city/country) should be followed up with a comma if they do not complete the sentence: I am traveling to Lafayette, LA, this spring; Has anyone ever been to Istanbul, Turkey, in December?

Matriculated vs. graduated

Do not use “matriculated” when referring to students who have graduated. Matriculate refers to students entering a college, university, or academic program.

nonprofit (one word, no hyphen needed); ***not-for-profit*** (always hyphenate)

Numbers

Numbers one through nine should be written out. Numbers 10 and above may be written numerically. If a number begins a sentence, it should be spelled out. The only exception is when a year begins a sentence: 2006 was the first year when co-ops were mandatory for all engineering students.

Percentages should be written numerically, but the word “percent” should be written out: 20 percent.

Numbers longer than three digits should have commas placed within them to separate every third digit. No spaces should be added following commas; for example, 2,300.

online (one word, no hyphen needed)

Parentheses

Avoid using partial or complete parenthetical sentences in statements. All punctuation not related to the text inside parentheses should follow the closing parenthesis. For example, follow the rules of punctuation (or be forced to face the wrath of my red pen). The exception to this rule occurs when the text between parentheses forms a complete sentence. (When this occurs, capitalize and punctuate the sentence accordingly within the parentheses.)

Periods

Periods should be followed by two spaces.

Program Educational Objectives and Program (Student) Outcomes

Capitalize objectives and outcomes as required by Criteria 2 and 3 only when referring those provided by the program. For example, “Program Education Objective 3 is not acceptable.” Do not capitalize when referring to the set of objectives or outcomes provided by the program. For example, “The Program Outcomes do not include all (a) through (k) as required by Criterion 3.”

Do not capitalize when referring to the objectives and outcomes in general. For example, “Criterion 2 requires program educational objectives that are consistent with the mission of the institution.” Refer to the outcomes required in Criterion 3 with parentheses as noted in the criterion. For example, outcome (a) was not addressed; there was no evidence of an assessment process for outcomes (a) through (k).

Quotation Marks

All punctuation should be placed inside quotation marks except for colons and semicolons, which are placed outside quotations.

Single quotes should also be used “when writing a ‘quote’ within a quote.”

Report Names

Always capitalize the formal name of a report or a document, such as the 2014 Electrical Engineering Laboratory Report. Do not capitalize the word “report” when used alone: “The report includes numerous graphs that show the initiative’s progress.” Use italics only when a report is published as a document for wide distribution. For example, *History of the Upper State University College of Engineering: 1914-2014*.

Semicolon

The semicolon is used to separate two complete sentences — not joined by a conjunction (and, but, or) — that are more closely related to each other than a period suggests. Two spaces follow a semicolon, and the first word following a semicolon is not capitalized.

The semicolon is also used when writing lists that contain commas within single list items: This program has distance delivery locations in Westborough, MA; Reno, NV; and Seattle, WA.

U.S. (always capitalized and with periods)

website (one word, lowercase)

Word Pairs

When a pair of words is used as an adjective, the two should be hyphenated. Here are two examples: full-time students, tenure-track faculty.