

Compliance Review Manual
2005-2006

Southwestern Community College
Sylva, North Carolina

Foreward

This *Compliance Review Manual* has been written to provide guidance for Southwestern Community College's compliance review process. It is intended to supplement, but not in any way to replace, *The Principles of Accreditation* or *the Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*, both published by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The *Compliance Review Manual* will provide the specific policies and procedures that have been developed to facilitate the compliance process at the College. Although intended to be as comprehensive as possible, questions and problems will arise which are not addressed adequately in the manual. These should be referred directly to the Compliance Team for resolution.

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PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction To The Compliance Review

As stated in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, published by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, in 2004, the principles of accreditation are as follows:

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is the regional body for the accreditation of higher education institutions in the Southern States (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) and Latin American that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees.

Self-regulation through accreditation embodies a traditional U.S. philosophy that a free people can ought to govern themselves through a representative, flexible, and responsive system. Accordingly, accreditation is best accomplished through a voluntary association of educational institutions. Accreditation enhances educational quality throughout the region by improving the effectiveness of institutions and ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community, and serves as a common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions. (p. 3)

The principles of *integrity* and *commitment to quality enhancement* are foundational to the relationship between the Commission and member institutions. Integrity is the essential bond between the Commission and member institutions whereby all parties agree to deal honestly and openly with constituencies and with one another. Member institutions must also dedicate themselves to “enhancing the quality of

their programs and services within the context of their missions, resources, and capacities, and to create an environment in which teaching, public service, research, and learning occur” (*Principles*, 2004, p. 5).

The foundation principles of integrity and quality enhancement are fundamental to the compliance certification review. “Although evaluation of an institution’s educational quality and its effectiveness in achieving its mission is a difficult task requiring careful analysis and professional judgment, an institution is expected to document quality and effectiveness in all its major aspects” (*Principles*, 2004, p. 5). The Compliance Certification Document represents a member institution’s judgment of the extent of its compliance with Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Requirements outlined in *The Principles of Accreditation*. An institution must document its compliance from a commitment to integrity whereby accurate information will be provided in a timely manner and honest, open communications will characterize the relationship between the institution and the Commission.

History And Purpose Of The Compliance Process

The process of institutional compliance review or self-study was initiated in the 1950's as an element of the accreditation process. After considerable discussion of the concept the Commission on Colleges adopted its version of self-study in 1957. The self-study allowed an institution to be evaluated according to its purpose and accommodate the dynamic changes in education occurring at the time. In spite of the success and acceptance of self-study, concern over the need for increased accountability and quality assurance led the Commission during the early 1980's to engage in several years of further analysis and consideration of alternative approaches to accreditation.

In 1984, the College Delegate Assembly of the Commission on Colleges voted to replace the *Standards of the College Delegate Assembly* with the *Criteria for Accreditation*. While the *Criteria* maintained many of the elements in the previous *Standards*, sections were restructured and a significant new dimension was added which addressed the planning and evaluation process of the institution.

The emphasis on institutional effectiveness significantly modified the process, product, and impact of the self-study program. The program was framed as a multi-year process by which an institution conducts a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of all programs and activities, and, as a consequence, identifies and studies issues important to the institution and formulates recommendations for future improvement of its programs, processes, and operations. In addition, the process provides information to the public regarding its' compliance with minimum standards of quality.

Most recently, the College Delegate Assembly of the Commission voted to replace the *Criteria for Accreditation* with *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations*

for Quality Enhancement. Accreditation and reaffirmation are predicated on foundational principles of integrity and a commitment to quality enhancement from member institutions.

Reaffirmation is peer reviewed process that examines member institutions' compliance with the principles of accreditation and commitment to quality enhancement. Member institutions develop a Compliance Certification Document that demonstrates the institution's judgment of the extent of its compliance with each of the Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and federal requirements. Additionally, member institutions submit a Quality Enhancement Plan that describes a carefully designed and focused course of action directly related to improving student learning.

The Commission will use off-site and on-site peer review committees to evaluate member institution's compliance with principles of accreditation and Quality Enhancement Plans. An off-site peer review of the Compliance Certification Document will determine whether the institution is in compliance with all Core Requirements (except 2.12), Comprehensive Standards, and federal requirements. An on-site peer review will finalize issues of compliance and evaluate the acceptability of the QEP.

Compliance Team – Purpose and Objectives

The philosophy and processes of the *The Principles of Accreditation* are based upon the institution's commitment to:

- Comply with Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and federal regulations
- Enhance the quality of educational programs
- Focus on student learning
- Ensure a culture of integrity in all operations
- Recognize the centrality of peer review to an effective accreditation process

The purpose of the compliance team is to conduct a *thorough, honest, forthright* self-assessment to result in a *truthful, accurate, and complete* Compliance Certification Document.

The Compliance Certification is the document completed by the institution that demonstrates its judgment of the extent of its compliance with each of the Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and federal regulations as presented in the Principles of Accreditation. The Compliance Certification document is based upon the institution's internal analysis and assessment of its compliance with the requirements and standards using the documentation generated or assembled by the institution to support the conclusions that it has reached regarding its compliance. (*Handbook*, 2004, p. 11)

The Compliance Team will support its conclusions by adhering to following objectives:

- Make an *honest* evaluation of the evidence that the institution has to *determine* the extent of compliance with a Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or federal regulation.
- Base compliance decisions on *compelling* and appropriately *documented* evidence.
- Present evidence that is a *coherent* and *focused* body of information supporting a *judgment* of compliance (not simply an amassed body of facts, information, data, or exhibits).
- Conduct all responsibilities with *integrity, objectivity, fairness, and confidentiality*.

The general goals of the compliance analysis emphasize both the process and the product. The compliance report should provide and institution with:

1. A basis for affirming or revising the institution's statement of purpose.
2. The re-evaluation of institutional goals within the context of its purpose.
3. An identification of significant institutional issues, strengths and weaknesses, and strategies for addressing concerns raised in the compliance report.
4. An improved/strengthened process for evaluation of the institution's effectiveness.
5. A comprehensive report and supporting documents to be used by the institution as part of its planning and by off-site and visiting committees during their review of the institution.

6. An Assessment of the extent to which the institution meets or exceeds
The Principles for Accreditation.
7. Involvement in and development of an enhanced sense of cohesiveness
among members of the institutional community.

Benefits Of The Compliance Review

While the compliance review process is demanding and requires substantial commitment of time, energy, and resources, the benefits are significant.

The review:

1. Sharpens the focus of the institution's purpose and clarifies its goals.
2. Creates a clearer understanding for the institution's constituencies of the future direction of the institution.
3. Provides a structured and constructive framework within which to engage in self-analysis to identify institutional strengths and weaknesses.
4. Provides an opportunity to identify and respond to the critical issues and concerns facing the institution, and to generate new or improved approaches to these issues.
5. Increase efficiency and productivity of the operational units of the institution.
6. Strengthens institutional research.
7. Provides an opportunity for faculty and staff involvement and development.
8. Provides the opportunity for identifying, developing, and refining leadership skills of key personnel.
9. Strengthens appreciation for and understanding of the institution.
10. Establishes confidence in and credibility of the institution and its programs among the members of the academy, various governmental and private agencies, and the public at large.
11. Culminates in an internal report containing recommendations which are useful to the future development of the institution.

ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance Team Organization

Institutions may choose to give the responsibility for conducting the institutional analysis of compliance to a committee formed specifically for this purpose, or they may assign this task to an existing committee or council. In either case, it is recommended that the group charged with this responsibility be composed of a director or chair and a relatively small number of members and involve:

- The institution's accreditation liaison in either an oversight or support role.
- Individuals who have access to the data and information required to prepare a report that substantiates the institution's assessment of compliance.
- Knowledgeable representatives from areas such as:
 - Institutional Research,
 - Finance and business,
 - Educational programs,
 - Student services,
 - Institutional effectiveness,
 - Libraries and other learning resources,
 - Enrollment management,
 - Governance.

In choosing the members of the group to conduct the institutional compliance review, the goal should be to select those individuals who understand the institution's mission and who have extensive knowledge of its history, culture, practices, policies, procedures, and data sources. Achieving widespread institutional participation for the

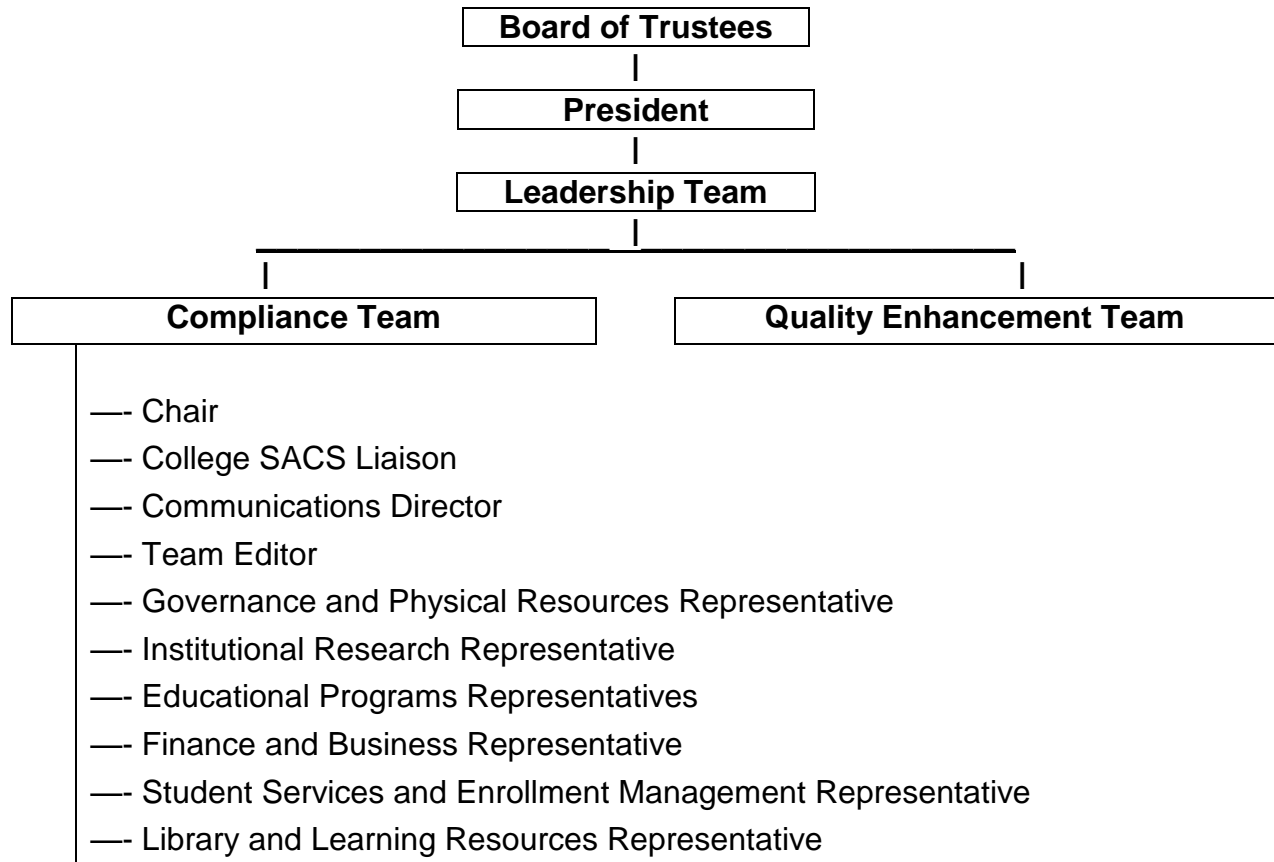
compliance review is not a goal. (*Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*, 2004, p. 12)

The chart on the following page indicates the compliance organizational structure for Southwestern Community College. The structure contains a Compliance Team with a chairperson and the institution's SACS liaison who also serve on the Leadership Team. The remaining members of the team are knowledgeable representatives from differing areas the College.

Members of the compliance team will have individual responsibility for various sections of *The Principles of Accreditation* (Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and federal regulations). Members are charged with studying the College's compliance with SACS *Principles for Accreditation*. Team members will study the policies, activities, and plans of the College as they relate to the assigned principles of the Southern Association. Each member will prepare written documents (compliance reports) which demonstrate an analysis and evaluation of the College's compliance with the assigned requirements, standards, and regulations and demonstrates a persuasive case (including all relevant documentation) to support a judgment of compliance. These reports should be based on the widest possible input from the College community and an examination of relevant records and documents. The individual reports will be edited and synthesized by the Compliance Team and editor to produce the final Compliance Certification Document.

SACS Reaffirmation

Organization for Compliance Study



Compliance Team Members:

Thom Brooks
Delos Monteith
Sandra Bunn
Bill Lee
Chuck Reece
Deb Klavohn
Gene Norton
Joe Roman
Rita Norris
Phil Weast
Dianne Lindgren

Compliance Team Responsibilities

The Compliance Team has the responsibility for the general planning, coordinating, and facilitating of the compliance certification review and for compiling the results into a meaningful and coherent report. The Chair of the Compliance Team will coordinate and give leadership to the study.

Attendance at meetings, team participation, and high quality work is required for each committee member. If a member's attendance, participation, or quality of work is in question, then the team chairperson will discuss the issue in question with the team member. If the issue is unresolved, then the team chairperson will notify the Leadership Chairperson for discussion with the Leadership Team. After discussion with the Leadership Team, the Leadership Team Chairperson may choose to notify the team members' immediate supervisor, requesting that the supervisor stress the need to increase the commitment to the compliance effort.

Responsibilities Of Committee Members

1. Attend meetings of the Compliance Team and adhere to deadlines.
2. Analyze objectively the institutional operations and processes under examination.
3. Conduct duties in a manner that demonstrates a commitment to integrity and the enhancement of the quality of programs at Southwestern Community College.
4. Collect and analyze data to fully support a judgment of compliance for each assigned Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, and federal requirement.
5. Organize and present documentation to support a judgment of compliance for each assigned Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, and federal requirement.
6. Write compliance reports demonstrating judgment of compliance for each assigned Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, and federal requirement.
7. Present completed drafts of compliance reports for approval by the full Compliance Team.
8. Perform revisions of compliance report drafts as recommended by the full Compliance Team.
9. Interact cooperatively with other team members to reach consensus on the analysis of data to support a judgment of compliance.
10. Follow team guidelines for disseminating and publishing compliance reports.
11. Fulfill other committee assignments made by committee chairperson.

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Data Collection Process

The following statements are to serve a general guidelines for the collection, analysis, and reporting of data.

1. Data collection methods will vary, depending upon the standard or requirement being addressed. Survey data may provide part of the data for reports. Data may also need to be gathered through interviews, observations, review of historical data, review of publications, review of college records, etc.

The following groups are among those from whom team members may want to collect data:

- Full-time and part-time faculty
 - Full-time and part-time students
 - Staff
 - Administrators
 - Alumni
 - Various advisory or governing board members
 - Employers of SCC graduates
 - Business and industry
 - Other colleges
2. Each team member will determine the data needed to answer his or her requirements and standards and the best method to obtain the data. Team members may want to consult with the office of institutional research, the

entire compliance team, the compliance chair, or other institutional officers to determine the best means to obtain data.

3. Survey instruments may be used for collecting opinion data from SCC constituent groups. Each team member is responsible for determining the data to be collected for his or her section of the compliance report.
4. Survey statements are to collect opinions and/or information that relates to a standard or requirement.
5. It is not necessary for each team member to do surveys. This method of data collection should be used only if a member has determined the survey is the best way to collect certain data.
6. The analysis and interpretation of survey data are to be handled by each team member using accepted statistical techniques (the Institutional Research and Planning Officer may provide guidance on techniques).
7. Statistical data and interpretation should be used only when they enhance the team member's report. Statistics should not overpower the reader and should be kept as simple as possible.
8. Each team member is urged to secure data in a number of ways to have as complete and unbiased a picture as possible of the member's area of investigation.

Criteria for Evaluating Reports

Compliance Team members will be individually responsible for drafting reports of compliance on Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and/or federal requirements as assigned by the team chairperson. The Compliance Team may accept or reject a draft report. Reports will be accepted if they meet the parameters outlined in “Criteria for Evaluating Reports.”

1. Is the report written in standard English?
2. Is the report clear?
3. Is the report consistent in style?
4. Does the report consistently maintain an objective tone?
5. Does the report have clear transitions?
6. Does the report reflect a genuine, critical analysis of the area being evaluated?
7. Are components of the standard or requirement fully addressed? If the college is found not to be in compliance.
8. Does the report reflect objective, unbiased investigation?
9. Are terms defined clearly?
10. Does the report properly document and interpret data?
11. Are conclusions substantiated by facts?
12. Does the report follow SACS recommendations that all evidence to support a judgment of compliance must be:
 - a. **Reliable.** Can be consistently interpreted.
 - b. **Current.** Information supports an assessment of the current status of the institution.

- c. **Verifiable.** The meaning assigned to the evidence can be corroborated, and the information can be replicated.
- d. **Coherent.** The evidence is orderly, logical, and consistent with other patterns of evidence presented.
- e. **Objective.** The evidence is based on observable data and information.
- f. **Relevant.** The evidence directly addresses the requirement or standard under consideration and should provide the basis for the institution's actions designed to achieve compliance.
- g. **Representative.** Evidence must reflect a larger body of evidence and not an isolated case.
- h. Additionally, evidence should:
 - 1. Entail interpretation and reflection. Those responsible for submitting evidence should have thought about its meaning and be able to interpret it appropriately to support a conclusion.
 - 2. Represent a combination of trend and "snapshot" data.
 - 3. Draw from multiple indicators.

Each team member will be notified regarding the acceptability of his or her reports. If a report is accepted, it will be reviewed by the team editor and forwarded to the communications director for publication to the College's SACS website.

If a report is rejected, it will be returned to the member with an explanation from the team as to why it was not accepted. The draft report must then be rewritten or expanded to meet the recommendations of the team. The team

chairperson will set a deadline for resubmission of the draft by the team member responsible for that standard or requirement.

Process for Electronic Submission of Reports

1. Team Members will access Word document templates on the Share drive (SACS folder, Report Templates subfolder) for each of their compliance reports.
2. Team Members will complete the templates with narratives, judgment of compliance, and links to supporting documentation.
3. Completed reports will be saved back to the Share drive in the SACS folder, Completed Reports subfolder.
4. Individual Team Members will email Compliance Team Chair (Thom Brooks) and inform him when a report has been completed.

NOTE: Team Members must complete the compliance report template at least one week prior to the date they are scheduled to present the report to the entire compliance team. This is the minimum time to allow for an adequate review of the materials by all team members prior to formal presentation during team meetings.

5. Compliance Team Chair will email all team members informing them that a specific report is completed on the Share drive and ready for their review and confirming the meeting date for team review.
6. Team Members will access completed reports from the Share drive (SACS folder, Completed Reports subfolder) and review them prior to team meetings.
7. Team Member completing a report will present it to the entire team for review and approval.
8. All team members must be in agreement for approval of a report.
9. Team Editor (Bill Lee) will access approved reports from the share drive and edit them for form and style.

10. Team Editor will email edited reports to Team Communication Director (Sandra Bunn) for publication.
11. Communication Director will publish approved, edited reports on the college's SACS website.
12. Any reports not approved by the team in step 8 will revert back to step 2 and repeat steps until approved.

Linking Supporting Documents

Much of the supporting information for the compliance reports will be found online at the college or various state websites. In some cases, a team member may have a hard copy or an electronic copy of documents that need to be published online and linked in the compliance report. In the event that a team member needs to have a hard or electronic copy of a document published online:

1. Email electronic documents or send hard copies of paper documents to the Communications Director.
2. Specify the following information with the document:
 - a. Document Title.
 - b. Report Number with which the document corresponds (example, 3.4.13).
 - c. Item number in supporting document table where the information will appear in the compliance report (example, item 3).
3. Communications Director will create and publish online an electronic version of the supporting document named according to the associated report and item number (example, 3.4.13-3).
4. Communications Director will email the team member a URL link to the published document.
5. Team Member will copy and paste the URL for the newly published document into the template for the corresponding compliance report.

Example of Electronic Report Template

2.1 *The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies.*

JUDGMENT OF COMPLIANCE

- Compliance
- Partial Compliance
- Non-Compliance

NARRATIVE

SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

	SOURCE	LOCATION/Special Instructions
1.		
2.		

Timeline for Compliance Review

February 2005	Compliance Team is formed
April 22, 2005	Team begins review of draft reports
December 16, 2005	Team concludes review of draft reports
January 15, 2006	Completed Compliance Certification Document is submitted to Leadership Team
January, 2006	Final editing of Compliance Certification Document
February, 2006	Materials (printed copies, CDs, website) finalized for submission to SACS
March 1, 2006	Compliance Certification Materials submitted to SACS
May 15-19, 2006	Off-site Peer Review conducted
June 2006	Phone report from SACS on findings of off-site team
September 18 – October 27, 2006	Visitation by On-Site Team
June 20-22, 2007	Review by Commission on Colleges

STYLE, GRAMMAR, AND MECHANICS

Point of view:

In formal report writing, first person (I, we, us) and second person (you) are not used. Third person (he, they, it, she, one, everyone, the committee, the college, the administration, etc.) is appropriate. Furthermore, individuals should not be referred to by name. Writers should refer to specific employees by title, position, or function. The performance and effective functioning of offices is of interest in the report, not the names of those employed in the offices. Avoid using passive voice. Passive voice uses helping verbs and places the object of the action as the subject of the sentence (“three objectives were identified...a report was completed”). Passive voice frequently omits altogether any mention of *who* performed the action, and this fails to communicate thoroughly. To avoid passive voice, state as clearly as possible who is the actor in each sentence (“The committee finds...the library staff discovered...the president notes”).)

Verb tense:

Use **present tense** for current description and for any analysis or evaluation of past, present, or future. Use **past** in reporting past history and **future** tense for future descriptions or projections. Do not shift tense between past, present, and future unless transition justifies the shift.

Word choice:

1. Keep words as short as possible while still being accurate and specific.
2. Use concrete and specific words that provoke images about real people, objects, and situations.
3. Avoid using “there” and “it” as subjects of sentences – doing so makes the meaning of the sentences vague. Also avoid using “there” and “it” at the beginning of sentences.

Example: “There is not enough financial support for the library.” is less clear than “Financial support for the library is inadequate.”

4. To promote “clear” reports, avoid professional jargon. Typical educational jargon might include words like “utilization”, or “facilitate”. Words like these may be used if

they are indeed the most descriptive words available – but they should be used sparingly, if at all.

Example:

<u>For:</u>	<u>Substitute:</u>
utilize	use
for the purpose	for
in the event	if
in order that	to
because of the fact that	because
not unlike	like

Content:

1. Findings should be reported in a simple, straight-forward manner. Eliminate phrases when a word will suffice.
2. Narratives should be factual.

Example: Of 253 individuals receiving questionnaires, 45 responded favorably.

3. Narratives should be analytical and should avoid exaggerated statements; for example, rather than stating that the college offers excellent counseling services to the students, the report should be specific and outline the ways in which the college serves students through counseling.

Phrasing:

1. Committees should report findings in an impersonal manner. Avoid the use of personal pronouns and the names of individuals.

Example: Office of Vice President for Instructional Services

not
Gene Couch's office.

2. If pronouns are used in the report, they should have a clearly defined antecedent, and the two must agree in number, gender, and person. The pronoun "who" refers to places, objects, and animals. "Which" introduces nonessential clauses; "that" introduces essential clauses.

3. Specialized language, acronyms, and abbreviations should be minimized; use language that the reader can understand.
4. Sexist language should be avoided.

Example: chairperson, not chairman.

5. Reports should have smooth transitions from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph.
6. Write in complete sentences unless you are listing something. Please try to vary the structure of the sentences so they don't sound repetitive.
7. Write in the third person (he, she, it, they, etc.), but it is best to choose plural antecedents whenever possible to avoid he/she construction or sexist language.

Awkward: Each student pay his/her tuition at registration, or he/she is dropped from the roll.

Better: Students pay their tuition at registration, or they are dropped from the roll.

Incorrect: Each student pays their tuition.

8. Use standard abbreviations after the name of a reference has been identified: Southwestern Community College becomes SCC after the first reference. Enclose the abbreviation in parentheses when the reference is first mentioned. Avoid "etc.," "i.e.," and "e.g."

Spelling:

1. Correct spelling is mandatory. When in doubt, consult *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition or <http://www.webster.com>.
2. If two variant spellings are given and the spellings are joined by the word "or", use the first spelling.
3. Use the word "appendices," not "appendixes."
4. Treat the word "data" as plural.
5. Use the spelling "catalog" rather than "catalogue".

6. Refer to degrees as doctor's, master's, bachelor's, and associate's.

Capitalization:

1. Capitalize titles before names; do not capitalize titles that follow or replace names.

Example: President Groves;
Dr. Cecil Groves, president of the College;
the president of the College.

2. Capitalize the word *college* when it replaces Southwestern Community College.

Example: The College offers classes in Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties to prepare students to pass the GED.

3. Capitalize the word *compliance* when it refers to the name of the report, not when it refers to the process.

Example: The Compliance Report includes facts, and analysis of the facts, recommendations, suggestions, and projections.

During the course of the compliance process, 20 instructors revised syllabi to include writing assignments.

4. Capitalize the names of curriculum programs, degrees, specific courses, and the names of committees within the College.

Example: Office Systems Technology, Associate in Arts degree, Word Processing I and Introductory Botany.

5. Capitalize organizational terms when they refer to units within the College organization.

Example: Instructional Services, Board of Trustees

6. Do not capitalize the names of semesters of the school year.

Example: fall semester 2004.

7. Capitalize the names of buildings and specific rooms.

Example: Oaks Hall, Room 106.

8. Capitalize important words in titles of books.

Example: *The Gregg Reference Manual*
Worlds of Writing

9. Capitalize the first word of each item in an enumerated list.

Example: Task Functions of Leadership in Groups
1. Initiating-structuring
2. Stimulating communication
3. Clarifying communication

10. Do not capitalize the word federal unless it is a name. Do not capitalize federal government.

Example: The Federal Reserve Board does not dispense federal funds.

11. Capitalize a noun that precedes a number or a letter.

Example: Chapter 5, Illustration 12, Figure 6, Exhibit A
exceptions
line, note, page, and paragraph

Numbers

1. Spell indefinite numbers.

Example: several thousand

2. Avoid beginning a sentence with a number.

Example: Counselors and advisors registered 215 students during orientation.

not
215 students were registered by counselors.

3. Spell numbers from one through ten; write figures for numbers above ten. However, if a statement contains several items with figures above ten and below ten, write all the amounts in figures.

Example: The bookstore returned ten texts during fall semester 2004.

The Writing Lab houses 55 Dell computers.

The College applied for 10 federal grants, 4 state grants, and 11 local grants.

4. Express exact or approximate amounts of money in figures; round amounts over a million and express related amounts the same way.

Example: \$120, \$15.50, nearly \$75,000, \$5 million

but
\$300,000 to \$3,000,000

Dates:

1. Spell the month in dates and place the day after the month.

Example: November 7, 2004; November 2004

not
7 November 2004

Percentages:

1. Type percentages in figures. Always spell the word *percent* in sentences.

Example: 80 percent.

2. Put commas between two numbers that come together in a sentence.

Example: On page 76, 15 names are listed.

3. When adjacent numbers are part of a compound modifier, spell the first and use a figure for the second.

Example: Two 5-hour classes

4. Avoid beginning a new line of narrative with a number.

Example: The information for the manual can be found on page 25.

Students applied for 25 grants.

not

The information can be found on page 25.

The Financial Aid Office reported that 25 grants were requested.

Commas:

1. Separate independent clauses joined by “and”, “but”, “or”, “nor”, and “for” by placing a comma before the conjunction.

Example: In-state students had a mean SAT score of 890 in 1987, but out-of-state students had a mean SAT score of 950.

2. Separate items in a series with commas, including before “and”.

Example: Probation, suspension, dismissal, and readmission are the regulations governing academic continuation.

3. Use a comma before and after the year when citing the month, day, and year. When only the month and year are cited, omit all commas.

Example: The Editorial Committee met on August 6, 2004, to hear reports on the graphics and style manual.

The Editorial Committee met during August 2004 to hear reports.

Semicolons:

1. Use a semicolon between two closely related independent clauses.

Example: The **AU** does not count as credit hours attempted; the **I** does count as credit hours attempted.

2. Use a semicolon before a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase that links two independent clauses.

Example: Veteran students are not required to take physical education courses; however, they

must submit a copy of their DD-214 to the registrar.

In some cases a class of more than 20 is too large; for example, an ENG 111 class of 25 does not have adequate time for speeches, lectures, and critiques.

Quotation Marks:

1. Put commas and periods inside quotation marks.

Example: The catalog states: “The College offers an extensive schedule of both credit and noncredit courses at night and during weekends.”

“Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling are essential,” according to the chairperson.

2. Put semicolons outside quotation marks.

Example: “Instructors should conduct research in their classes”; this was the presenter’s main idea.

Abbreviations:

1. Use abbreviations sparingly. Before abbreviating the name of an organization, first state the name in full followed by the abbreviation in parentheses.

Example: North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS)

2. Use the course prefix and title when identifying courses.

Example: OST 131, Keyboarding

3. Omit periods in the abbreviation of names of organizations like SACS and ACA.

Italics:

1. Use italics for foreign words.

Example: Students are taught fallacies of argument such as *ad hominem* attack.

2. Use italics for words used to emphasize words.

Example: The word *very* adds nothing.

Possessives:

1. Use possessive forms of nouns and pronouns to precede a gerund.

Example: Because of the student government's winning faculty support, several changes in policies were effected last year. Because of their winning...

2. Add the apostrophe and s to make singular nouns possessive.

Example: The director's duties; Bob Clark's report.

3. Add only the apostrophe to make plural nouns ending in s possessive.

Example: The students' scores.

4. Add the apostrophe and s to make plural nouns not ending in s possessive.

Example: Women's names.

Miscellaneous:

1. Do not hyphenate ly compounds if the ly word is an adverb; do hyphenate ly compounds if the ly word is an adjective.

Example: recently written article;
friendly-looking counselors.

2. Do not use an apostrophe to make dates and capital letters plural.

Example: 1980s, Bs

not

1980's, B's

3. Italicize titles of published books, newsletters, pamphlets, and journals.

Example: *Foundations of Argument* by John Reinard was published in 1991.

4. Do not capitalize or italicize the initial definite article in titles unless it is part of the name.

Example: *The New England Review*;
The Gregg Reference Manual;
the *Southwestern Community College Catalog*

5. Do not use split infinitives.

Example: It is impossible to make definite plans for even six months ahead.

6. Avoid using contractions.

7. Type a dash as two hyphens with no space between the hyphens and the words that precede and follow..

Example: The cornerstones of community colleges— access, low cost, and relevant programs— must be at the heart of our continuous improvement efforts.

8. Maintain consistency in references to college sites according to the following guidelines:

To achieve uniformity throughout the narratives, it is necessary to use only the following forms when referencing the name of a specific college site.

Campus

Jackson Campus

Centers

Cherokee Center

Macon Center

Swain Center

Cashiers Center

Public Safety Training Center

However, be careful to observe the difference in capitalization when center is not intended to be a proper noun:

“the Macon and Cherokee Centers”

or

“the centers at Macon and Cherokee”

9. Spell out “North Carolina.”
10. Spell out “Veterans Affairs.”
11. When giving percentages, be sure they add up to 100.

ADDITIONAL SACS RESOURCES

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