

Writing and Editing Strategies for Compliance Certification

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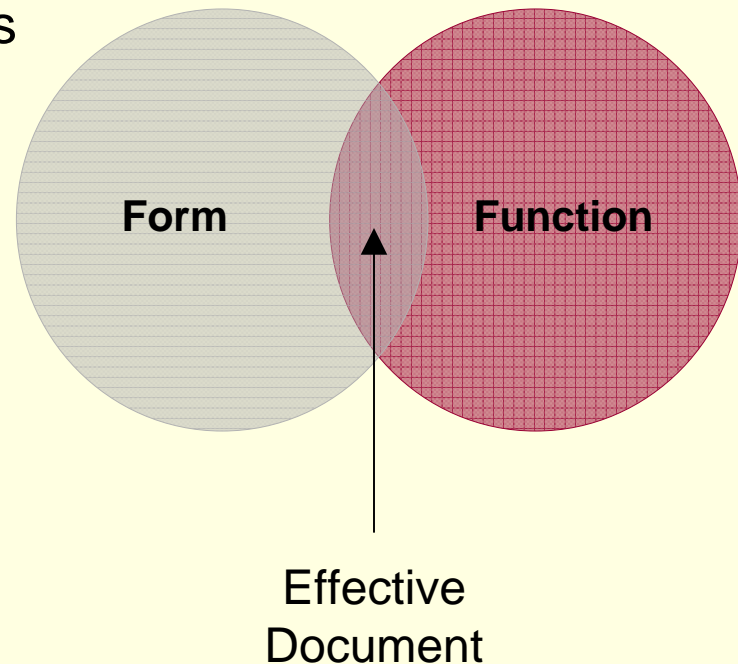
Western Carolina University

www.wcu.edu



Workshop Overview

- Introductions
- Who we are and what we did
- Discussion of writing process
 - Group work on style and preparation
- Break
- Discussion of writing and rhetorical issues
 - Group work on writing and editing
- Final report preparation



Who we are and What We Did

- Western Carolina University
- WCU SACS-COC Review
- Our Team
 - SACS Liaison
 - Writers and Editors
 - Content Specialists
 - Faculty, Administrators, and Staff

Before You Begin: Preparation

- Envision a final format
 - Allows you to set a goal
 - May change as you develop product
 - “Thumbnails” may be helpful
- Take a technology inventory
 - Will inform both print and online decisions
 - Will inform who will be working on the project (especially writers/editors)
- What method of composition will allow you to reach that goal

Example: Our Goal

3.2.2 The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure:

3.2.2.1 *Institution's mission*

Judgment of Compliance

In Compliance

Narrative of Compliance

The UNC Board of Governors has clearly defined legal authority and operating control for all affairs of WCU, including the development of the institutional mission. The Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs is one of four standing committees established by the UNC Board of Governors on September 15, 1973.¹ Pursuant to Section 301 C of the Code,² the Committee shall make recommendations to the UNC Board of Governors in all areas pertaining to the development of a coordinated system of higher education in North Carolina, including:

1. the definition of mission and assignment of functions of each constituent institution;
2. the review of requests for the initiation of new degree programs and recommendations for the termination of existing programs;
3. the provision of supportive services, facilities, and other resources for the instructional, research, and public service programs of the constituent institutions.

WCU's mission is currently undergoing revision and will be adopted pending approval by the Board of Governors.³

Supporting Documentation and Links

¹ Board of Governors Committee on Planning, Policies, and Programs
<http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/aa/planning/boardCommittee.htm>

² The Code
http://www.northcarolina.edu/content.php/legal/policymanual/uncpolicymanual_100_1.htm

³ WCU Mission Statement and Draft
<http://www.wcu.edu/strategicplanning/mission.html>

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Logistics Associated with Composition

- Determine who will be working on what part and when (schedule)
 - Buy-In and Input:
 - Authors
 - Editors
 - Reviewers
 - Tech/IT
 - Importance of budget, release time, and/or “count towards” for significant contributors



Prepare for the Writing Issues: What Do You Think They Will Be?

- Preparing for and avoiding problems is easier and quicker than fixing them
- What writing issues do you expect you'll encounter as you prepare your documents
 - REMEMBER: Focus on writing issues rather than compliance (content) issues

Launch a Preemptive Strike

- Document Mapping and Work Flow
- Style Sheet
 - Format
 - Rhetorical Strategies
- Training Session
 - For writers and editors
 - Online vs. Print

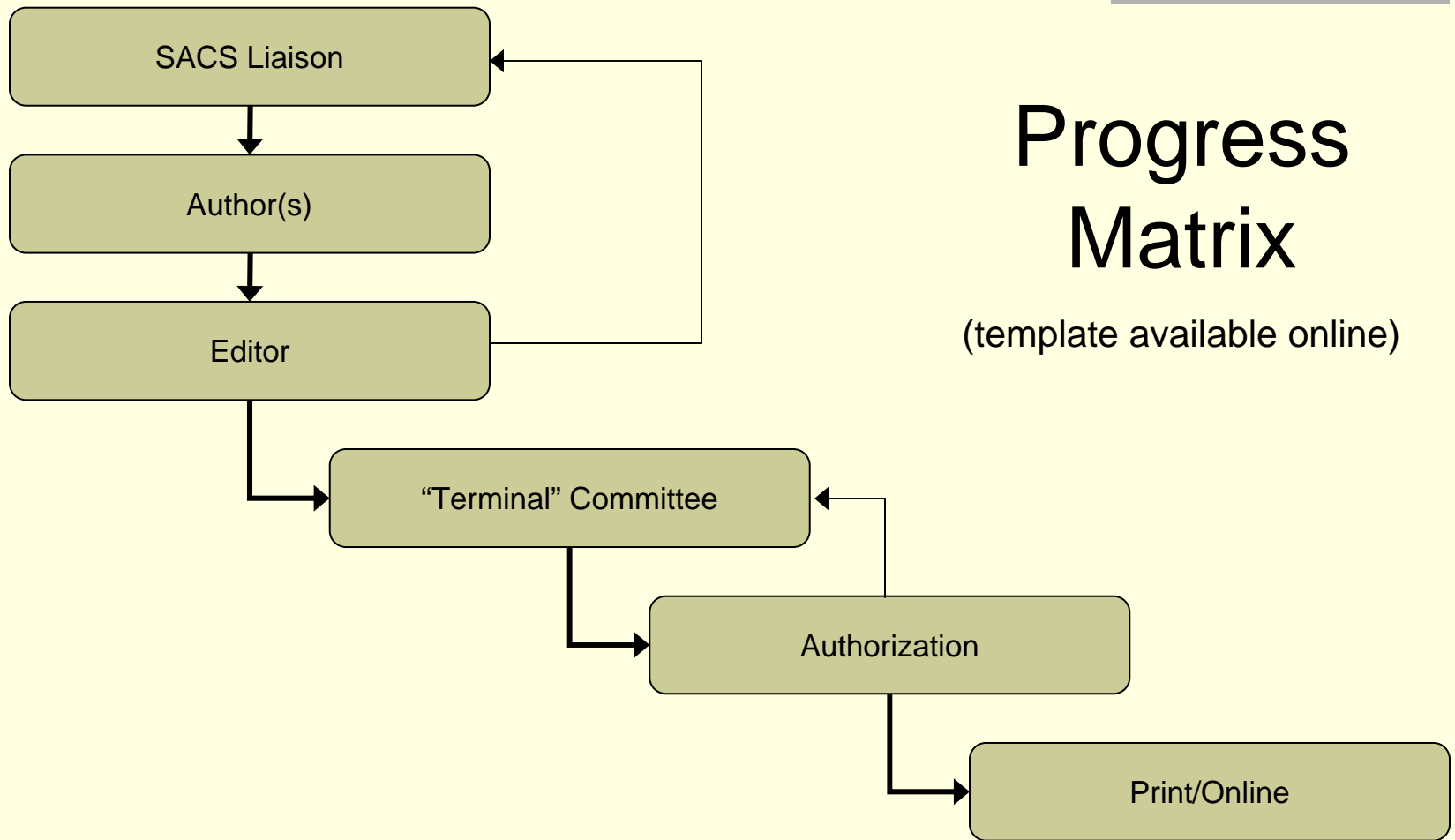


Document Mapping and Work Flow

Carefully review all document sections.

- Map out which document sections are closely related to other sections
 - Assures consistency between reports
- Label what individual/organizational entity has responsibility for contributing each section
 - Helps to track down information

Preparation: Our Model



Progress Matrix

(template available online)

Preparation: Style Sheet

- Defines Formatting and Writing (style) issues
 - Can start with a common style (MLA, APA, etc.) but should modify for these reports
- Terms and Abbreviations
- Make widely available (print and online)
- Organize a training session for writers and editors (more on this later)
- Consistency throughout documents is KEY as you may have numerous contributors from disparate fields

Preparation: Style Sheet

- Review other institutions' documents (but be aware of changes in requirements over time)
- Style Sheet can help create a consistent “voice” – very important for a unified document written in pieces
- Always Defer to Current SACS Requirements

Preparation: Style Sheet – Common Issues

- Names, Titles, and Programs
- List Item Syntax
- Illustration Refs
- Document Design/layout
- Headings
- Subordination/indentation

Begin a Style Sheet

- In small groups (2-3), begin creating a style sheet for your institutions
- Try to work with someone not at your institution
- Focus on clarifying the “lexicon” of your institution:
 - “Western” for “Western Carolina University”
 - “Liberal Studies” for “General Education”

Preparation: Formatting Issues

- Re-formatting reports from authors can take an IMMENSE amount of time
 - Copying and pasting issues (esp. margins and tabs)
 - Submit work as PLAIN TEXT FILES
 - or create a LOCKED document template
 - Minimal formatting of tables
 - Or in an image format (jpeg, gif, etc.)
 - Source for data (for verification of accuracy)

Preparation: Training

- Conduct a brief writing workshop for everyone
 - Reviewers can provide good editorial feedback as well as content feedback
- Discuss Style Sheet
 - This can be an “excuse” so it doesn’t look like you are trying to teach them how to write (which you are)
- Use Style Sheet as opportunity to talk about some basic rhetorical strategies

Basic Training: Professional Rhetoric

Clear
Accurate
Concise
Accessible
(CACA!?!?)

Active and Passive Voice

- Active voice: subject does the verb; the subject performs the action expressed in the verb; the subject acts
 - “The Faculty Senate authorizes all curriculum changes.”
- Passive voice: verb does the subject; the subject receives the action expressed in the verb; the subject is acted upon
 - “All curriculum changes are authorized by the Faculty Senate.”
- Prefer Active (when possible)
 - Shorter (therefore clearer) sentences
 - Implies authority and forcefulness

Active/Passive Examples

- Periodic surveys of students have been conducted by the University to assess student learning.
 - Revision:

- A student is allowed to re-matriculate when probationary criteria have been met and verified.
 - Revision:

- Since the last review was performed by SACS, not all of the procedures required were implemented by the Provost.
 - Revision:

Expletive Construction

- Expletive sentences use “filler” words that don’t add meaning
- Makes sentences needlessly longer
- Usually begins
 - “There is/are”
 - “It is”
- Focus on the “real” subject of the sentence
 - Example:
 - There are several programs designed to provide academic support to students.
 - Several programs provide academic support.

Expletive Examples

- It is common for over 20 faculty to attend these training seminars.
 - Revision:

- There has been a decrease in the number of students enrolled in our training sessions
 - Revision:

- The use of in-class demonstrations has resulted in a dramatic increase in enrollment.
 - Revision:

Nominalizations

- Turning a verb or an adjective into a noun
- Nominalizations increase sentence length (decreasing readability)
- Focus on the “real” verb in the sentence
- Example:
 - Department heads provide an evaluation of candidates.
 - Department heads evaluate candidates.

A study for the Society for Technical Communication, “Nominalizations and Their Impact on Readers,” (1996) Jan H. Spyridakis and Carol S. Isakson, showed that denominalized versions of the same material led to significantly higher (50%) comprehension rates by readers than nominalized versions.

Nominalization Examples

- Budget cuts constitute a threat to faculty development programs.
 - Revision:
- The University conducts periodic surveys of students to assess student learning.
 - Revision

Other Rhetorical Issues

- Report Length
 - Brevity/conciseness
- Jargon
- Online and print versions
 - Must be the same
 - Online rhetoric similar to technical documentation rhetoric
- Importance of Formatting and Layout
 - This IS a rhetorical issue
 - Use SACS standard as a guide for sections within a report



Back To School

Document Preparation: Putting it all together

- Making print = online
- Preparing prefatory material
- Final checking of print version
 - The ~~importance~~ ^{importance} of proofreading
- Making it look good
- Printing issues
- Use a print template

Other Issues or Questions?

Thank You

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SACS Review Compliance Certification

Submitted to the Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

September 8, 2006



WESTERN
CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
A University of North Carolina campus