

A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR PUNCTUATION, USAGE, AND FORMATTING

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PURPOSE

This Quick Reference Guide is intended as a resource for the authors of Cañada College's *Report of the Institutional Self-Study for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*. Although teams will be composing sections of the report separately, the text as a whole must function as a cohesive unit. Punctuation, language use, and formatting should remain consistent throughout; to this end the report's authors should use to the following guidelines and rules of thumb for reference.

PUNCTUATION

Hyphens

Hyphenate compound nouns and adjectives that function as a unit. The following are examples of some you are likely to use in the report:

- African-American
- board-adopted policy
- district-wide
- four-year college
- long-range
- off-campus
- out-of-date
- part-time
- self-assessment
- self-study
- step-by-step
- two-thirds

Some compound nouns and adjectives, however, should appear as one word:

- offline
- online
- ongoing

Some words containing affixes—non-instructional, non-bias, non-discrimination, co-chair, re-elect—should be hyphenated. For others, though—like multicultural, multiethnic, proactive—hyphens have fallen out of fashion.

Dashes

Dashes, not hyphens, indicate a pause. To include a dash in text, type two hyphens.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Use all capitals and no periods to abbreviate names and titles when the abbreviations are pronounced letter by letter: FTE, CSU, ESL.

Acronyms are abbreviations which have been made into pronounced words. Use all capitals and no periods for them as well: SLOAC, SMART.

Add a lowercase –s without an apostrophe to make an abbreviation or an acronym plural: FTEs, CSUs.

Form the possessive of an acronym by adding –’s: ITS’s, CalWORKs’s.

Remember, the abbreviation for the San Mateo County Community College District has three “C”s, not two as in our email addresses: SMCCCD.

Lists with Semicolons

When composing lists involving lengthy structures, such as clauses, separate the structures with semicolons:

Cañada asserts a personalized orientation toward instruction, one whose benefits can be grasped readily: students who have trouble understanding course material can seek extra help with little difficulty; opportunities for active student participation in class discussion are maximized; teachers can become aware of students in their classrooms who may be falling through the cracks academically, as they might not when leading large groups.

USAGE

Active and Passive Voice

Consider the following two sentences which express the same idea, the first written in the active voice, the second in the passive voice:

- Active: “The College must provide quality instruction for its students.”
- Passive: “Quality instruction must be provided for the College’s students.”

In the first sentence the grammatical subject is the “College.” The College, as agent, is active; it is doing the providing. In the second sentence, however, “quality instruction” is the subject, but “instruction” cannot logically be an agent. The

providing is being done passively *by* an agent; that the College is the agent is only implied. In this example we see how the active voice expresses agency directly while passive does so only indirectly. Because of its directness, the active voice is stronger, clearer, and more authoritative.

FAVOR THE ACTIVE VOICE! Active sentences make for an active document.

Useful Sentence Structures

Since you will be including a tremendous amount of detail in the accreditation self-study, you should be aware of simple sentence structures you can use to infuse that detail into your text smoothly and effectively. The following are some good ones to keep in mind:

Appositives

An appositive is a nouns or noun phrase which renames another noun or noun phrase preceding it. You can use an appositive to explain, clarify, or elaborate on the original noun or noun phrase. In the following sentence, the underlined text is the appositive:

Redwood City and the greater San Mateo County area, the locale in which Cañada is situated, is home to a multicultural, multiethnic population engaged in an extensive range of economic activities.

Verbals

You can use verbal phrases to modify nouns or whole clauses. In the following sentence, the verbals are underlined:

Stressing students' diverse backgrounds, the Cañada College mission statement highlights the imperative to address a wide range of educational needs, regarding not only curriculum but also "personal development" and "lifelong enrichment."

Adjective Clauses

Use adjective clauses to identify or give background information about nouns or noun phrases:

Cañada College, which is conducting its accreditation self study, is an outstanding institution of higher learning.

FORMATTING

Alignment

Justified alignment squares off paragraphs graphically, lending a professional appearance to documents. I recommend it.

Titles & Subtitles

Use small caps and bold font for all section titles—for example, “**STANDARD TWO: INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY**”—and major subtitles—for example, “**DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY.**” Align section titles in the center of the page and subtitles to the left of the page.

Standard Statements

Each Standard in the self-study includes a series of *standard statements* against which you will be making your evaluations. Number these and put them in italics as in the following such statement:

1. *The institution seeks to meet the various educational needs of its students through programs consistent with its institutional mission and purposes and the demographics and economics of its community.*

Margins

Please use the following margin sizes:

- Left—1.5 in. (This margin should be larger for eventual binding.)
- Right—1.25 in.
- Top—1 in.
- Bottom—1 in.

Spacing

Since editing a single-spaced document is hard on the eyes, please use 1.5 spacing. I may change the spacing, however, as we approach completion of the manuscript.

Tables & Figures

Use tables or figures (any type of illustration other than a table, including graphs) when you need to present a large amount of data in a small amount of space. Number and title all tables and figures, and in the text refer to each to tell the reader what to look for, discussing only highlights rather than every detail. Use the following table as a model:

Table X

Accreditation quality of work measures by standard

Standard	Fun*	Aggravation*	Exuberance*
1	9	1	14
2	8	0.5	16
3	10	2	12

*On a scale of 1-10.

You can create a table like this one from the Microsoft Word “Table” menu. Please do not use gridlines and use the standard gray borders. I will handle formatting for tables or figures that are more intricate on an individual basis.