

# JSU's SACSCOC Style Guide

## In general, write your narratives

- In third person, not first person. Example: *The university* transitioned to a Writing Across the Curriculum program in 2021, NOT *We* transitioned to a Writing Across the Curriculum program in 2021.
- In past, present, and/or present perfect tense. Example: The university transitioned (past) to a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program in 2020 and has added (present perfect) new writing-intensive courses every year. The WAC committee reviews (present) new writing-intensive courses regularly.
- In an easily readable format – headings, sections, bulleted or numbered lists.
- In clear, succinct prose.

## Notes on style from the SACSCOC Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation

### Writing Narratives (page 24):

- Strong narratives incorporate the given evidence into a convincing argument for compliance on a given standard; readers should not have to make the case for themselves. Don't make your reader have to work to understand your argument; instead, explicitly state how the evidence demonstrates compliance.
- "[U]se past tense verbs to describe actions previously taken by the institution and present tense verbs to describe current policies and procedures that support the maintenance of compliance. Because future tense verbs signal an action not yet taken, future tense is typically found only in the action plans included for standards marked Partial Compliance or Non-Compliance."
- As far as narrative length, work to find the "Goldilocks Zone" – not too much, not too little. Address the standard fully without extraneous information (that will also have to be reviewed and might open us up for further, unnecessary scrutiny).

### Common Style Issues for JSU Documents:

**Academic Colleges** – Proper names of JSU's colleges are capitalized, but informal or incomplete names are lowercased. Examples: the College of Health Professions and Wellness, health professions, the college. College names including the word *and* should be spelled out and not use an ampersand (&). Examples: the College of Arts and Humanities, not the College of Arts & Humanities.

**Academic Departments** — Proper names of JSU's departments are capitalized, but informal or incomplete names are lowercased. Examples: the Department of Communication, the communication department, the department. The exception would be proper nouns that occur within these names. Examples: the Department of English, the English department.

**Academic Disciplines** — Do not capitalize generic phrases or terms for academic fields of study unless they function as proper nouns, such as English. Examples: He is a music major but has a strong interest in English and French. His sister, enrolled in the College of Arts and Humanities, is delving into history as part of her bachelor's degree program. Sam, formerly a business student, is now studying political science.

**Catalog** – Not *Catalogue*. Capitalize when giving the full title: the Undergraduate Catalog. Lowercase when using generally: Students follow the program from their catalog year.

**Corequisite** – Written as one word without a hyphen at JSU.

**Degrees** – Capitalize formal degree names, such as Bachelor of Arts in English. When written generally, use lowercase and an apostrophe: He is working on his master's degree.

**Grade-Point Average** — Note the hyphen. May be abbreviated to GPA for multiple references or if the context allows for clear meaning.

**Grades, Scholastic** — Letters used to denote grades are capitalized and are not italicized. Do not use quotation marks or an apostrophe with plural forms. Examples: John made all As. John received an A on the essay.

**Inclusive language** – Strive to use inclusive language as described below:

- When speaking of an unknown person in general, use the singular *they* to avoid imposing gender on this unknown person. (Example: The student needs to have their own living space.) When possible, you might instead make the sentence plural to avoid the singular *they*. (Example: Students need to have their own living spaces.)
- Avoid gendered phrases like *ladies and gentlemen*, which may exclude people.
- Please visit [The Diversity Style Guide](#) website for more extensive information on using inclusive language.
- *Handicapped* is no longer the preferred term for a *person with a disability* or a *disabled person*. The latter two terms are preferred.
- Please see the [National Disability Authority](#) website for more preferred terms.

**Instructor** – The generic term to be used for faculty members at JSU, which should not be capitalized. Example: Please ask your instructor about the syllabus. (*Teacher* is a term that applies more to K-12, and *professor* is a term that does not apply to all faculty.)

**Jacksonville State University** – In formal university writing, write out the entire university name with its abbreviation in parentheses upon first mention: Jacksonville State University (JSU). For each subsequent mention in the piece of writing, use only the abbreviation JSU.

**Post-traditional students** – Now more accepted than the term *non-traditional*, post-traditional students are generally 25 years of age or older and, according to the [Postsecondary National Policy Institute \(PNPI\)](#), “are a diverse group of adult learners, full-time employees, low-income students, students who commute to school, and working parents. In general, post-traditional students have one or more of the following characteristics: they delay enrollment in college after high school, they attend part-time for at least part of an academic year, they work full-time while also enrolled in school, they are financially independent, or they have dependents (spouse and/or children).”

**Prerequisite** - Written as one word without a hyphen at JSU.

**President, Provost, Dean, and other Names/Titles** – Avoid using both *Dr.* and *President* before a name; use one or the other. Examples: *President Dr. Don C. Killingsworth, Jr.* is incorrect; *President Don C. Killingsworth, Jr.* is correct. On second references, use *President Killingsworth*, *Dr. Killingsworth*, or *the president*. The same rules apply to other individuals and their titles.

**University** — Lowercase as a stand-alone word, even when referring to JSU. Examples: Dr. Jones works at Jacksonville State University. The university is accredited. Sam attends the university each summer.