

# AACE<sup>®</sup> International

## Conference & Expo Technical Paper Guidelines

Prepared by the AACE International Technical Board

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# 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for the submission of technical papers for publication in the AACE International Transactions and presentation at the AACE International Conference & Expo. This document establishes the legal issues, style issues, and overall evaluation criteria that must be met for publication acceptance.

## 2. General Paper Requirements

### 2.1. Authorship

All papers are to be original documents of the author(s). If a co-author is identified, then the co-author must have substantially contributed to the writing of the document.

### 2.2. Paper Review

All papers are reviewed for compliance with the AACE International Technical Paper Style Guide; as well as for technical accuracy and alignment with AACE International recommended practices and the AACE International Total Cost Management Framework. The review is performed by both AACE International staff and subject matter experts.

The paper review focuses on the following areas:

1. Legal Issues
2. Paper Style
3. Overall Evaluation
  - a. Subject Matter Competency
  - b. Organization and Development
  - c. Syntax and Command of Language
  - d. Grammar, Usage and Mechanics

AACE International has developed a Technical Paper Evaluation Criteria (TPEC) spreadsheet tool to drive consistency in the review process, and to report results to the paper authors. A passing score in all of the review areas is required for the paper to be accepted for publication in the AACE International Transactions.

Authors will be provided a copy of the TPEC review spreadsheet and with any additional review comments. To ensure consistency, any paper that fails an initial review will be evaluated by a second independent peer to verify the initial reviewer's findings. If a paper does not pass the overall evaluation review, the author will be provided a short time period in which to address any deficiencies and re-submit the paper for a second review cycle.

## 3. Legal Issues

AACE is a non-profit organization that is registered in the United States and is governed by U.S. Federal law. All papers must comply with U.S. laws, regulations, and economic sanctions.

### 3.1. Plagiarism

AACE International submits all technical papers to CheckForPlagiarism.net to check for potential similarity with other published documents. Papers that receive a similarity index of  $\geq 10\%$

against other published papers may indicate potential plagiarism. Similarity may be due to common phrases and terminology used in the cost engineering profession that by themselves do not indicate plagiarism. Therefore papers with a similarity index of  $\geq 10\%$  undergo a manual review to evaluate potential plagiarism.

Words that are identical to parts of other published materials may need to be quoted and cited. Similarly, the expression of words, ideas, thoughts or other works that are close to other published documents (i.e. paraphrasing) may require citations to the original source document.

A common mistake made by authors is the re-use of wording or paraphrasing from other documents that they have written without including citations to the original source document. In such cases, citations to the original source documents are required (even if they are other AACE International documents).

If AACE International is concerned about potential plagiarism, the submitted paper will be returned to the author with a copy of the similarity report, and the author will be requested to correct the issues. Authors are encouraged to submit their papers to [CheckForPlagiarism.net](http://CheckForPlagiarism.net) prior to submittal to AACE International in order to discover and correct any potential issues. There is a fee associated with using the [CheckForPlagiarism.net](http://CheckForPlagiarism.net) service.

AACE International takes potential plagiarism very seriously. Where AACE International considers intentional plagiarism to have occurred, AACE International may impose penalties and/or consider legal action.

### 3.2. Ownership of Figures

If not created and owned by the author, all figures (photographs, illustrations or other graphical elements) must be accompanied by a copyright release from the content owner that is submitted with the paper. If required copyright releases are not submitted with the paper, the paper will be returned to the author for correction.

### 3.3. Overuse of Quotations

The overuse of quotations in a paper may constitute violation of the *fair use* policies of U.S. Copyright law. As noted in the AACE International Technical Paper Style Guide, the use of quotations in a paper should be minimized. If AACE International considers that the use of quotations is excessive, then the submitted paper may be returned to the author for revision.

### 3.4. Confidentiality Issues

Do not use data or information that may be considered confidential. The purpose of most technical papers is to convey concepts. Whenever possible, use modified data to illustrate the concept in place of actual project data that may be considered confidential.

For case studies or other papers where actual project or potential proprietary information is used, AACE International may require a disclaimer (submitted with the paper) from the project or data owner indicating that the information may be included in the paper. Where data or information is in the public domain, the author should cite the public domain source of the information. Where potential confidentiality issues exist, AACE International may return the paper to the author for correction.

### 3.5. Intellectual Property

If the paper contains intellectual property owned by a party other than the author, then the author must obtain a release (submitted with the paper) from the owner indicating that the information may be included in the paper. Proprietary application of knowledge or research gained from the author's employer (or former employers) will require a release. Where potential intellectual property issues exist, AACE International may return the paper to the author for correction.

### 3.6. Anti-Competitiveness Issues

Papers dealing with benchmarking issues or provision of comparative metrics must abide by U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Federal Trade Commission anti-trust regulations regarding benchmarking, including maintaining strict confidentiality of client data and information.

### 3.7. Commercialism

AACE International will not accept papers that are commercial or self-promoting in nature. Whenever possible, refrain from using company/product names and logos.

If a paper is focused on concepts and features that are common to a class of software packages, and there is no direct marketing intent or implied, then the paper will be allowed; however, authors and co-authors are specifically prohibited from submitting papers (or providing presentations) that mention or reference the products of the company that they work for. If AACE International considers a paper to be overly commercial in nature, it will be returned to the author for correction.

### 3.8. U.S. Economic Sanctions

AACE International must comply with U.S. economic sanction laws enforced by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control that restrict business activities with sanctioned and other sensitive countries. Economic sanction laws prohibit certain business activities with targeted governments, organizations and individuals, as well as persons and entities that act on their behalf. This may require AACE International to reject papers whose authors are citizens or residents of countries that are on the list of *sensitive countries* identified by the U.S. Department of State. AACE is committed to accepting papers from foreign authors whenever legally permissible to do so.

## 4. Paper Style

There are two goals for AACE International technical papers. The first is to teach the reader about a subject for which they may have little or no knowledge. The second related goal is to clearly convey concepts and develop the subject thoroughly enough for the reader to put an idea into immediate use.

Do not be constrained by word count. Break concepts down into the simplest step-by-step explanations. Use examples, figures, tables, etc. to illustrate key points. Do not use jargon, and avoid obscure technical terms. Finally, write the paper so that the idea can be read and understood by a wide audience.

#### **4.1. Paper Template**

Papers submitted for the AACE International Conference & Expo must adhere to the AACE International Technical Paper Style Guide. The document must be submitted in Microsoft Word utilizing the AACE International Conference & Expo Technical Paper Template.

#### **4.2. Third Person Form Technical Writing Style**

Papers must be written in third person form. A technical writing style, which is non-conversational, should be used.

#### **4.3. Title**

The paper must include a title that accurately describes the technical content of the paper. The title should generally be limited to approximately ten words or less. Do not use humor in the title. For example, a title such as “10 Things We Remembered in the Bog After the Big Storm” would be better expressed as “Project Control Issues After Hurricane Katrina.” The paper title should convey the technical concept being described in the paper, and utilize words that a potential reader might seek when performing an online search for technical documents.

#### **4.4. Abstract**

The paper must include a short abstract that accurately describes the technical content of the paper. Typically the abstract will be the same as that submitted initially to the AACE International Call for Papers; however as the paper itself is being written, the abstract may need to be updated to reflect the finished paper. The abstract should be approximately 100 to 200 words in length. If AACE International considers the abstract to be too short, too long, or does not adequately describe the content of the paper then the paper may be returned to the author for revision.

#### **4.5. Table of Contents**

The paper must include a Table of Contents that identifies page numbers for all Level 1 and Level 2 Headings.

#### **4.6. Caption All Tables and Figures**

All tables and figures must have captions. Captions must use the Caption style in the paper template and placed directly following the table or figure. Do not provide a List of Tables or a List of Figures.

#### **4.7. Numbering of Equations**

All equations that have been placed on a separate line either for readability or for later reference must be numbered. Do not provide a List of Equations.

#### **4.8. Length of Paper**

Papers should typically include between 3,000 and 12,000 words, not including the abstract, table of contents, bibliography, and appendices. If AACE International deems a paper too short to have adequately developed the subject matter, then the paper may be returned to the author for revision.

Conversely, if a paper is deemed too long because of the inclusion of irrelevant material or from a lack of focus on the subject matter, the paper may also be returned for correction. Do not include extraneous material in the paper simply to meet a minimum number of words.

#### **4.9. List of References Format**

The format of the List of References must follow that identified in the AACE International Technical Document Style Guide. Website references are discouraged in all technical documents. If a reference must be included from a website in order to meet proper citation of a source, a copy of the webpage in .pdf format must be included with the submission of the paper.

#### **4.10. Miscellaneous Style Issues**

The paper must meet all other expectations of style as identified in the AACE International Technical Paper Style Guide. Failure to follow the indicated style guidelines may result in the return of the paper to the author for revision.

### **5. Paper Evaluation**

If the paper submission passes all legal and style issues (identified above), the paper is evaluated on the following four areas (as indicated in the Technical Paper Evaluation Criteria).

1. Subject Matter Competency
2. Organization and Development
3. Syntax and Command of Language
4. Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics

For each area, a score ranging from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest) is assigned. A score of 4 or higher is a passing score for each area. If the paper results in a non-passing score (3, 2, 1) in one or more areas, the paper will be returned to the author for revision. A passing score in all four areas must be realized for the paper to be accepted for publication in the AACE International Transactions and potential presentation at the AACE International Conference & Expo.

#### **5.1. Subject Matter Competency**

The paper must be technically correct, and the subject matter must be addressed competently. Scoring is as follows:

6 – The paper is technically correct; addresses the subject matter clearly and thoroughly; and effectively communicates all technical aspects of the paper.

5 – The paper is technically correct; addresses the subject matter clearly and thoroughly; but may communicate some technical aspects of the subject more effectively than others.

4 – The paper is technically correct; addresses the subject matter clearly, but perhaps not as thoroughly as it should; and communicates the technical aspects of the paper adequately.

3 – The paper may have issues with technical accuracy or in addressing specific portions of the subject matter; or may be lacking in explaining the technical aspects of the paper.

2 – The paper may indicate confusion about the technical subject matter; may neglect important parts of the subject matter; or may be lacking in explaining the technical aspects of the paper.

1 – The paper suggests a lack of knowledge of the technical subject matter; may neglect important parts of the subject matter; or may be lacking in explaining the technical aspects of the paper.

## 5.2. Organization and Development

The paper must be clearly organized and should develop the subject matter in a step-wise manner to the conclusion or result. A key aspect of any paper is to introduce the topic, speak to the topic, and offer a conclusion in alignment with the subject matter presented. Scoring is as follows:

6 – The paper is clearly organized; and reinforced with developed reasoning, examples, figures, and other supporting information.

5 – The paper is clearly organized and developed; but may lack extensive supporting information.

4 – The paper is adequately organized; and generally reinforced with supporting information.

3 – The paper is inadequately organized; and/or may present generalizations or conclusions without appropriate supporting examples or information.

2 – The paper is weakly organized; and/or provides little or no supporting information.

1 – The paper is disorganized and underdeveloped; and provides little or no supporting information.

## 5.3. Syntax and Command of Language

The paper must be syntactically correct; and demonstrate correct use of vocabulary that is pertinent to the subject matter. Scoring is as follows:

6 – The paper has a fluent style; demonstrates syntactic variety and clear command of language and vocabulary.

5 – The paper provides some syntactic variety; and demonstrates command of language and vocabulary.

4 – The paper demonstrates adequate use of syntax and vocabulary.

3 – The paper shows limited control of syntax and vocabulary.

2 – The paper shows inadequate control of syntax and vocabulary.

1 – The paper lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary.

## 5.4. Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics

The paper must be grammatically correct in sentence and paragraph structure. The paper must utilize proper spelling, punctuation, tense, conjugation, and verb usage. Scoring is as follows:

- 6 – The paper contains no errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 5 – The paper is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 4 – The paper may contain a few errors, but generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- 3 – The paper contains an accumulation of errors that sometimes interferes with the understanding of the subject matter.
- 2 – The paper contains numerous errors that frequently interfere with the understanding of the subject matter.
- 1 – The paper contains serious and persistent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that severely interfere with understanding the subject matter.

## Appendix A: Common Mistakes

There are many common mistakes that authors make when writing technical papers for the AACE International Conference & Expo. This appendix is intended to identify the most common mistakes to assist potential authors in making corrections before submitting to AACE International.

### 1. Third party technical writing style

AACE International technical papers are intended to expand upon the technical knowledge of the total cost management and cost engineering industries. Writing in third person form conveys a professional, technical tone and a degree of objectivity to the paper. It directs the reader's focus to the subject matter being presented.

Third person writing depends on the use of third person pronouns such as: *he, she, him, her, his, hers, it, its, they, their, and theirs*. In contrast, first person writing uses pronouns such as *I* and *me*; and second person writing uses pronouns such as *you* and *yours*.

### 2. No humor

In general, technical papers should not include (or severely limit) humor to illustrate a point. Humor is allowed in presentations where it can be used to aid in the delivery of what otherwise would be a dry, technical subject; however, the paper itself should focus on the subject matter. Related to this is the direction to keep the paper title devoid of humor, and to include keywords in the title that may likely be used in an internet search for the subject matter.

### 3. Refer to AACE International correctly

The correct term for the Association name is AACE International. If previously introduced as an acronym, such as AACE International (AACE), then the Association may be referred to as AACE. Never use the acronyms AACEI or AACEi for the Association.

It is also incorrect to use the term AACE International or AACE in a plural or possessive form. It would be correct form to state "AACE International publishes many internationally recognized recommended practices" but incorrect form to state that "AACE International's recommended practices are internationally recognized."

### 4. Paper organization

The paper should be organized in a way that 1) the subject matter is introduced, 2) the subject matter is developed in a logical, step-wise manner in the body of the paper, and 3) a summary or conclusion is provided that is supported by the material presented in the body of the paper. Providing information in the summary or conclusion that was not introduced in the body of the paper is a common mistake to be avoided. Consistency of thought throughout the abstract, introduction, body of the paper, and the paper summary is important.

### 5. Figures (pictures, screenshots and other graphics)

Figures should be introduced and discussed in the body of the text. Tell the reader why it is included and what the figure is intended to illustrate. Unless original works of the author(s), all pictures and graphics must be properly cited within the paper, and be accompanied by a copyright release from the content owner. Screenshots from software applications must indicate the software name and version number used to create the screenshot.

## 6. Capitalization

Capitalization should be reserved for proper nouns. Do not capitalize for emphasis or when referring to a generic entity. An example of a common mistake is:

The Project Manager established that project reporting will be required on a bi-monthly basis  
The term *project manager* should not be capitalized in the above example because it is not a proper noun.

## 7. References

There is little entirely new original thought or knowledge that can be presented in technical papers. Even research into new techniques is typically built upon prior study and examination; therefore appropriate references are encouraged (and expected) to be included in each paper. Include citations in the paper to the appropriate references whenever quotes are used, or to identify the original source of information being presented. Whenever possible, provide references to AACE International recommended practices and other AACE International publications. Format references correctly.