

Writing a citation for ACCEA

Citation writers should not normally be employed in the same organisation.

The purpose of a citation is to provide external support for an applicant. As these are national awards ACCEA assumes that in the vast majority of cases someone from outside the applicant's organisation would be able to write a citation emphasising the impact of the individual's contribution on the wider NHS. The citation should include information that goes beyond what is written on the application form and stress the impact of the applicant's contributions.

It is likely that applicants will have several citations. There is a mandatory citation (Form 2) submitted by the employing chief executive (and many do write their own), there may be a College citation as the National Nominating Body for anaesthetists, citations are also often provided by the AAGBI, other specialist societies registered with ACCEA, the BMA, Department of Health etc.

Citations must be submitted on time.

The National Nominating Body cannot submit its list until every ranked applicant has a properly completed citation. Equally if the citation is too long/ incomplete the whole process stalls until this is corrected. There is no other way of submitting these citations other than electronically. If you are asked to write a citation then **please** take this task seriously and check you have the time to write it.

The citation has to be attributed to you and also has to identify what status you have in being asked to submit a citation. If you are not the recognisable lead of the organisation submitting the citation the form will need to be countersigned. For this College they are all signed by the President.

The practical aspects of writing a citation include:

- Knowing the applicant and their contributions well
- Being able to count – there is a strict character limitation
- Avoiding acronyms/ superlatives
- Being very specific about what the applicant's contribution has been in the area that the body submitting the form is representing – ACCEA are looking for 'impact factor'
- Understanding the scoring system in detail – what counts for 6 or 10 points for instance is essential knowledge
- Willing to get a second opinion (from an expert) on what you have written

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Knowing the applicant

Usually you will have a detailed knowledge of what they have done that is clearly over and above any expectation within their contract. You must have a copy of the CVQ they intend to submit. Make a list of their claims and how this matches to what you know already and balance this against their job plan.

Next make your own Word document that itemises all the aspects you think are important to your area; vascular anaesthesia for instance. Make sure that what you say is clear to a lay reader; it is highly unlikely that there will be more than one anaesthetist on the reviewing panel.

Finally, be sure that what they claim is current and since their last award if already an award holder.

Character count at every opportunity

The standard **1350** characters including spaces is the maximum you can include. The extra text will simply disappear and (certainly at present), unlike the domains where it will warn if there are too many characters, it may not be apparent on looking at the screen. It is better to use line spacing and short words for obvious reasons. The College recommends that you limit a citation to **1200** characters including spaces to allow space for your name and the capacity in which you are writing the citation – all included in the character count.

Do not use any acronyms if at all possible

Whilst we have provided ACCEA with a list of common anaesthetic, intensive care and pain medicine related ones, so has every other area of medicine. Realistically, the assessors are not going to look up ones they don't instantly recognise – GMC may be permissible, ICNARC probably isn't.

Stay within the script

Be very careful to stick to the specific area of support that you are expanding on and provide examples, if possible. Make sure that they are at national level, or above, and where ever possible add numbers – he is 1 of a 100 chosen from 8000 eligible consultants – gives a context within which the lay reader understands how great an achievement this is.

What counts for what

The scoring system for each domain gives examples of what level of activity scores most highly and, just as importantly, where one type of activity scores best. Applicants repeatedly fail to read the guidance; it will help you enormously if you do. It is recommended to cover every domain in the citation, if possible, but certainly emphasise any aspect that is scoring at 6 or above.

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Check it

Character count and spell check the text, and then do it again! Ask another higher award holder to read what you have written and give you critical feedback (which may be positive).

Then ask a non-medical colleague to read it as well. If they understand what you meant to say - send it in!

Who to send it to

For the College the Regional Co-ordinator who requested the citation ideally needs to see it before submission to the President's Office. Their contact e-mail will have been given to you by the applicant themselves. This first check should be at least a week before the closing date at the College (8 August 2014).

The Regional Co-ordinator will then forward the final (agreed) version to the College before 8 August 2014 in time for the President's Executive Assistant to do a final check that all is well. The President will then read your prose before signing it off for submission to ACCEA.

Thank you and Good luck

Peter Nightingale