

CSC207 Annotation Checklist: “Have I Written Good Docs?”

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So, you’ve annotated your software file with comments. Review this checklist to see if the file follows good practices for software documentation.

(However, remember that there is no one-size-fits-all checklist for good documentation! You can adapt this checklist as you see fit, depending on what software project you’re writing. After all, this checklist is an adaptation of the ACCEU framework; notice the way that each checklist item is related to some part of ACCEU.)

Comment-Level Aspects

- ☐ Every comment is accurate
 - ☐ Every comment is true
 - ☐ Every comment is relevant, i.e. describing the key ideas behind the code
 - ☐ Every comment avoids unnecessary or irrelevant information
- ☐ Every comment is clear, i.e. a comment can only be interpreted one way; there is no ambiguity present

Document-Level Aspects

- ☐ Taken together, the documentation provides all the information one needs to understand how the code works
 - ☐ The program’s behaviour is described in terms of different inputs
 - ☐ All data (used by the program) is described somewhere
 - ☐ The format of data (inputted, processed, and outputted by the program) is described somewhere
- ☐ Good variable names, good function names, and good formatting
- ☐ No code smells
- ☐ Same format for function headers, program headers, and comments
- ☐ Use of Java’s approach to function headers (which has a multiline comment and descriptors like @param, @return, etc.), a similar format used in ArrayList.java
- ☐ It is easy to find information on any object or idea; one does not have to go all over the file to find information on any one idea

Process-Level Aspects

- ☐ Comments are updated each time the code is updated
- ☐ The file is being maintained on the same repo for version control
- ☐ Pull requests describe what sections of the file have been changed
- ☐ When reviewing a pull request, there are checks to ensure that documentation is updated alongside the updated code
- ☐ Code reviews involve checking and updating any documentation
- ☐ Code reviews involve the detection and cleaning of code smells

Other Writing Criteria

- ☐ The file uses hyperlinks and numbered lists when needed, either to reference other documentation or to improve readability
- ☐ Technical jargon is only used when necessary
- ☐ Non-obvious decisions (in coding something a certain way) are explained by an informative comment
- ☐ Comments are not on every line of code