



COMPLIANCE REPORT • April 2013

Plain Writing Act Compliance 2012–2013
National Credit Union Administration

Plain Writing Act Compliance Report 2012-2013

The Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Act) became law on October 13, 2010. The Act requires public communications by federal agencies to adhere to clear and concise “plain writing” principles. The Act also requires federal agencies like the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) to post a compliance progress report for public viewing on their websites.

There are ten requirements in the law for federal agencies. This compliance report details NCUA’s compliance progress for each of those ten sections.

As detailed in Section 4(a)(1) of the Act, “not later than nine months after the date of enactment of the Act,” federal agencies should accomplish the six actions italicized below.

First, designate one or more senior officials within the agency to oversee the agency implementation of the Act.

- NCUA designated the Deputy Executive Director as the primary senior official responsible for implementing the Act agency-wide. The Deputy Executive Director formed a working group from representatives of each central and regional office to ensure agency-wide implementation.
- NCUA created a [Plain Writing Implementation Plan](#), listing the roles and responsibilities of each office.

Second, communicate the requirements of this Act to the employees of the agency.

- The Executive Director issued an internal memo outlining the implementation roles and responsibilities to each office. All agency employees received a copy of the agency’s Plain Writing Implementation Plan.
- NCUA notified all agency employees of a mandatory, on-line plain writing training course to educate them on the new law and the principles of plain writing.

Third, train employees of the agency in plain writing.

- NCUA conducted training during 2012 that included an online tutorial on plain writing principles and specialized training sessions for individual offices. The plain writing tutorial was launched March 1, 2012, and all staff were required to complete it by March 31, 2012.

- In February 2013, a new Communications Manual was released, which included a chapter on plain writing principles. All staff were authorized time to read the new manual and attend a webinar addressing the manual content.
- Plain writing principles continue to be the foundation of the various writing courses NCUA hosts.
- NCUA's Division of Training and Development provided specialized training sessions for numerous individual offices. They include the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP), the Office of Public and Congressional Affairs (PACA), the Office of Examination and Insurance (E&I), and the regions.
- Examples of individual offices' activities that prepare public documents include the following:
 - The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) received training from the Plain Language Action and Information Network on plain writing principles. They also put controls in place to ensure consistent and quality writing. All regulations and legal opinions are reviewed by multiple managers for accuracy and readability. While regulations are specifically exempt from the Act, OGC strives to write regulations as plainly and clearly as possible.
 - E&I hosted plain writing training and incorporated plain writing principles into the review process for all written correspondence. Managers are required to ensure the use of plain language through review and feedback to staff.
 - OCP participated in a daylong plain writing training session. They are in the process of converting their standard templates and standard-language paragraphs to adhere to plain writing guidelines.
 - The Asset Management and Assistance Center (AMAC) held plain writing training and prepared a new instruction that included plain writing principles in templates letters that are issued following a credit union liquidation.

Fourth, establish a process for overseeing the ongoing compliance of the agency with the requirements of this Act.

- Within NCUA's central office, the Office of the Executive Director or PACA reviews official documents prepared for external audiences, such as Board Action Memorandums, press releases, publications, reports and correspondence. The document review process conducted by the Deputy Executive Director or the PACA Director includes an assessment of compliance with the Act.

- First-line supervisors review the examination reports issued directly by the examiners to credit unions with some reports reviewed by higher supervisory levels.
- The review of plain writing principles is a regular part of the examination quality control process conducted within each regional office.

Fifth, create and maintain a plain writing section of the agency’s website that is accessible from the homepage of the agency’s website.

- NCUA launched a [plain writing webpage](#), including a copy of the Act, NCUA’s compliance plan and annual report, plain writing guidelines, and a section for public comments on the website in September 2011.

Sixth, designate one or more agency points-of-contact to receive and respond to public input on agency implementation of this Act and the agency required reports.

- The Office of the Executive Director is NCUA’s public point of contact. The public can submit comments or input through the established plain writing webpage or by sending an email to plainwriting@ncua.gov.

Here are four other requirements of the Plain Writing Act of 2010, and NCUA’s compliance report for each.

The plain writing website for the agency shall (A) inform the public of agency compliance with the requirements of this Act; and (B) provide a mechanism for the agency to receive and respond to public input on agency implementation of this Act; and required reports.

- NCUA’s plain writing webpage covers the Act, details the implementation plan, explains plain writing, provides links to various sites addressing plain writing, and provides an area for submitting public comments.

Beginning not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, each agency shall use plain writing in every covered document of the agency that the agency issues or substantially revises.

- NCUA is achieving compliance by continuing to educate and emphasize plain writing to staff, management, and review offices. NCUA continues to emphasize the use of plain writing in every covered document.
- The new Communications Manual is the governing document for all NCUA communications and it includes an extensive section on plain writing.

Not later than nine months after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of each agency shall publish on the plain writing section of the agency's website a report that describes the agency plan for compliance with the requirements of this Act.

- NCUA posted a [Plain Writing Implementation Plan](#) in September 2011.

Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the head of each agency shall publish on the plain writing section of the agency's website a report on agency compliance with the requirements of this Act.

- NCUA posted this report on April 22, 2013. This report is the second annual review of NCUA's compliance.