

## ***Construction Specification Institute (CSI) Recommendations for Specifications***

CSI's *Project Delivery Practice Guide* states that the word *specify* describes or defines an object, idea, or concept in such detail that it is easily understood by most people. Specifications for construction are precise statements describing characteristics of a particular item that complement the graphic representations on the drawings. The CSI Guide also includes recommendations for drafting specifications. Reading these recommendations can help concrete contractors to see how specifications *should* be written and to identify poorly written specifications that can result in jobsite problems. Three sections of the Guide are summarized as follows:

### **Coordinating Drawings with Specifications**

“The drawings and the specifications are complementary, and both are needed to fully describe a construction project. Aspects of the specifications and the drawings may be clear, concise, correct, and complete as to the information they convey, but unless the parts are coordinated with each other, the construction project may experience many problems and discrepancies. Effective coordination and quality assurance programs must begin early in the design process and depend largely on continuous and effective communication among project team members. The level of detail in the drawings should be consistent with the level of requirements in the specifications.”

“Coordination must occur at all levels of the project team. Consultants must ensure that the drawings and specifications within their offices are fully coordinated. Various consultants must also coordinate their graphic and written materials among their respective offices. The responsible A/E must not only coordinate the drawings and specifications within the A/E's own office, but also be responsible for coordinating the entire construction document package and for maintaining the communication process that will facilitate this coordination.”

### **Specifying Workmanship**

“*Workmanship* is often confused with the term *quality*. As quality is a mirror of the requirements, the requirements need to reflect what is intended. Workmanship generally refers to precision, and craftsmanship. These requirements have measurable properties and can be specified with a means to verify compliance. Workmanship can be controlled in several articles of a specification section. These articles specify qualifications, tolerances, and various other aspects of quality assurance and quality control.”

“It is a combination of materials and workmanship that results in the final characteristics of the product. Workmanship requirements are specified to an appropriate level in accordance with the needs of the project. Project requirements should be specified without demanding conformance to unattainable standards or to standards exceeding those necessary for the requirements of the overall project. Workmanship requirements should be measurable. Avoid broad generalities such as “best possible workmanship.” The word *best* is open to many interpretations by the contractor, subcontractors and suppliers reading the specifications.”

### **Inappropriate Terms**

CSI recommends avoiding using words such as the following:

- as approved; as indicated; as required
- as per
- hereinafter; hereinbefore; herewith
- in a workmanlike manner
- any, such
- to the satisfaction of the architect/engineer
- etc.
- also

Ward and I see a lot of specifications that don't conform to these recommendations. We believe that concrete contractors can benefit from understanding how specifications should be written so that they are better prepared to have discussions with the specifier.

To obtain a copy of CSI's *Project Delivery Practice Guide* go to [www.csinet.org](http://www.csinet.org).