

Grammar Check Has/Have?

In writing a letter of recommendation, how would you craft this sentence?

His level of care, competence, professionalism and integrity has/have been unsurpassed.

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Has. But why not simplify it (and add a serial comma): "His care, competence, professionalism, and integrity have been unsurpassed."

Best regards,

Rackham Karlsson, Massachusetts

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Has--"his level. . .has been unsurpassed." Level is the subject of the sentence so the verb goes with that; "of care, competence, professionalism and integrity" is a prepositional phrase.

Barbara J. McDonald, Minnesota

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Correct you are.

Robert "Robby" W. Hughes, Jr., Georgia

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It's a compound subject; therefore, use "have."

Lisa Solomon, New York

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"Has" is the correct verb. Barbara is correct - the 'of care..' prepositional phrase that functions as an adjective modifying 'level'

Seth Combs, Kentucky

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Have, whether you add the comma or not.

Chris Tozer, Illinois

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C) None of the above.

"Are" - yes, the plural, because it's a compound subject, but "are" provides a much stronger recommendation in saying that those traits are presumed to be ongoing, still on the top shelf.

"Have been" suggests that, to your knowledge, from time to time, he's held

the top position on Care, Competence, and Professionalism Scale. There may "have been" times, though, that he slipped out of the lead.

"Were" would suggest a certain level of confidence that they have, indeed, since been surpassed.

YMMV,

-Rick

Richard J. Rutledge, Jr., North Carolina

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I think we need to clarify something. Is it (1) his level of multiple comma-separated things, or (2) "level of care," comma, and other things?

Rackham Karlsson

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I agree with Rick. Are is the word you want if you're going to use unsurpassed.

Patricia Meringer

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In your sentence, I believe "are" is the correct form of the verb. I would delete "level of" because it is unnecessary and causes the singular-plural confusion. A careful reader will sense the same confusion whichever verb number you use. Your sentence speaks of his qualities now, so I would use present tense.

However, if I were writing the letter, I would try to say something more specific about the individual's performance and accomplishments, rather than stringing together positive attributes.

Steve Finell, California

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If you are referring to level of a, b, c, then it is has.

If you are referring to level of a, level of b, level of c, then it is have.

However, if there is so much interpretation, I would suggest rewriting the sentence to avoid the problem.

Mitchell P. Goldstein

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