

McLennan Community College

# Writing Style Guide



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## Introduction

### Why Use this Guide

While each department and program at McLennan Community College (MCC) is distinctive, each part is also a piece of the College as a whole. Many readers who start with one publication from the College also receive other publications from the College.

If each department or program produces a publication with its own look and stylistic conventions – with no similarities to other campus publications – then it becomes hard for readers to associate the publication with MCC. This association is important because the College as a whole benefits from the success of each of its parts and vice versa. When any one part makes a positive impression on the public, MCC’s reputation is strengthened. As the College’s reputation becomes stronger, every department and program benefits in turn.

### How to Use this Guide

One concern may be that since each department or program possesses qualities and characteristics that are much different from other departments or programs on campus, how do we communicate clearly the distinctive qualities of your department or program while letting our audiences know that we come from the same cohesive institution?

One way is to use consistent conventions for the ways all College publications present common names, places, and concepts (e.g., accurate proper names, abbreviations, capitalization, etc.). This writing style guide addresses the most common conventions used at MCC.

You will also want to incorporate the principles of good writing: clarity, precision, consistency, economy, and correctness. This guide provides short reminders of basic guidelines for effective writing.

#### **Do guidelines limit individual expression?**

No. This guide is intended to help you communicate your message in the most effective way possible. Since you know your area or program and message better than anyone else does, we want you to have the freedom to tailor your own message.

### **Who should use these guidelines?**

The information provided in this guide applies to the production of brochures, newsletters, pamphlets, webpages, and other publications that represent MCC. Therefore, this guide will be helpful to all collaborators at MCC producing any publication for communication or marketing purposes.

Using these guidelines in the preparation of your publications will improve their effectiveness and reduce the turn-around time needed by the Marketing & Communications department, which is **required to review all College publications intended for off-campus audiences or wide distribution on campus.**

### **How is a College publication defined?**

A College publication is any written or graphic communication produced or authorized by College faculty and/or staff (and, in some cases, students) that is intended for mass audiences on or off campus. This broad definition includes printed and electronic publications.

### **Which publications need to follow the guidelines?**

Usages, explanations, and definitions in this guide apply to all campus publications.

Additionally, all publications must adhere to a standard use of the names, seals, and logos of MCC, explained in detail in the Graphic Standards guide on the MCC website at [www.mclennan.edu/marcom/resources](http://www.mclennan.edu/marcom/resources)

### **Who do I go to for additional assistance?**

For questions about public relations, advertising, free publicity, or media relations in general, contact [Lisa Elliott](#), Director of Marketing & Communications (254-299-8640) or [Jennifer Norman](#), Associate Director of Marketing & Communications (254-299-8721).

## **Writing Tips for Marketing Publications**

When editors refer to style, they usually do not mean an individual's writing style; they usually mean the editorial style – the guidelines a publisher uses to enhance the reader's understanding. Editorial style includes the consistent use of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations, as well as the selection of headings and the use of numbers. These guidelines are often called “conventions” because they represent a conventional presentation used in publishing.

MARCOM uses the *Associated Press Stylebook* (AP), *MLA Stylebook*, and the latest edition of the *Merriam-Webster online dictionary* as primary sources. If you have questions or need assistance with editing, proofing, or writing content, please email us at [marcom@mclennan.edu](mailto:marcom@mclennan.edu). We are happy to help!

For all content written for the media, MARCOM uses the *Associated Press Stylebook* as a reference. For all other content, MARCOM uses the *MLA Stylebook*.

## Organization

Since many readers scan for information, the text for brochures, advertising content, and webpages should be concise and organized into logical pieces. Choose section headings that are meaningful and short. Put important information first. For the web and printed marketing publications, use paragraphs of no more than two to four sentences.

Vary the length of sentences to create interesting rhythms. When a sentence needs to be long to communicate vital information, try to follow it with a short sentence.

Use bullet points:

- Bullet points aid in scanning.
- Bullet points organize information.
- Bullet points increase retention.

## Content

- Provide value to your readers and focus on the benefits for them.
- Stick to the point.
- Be concise. If a word, phrase, or paragraph is unnecessary, take it out.
- Keep information current.

## Tone and Voice

Text should be clear and easily understood. Use straightforward language, a conversational tone, and avoid jargon and academic language. Always research and consider your audience before writing.

Use an active voice rather than a passive one: “MCC offers these programs” is more energetic than saying that “these programs are offered at MCC.” To increase the conversational tone, use contractions like “it’s” and “you’re” rather than “it is” and “you are.”

Due to the informality of the web, first- and second-person addresses are increasingly used. First person uses “I” phrases, second person uses “you” phrases, and third person uses impersonal pronouns like “they.” At MCC, it’s fine to use first- and second-person phrases when creating content for students and the campus community. When addressing a more formal group, like the Board of Trustees or a constituency group, use third person.

## Consistency

It’s important that MCC marketing materials reflect a consistent look and present information in a consistent manner. Consistency helps the reader identify a publication as being from MCC and helps create a positive, high-quality, cohesive image of MCC.

Consistency involves the following components:

- Accurate and updated content.
- Key messages about MCC. (Email [marcom@mclennan.edu](mailto:marcom@mclennan.edu) for the latest key messages.)
- Proper and consistent use of language. For suggestions on how to format common types of information, see the section below on [Common Abbreviations and Acronyms](#).

- Use a font that is collegiate and professional as well as legible on any publication. Some good fonts to use are Times New Roman, Giovanni, Arial, and Calibri.
- Use design features and ink colors that rely on the graphic standards that have been developed for MCC. See MCC's Graphic Style Guide at [www.mclennan.edu/marcom/](http://www.mclennan.edu/marcom/).

### Punctuation, Spelling, and Grammar

It is important to use language correctly in all MCC publications in order to communicate clearly and to present a professional image of MCC. If MCC publications contain errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, it reflects poorly on the quality of education we offer.

The Marketing & Communications department is happy to proof and edit publications, content, letters, etc. Email the document to Jennifer Norman ([jnorman@mclennan.edu](mailto:jnorman@mclennan.edu)), and she will assign a writer to the task.

### Alignment/Justification and Spacing

Text in paragraph form should use left alignment: this is the convention, and it makes text easy to read. Fully justified text, which is aligned on both the left and right sides, will usually cause an uneven and awkward spacing between words. Print publishers laying out for magazine copy generally use fully justified text.

### Use of period

When a website address or URL is at the end of a sentence, it is appropriate to add a period to signify the end of the sentence. However, if you are including a hyperlink to the URL, do not include the period as a part of the hyperlink.

Example:

*For more information, go to [www.mclennan.edu](http://www.mclennan.edu).*

### Required Content

#### **Notice of Non-Discrimination**

MCC is dedicated to providing equal opportunities to all individuals and is required by Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Educational Amendments Acts of 1972, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1978 to inform prospective students, potential employees, current students and employees, and the general community about specific information concerning non-discrimination. Therefore, **all publications must have at least the following minimum required Non-Discrimination statement:**

McLennan Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs or activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Claudette Jackson, Director, Accommodations & Title IX, 1400 College Drive, 254-299-8465, [titleix@mclennan.edu](mailto:titleix@mclennan.edu).

In addition to the Non-Discrimination statement, all **Workforce Program-related publications** must include the statement in Spanish and in English as well as a statement regarding English language skills. Therefore, all **Workforce Program-related publications** should use the following statements:

McLennan Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs or activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Claudette Jackson, Director, Accommodations & Title IX, 1400 College Drive, 254-299-8465, [titleix@mclennan.edu](mailto:titleix@mclennan.edu).

A lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission to and participation in career and technical education programs.

McLennan Community College no discrimina a ninguna persona independientemente de la raza, color, origen nacional o étnico, género, discapacidad, o edad en sus programas, actividades o empleo. Para obtener información sobre el cumplimiento de esta política de no discriminación por parte de la institución, comuníquese con el siguiente administrador: Claudette Jackson, director de acomodaciones y título IX, 1400 College Drive, 254-299-8465, [titleix@mclennan.edu](mailto:titleix@mclennan.edu).

La falta de conocimiento del idioma inglés no será un impedimento para la admisión y participación en programas de educación técnica y profesional.

Additionally, all MCC publications for programs that conclude with State of Texas licensing must use the following statement:

For students in this course who may have a criminal background, please be advised that the background could keep you from being licensed by the State of Texas. If you have a question about your background and licensure, please speak with your faculty member or the department chair. You also have the right to request a criminal history evaluation letter from the applicable licensing agency.

Please make sure you add the appropriate statement(s) to any publication (including forms, applications, student handbooks, guides, etc.) or contact MARCOM to add the appropriate statement(s) to publications we have previously created for you.

If you have questions concerning MCC's Non-Discrimination policy and/or statement, please contact Claudette Jackson, Director, Accommodations & Title IX at [cjackson@mclennan.edu](mailto:cjackson@mclennan.edu). You may also visit [www.mclennan.edu/titleix](http://www.mclennan.edu/titleix) to review the statement and policy information.

For questions concerning the addition of these statements to publications, please contact Lisa Elliott at [lelliott@mclennan.edu](mailto:lelliott@mclennan.edu) or 254-299-8640.

## ADA Compliance

MCC continuously strives to be an inclusive college, and therefore complies with federal laws that protect people with disabilities from discrimination (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

Section 503 prohibits “*any program receiving federal financial assistance*” from discriminating against any individual because of his or her disability. MCC receives both direct and indirect federal financial assistance.

To comply with the ADA guidelines, documents posted online – including, but not limited to, Adobe PDF files, Microsoft Word documents, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, and online flipbooks – must be screen-reader friendly.

Screen-reader software is a form of assistive technology that reads a screen's display aloud to the user. It can be especially useful for people who have visual or motor impairments. [Here is an example](#) of how a screen reader works.

To help you create ADA-compliant documents, please review the articles in the Tech Support [FAQ Knowledge Base](#) about producing accessible documents. Or, you may contact MCC’s Help Desk at 299-8077 or [helpdesk@mclennan.edu](mailto:helpdesk@mclennan.edu).

## Approval of College Marketing Publications

Before advertising and posted materials are published, MCC requires that these items be reviewed and approved by the Marketing & Communications department. For assistance, contact MARCOM at [marcom@mclennan.edu](mailto:marcom@mclennan.edu).

## Definitions

**Pathways:** An integrated, system-wide approach to student success. MCC’s Pathways (STEM, Business, Creative Arts, Liberal Arts, Public Service, and Health Professions) also serve as a way to narrow student choices at the start of their academic journey while they learn about different disciplines and career options. MCC’s Pathways are also linked to industry credentials or transfer agreements with four-year institutions. [www.mclennan.edu/pathways](http://www.mclennan.edu/pathways)

**Division:** MCC is divided into five divisions led by the President and four Vice Presidents. The five divisions are President; Finance & Administration; Instruction; Research, Effectiveness and Information Technology; and Student Success.

**Department:** MCC’s Deans and Directors supervise Departments. Instructional Departments are based on a particular academic discipline like Accounting or Arts & Sciences. Administrative Departments are based on areas of the college that pertain to administrative services like Financial Aid and Marketing & Communications.

**Program:** MCC Programs may be supervised by Program Directors or Coordinators. Programs generally fall under a Department. There are Instructional Programs within the Workforce Education Division and Administrative Programs within the Student Success Division.



**Office:** Offices are the physical locations housing employees.

### **Schedule Types:**

**Blended/Hybrid** – The classes blend two great learning options. Students spend part of their class time in a traditional classroom setting and the rest completing Internet assignments using their own computer or computers in the library.

**CAI** – CAI stands for Computer-Assisted Instruction. CAI Math classes are taught primarily on the computer. Students must have passed the TSI Assessment and are responsible for meeting all course deadlines outlined in the syllabus and/or posted on Brightspace.

**ESOL** (English for Speakers of Other Languages) – These classes are recommended for students whose first or home language is not standard English or for whom placement scores indicate a need for further development of reading or writing skills. This is a developmental education course to fulfill Texas Success Initiative (TSI) requirements.

**Evening** – These classes start at or after 5 p.m.

**1st 8-week** – Students spend the same number of hours in the classroom in half the time of a traditional 16-Week course.

**2nd 8-week** – Students spend the same number of hours in the classroom in half the time of a traditional 16-Week course.

**Internet** – Classes taught completely online with the possible exception of an introductory meeting with the instructor. Students receive and return assignments via email or Brightspace and talk with the teacher and other students in a “chat” format. You can take your tests at the MCC Testing Center or at approved testing centers in other locations.

**Linked** – These classes are generally developmental classes linked to a college-level class.

**Off-campus** – Classes taught at locations other than MCC’s main campus.

**Minimester** – Classes taking place between the regular semesters. Students attend the class for 2-3 weeks with approximately 3-3 ½ hours of instruction per day five days a week.

**16-week** – Classes taking place during regular fall or spring semesters lasting 16 weeks.

**Study Trip** – Courses offered outside of the classroom that travel throughout the country – and even internationally.

**Two-Way** – These classes allow students located in different locations to attend class together using two-way, real-time video.

## Common Abbreviations and Acronyms

Use only official College abbreviations. The first time you use an abbreviation, present both the spelled-out version and the short form. After the first time used, abbreviate with the official College abbreviations below. Do not alternate between spelling out the term and abbreviating it.

### Building names/abbreviations

<b>A</b>	Administration building
<b>BF</b>	Baseball Field
<b>BPAC</b>	Ball Performing Arts Center
<b>BR</b>	Boat Ramp
<b>BRB</b>	Bosque River Ballpark
<b>BRS</b>	Bosque River Stage
<b>BT</b>	Business & Technology
<b>CD PG</b>	Cameron Drive Parking Garage
<b>CSC</b>	Community Services Center
<b>CU</b>	Central Utility
<b>ESC</b>	Enrollment Services Center
<b>ESEC</b>	Emergency Services Education Center
<b>FH</b>	Field House
<b>FO</b>	Faculty Office building
<b>H</b>	The Highlands gym
<b>HD PG</b>	Highlander Drive Parking Garage
<b>HP</b>	Health Professions
<b>HPN</b>	Health Professions Nursing
<b>HPS</b>	Health Professions Simulation
<b>HR</b>	Highlander Ranch
<b>IF</b>	Intramural Fields
<b>LA</b>	Liberal Arts
<b>LH</b>	Lecture Hall
<b>LTC</b>	Learning Technology Center
<b>M</b>	Mathematics
<b>MAC</b>	Michaelis Academic Center
<b>MCCF</b>	MCC Foundation
<b>MTA</b>	Music & Theatre Arts building
<b>NH</b>	The Northwood House
<b>PHP</b>	Physical Plant
<b>PS</b>	Plaza & Stage
<b>RE</b>	Research & Effectiveness
<b>S</b>	Science building
<b>SBF</b>	Softball Field
<b>SSC</b>	Student Services Center & Campus Police
<b>WF</b>	Wellness & Fitness

In general, and especially for off-campus audiences, avoid acronyms. Explain or spell out an acronym. Periods are not used in the acronyms.

For example: The Conference Center at MCC (CC) is located on N. 19th St.

## **Addresses**

In text (as opposed to mailing labels), use full official names of offices, departments, and buildings in College addresses. Use the following format:

Marketing & Communications department  
McLennan Community College  
1400 College Dr.  
Waco, Texas 76708

Sentence example: The Conference Center at MCC (CC) is located at 4601 N. 19th St., Waco, Texas 76708.

Note that just one space separates the state from the zip code.

## **Directing readers to Campus offices:**

For off-campus readers, use the full official name of the office and office location.

For example:

The Marketing & Communications department is located on the third floor of the Administration building.

The Alternative Teacher Certification program is located in the Community Services Center, Room E-115.

## **A**

acronyms: no periods (EMT), except U.S. and academic degrees (see below); plurals formed without apostrophe (EMTs)

admission application

admission requirements

admissions representatives

Adult Education & Literacy program

advisor (not adviser)

aid (financial)

aide (Certified Nurse Aide)

alumni – plural form of alumnus or alumna

alumna – refers to female graduate or former student

alumnae – refers to a group of female graduations or former students

alumnus – refers to male graduate or former student

Ampersand (&): use only in proper names

Arts & Sciences

A.A. (Associate of Arts, use periods)

A.A.S. (Associate of Applied Science, use periods)

A.A.T. (Associate of Arts in Teaching, use periods)

A.S. (Associate of Science, use periods)

Admissions & Recruitment (not Office of Admissions or Office of Student Admissions)

associate's degree (lowercase, use apostrophe)

Associate Degree Nursing (ADN)

Asterisk (\*): Use a period at the end of information after an asterisk only if it's a complete sentence.

## **B**

B.A.A.S. (Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences)

bachelor's degree (lowercase, use apostrophe)

Bachelor of Arts degree (capitalized)

bookstore: lowercase, except with full title (the bookstore, the MCC Bookstore)

Brightspace: MCC's student Learning Management System (LMS); [brightspace.mclennan.edu/d2l/login](https://brightspace.mclennan.edu/d2l/login);  
a D2L Corporation trademark.

buildings: Capitalize names of buildings but not "building" (Science building, Administration building, etc.); if abbreviations are necessary, use those on the official campus map (found on the MCC website) or the [list of buildings in this document](#)

Business Office

Business & Industry: capitalize as part of our Pathways

## C

Capstone course

catalog (not catalogue)

Certificate of Completion (capitalized)

coed

colon: Capitalize the following word if it is a proper noun or it begins a sentence (Example: This is correct.); lowercase if the following word begins a fragment (Example: the correct way).

college-level courses (hyphen), but college credit courses (no hyphen)

college: capitalize if it's referring specifically to MCC. (The College requires transcripts from all students.)

Community Programs

competency-based (adj.)

computer-assisted or computer-aided

concurrent enrollment

Continuing Education, Continuing Education brochure, Continuing Education Office

corequisites (one word, no hyphen)

counselor

course names: Use abbreviation (PSYC 2301) but not title and number (Psychology 2301). Or use the full title (PSYC 2301 General Psychology).

course work (two words)

Creative Arts: use instead of Visual & Performing Arts as part of our Pathways; capitalize as part of our Pathways

credit-by-articulation: designates particular agreement listed in the General Catalog

credit by examination

curriculum, curricula

## D

dash: — em dash (space before and after)

database

dates: Use AP style (Month (abbr.) day, year). Example: Jan. 1, 2018

divisions: Capitalize divisions as in Student Success Division or Division of Student Success.

doctoral degree (lowercase)

Doctorate of Education (capitalized)

dual-credit course

## E

Early Admission program

Early College High School program

email

email addresses: for printed publication, no underline (marcom@mclennan.edu); for digital pieces, make it a hyperlink [marcom@mclennan.edu](mailto:marcom@mclennan.edu)

Emergency Services Education Center: ESEC on second reference

EMS, EMT

extracurricular (no hyphen)

## F

fall semester: lowercase unless referring to a specific semester (Fall 2015 semester)

1<sup>st</sup> 8-week (1<sup>st</sup> 8-week Fall semester)

2<sup>nd</sup> 8-week (2<sup>nd</sup> 8-week Fall semester)

Field of Study: no hyphen unless used as a compound modifier; capitalize specific fields of study; otherwise lowercase (the Business Field of Study; take a field of study; a field-of-study curriculum)

financial aid: lowercase unless referring to the Financial Aid Office

footnote

four-year institution

full time/part time: hyphenate only as a modifier (part-time students; enrolled full time)

## G

GED<sup>®</sup>: General Educational Development

General Catalog (not College Catalog)

GPA

grade point average (not capitalized when spelled out)

grades: Use the letter without quotation marks: A, not "A"

## H

HealthCare Academy

health care (two words)

Health Professions: as part of our Pathways, capitalize; use instead of Health Careers

health-related fields

Highlander Guide

Highlander OneCard

home page

I

ID card (no periods)

internet

internships: capitalize when part of MCC Guidelines for Internships

L

Learning Technology Center (LTC)

library: lowercase except with full title (MCC Library)

Liberal Arts: capitalize as part of our Pathways

lifelong: (not life-long)

login (noun, one word)

log in (verb, two words)

Long-Term Care Administration

lower-level course (see higher-level, upper-level)

M

master's degree (lowercase)

Master of Science (capitalized)

McLennan: Always capital M, lowercase c, and capital L

Michaelis Academic Center: MAC on second reference

mental health courses (lowercase)

multicultural (no hyphen)

Music Industry Careers



## N

noncredit

nonprofit, nonrefundable, nonsmoker, nonaccredited, nondegree, nondevelopmental

noon: Not 12:00 pm

note-taking

numbers: Spell out one through nine; use digits for 10 and above; spell out if used at beginning of a sentence.

## O

off campus: Hyphenate if used as modifier (off-campus class); otherwise it's two words (a class off campus).

offices: Capitalize names of offices (Financial Aid Office, Business Office).

on campus: Hyphenate if used as modifier (on-campus class), otherwise two words (a class on campus).

one-year program

online (not on-line)

## P

Pathways: capitalize

part time: hyphenate only as a modifier (part-time students, but enrolled part time)

percent: one word, always spelled out and always used with numerals (10 percent, not 10%)

Physical Therapist Assistant program

postsecondary (no hyphen)

prerequisite (singular)

problem solving: no hyphen unless used as a compound modifier

program director: lowercase except when it precedes a director's name

program: lowercase

Public Service: capitalize as part of our Pathways

## R

Radiologic Technology

re-admission, re-enroll, re-entry

related: used with hyphen as a modifier (health-related fields)

Respiratory Care Technology

RSVP

## S

seasons: lowercase unless used to designate a specific semester (Fall 2015 semester)

sophomore-level classes

spring semester: lowercase unless referring to a specific semester (Spring 2015 semester)

STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering & Math; capitalize as a part of MCC's Pathways

Student Engagement (not Student Activities)

summer term (not semester)

Support and Empowerment Program for Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers (SEP)

## T

Tarleton State University or Tarleton State University-Waco or Tarleton State University at MCC

Texas Tech University or Texas Tech University-Waco or Texas Tech University at MCC

Tech-Prep when specific program, tech-prep otherwise

test-taking skills

theatre, theater: Use theatre when referring to McLennan Theatre; use theater for all other references.

three-hour course

time: 10 a.m. (do not use :00), but 10:30 p.m. (use periods in a.m. and p.m.)

titles (at MCC): Capitalize and put in this order: position, area (Director, Health Sciences; Vice President, Instruction)

Texas Success Initiative: OK to use TSI on first reference

## U

University Center at MCC

University of Texas Medical Branch

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (not University of Texas at Brownsville)

United States: Spell out as a noun (in the United States); abbreviate as adjective (U.S. government).

upper-level course

## V

Venue & Talent Management program

Veterinary Technology program

## W

WebAdvisor

website, webcam, webcast and webmaster, webpage, web page and the web

workload

work study program (no hyphen), but non-work study program

words a minute (in typing/keyboarding)

web addresses: no underline in printed publications, but make them hyperlinks for online information

workforce education

## X

x-ray