EDITORIAL
STYLE GUIDE

HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Public Relations & Communications

THE HGTC EDITORIAL VOICE

Consistent writing strengthens Horry-Georgetown Technical College's (HGTC) credibility, makes information easier to understand and helps the College communicate with one clear institutional voice.

The HGTC Editorial Style Guide establishes standards for written communications produced on behalf of the College. It complements the HGTC Brand Style Guide, which establishes standards for the College's visual identity, including logos, colors, typography and graphic applications. The Editorial Style Guide addresses how HGTC writes and communicates, while the Brand Style Guide addresses how HGTC's visual identity is presented.

HGTC generally follows The Associated Press Stylebook (AP Stylebook) for spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, numbers and other editorial matters. This guide supplements the AP Stylebook with College-specific standards and usage. When this guide addresses a matter differently from AP style, HGTC style takes precedence.

CONSISTENCY
Use established HGTC terminology, naming conventions and editorial standards across College communications.

CLARITY
Write for the audience. Favor active voice and use plain language, concise sentences and familiar words whenever possible.

ACCURACY
Verify names, titles, dates, statistics, quotations, links and institutional information before publication.

VOICE
HGTC communications should be professional, credible, welcoming, accessible and student-centered.

About This Guide
This guide is intended for employees who develop, review or approve written communications on behalf of HGTC. It applies to public-facing and broad internal communications, including websites, news releases, media advisories, newsletters, email communications, presentations, reports, social media and event materials.

This guide is not intended to address every question of grammar or usage. For matters not covered here, consult the current AP Stylebook. Merriam-Webster is the preferred reference for spelling and usage questions not addressed by the AP Stylebook. Specialized legal, regulatory, accreditation or grant requirements should be followed when applicable.

The Editorial Style Guide is maintained by HGTC Public Relations & Communications. Questions regarding editorial style, institutional terminology or official College communications should be directed to Public Relations & Communications.

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01.
COLLEGE IDENTITY & TERMINOLOGY

Use the official College name and institutional references consistently.

College name

Use Horry-Georgetown Technical College on first reference in most external communications. HGTC may be used on subsequent references. The College may be used as a shortened reference when it clearly refers to HGTC.
PREFERRED Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC)
AVOID Horry Georgetown Technical College

PREFERRED HGTC
AVOID H.G.T.C.

PREFERRED the College, when referring specifically to HGTC
AVOID HGTC College

Area Commission

Use Horry-Georgetown Technical College Area Commission on formal first reference when appropriate. HGTC Area Commission or Area Commission may be used on subsequent reference.
PREFERRED HGTC Area Commission Chair Robert Hucks
PREFERRED Robert Hucks, chair of the HGTC Area Commission
Use *chair* rather than chairman or chairwoman as the College's standard title unless an individual's official title specifies otherwise.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Spell out an organization's, program's or term's full name on first reference when the abbreviation may not be familiar to the audience. Place the abbreviation in parentheses if it is used again. Do not introduce an abbreviation that will not appear again.
PREFERRED South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS)
SUBSEQUENT REFERENCE SCTCS
PREFERRED Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
SUBSEQUENT REFERENCE FOIA

College departments, divisions and offices

Capitalize the complete formal names of College divisions, departments, offices and organizational units. Lowercase shortened or generic references.
PREFERRED Public Relations & Communications
PREFERRED Office of the President
PREFERRED Academic Affairs
PREFERRED the department, the office, the division

02.
CAMPUSES, BUILDINGS & LOCATIONS

Official campus names
HGTC's three official campus names are Conway Campus, Georgetown Campus and Grand Strand Campus. Capitalize Campus when it is part of the formal name; lowercase it when used generically.
PREFERRED Conway Campus
AVOID Conway campus
PREFERRED Georgetown Campus
AVOID Georgetown campus
PREFERRED Grand Strand Campus
AVOID Grand Strand campus

Buildings and rooms
Capitalize Building and Room when followed by an official number or name. In public-facing narrative copy, spell out Building rather than using Bldg.
PREFERRED Building 1100
AVOID Bldg. 1100 in external narrative copy
PREFERRED Room 120
AVOID room 120 when used as a formal locator

State names and addresses
Spell out state names when they stand alone in narrative text. Follow AP style for state abbreviations when used with a city in news writing. Use U.S. Postal Service abbreviations in complete mailing addresses.
PREFERRED IN NARRATIVE South Carolina
PREFERRED IN NEWS COPY Conway, S.C.
PREFERRED IN A MAILING ADDRESS Conway, SC 29526

Phone numbers
In HGTC communications, use hyphens and include the area code.
PREFERRED 843-347-3186
AVOID (843) 347-3186

Verify before publishing
Building names, room numbers, addresses and event locations should be confirmed against the current College website, calendar or responsible department.

03.
ACADEMIC STYLE

Programs and disciplines
Capitalize official academic program names. Lowercase general fields of study unless the field is a proper noun or language.

PREFERRED Associate Degree Nursing, when referring to the formal program name
GENERIC REFERENCE the nursing program
PREFERRED She is studying nursing.
AVOID She is studying Nursing.
PREFERRED English
AVOID english

Degrees and credentials
Capitalize the complete formal name of a certificate, diploma or degree. Lowercase certificate and diploma when used generically.
PREFERRED She earned a certificate in welding.
PREFERRED Associate in Applied Science
PREFERRED associate degree
AVOID associate's degree
PREFERRED bachelor's degree
AVOID bachelors degree
PREFERRED master's degree
AVOID masters degree
Capitalize a complete formal credential name, such as Associate in Arts or Associate in Applied Science. Lowercase generic references to degrees.

Courses and terms
Capitalize official course titles, such as English Composition I. Use official course codes, such as ENG 101. Lowercase seasons and semester references unless they are part of a formal event or title.

Academic and fiscal years
In HGTC communications, use 2026-27 for inclusive academic and fiscal years.
PREFERRED 2026-27 academic year
PREFERRED fiscal year 2026-27

Commencement and graduation
Use *commencement* for the ceremony. Use *graduate* or *graduation* when referring to completion of academic requirements or the conferral of a credential. Participation in commencement does not necessarily indicate that all graduation requirements have been completed.

04.
NAMES, TITLES & CREDENTIALS

Job titles
Capitalize a formal title immediately before a person's name. Lowercase a title when it follows the name or stands alone. Long titles are generally easier to read after the name.
PREFERRED President Lori A. Heafner
AVOID president Lori A. Heafner
PREFERRED Lori A. Heafner, president of HGTC
AVOID Lori A. Heafner, President of HGTC
PREFERRED The president addressed employees.
AVOID The President addressed employees.

Doctoral titles and credentials
HGTC may use *Dr.* before the name of an individual who holds an earned doctoral degree in institutional communications. Do not use *Dr.* and a doctoral credential together in the same reference.
PREFERRED Dr. Lori A. Heafner
AVOID Dr. Lori A. Heafner, Ph.D.
PREFERRED Lori A. Heafner, Ph.D.
AVOID Dr. Lori A. Heafner, Ph.D.

Courtesy titles and subsequent reference
Do not routinely use Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss in College news writing. In news releases, use the person's full name on first reference and generally the last name on subsequent reference.

Preferred names and pronouns
Use the name and pronouns an individual uses when known. Confirm spelling, credentials and professional titles before publication.

Possessives
Follow AP style for possessives, including names ending in *s*.

05.
DATES, TIMES & NUMBERS

Dates
Abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. when used with a specific date. Spell out March, April, May, June and July. Do not use ordinal endings in dates.
PREFERRED Oct. 16, 2026
AVOID October 16th, 2026
PREFERRED March 4, 2027
AVOID Mar. 4, 2027
PREFERRED October 2026
AVOID October, 2026

Times
PREFERRED 8 a.m.
AVOID 8:00 AM
PREFERRED 8:30 a.m.
AVOID 8:30 A.M.
Use *noon* and *midnight* rather than 12 p.m. and 12 a.m.
PREFERRED noon
PREFERRED midnight

Numbers and percentages
In general narrative writing, spell out one through nine and use numerals for 10 and above. Use numerals for ages, money, dates and other AP-designated categories. Use numerals with the % symbol for percentages in most contexts.
PREFERRED 7%
AVOID 7 percent

Ages
Always use numerals for ages.
PREFERRED a 19-year-old student
PREFERRED The student is 19.

Money
Use the dollar sign and numerals for monetary amounts. Do not include zeros after the decimal unless cents are relevant.
PREFERRED $5
PREFERRED $1,000
PREFERRED $5.25

Millions and billions
Use numerals with million or billion in narrative text.
PREFERRED $2.5 million
PREFERRED 1.2 million students

Ranges

In HGTC communications, use a hyphen rather than an en dash for numerical and time ranges. Omit the first a.m. or p.m. when both times occur in the same part of the day. Use *to* when a time range crosses noon or midnight.

PREFERRED 9-11 a.m.
PREFERRED 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
PREFERRED pages 10-15

06.
CAPITALIZATION, PUNCTUATION & USAGE

Capitalization
Capitalize proper nouns, formal College names, formal program and unit names, formal titles immediately before names, and official event names. Do not capitalize words merely to emphasize importance.

Commas
Follow AP style. Do not generally use the Oxford, or serial, comma in a simple series. Use a comma when needed to prevent confusion.
PREFERRED students, employees and community members
AVOID students, employees, and community members in a simple series

Dashes and hyphens
In HGTC communications, use hyphens (-) rather than en dashes (–) for numerical and time ranges. HGTC editorial style generally favors commas, parentheses, colons or separate sentences over em dashes (—). Use hyphens where needed in compound modifiers.
PREFERRED full-time student
AVOID full time student
PREFERRED The student attends full time.
AVOID The student attends full-time.
PREFERRED longtime employee
AVOID long-time employee

Apostrophes and ampersands
Use an ampersand only when it is part of an official name.
PREFERRED Veterans Day
AVOID Veteran's Day
PREFERRED 1990s
AVOID 1990's
PREFERRED Public Relations & Communications
AVOID Public Relations and Communications when naming the formal division

Quotation marks and titles of works
Follow AP style for quotation marks, punctuation and titles of works. Periods and commas generally go inside closing quotation marks. In news-style writing, use quotation marks rather than italics where prescribed by AP style.

Bulleted lists
Use parallel construction in bulleted lists. Capitalize the first word of each bullet. Use periods when bullets are complete sentences. For short fragments, punctuation may be omitted when the treatment is consistent throughout the list.

Spacing
Use one space after periods and other ending punctuation.

07.
DIGITAL & EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Digital usage
PREFERRED email
AVOID e-mail
PREFERRED website
AVOID Web site
PREFERRED webpage
AVOID Web page
PREFERRED online
AVOID on-line

Hyperlinks
Use descriptive hyperlink text whenever possible. Avoid generic directions such as click here.
PREFERRED View the Academic Calendar for important dates.
AVOID Click here for the Academic Calendar.

URLs and email addresses
When a URL must appear in text rather than as a hyperlink, use the shortest functional form when appropriate. Do not add unnecessary protocol information such as https:// unless needed for functionality or clarity. Write email addresses in lowercase unless a specific system requires otherwise.
PREFERRED hgtc.edu
PREFERRED foia@hgtc.edu

Broad institutional email
Broad institutional email communications should be concise, informative and easy to scan.
- Use a clear subject line that identifies the purpose of the message.
- Put deadlines, required actions and essential information near the beginning.
- Use headings and bullets to make longer messages easier to scan.
- Define unfamiliar acronyms and internal terminology.
- Proofread links, dates, names and contact information before distribution.

Subject lines
Keep subject lines concise, specific and informative. Use capitalization consistently with the communication or publication in which the subject line appears.

Social media
Social media may use a more conversational tone, but content should remain accurate, professional and consistent with HGTC's institutional voice. Use emojis and hashtags selectively and include alternative text for meaningful images when the platform allows it.

08.
NEWS & MEDIA STYLE

Headlines
Write headlines that are clear, specific and informative. Favor active voice and strong verbs. Avoid unnecessary articles, unsupported superlatives and promotional language. Use the College's established headline capitalization consistently.

News releases
- Lead with the most newsworthy information and use factual, concise language and accepted journalistic structure.
- Attribute opinions and evaluative statements.
- Use quotations to add perspective, significance or reaction, not to repeat facts.
- Verify names, titles, dates, statistics and partner organization names.
- Follow AP dateline style when a dateline is used.

EXAMPLE CONWAY, S.C.

- Use the current approved **HGTC boilerplate** when appropriate. Do not modify the institutional boilerplate without approval from Public Relations & Communications.

Media advisories
Keep advisories concise and focused on what journalists need to evaluate and cover an event. Include WHAT, WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and, when useful, VISUALS/INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES and MEDIA CONTACT.

Media inquiries and contact information
Media inquiries regarding College matters should be directed to Public Relations & Communications and handled in accordance with the College's Media Guidelines. News releases and media advisories should include the appropriate Public Relations & Communications media contact information.

Photo captions and credits
Identify people and explain what is happening in the image. When identifying multiple people, use *from left*. End complete-sentence captions with a period. Include a photo credit when required and follow the source's required credit language.

PREFERRED From left, Jane Doe, John Smith and Mary Jones attended the event.
LESS PREFERRED Pictured left to right: Jane Doe, John Smith, Mary Jones

Quotations
Do not materially change a speaker's meaning. Minor edits for grammar, clarity and concision may be appropriate when they preserve the speaker's voice and intent.

09.
ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

HGTC communications should be understandable and accessible to the broadest reasonable audience. Accessibility is an editorial responsibility as well as a design responsibility.

- Use plain language and explain specialized terminology.
- Use descriptive headings and meaningful hyperlink text.
- Provide alternative text for meaningful images in digital communications.
- Do not rely solely on color to convey meaning.
- Use respectful, current terminology when referring to individuals and communities.
- Mention personal characteristics only when relevant to the communication.
- Follow current AP guidance for disability, race, ethnicity, gender and related terminology, while respecting an individual's stated preference when known and relevant.
- Avoid directional instructions that depend solely on visual position, such as “click the button on the right,” when clearer descriptive language can be used.
- Avoid using ALL CAPS for extended passages of text.

Readability

Writing that is easy to scan and understand benefits all audiences. Short paragraphs, descriptive headings and direct sentences improve both accessibility and comprehension.

10.
INSTITUTIONAL FACTS, EVENTS & PARTNERS

Facts and statistics
Verify institutional facts and statistics with the office responsible for the data before publication. When appropriate, identify the source, reporting period or academic year so statistics are not presented without context. Do not reuse outdated enrollment, graduation, placement, licensure or performance data simply because it appeared in an earlier publication.

Events
Capitalize formal event names and lowercase generic references. Event communications should clearly provide the date, time, location, intended audience, registration requirements and deadline when applicable.
PREFERRED Welcome Week, when naming the official event
AVOID welcome week, when naming the official event

PREFERRED 60th anniversary
AVOID 60th Anniversary, unless part of a formal title

Event listings
Present event information in a consistent order whenever possible: event name, date, time, location, audience, registration information, deadline and contact information.

Partner organizations
Use an organization's official name and styling. Verify unusual capitalization, spacing and spelling rather than changing a partner's name to HGTC style.

11.
A-Z EDITORIAL STYLE

Common HGTC terms and usage at a glance.

academic year Lowercase unless part of a formal title. Use 2026-27 academic year.

acronyms Spell out unfamiliar terms on first reference. Use the acronym thereafter when needed.

All-College Meeting Capitalize and hyphenate when referring to the formal HGTC event.

alumni/alumnus/alumna Use graduate when gender-specific terminology is unnecessary. Alumni is plural.

Area Commission Capitalize when referring to the HGTC Area Commission.

associate degree No apostrophe.

bachelor's degree Lowercase with an apostrophe when used generically.

campus Lowercase generically; capitalize in Conway Campus, Georgetown Campus and Grand Strand Campus.

campuswide One word.

chair Preferred gender-neutral term. Capitalize before a name when used as a formal title; lowercase after a name.

Class of Capitalize when referring to a specific graduating class: Class of 2027.

College Capitalize when used as a shortened reference to Horry-Georgetown Technical College in formal institutional communications.

collegewide One word.

commencement Lowercase unless part of the formal name of an event.

coursework One word.

Dual Enrollment Capitalize when referring to the formal HGTC program.

email One word; no hyphen.

e-newsletter Use a hyphen.

faculty Collective term. Use faculty member for an individual when needed.

11.
A-Z EDITORIAL STYLE, CONTINUED

first-generation Hyphenate when used as a compound modifier: *first-generation college student.*

full time/full-time Hyphenate before a noun: full-time student. Do not hyphenate after the noun: attends full time.

fundraising One word.

graduate/graduation Use for completion of academic requirements; do not use interchangeably with commencement when the distinction matters.

health care Use health care as two words, although formal names should retain their official styling.

HGTC No periods.

hgtc.edu Preferred display format when a shortened URL works.

in person/in-person Hyphenate before a noun: *in-person meeting*. Do not hyphenate when used adverbially: *The meeting will be held in person.*

login/log in Use *login* as a noun or adjective and *log in* as a verb.

longtime One word: a longtime employee.

myHGTC Follow the official College styling.

news release/press release Both are acceptable. News release is preferred in formal HGTC communications.

noncredit One word.

nonprofit One word.

online One word.

percent Use the % symbol with numerals in most contexts.

phone numbers Use hyphens and include the area code: 843-349-XXXX.

postsecondary One word.

state names Spell out when standing alone; follow AP style with city names and USPS style in complete mailing addresses.

11.
A-Z EDITORIAL STYLE, CONTINUED

student-centered Hyphenate before a noun.

technical college Lowercase when used generically. Capitalize when part of an institution's formal name.

Veterans Day No apostrophe.

webpage One word.

website One word.

workforce development Lowercase unless part of a formal organizational or program name.

work-study Hyphenate.

12.
QUICK REFERENCE & ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

2026-27 academic year not 2026/2027 academic year

60th anniversary not 60th Anniversary unless part of a formal title

843-349-XXXX not (843) 349-XXXX

8 a.m. not 8:00 AM

associate degree not associate's degree

bachelor's degree not bachelors degree

Conway Campus not Conway campus

email not e-mail

full-time student but attends full time

Horry-Georgetown Technical College not Horry Georgetown Technical College

HGTC not H.G.T.C.

longtime employee not long-time employee

midnight not 12 a.m.

noon not 12 p.m.

Oct. 16, 2026 not October 16th, 2026

Veterans Day not Veteran's Day

Questions and Additional Guidance

For questions involving HGTC-specific terminology, institutional usage or editorial standards, contact Public Relations & Communications. For general matters of grammar, punctuation and journalistic style not addressed in this guide, consult the current AP Stylebook. For spelling and usage questions not addressed by AP style, consult Merriam-Webster.

EDITORIAL QUESTIONS

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