



IOWA·VALLEY

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE

Iowa Valley Community College District (IVCCD) was organized in 1966 as one of 15 community college districts in Iowa. IVCCD is unique among Iowa's community colleges because it operates two separate community colleges under the umbrella of one district. There is no Iowa Valley Community College ... rather, the District operates Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls (founded in 1890), Marshalltown Community College (founded in 1927), and Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions, as well as a satellite center (Iowa Valley Grinnell, established in 1993).

Our Purpose

ECC and MCC offer one-year and two-year career-technical programs as well as a transferable Associate of Arts (AA) degree. Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions offers training for business and industry as well as thousands of adult education programs and services throughout the Central Iowa service area.

Our Promise

Iowa Valley provides quality education solutions to every student. We strive to meet every student where they are, and providing educational solutions that will help them improve their lives through education and training.

Our Values

We believe education should be affordable and accessible to all. Students of all backgrounds seek to take classes from our world-class instructors. We provide affordable, hands-on education to students. We work to keep class sizes small so that we can offer individual attention and real world experiences to students. We align our courses and curriculum with the idea that students will leverage their experiences in their next steps, whether college or career.

Our Personality

College isn't just about the classes students take; the college experience encompasses athletics, student life, residential opportunities, student activities and involvement, and more. We aim to offer a robust student experience in two years. Both the Ellsworth and Marshalltown campuses offer college-staffed residential housing. Both participate in the National Junior College Athletics Association (NJCAA) and the Iowa Community College Athletic Conference (ICCAC).

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE

Brand Hierarchy

There are three main campuses that fall under the District umbrella:

Iowa Valley Community College District (IVCCD)

1. Marshalltown Community College District (MCC)
 - 1.2 Iowa Valley Grinnell (IVG)
2. Ellsworth Community College (ECC)
3. Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions (BCS)



EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE

Our Voice

At Iowa Valley, we serve our students, communicate with potential students, non-traditional students, school districts in our region, and business and community leaders. Despite our audience differences, there are commonalities in the way we communicate.

Voice

At Iowa Valley, we have all been students at one time or another. We want to educate people without confusing or patronizing them. We know that everything we write is a conversation between the college and the student or business partner so we use a casual and informal tone with language that is easy to understand and comprehend.

When we sit down to have an initial conversation with our readers, we write copy with this in mind:

- **We are plainspoken.** College choices are complicated enough – we want to clarify, not add to the confusion. We strive to make our choices clear and easy for the average reader. After all, our readers shouldn't need a PhD to decipher their college choices.
- **We are conversational.** There is nothing more frustrating than being talked at. We would rather have a conversation with our students and community members, and that begins with our tone. We strike a conversational tone in everything we do.
- **We take a genuine interest in our student's success.** We have some of the best instructors at any level, and our class sizes are intentionally small so that instructors can develop relationships with the students in their classes. We are truly excited about a student's opportunities, and we show that excitement in how we write. We know that graduation isn't the end, it's a beginning, and we are truly excited to have played a part in our student's success stories.

Tone

Iowa Valley's tone is more casual than most academic writing. We know it's important to be clear, and we work hard to clarify rather than confuse. When writing, we work hard to understand a reader's state of mind. Are they starting their college search? Have they just toured one of our residential facilities? Have they applied for admission? Are they navigating the confusing world of financial aid? When we understand their emotional state, we can set out to assist them.

EDITORIAL STYLE GUIDE

We know that college choice is a very personal decision. As much as we want to serve our students, we also know that community college isn't right for everyone – and that's OK, too. We strive to reach these people when we write:

- **First-generation college students.** There are a lot of students that have never considered attending college after high school, and have parents that went straight to the workforce and never considered getting a college degree. At Iowa Valley, we make education accessible to all, but have programs designed to engage first-generation college students.
- **Concerned about the expense of college.** There are people who feel that college is not worth the investment when the outcomes aren't guaranteed. At Iowa Valley, we have several programs designed to make college affordable to all, from grants to financial aid, we help make college affordable for all. Many of our programs are tied directly to serving a workforce need.
- **Academically inclined.** Many people have viewed community college as an education "consolation prize" for students not academically gifted enough to attend a four-year school. At Iowa Valley, we hire world-class educators and have several nationally-renowned academic programs. Our programs are rigorous enough to prepare students for any four-year program in the state and beyond our borders.
- **Designed for Gen-Ed.** Many students may look to community college to satisfy their general education requirements before transferring to a four-year college. While we can prepare students for their next steps academically, we can also provide programs that you simply won't find at a four-year school.
- **Just technical training.** Many students believe that community colleges only serve students looking for a technical career. Can you find career and technical training programs at Iowa Valley? Of course – but our colleges offer more than technical training opportunities.

Our education solution may not be the right choice for everyone. When we write, we talk about the benefits of community college first, and then we dive into what makes our schools special and unique. We talk about how we can help people overcome their barriers and go on to achieve great things. We view college as a starting point, rather than where someone "ends up." In short, our students don't fit into a neat "box" and neither do our educational offerings. We want to change the conversation around community college in general while selling the benefits of Iowa Valley.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS OVERVIEW

Every letter, email, phone call and voicemail message enhances the perception of an organization. The tone, word selection, and level of sophistication projected in communication become synonymous with the organization in the receiver's mind. It is essential that IVCCD be represented in a consistent and professional manner.

The Written Communication Standards have been developed to ensure that the IVCCD name will be representative of the quality education, friendly service, commitment to students, and results-focused approach that is inherent in this institution and its employees.

Information in this section provides valuable guidelines for:

- Editorial Style Guidelines
- Accreditation Statement
- Non-Discrimination/Educational Equity Statement

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

The following is a guideline the Marketing Office uses for writing news releases, letters, memos, brochure copy, etc. This guideline contains words and phrases we most often use in writing about District events, classes, and personnel. To keep all of our publications consistent, we suggest following these guides. Most of these entries have been adapted from the AP Style book and have been tailored to IVCCD where appropriate.

A

academic degrees

If mention of degrees is necessary to establish someone's credentials, the preferred form is to avoid an abbreviation and use instead a phrase such as: Mandy Brown, who has a master's degree in higher education. For those who hold doctorates, the preferred form of reference is Dr. Lisa Breja.

Associate degree and doctorate do not require an apostrophe. Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree and master's degree.

When referring to academic degrees, such as an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science, use the word of, not in. He received an Associate of Arts degree.

Use such abbreviations as A.S., B.A., M.A., Ed.D., and Ph.D. only when the need to identify many individuals by degree on their first reference would make the preferred form cumbersome. Use these abbreviations only after a full name, never after just a last name.

When used after a name, an academic abbreviation is set off by commas: Lisa Breja, Ph.D., spoke at the meeting. On subsequent references, those who hold doctorate degrees should be referred to as Dr. (Breja).

Do not precede a name with a courtesy title for an academic degree and follow it with the abbreviation for the degree in the same reference:

Wrong: Dr. Robin Lilienthal, Ph.D.

Right: Dr. Robin Lilienthal, MCC Provost.

When in doubt about the proper abbreviation for a degree, follow the first listing in Webster's New World Dictionary.

academic departments/divisions

Use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives: *the division of history, the history department, the division of English, the English department.*

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

alumnus, alumni, alum

Use alumnus (singular) when referring to a man or woman who has attended a school.

Use alumni (plural) when referring to a group of men or women.

Use alum when referring to a man or woman who has attended a school. This version is appropriate in more informal situations.

academic titles

Capitalize and spell out formal titles such as Professor, Chancellor, Provost, etc., when they are used before or after a name; lowercase elsewhere.

Also use lowercase with modifiers such as speech Professor Dave Engel.

ampersand (&)

Do not use in text unless part of a title, company name, etc.

B

Board of Directors

Use Iowa Valley Community College District Board of Directors on first reference, then the Board on subsequent references.

The Iowa Valley Community College District Board of Directors approved the minutes from the September meeting.

C

capitalization

Avoid unnecessary capitals. Capitalize common nouns such as party, county, river, street, and south when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place, or thing. EXAMPLE: Democratic Party, Hardin County, Iowa River, Center Street, South Dakota.

Use lowercase common nouns when they stand alone: the party, the county, the river, the street.

Use lowercase common noun elements of names in all plural uses: the Democratic and Republican parties, Main and State streets.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

college

Capitalize when part of a proper name: Marshalltown Community College, Ellsworth Community College. Also capitalize when used as a substitute for the full name of a college: Classes at the College (*referring to Marshalltown Community College*) begin on Aug. 26, 2024.

Lowercase when referring to colleges in general: *High school students wanting to take a class for college credit should consult their guidance counselors.*

course titles

Capitalize when using a formal name. Lowercase when using the generic term. *She signed up for Website Strategy and Planning because she wanted to learn how to build her own website.*

D

dates

Use only the numbers for dates. Use Arabic figures without st, nd, rd or th. Set off day and year with commas: *He was born Oct. 5, 1966 in Des Moines.* Use abbreviation for month when used as a specific date. Spell out month when used alone or with just the year: *Oct. 5, 1996. October 1966.*

days of the week

Do not abbreviate days of the week unless necessary for a tabular format.

dean's list

Lowercase in all uses: *He is on the dean's list. She is a dean's list student.*

E

Ellsworth Community College/ECC

Capitalize in all references; on subsequent references you may use *Ellsworth*. When used within the College community, the use of *ECC* or *Ellsworth* is acceptable for all references. When referenced in external publications, use *Ellsworth Community College (ECC)* on first reference and *ECC* or *Ellsworth* on subsequent references.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

email

email is the preferred format. Lowercase “e” required unless it is used at the beginning of a sentence or in a standardized form.

em dash

The em dash is roughly the width of the letter m. The em dash often demarcates a parenthetical thought—*like this one*—or similar interpolation. Em dashes should be used without spaces.

en dash

The en dash is roughly the width of the letter n. The en dash is used in ranges, such as 8–12 years, read as “*eight to twelve years*.” En dashes used to connect words should have spaces around them.

Esports/esports

One word, no hyphen. Lowercase “e” required unless it is used at the beginning of a sentence or in a standardized form.

Esports is off to a fast start this year. vs. We won the esports championship!

F

flier

Not flyer when referring to a handbill.

full time/full-time

Hyphenate as a compound modifier. *She is a full-time faculty member who works at the Success Center full time.*

fundraising, fundraiser

One word.

G

graduate

Graduate is correctly used in the active voice: *She graduated from the College.* It is correct, but unnecessary, to use the passive voice: *He graduated from the College.*

Do not, however, drop “from”: *Tara Miller graduated from Ellsworth Community College.* Not: *Tara Miller graduated Ellsworth Community College.*

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

H

home page

Two words.

I

internet

Internet is a proper name for a public worldwide connection of computer network systems sharing data. It is not capitalized unless it's the first word in a sentence.

Iowa Valley Community College District / IVCCD

Capitalize all words when used as a proper name and spelled out; on subsequent references you may use *IVCCD*. When using only the word district in reference to *IVCCD*, capitalize: *Voters in the District passed the six cent levy by a narrow margin*. Do not capitalize when referring to a general district: *Two of the community college districts in the state support more than one college*.

Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions / BCS

Capitalize in all references; on subsequent references you may use *BCS*.

When used within the District community, the use of *BCS* is acceptable for all references. When referenced in external publications, use *Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions (BCS)* on first reference and *BCS* or *Business and Community Solutions* on subsequent references.

Iowa Valley Community College Grinnell / IVG

Capitalize in all references; on subsequent references you may use *IVCC Grinnell*, *IVG*, or *Iowa Valley Grinnell*. When used within the College community, the use of *IV Grinnell*, *IVG*, or *Iowa Valley Grinnell* is acceptable for all references. When referenced in outside publications, use *Iowa Valley Community College Grinnell* on first reference and either *Iowa Valley Grinnell*, *IV Grinnell*, or *IVG* on subsequent references.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

L

legislative titles

Use *Rep.*, *Reps.*, *Sen.*, and *Sens.*, as formal titles before one or more names in text. Spell out and lowercase representative and senator in other uses. *Sen. John Smith* and *Sen. Jane Doe*, not *Sens.*

legislature

Capitalize when preceded by the name of a state: the *Iowa Legislature*. Retain capitalization when the state name is dropped but the reference is specifically to that state's legislature. Lowercase legislature when used generically: *No legislature has approved that amendment.*

lifelong

One word, no hyphen.

M

Marshalltown Community College/MCC

Capitalize in all references; on subsequent references you may use *MCC*.

When used within the College community, the use of *MCC* is acceptable for all references. When used in outside publications use *Marshalltown Community College (MCC)* on first reference and *MCC* on subsequent references.

months

Capitalize the names of months in all uses. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.*, *Dec.* Spell out when using alone or with a year alone.

When a phrase lists only a month and a year, do not separate the year with commas. When a phrase refers to a month, day, and year, set off the year with commas.

EXAMPLES: *January 1972 was a very cold month.*

Jan. 2 was the coldest day of the month. His birthday is May 8.

Feb. 14, 2010, is the target date.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

N

numbers

Spell out all digits less than 10 (exception: dates and times)
He took three classes in 2010. He spent 14 hours a week on each class.

O

online

One word, no hyphen.

P

part time/part-time

Hyphenate as a compound modifier. *She works part time.*
He is a part-time employee.

percent

Always spell out in news releases because the % symbol is sometimes botched when transmitted via email. It's OK to use the symbol (%) in documents, tables or for other any purposes.

period

Use one space after periods.

post-secondary

Hyphenate.

Provost

Capitalize when used as a formal title before or after a name: *Provost Robin Lilienthal* or *Dr. Robin Lilienthal, MCC Provost.*

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

Q

quotation marks

Periods and commas always go within the quotation marks.

S

State

Lowercase in all “state of” constructions: *the state of Iowa, the states of Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska.*

Do not capitalize state when used simply as an adjective to specify a level of jurisdiction: *state Rep. John Smith, the state Education Department, state funds.*

Apply the same principle to phrases such as *the city of Des Moines, the town of Grinnell, federal government, etc.*

seasons

Do not capitalize *winter, spring, summer, or fall* unless it is part of a formal name: *Summer Olympics.*

semester

Lowercase, such as *spring semester, fall semester.*

sexism

Current practice requires masculine pronouns not be used for generic references to non-gender-specific persons. Avoid the problem by pluralizing the reference or eliminating the pronoun whenever possible.

Right: *Students may check their records. A student may check his/her record.*

Wrong: *A student may check her record.*

spaces

Use only one space after all punctuations.

spring, spring break, spring semester

No capitalization.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION STANDARDS

T

time of day

Use figures except for noon and midnight. Do not use a colon followed by two zeros for hourly designations; use a colon to separate hours from minutes: *11 am, 1 pm, 3:30 pm* (not *10:00 am*.)

Do not use a period after the figure (1 p.m.) and put a space between the figures and the hours (1 pm)

Avoid redundancies such as 10 am *this morning* or 10 pm *Monday night*.

title typography

Names of books, newspapers, videos, and magazines should be italicized in text. Names of articles, studies under grants, or anything contained within a book is put in quotes.

V

vice

Use two words: *vice chair, vice president*. Do not capitalize unless preceding or following a name as part of a title: *Vice President Doe*.

W

website, web pages

Website is one word and not capitalized. Web pages are two words and not capitalized. *She looked at several web pages associated with the topic. He used the website for his research.*

Z

ZIP codes

Use all capitals for *ZIP*, but always lowercase the word *code*.

ACCREDITATION / NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENTS

The following statements are specific to IVCCD and have been approved by the IVCCD Board of Directors. Questions regarding style should be addressed to the Marketing Office.

Accreditation Statement

The District's official accreditation statement is included on the websites, in the College catalog, in class schedules, and on key admissions materials as deemed appropriate. The accreditation statement reads as follows:

Iowa Valley Community College District (which operates Ellsworth Community College, Marshalltown Community College, Iowa Valley Grinnell, and Iowa Valley Business and Community Solutions) is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission (<https://www.hlcommission.org>; ph. 312-263-0456), the Iowa Department of Education, and the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships; some individual degree programs are also accredited by agencies specific to those areas of study. IVCCD has articulation agreements with Iowa's Regent universities and several other colleges in Iowa and the Midwest.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Statement (EEO/AA) – Used for HR/Employee purposes only

It is the policy of Iowa Valley Community College District to provide equal opportunities in its employment practices and policies for all employees and applicants for employment without discrimination on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and veteran status.

Retaliation against any individual for reporting discrimination or assisting in providing information relevant to a report of discrimination is strictly prohibited by IVCCD and constitutes a violation of this policy.

ACCREDITATION / NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENTS

The following statement is specific to IVCCD. Questions regarding style should be addressed to the Marketing Office.

Equity Statement

Iowa Valley Community College District does not discriminate in its programs, activities, or employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, religion, actual or potential family, parental or marital status, or other protected classes. If you have questions or complaints related to compliance with this policy, please contact the District Equity Coordinator, 3702 S. Center Street, Marshalltown, IA 50158, 641-844-5523, Equity@iavalley.edu.

The equity statement should appear on all public-facing promotional materials, including the website, postcards and mailers, fliers, viewbooks, ads, and handbooks. It is not necessary to list the equity statement on individualized communications, such as billing statements and individual correspondence (such as an acceptance letter). Please contact Marketing with questions.