



# PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE SYSTEM *of* HIGHER EDUCATION

## STATE SYSTEM STYLE GUIDE

This style guide was developed by the Public Affairs division to ensure consistent editorial and visual standards are utilized in the preparation of all materials shared on behalf of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The standards apply to materials, documents, and digital assets intended for both internal and external use.

### Our Name

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education is the full name we use to promote the organization. (Note: In 2014, we intentionally started using "Pennsylvania's..." with the apostrophe rather than "The Pennsylvania..." in order to better differentiate from Penn State.) In a document, the first usage is "Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE)." After that, PASSHE or the State System can be used interchangeably.

### System Banner

The use of the State System's banner (above) is encouraged when appropriate as a graphic element at the top of documents. (Note: This should not be used in place of letterhead for official correspondence.) We are no longer using the previous banner with individual university logos, so please ensure all materials are updated accordingly.

Artwork for the banner, university logos, letterhead, and PowerPoint templates, as well as instructions for ordering business cards, can be found at [System Branding](#).

### Formatting Text for Print

- Official Typestyles:
  - o Body copy: Arial 11 pt.
  - o Headlines: **Arial Bold**
  - o Email, website, and PowerPoint: Arial/**Arial Bold**
- To emphasize text, use **bold** or *italic* font. Do not underline. If/when you feel the urge to underline text, use **bold** or *italic* font instead. (Hyperlinks are underlined.) Be consistent throughout individual documents; pick one and use it consistently.
- A different font may be used for design purposes in headings, pulled quotes, or to bring attention to specific text, as examples. Allowable fonts for design emphasis are **Arial Black**, Arial Narrow, Book Antiqua or Palatino, and Trebuchet.
- Text should be LEFT justified (not FULL justified). This reduces white space and irregular gaps in the body copy, making it easier to read.

## Official Colors

The State System’s official brand colors should be used in all communications.

Dark blue and gold are the official colors, with 30% gray serving as an accent color. The following are acceptable approximations of the official Pantone colors. These can be created in Microsoft by clicking on “More Colors” and then “Custom.”



**Dark Blue**  
HEX. #153D6D  
RGB 21, 61, 109



**Gold**  
HEX. #F1C678  
RGB 248, 198, 120



**30% Gray**  
HEX. #BDBFC1  
RGB 189, 191, 193

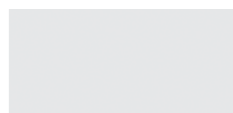
If other accent colors are necessary, please use the tinted versions of the official colors shown below.



**Light Blue**  
HEX. #96ABDF  
RGB 150, 171, 223



**Light Gold**  
HEX. #F9DFB1  
RGB 249, 223, 177



**10% Gray**  
HEX. #E6E7E8  
RGB 230, 231, 232

## Additional Colors

Should a particular application or communication require additional colors, please contact Steve Blades, Web and Graphics Designer, at [sblades@passhe.edu](mailto:sblades@passhe.edu).

## University Names—First and Second Reference

First Reference	Second Reference
Bloomsburg University	Bloomsburg
PennWest California	California
Cheyney University	Cheyney
PennWest Clarion	Clarion
East Stroudsburg University	East Stroudsburg
PennWest Edinboro	Edinboro
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	IUP
Kutztown University	Kutztown

Lock Haven University	Lock Haven
Mansfield University	Mansfield
Millersville University	Millersville
Shippensburg University	Shippensburg
Slippery Rock University	Slippery Rock
West Chester University	West Chester

## **Grammar, Punctuation, etc.**

### **Academic Degrees**

- Spell out: associate degree, baccalaureate degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctoral degree, doctorate, Associate of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy.
- Do not capitalize the specific discipline unless it is part of the degree title: Associate of Arts in industrial technology, Bachelor of Arts in mathematics, Master of Business Administration, Doctor of Nursing Practice. (Exceptions: Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, Master of Arts in English, etc.)
- Abbreviate degrees with periods and without spaces: B.A., M.S., Ph.D., M.Mus., M.Eng., M.B.A., D.Ed., J.D., M.D., etc. (Note: honorary doctor and Master of Law degrees are abbreviated LL.D. and LL.M. (not L.L.D. or L.L.M.).)
- Plural of B.A., M.A., Ph.D., and other abbreviations with periods—B.A.’s, M.A.’s, Ph.D.’s, etc. With plurals of acronyms where no periods are used, do not use an apostrophe (e.g., CACs).

### **Acronyms**

Acronyms should be used in limited circumstances:

- First reference: Whenever using an acronym, spell out the whole phrase followed by the acronym in parenthesis in the first reference; then use just the acronym in subsequent references (e.g., Executive Leadership Group (ELG) and Chief Academic Officers (CAOs)).
- Whenever possible, avoid the use of acronyms for the university names (Exception: IUP is acceptable on second reference to avoid confusion with other similarly named public universities.)
- Never use acronyms for the Board of Governors, Council of Trustees, or Office of the Chancellor. (Note: “the Board” or “the Council” may be used as a second reference in a document that references only one board or council.)

## Capitalization

- System is capitalized when referring to the State System; system is not capitalized when referring to a generic system or multiple systems.
- Do not capitalize the word university/universities unless referring to a specific university (e.g., Slippery Rock University).
- Do not capitalize job titles (chancellor, president, vice president) unless referring to a specific person (e.g., Chancellor Smith); capitalize an individual's title only if it comes before his/her name; do not capitalize it if it is listed after: Executive Vice Chancellor Susan H. Smith; Susan H. Smith, the System's executive vice chancellor.
- Do not capitalize semesters—fall semester, spring semester—nor other times of the academic year (i.e., summer session or winter session).
- Always capitalize “Board of Governors” or “the Board.”
- Capitalize “Council of Trustees” if referring to a specific council (e.g., the West Chester University Council of Trustees); do not capitalize it when referring to a generic council of trustees or various councils collectively (e.g., the councils of trustees have an important role to play for our universities.)
- Pennsylvania is legally a commonwealth, not a state. Capitalize the C in the phrase Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Lowercase commonwealth when the word stands alone.

## Numbers

- Spell out single-digit whole numbers from one to nine; use numerals for numbers 10 and greater.
- If a sentence starts with a number, always spell out, even if 10 or greater. If this is awkward, rearrange the sentence so it does not need to start with the number.
- Percent or % may be used with a number in document text or in tables but ensure consistency throughout the communication.

## Punctuation

- Use a comma before “and” in a series; example: Cheyney, Millersville, and Kutztown Universities of Pennsylvania (Exception: In news releases, use Associated Press style and exclude the final comma; example: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney and Clarion Universities of Pennsylvania.)
- Quotation marks

- Periods and commas always go inside the closing quotation mark.
  - Semicolons and colons always go outside the closing quotation mark.
  - At the end of a sentence, a question mark or an exclamation point goes inside the closing quotation mark when it applies only to the quoted material.
  - At the end of a sentence, a question mark or an exclamation point goes outside the closing quotation mark when it applies to the entire sentence.
- Never use the ampersand (&) in body copy unless part of an official name (e.g., Johnson & Johnson) or when necessary for digital media (e.g., character limitation in Twitter).
  - Use a comma before and after e.g. and i.e. unless you are using parentheses, which only requires it after.
  - Use only one space after a period. (Note: Microsoft Word automatically adds extra visual space at the end of a sentence, so adding a double space is no longer needed.)
  - Use s' with Board of Governors' and Council of Presidents' to represent the possessive form of a plural noun that has singular meaning (e.g., the United Nations' staff or the United States' executive branch).
  - Use an em dash or long dash (—) with no space before or after to replace commas, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to indicate added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought.
  - Use an en dash or short dash (–) with no space before or after to indicate periods of time when “to” might otherwise be used (e.g., 2011–2013 or January–June).

## **Spacing**

- Single space all text; double space between paragraphs.
- Do not use 6sp or 10sp spacing (before or after) in the document.
- Use one-inch margins.
- Use LEFT justification.

## **Subject-Verb Agreement**

- Board of Governors is singular, like Congress, United States, or United Nations. (e.g., MOTION: That the Board of Governors approves a Bachelor of Science in respiratory care at Clarion University of Pennsylvania).
- An individual council of trustees is singular (e.g., The Council of Trustees is scheduled to meet tomorrow).
- Always use singular pronoun when referring to the Board of Governors or an individual council of trustees—use “it” and not “they.”

### **Third Person vs. First Person**

- Unless a document is being attributed to a specific person (e.g., a blog or special message), the body copy should be crafted in third person. Do not use: we, our, your, etc.

### **Time, Date, Place**

- Correct order is time, date, place (e.g., The meeting will be held at 9 a.m., January 8, in Conference Room C).
- No zeros when time is on the hour, i.e., 9 a.m.; not 9:00 a.m. (9:30 a.m. is correct).
- a.m. or p.m. (lower case with periods); not am, AM, or A.M.
- Use a hyphen "-" to denote fiscal years (e.g., 2022-23) in all communication, including Board materials and press releases.
- 1990s (no apostrophe before the "s"); '90s (apostrophe goes before the number)

### **Two Words**

- Full time, part time, system wide, campus wide are used as two words (e.g., the staff will work full time; the materials will be distributed system wide). The words would be hyphenated only when used as a compound adjective modifying another word (e.g., full-time student; part-time employee; university-wide message).

### **One Word**

- Healthcare

### **Hyphenation**

- Typically, prefixes are not hyphenated, such as: nonresident, nonprofit, nontuition, nonrepresented, nonexecutive, substandard, proration, intersession, etc. Other words with no hyphen: email, ongoing, and online.

### **State System Mission**

- "The State System of Higher Education shall be part of the Commonwealth's system of higher education. Its purpose shall be to provide high quality education at the lowest possible cost to students. The primary mission of the System is the provision of instruction for undergraduate and graduate students to and beyond the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and in applied fields, including the teaching profession."

## Sample Messaging

- Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) is the state-owned, multi-campus public university system that provides the most affordable four-year universities in our commonwealth.
- We strive to provide a high-quality education that delivers every student the opportunity for success in life, regardless of where they live or their family background.
- PASSHE universities provide undergraduate and graduate degrees, professional certificates, and other workforce development programs in coordination with the private sector to prepare students for good careers. Most graduates earn degrees in high-demand professions that Pennsylvanians rely on, including healthcare, science and technology, business, and education.
- We offer tremendous value to the state's economy, society, and culture, and most of our universities are among the largest employers in their region. The vast majority of our students are from Pennsylvania and our graduates live and work here.
- PASSHE is redesigning itself to ensure the long-term sustainability of all universities so that each may continue to serve students, its region, and the commonwealth.