CUESTA COLLEGE

Brand Style Guide

Table of Contents

1. Guide Introduction 3
2. Cuesta College Logos 5
3. Graphic Elements 8
4. Colors 10
5. Typography 13
6. Department Logos 15
7. Business Collateral 16
8. Brand in Action 17
9. Brand Voice and Tone Guidelines 19
10. Editorial Style Guide 32
11. AI Usage Guidelines 37
12. Digital and Channel Guidelines 38
13. Resources and Templates 41
14. Contact Information 42

1. Guide Introduction

Cuesta College Brand Style Guide

This guide is your go-to resource for maintaining a consistent and professional visual identity across all Cuesta College communications. Inside, you'll find everything from logo usage and color palettes to brand elements and application examples—all designed to help you create cohesive, recognizable materials that reflect the quality and tradition of Cuesta College.

By following these standards, you support a unified brand presence that strengthens our reputation and connects our community. Please share this guide with anyone—staff, faculty, or students—tasked with creating visual content for the college. Your commitment to upholding our brand ensures Cuesta College is represented with clarity, credibility, and pride.

If you have any questions when using this guide please reach out to the Marketing & Communications office for clarification. Files found in this guide can be accessed through our **2025 Brand and Style Assets folder.**

2. Cuesta College Logos

Logo Variations

Cuesta College's primary logo is available in both horizontal and vertical formats, featuring the full-color (FC) emblem with black text. These are the preferred versions and should be used whenever possible to maintain consistency and brand recognition.

Additionally, the logo is available within a circular design, which serves as a strong visual element for specific applications like social media, merchandise, or promotional materials.

To accommodate different backgrounds and design needs, alternate versions include:

- Full-color (FC) with white text for use on dark backgrounds
- One-color (1C) black or one-color (1C) white, for simple designs or where the number of ink colors is an issue

Always use the appropriate version based on context, and refer to the brand guidelines to ensure proper placement, spacing, and contrast.

2.1 Primary Logos

Need Official Cuesta College Logos?

Access our logo files by visiting the **Cuesta College Logos Folder** on Sharepoint. In this folder you will find primary logos showed here and the color variations mentioned on the previous page.

Make sure you're using the correct, approved versions for your materials.

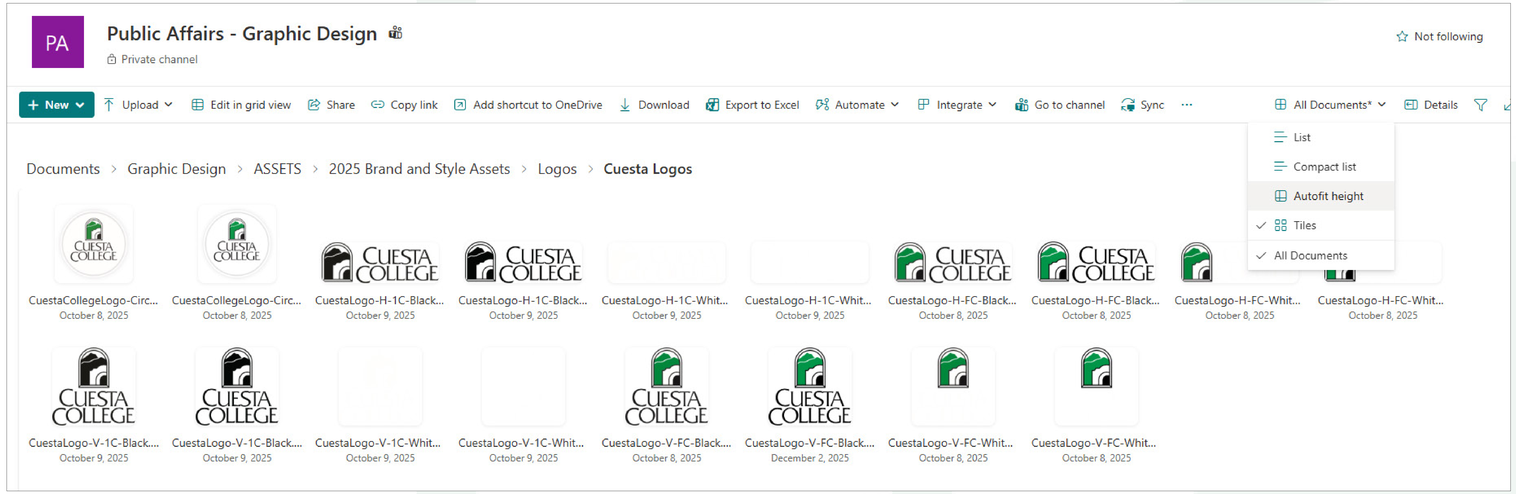






2.2 Viewing Logos on Sharepoint

When viewing the Cuesta College Logos folder, under the All Documents tab, we recommend switching from List view to Tiles view for a cleaner, more visual browsing experience. Tiles view makes it easier to quickly scan, recognize, and locate files, especially when working with shared assets or visual materials. Use the view toggle in the upper-right corner to select Tile View.



2.3 File Types and Their Uses

Understanding file types helps ensure your materials are optimized for quality, accessibility, and the intended platform. Below are common formats that you may come across or will be requested.

PNG

Ideal for digital use, especially when transparency is needed (e.g., logos on colored backgrounds). Maintains high quality with lossless compression, uses the RGB color profile.

PDF

A reliable format for sharing documents that preserves layout and design across platforms, often the preferred file type for print vendor. Preserves formatting across devices and platforms and supports both CMYK and RGB color profiles

JPG (or JPEG)

Best for photographs and web images where smaller file size is important. Uses lossy compression, so some quality may be reduced. JPGs have a white background, uses the RGB color profile.

SVG

A scalable vector format ideal for logos and icons used on the web, uses the RGB color profile. Maintains crisp quality at any size without pixelation.

TIFF

High-resolution format used for professional printing and archiving. Large file size, but excellent image quality and supports both CMYK and RGB color profiles.

EPS

An EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) file is a vector graphics file and supports both CMYK and RGB color profiles. It’s designed for professional printing and graphic design, allowing for lossless scaling and the inclusion of both vector and bitmap data.

3. Graphic Elements

Graphic elements such as icons, shapes, and illustrations help support and unify the visual identity of the brand. When used consistently, they enhance recognition and add visual interest. Always follow the style guide to ensure these elements align with the overall brand look and feel.
Access our Graphic Elements folder here.

Land



Sky/Sea





3.1 Graphic Elements

The Cuesta College watermark and double circle are subtle graphic elements that enhance visual consistency. Use the watermark as a light background to add depth without distraction. The double circle symbolizes unity and can be used to frame or accent content. Apply both thoughtfully to support a clean, cohesive design. Additionally, the cougar paw print can be used to add a bit of fun where appropriate.

Double Circle + Watermark

Cougar Paw Print





4.
Colors

Color is a powerful part of Cuesta College's visual identity. Our primary palette reflects the college's character and tradition and help create a consistent, recognizable look across all materials. The main palette should be used whenever possible to maintain brand strength and unity. Thoughtful use of color supports clarity, professionalism, and connection with our community.

When selecting additional colors, look to our secondary and tertiary colors for direction. Avoid combinations that may be associated with other regional institutions, e.g., green and gold. When in doubt, stay on brand.

Primary

New Cuesta Green

PMS:	3298 C
CMYK:	89/33/80/23
RGB:	0/110/77
Hex:	#026d4d

Cuesta Black

PMS:	Black C
CMYK:	0/0/0/100
RGB:	0/0/0
Hex:	#000000

4.1 Secondary Colors

Secondary colors serve as versatile complements to the core palette, offering flexibility across various design applications. They enhance visual interest, support hierarchy, and allow for dynamic combinations that maintain brand cohesion while adapting to different contexts. Whether used in backgrounds, typography, or illustrations, these hues provide a balanced extension of the primary identity.

Secondary

Bright Cuesta Green
PMS: 354 C
CMYK: 75/6/83/0
RGB: 58/172/98
Hex: #3AAC62

Rich Cuesta Green
PMS: 5545 C
CMYK: 86/27/79/13
RGB: 21/127/88
Hex: #157F58

Deep Cuesta Green
PMS: 554 C
CMYK: 90/40/89/41
RGB: 3/83/51
Hex: #035333

Bright Cuesta Gray
PMS: 441 C
CMYK: 7/1/5/0
RGB: 235/242/238
Hex: #ebf2ee

Rich Cuesta Gray
PMS: 5645 C
CMYK: 28/18/23/0
RGB: 186/191/187
Hex: #babfbb

Deep Cuesta Gray
PMS: 445 C
CMYK: 64/45/54/18
RGB: 94/110/104
Hex: #5e6d67

4.2 Tertiary Colors

Tertiary colors are used sparingly to add subtle emphasis and nuance. These minimal accents help guide attention, highlight key elements, or introduce a touch of contrast without overwhelming the design. Their restrained use ensures clarity and sophistication, reinforcing the overall aesthetic while allowing primary and secondary colors to lead.

Tertiary

Bright Cuesta Teal
PMS: 569 C
CMYK: 86/27/58/8
RGB: 2/133/120
Hex: #028578

Rich Cuesta Teal
PMS: 5473 C
CMYK: 91/48/53/27
RGB: 8/90/96
Hex: #085A60

Deep Cuesta Teal
PMS: 3035 C
CMYK: 97/66/42/28
RGB: 3/72/97
Hex: #034861

5. Typography

Typography is a key element of Cuesta College's visual identity. Consistent use of type helps communicate our message clearly, reinforces our brand personality, and ensures a cohesive look across all materials. Our selected font reflect the college's values, professional, approachable, and student-centered. Use the approved typeface and follow hierarchy guidelines to maintain clarity, accessibility, and visual harmony in every piece you create.

Poppins

Poppins is a clean, modern sans-serif typeface that reflects Cuesta College's commitment to clarity, accessibility, and innovation. With its geometric structure and balanced letterforms, Poppins supports a professional yet approachable tone across all communications. Its versatility and large font family makes it ideal for both digital and print materials, ensuring consistency and readability in everything from headlines to body text.

Find it here: **fonts.google.com/specimen/Poppins**

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

5.1 Alternate Typefaces

While Cuesta College encourages the use of our official typeface to maintain a consistent and recognizable brand identity, we understand that alternate typefaces may occasionally be necessary due to platform limitations or design needs. When using substitutes, choose fonts that closely reflect the tone and structure of our approved styles, clean, modern, and easy to read. Whenever possible, return to the brand standards to ensure visual consistency across all communications.

Example Alternate Typefaces

Barlow Condensed

Find it here: fonts.google.com/specimen/Barlow+Condensed

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u vw x y z

Playfair Display

Find it here: fonts.google.com/specimen/Playfair+Display

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u vw x y z

6. Department Logos

Cuesta College department logos follow a consistent template to support a unified brand identity. The department logo features the college logo and department name. Alternate versions include multiple color options for flexible use. If you don’t see your department in the list, please reach out to the Marketing and Communications Office to have one made. Always use approved files and avoid altering colors, fonts, or layout. Consistent use across departments strengthens our collective voice and reinforces brand recognition.





Access department logos here.

7. Business Collateral

Cuesta College Business Collateral

To maintain a professional and unified presence, Cuesta College provides commonly used business materials such as email signatures, letterheads, PowerPoint presentations, and virtual meeting backgrounds. These tools reflect our identity in both internal and external communications. Additional use cases may arise, and we encourage all employees to consult the Marketing and Communications Office for guidance on applying brand standards across new formats.

Please access our **Business Collateral folder** for templates on:

Email Signatures

Letterheads

PowerPoint Presentation Templates

Virtual Meeting Backgrounds

Please download a copy of any templates to your computer before making any edits. Do not edit the original file.

8.
Brand in Action

Cuesta College's brand comes to life through every interaction, communication, and visual touchpoint, whether it's a flyer on campus, a social media post, a classroom presentation, or a community event. When we apply our brand consistently across materials and platforms, we create a recognizable and trusted identity that reflects our values, mission, and commitment to student success. Every design choice, from typography to tone, plays a role in telling the Cuesta College story with clarity and pride.









8.1 Brand in Action



CUESTA COLLEGE CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Cuesta College Continuing Education Department is dedicated to student success through innovative educational programs and services and is responsive to the unique needs of adult learners in the community.

We prepare students for transition to post-secondary education, the workforce, and promote lifelong learning through noncredit courses.

SUPPORT SERVICES

- **We offer:**
- **FREE Continuing Education courses**
- **FREE Child Care (for students in ESL and GED)**
- **FREE Tutoring**
- **FREE Typing Certificates**
- **Pearson VUE Vouchers for GED students**
- **Noncredit Academic Coaching & Workshops**

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OFFERED

English as a Second Language (ESL) Program

We help students improve their English language skills so that they may achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals as well as participate more effectively in their communities.

GED (High School Equivalency) Program

We offer free GED test preparation classes that provide you the opportunity to learn technology and content that will be on the computer-based test as well as the chance to practice your test taking skills.

Emeritus Program

We offer enrichment courses catered to the older adult community; with an emphasis on new skill acquisition, healthy living strategies, and artistic expression.

Adults with Disabilities Program

This program provides students with intellectual disabilities with the skills they need to transition into more independent living, working environments, and community involvement.

Certified Pearson VUE Testing Center

We are a certified testing center for official GED, CSET, CBEST, and RICA testing.

Noncredit Career Technical Education (NCTE)

Certificate program for technical careers such as hospitality, autobody technology, and welding

Workforce Preparation

We offer noncredit certificates that provide the training and skill attainment you need to get a job, advance in your job, or skills to grow your own business.

Summer High School Program

We collaborate with our local K-12 districts to offer summer courses at our local high schools to help students complete credits and not fall behind on a high school diploma.

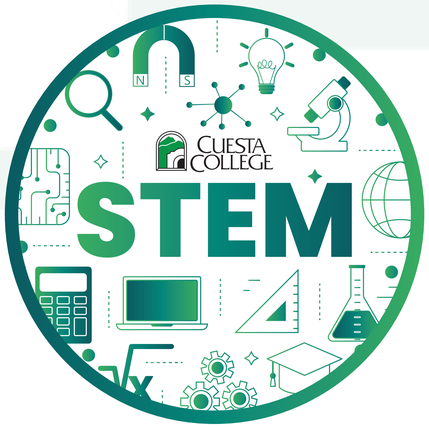
Commercial Driver's License Program

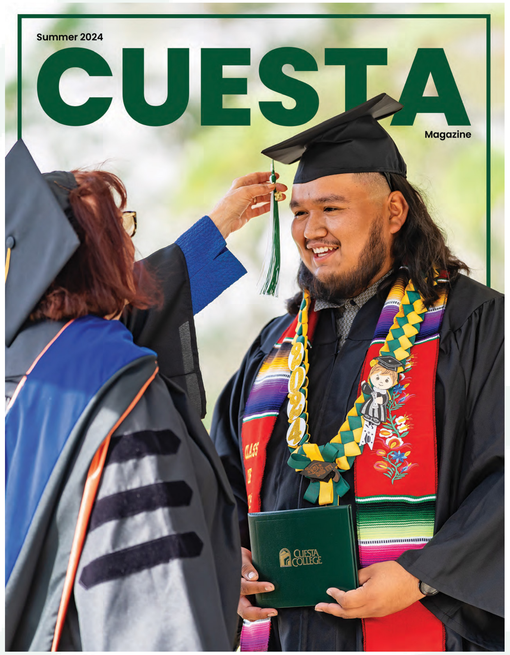
Our tuition-free program prepares students in receiving a California Commercial Learner's Permit and the behind-the-wheel practical test. Once students complete the program, they will be eligible to take the California Commercial Driver's License exam.

ASE Testing Center

We are a certified testing center for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certifications.

For more information visit bit.ly/ccontinuingeducation or scan the code above. Contact us at ContinuingEd@cuesta.edu.







9.
Brand Voice and Tone Guidelines

Cuesta College transforms a diverse community of learners with education and empowerment to become responsible stewards and leaders. Our vision is to advance social equity by maximizing the human potential of all students through innovative educational programs and services. To bring this mission and vision to life and provide a supportive environment for students, it's essential that our entire campus community communicates with consistency, clarity, and purpose.

Introduction

A unified voice and visual identity not only strengthens our reputation but also creates trust and recognition among our students, faculty, staff, and community partners. This guide provides:

- **Brand Voice and Tone:** How to write clearly, inclusively, and in a way that reflects Cuesta College
- **Editorial Style Guide:** Practical rules, common exceptions to AP style, and Cuesta College-specific preferences
- **Digital and Channel Guidelines:** Writing for web, social media, and online audiences
- **Resources and Templates:** Examples and tools for consistent communication

By following these guidelines, you help us establish a unified brand presence that connects our community and carries Cuesta College's reputation forward with clarity, credibility, and pride.

9.1
At a Glance

At a Glance

Use Everyday Language: Keep it accessible to students, parents, and community members. Avoid jargon when possible.

Use Active Voice: Write about people doing things rather than things being done.

Know Your Audience: Adjust tone based on who you're addressing, but maintain a consistent voice.

Be Inclusive: Use human-first language that highlights strengths and opportunities.

Make It Personal: Use "you" and "your" to connect with readers when appropriate.

Keep It Brief: Highlight key points first and respect the reader's time.

Focus on the Present and Future: Show what Cuesta College is doing now and how it impacts students.

Show the Benefit: Connect messaging to reader goals and outcomes.

Prove It: Support messages with statistics, student stories, and real results.

Connect to the Central Coast: Emphasize local impact, workforce development, and service to California.

9.2
At a Glance

What We Are Always

- Welcoming and supportive
- Clear, concise, and approachable
- Student-centered and inclusive
- Inspiring and aspirational
- Community-minded

What We Are Never

- Bureaucratic or jargon-heavy
- Condescending or exclusive
- Overly casual or flippant
- Deficit-focused

9.3 Brand Tone and Voice

Cuesta College's voice reflects who we are: a welcoming, people-first environment that empowers students to imagine and achieve their future, whatever path they choose.

Our Voice

Student-Centered and Approachable: Professional and knowledgeable, but always in a way that's warm, friendly, and respectful. We balance credibility with kindness, inviting people in and making them feel like they belong.

Forward-Thinking and Optimistic: Focused on opportunity, innovation, and progress. We share success stories and highlight the real-life impact of a Cuesta College education.

Confident and Empowering: Clear and direct, always using an active voice. Our language is bold and inspiring, motivating students and our community to take action.

9.4 Voice in Action

Educational yet Approachable Example:

Before (Bureaucratic):

"Students must submit all required documentation to the Office of Financial Aid prior to the published deadline in order to be considered for aid eligibility determination."

After (Cuesta College Voice):

"Need help paying for college? Submit your documents to Financial Aid by [date] to see what support is available for you."

Forward-Thinking and Optimistic Example 1:

Example One:

Before (Deficit-focused):

"This program serves at-risk students who lack basic academic skills."

After (Asset-focused):

"This program supports students building foundational skills for college and career success."

9.5 Voice in Action

Forward-Thinking and Optimistic Example 2:

Example Two:

Before (Wordy):

"By connecting donors with ways to support Cuesta College students, we are able to fulfill our promise to educate our community's future business leaders, health care workers, teachers, engineers, scientists and first responders."

After (Clear and Inspiring):

"With donor support, we're educating the next generation of healthcare workers, skilled tradespeople, innovators, and leaders who will shape the future of our community."

Confident and Empowering Example:

Before (Institutional):

"The college offers Associate Degrees for Transfer in multiple disciplines."

After (Student-centered):

"Earn your associate degree and transfer to a four-year university with our AA-T and AS-T programs."

9.6 Audience and Tone

No matter the audience, the Cuesta College voice remains consistent. What shifts is the tone — it can be adapted based on context, who we're speaking to, and the needs or interests of that audience

Audience	Tone Guidance	Example
Prospective Students	Welcoming, motivating, informative. Speak to possibilities and provide clear next steps.	"Discover programs that match your interests and start your journey toward a rewarding career."
Current Students	Clear and encouraging. Focus on actionable details: what, when, where, how.	"Register for spring classes by Dec. 15 to secure your spot in popular courses."
Faculty and Staff	Professional yet approachable. Emphasize shared purpose and collaboration.	"Join us for the faculty meeting to collaborate on new student success initiatives."

9.7 Audience and Tone

Audience	Tone Guidance	Example
Donors	Aspirational, impact-driven. Use storytelling to show real-life results of their support.	“Your scholarship dollars helped Maria complete her nursing degree and land her dream job at a local hospital.”
Community and Business Partners	Collaborative, future-focused. Show how Cuesta College contributes to regional success.	“Partner with Cuesta College to train the skilled workforce our Central Coast community needs.”
Alumni	Warm and proud. Celebrate achievements and invite continued connection.	“Your Cuesta College education opened doors — now help us create those same opportunities for the next generation of students.”

9.8 Audience and Tone

Audience	Tone Guidance	Example
Legislators and Policymakers	Focused on impact, outcomes, and return on investment.	“Cuesta College graduates fill critical roles in healthcare, education, and skilled trades throughout the region.”
Vendors/Partners	Professional, collaborative. Focus on expectations and timelines.	“Please submit materials by the agreed deadline to ensure timely project completion. Thank you for your partnership!”

9.9 Channel Specific Tone Guidance

Tone is also influenced by the type of message we're delivering and the channel we use to share it. Some examples may include:

Channel	Tone Guidance
Social Media	More conversational, with shorter sentences. Tailor by platform, such as more casual on Instagram versus informative on LinkedIn. Emojis may be appropriate for student-facing posts.
Website	Concise and action-oriented. Use simple language that quickly guides the viewer to next steps. Keep information organized with headers, bullets, and quick links.
Press/Media Releases	Professional and factual, always leading with news value.

9.10 Channel Specific Tone Guidance

Channel	Tone Guidance
Newsletter Articles	Informative and engaging. Use a warm, inclusive tone and incorporate student stories when possible.
Donor Outreach/Events	Aspirational and impact-driven, often longer form. Use storytelling to highlight student success made possible by donor support.

9.11 Person-First Language

Use inclusive, respectful language that puts the person before their circumstance. This helps to highlight their strengths rather than deficits.

Language Guidelines

Use person-first phrasing:

- Students experiencing food insecurity (not “food-insecure students”)
- Students with disabilities (not “disabled students”)
- Students facing barriers (not “at-risk students”)
- Students experiencing homelessness (not “homeless students”)

Example in context:

“We support students experiencing food insecurity by providing access to nutritious meals and resources that help them succeed.”

Additional guidelines:

- Avoid labels that define people by a single characteristic
- Highlight strengths and potential, not deficits
- Use asset-based language that focuses on what students bring to the college
- Respect individual preferences when known

10. Editorial Style Guide

We follow the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook as our primary reference, with the following Cuesta College-specific guidelines and exceptions. When in doubt, reference this guide first, then defer to AP Style.

General Principles

- In most cases, refer to the institution as Cuesta College (not just “Cuesta”). “Cuesta” alone may be used as part of official program names, e.g. The Cuesta Promise.
- Use plain, student-centered language
- Prioritize inclusivity and accessibility
- Use active voice whenever possible
- Follow the serial (Oxford) comma rule (departure from AP style)

10.1 Editorial Style Guide

A-Z Style Reference

A

abbreviations/acronyms

Generally avoid unnecessary use of acronyms or abbreviations, and avoid creating new acronyms unnecessarily. When necessary, spell out the first reference followed by the acronym in parentheses; the acronym may be used for subsequent references only if widely understood. Example:

- Career Technical Education (CTE) can be used when communicating with subject matter experts, or workforce development practitioners.

academic degrees

Use lowercase for general references: associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree. Capitalize specific degree names: Bachelor of Arts, Master of Science. Use apostrophes in bachelor's and master's but not in associate degree or doctoral degree. People earn degrees; they don't receive or obtain them. Examples:

- She earned a bachelor's degree in history
- He holds a Master of Business Administration
- The associate degree program starts in fall
- Maria Lopez earned her Bachelor of Arts in English

Abbreviations: Use periods in all degree abbreviations: A.A., A.S., B.A., B.S., M.A., M.S., Ph.D. Use abbreviations only after full names, set off by commas: "Maria Lopez, B.A., will speak at graduation." Avoid abbreviations in general text unless listing many individuals would be cumbersome.

Transfer degrees: Use AA-T and AS-T (no periods) for Associate Degrees for Transfer, as these are specific program designations rather than traditional degree abbreviations.

Alumni listings: For degree information in alumni contexts, use: Maria Lopez (Business, '21). List only the last two digits of graduation year with an opening single quotation mark.

academic departments

Use lowercase except for words that are proper nouns or adjectives. Capitalize "department" when it's part of the official name. Examples:

- The department of history, the history department
- The department of English, the English department
- She works in the Mathematics Department (official name)
- The department is hiring new faculty (generic reference)

addresses

Use abbreviations, such as Ave., Blvd., and St. only with a numbered address: "1600 Cedar St." Spell out these words when used without a number: "Ocean Park Boulevard." These three terms are the ONLY ones that can be abbreviated. Related terms such as "alley," "drive," "road," and "terrace" must always be spelled out. Always use and capitalize First through Ninth when referring to a street name: "Third Street."

advisor/adviser

Use "advisor" (departure from AP style)

10.2 Editorial Style Guide

A-Z Style Reference

alumni

Alumni (plural), alumna (female singular), alumnus (male singular). Alum can be used as a singular gender-neutral term. Do not use “alums.” For listing degree information: Maria Lopez (Business, ‘21). List only the last two digits of graduation year with an opening single quotation mark.

ampersand (&)

Avoid in text unless part of an official company name (PG&E). Use “and” in program, department, college, and building names.

B

buildings/room numbers

Capitalize proper building names.
Use “Room” with numbers. Examples:

- Room 2609 in Dr. Frank R. Martinez Building
- Acceptable to use Martinez Building for subsequent references

C

California Community Colleges

Capitalize when referring to the overall system: The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation. Lowercase when referring to individual colleges or campuses: California community colleges or California’s community colleges.

campuses and centers

Use proper names when referring to official campuses and centers: San Luis Obispo Campus, North County Campus, and South County Center.

canceled/canceling/cancellation

Use one “l” in canceled and canceling. Retain the double “l” in cancellation.

capitalization

Capitalize formal titles when they precede a name; lowercase elsewhere. Examples:

- Superintendent/President Dr. Jill Stearns
- Dr. Jill Stearns, superintendent/president of Cuesta College
- Do not capitalize “university,” “college,” or “department” when they stand alone

commas

Use the serial (Oxford) comma in series: red, white, and blue. Use commas to separate elements in dates when month, day, and year are included. Examples:

- Feb. 14, 2025, was the deadline
- No comma with month and year only: January 2025

course names/codes

Capitalize course names. Use course codes as formatted in the catalog. Examples:

- Academic Reading and Writing, ENGL C1000
- Introduction to Psychology, PSYC C1000

Cuesta College name

Always use “Cuesta College” in formal references. Add “in San Luis Obispo” if needed for clarification. Exception: “Cuesta” alone may be used when part

10.3 Editorial Style Guide

A-Z Style Reference

of official program names. Examples:

- The Cuesta Promise
- Cuesta College offers many programs

D

dates/times

Dates: Use Arabic figures without st, nd, rd, or th. When a month is used with a specific date, abbreviate these months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. Always spell out March, April, May, June, July. Examples:

- Feb. 4, 2025
- Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025
- The class will begin Feb. 4, 2025
- Spell out months when using alone or with year only: September is typically the hottest month
- Exceptions may be made for collateral such as invitations and programs, where "August 6, 2026" is acceptable. If the day of the week is included, abbreviate the month: "Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026."

Times: Use figures except for "noon" and "midnight." Use lowercase a.m. and p.m. with periods. Use hyphens (no spaces) for time ranges. Examples:

- 10-11 a.m.
- 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- The meeting runs from 2-4 p.m.
- Classes start at 8 a.m., noon, and 6 p.m.

departments/divisions

Capitalize the proper names of each department and division (e.g. Earth, Engineering, and Physical Sciences).

Dr./doctor

Use "Dr." on first reference for individuals who hold doctoral degrees when relevant to their role or expertise. Use last name only on subsequent references. Example:

- Dr. Jill Stearns announced the new initiative. Stearns said the program will launch in fall.

E

email

Always use lowercase. Use the following format: name@cuesta.edu

emerita, emeritus, emeriti

"Emerita" refers to a woman, "emeritus" refers to a man, "emeriti" refers to a mixed group or to a group of either sex.

F

fiscal year

Use "FY" with the ending year. Our fiscal year ends June 30. Examples:

- FY26 ends June 30, 2026
- The FY25 budget was approved in May

fundraising/fundraiser

One word in all cases. Examples:

- The fundraising event raised $50,000
- She is an experienced fundraiser

10.4 Editorial Style Guide

A-Z Style Reference

G

GPA

Use one decimal place for grade point averages. Examples:

- 3.5 GPA (not 3.50)
- She maintained a 3.8 GPA

L

lists

Use parallel structure and consistent punctuation. For bulleted lists, capitalize the first word and use periods if items are complete sentences. No periods for phrase fragments. Examples:

Students can:

- Register for classes online
- Meet with counselors
- Apply for financial aid

N

noncredit

One word in all instances.

numbers

Spell out whole numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above. Spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence. Use figures for ages and percentages even when less than 10. Examples:

- He is 6 years old
- Only 6% of students took the survey
- Academic years: 2024-25 (use hyphen with no spaces and only the last two digits of ending year)

P

percent/percentage

Use the % sign when paired with a numeral: 3.1%, 4.75%. Use figures: 1%, 4 percentage points. For amounts less than 1%, precede decimal with zero: 0.6%.

person-first language

Reference the Person-First Language section above. Use person-first phrasing that highlights strengths rather than deficits.

programs/initiatives

Capitalize official program names; lowercase generic references. Capitalize “program” when it’s part of the official name. Examples:

- Cougar Career Closet
- Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement (MESA) Program
- The scholarship program
- She enrolled in the Cuesta College Nursing Program (official name)
- The college offers many programs (generic reference)

Q

quotation marks

The period and comma always go within quotation marks. Use single quotation marks in headlines.

10.5 Editorial Style Guide

A-Z Style Reference

R

race/ethnicity

Capitalize: Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Native American. Follow personal preference when known. Avoid outdated terms. Only use descriptions of race or ethnicity when pertinent to the story.

S

scholarships

Capitalize official scholarship names; lowercase generic references. Examples:

- Presidential Scholarship, The Cuesta Promise
- The scholarship recipient

slashes

Do not use spaces around slashes when used for alternatives, compound titles, abbreviations, or pronouns: and/or, he/she, superintendent/president, advisor/adviser, he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/them/theirs. Examples:

- Students can choose credit/noncredit options
- The fall/spring schedule is available online
- Include your pronouns in your email signature: Maria Lopez (she/her/hers)

state names

Spell out all state names when used in text, whether standing alone or with a city.

T

telephone numbers

Format: (805) 546-XXXX (no periods in the entire number; no dashes connecting the area code)

times

Include periods in a.m. and p.m.

Do not include :00 when referencing a time on the hour (e.g. 3 p.m. NOT 3:00 p.m.)

For ranges in time, include a dash (e.g. 2-3 p.m.)

References to 12 p.m. and 12 a.m. should be written as noon or midnight

titles

Capitalize formal titles when they precede a name; lowercase when they follow. Examples:

- Superintendent/President Dr. Jill Stearns
- Dr. Jill Stearns, superintendent/president

W

web/digital terms

Lowercase: website, email, online, internet. For URLs, omit “http://www” unless necessary. Example:

- cuesta.edu

11.
AI Usage Guidelines

Generative AI can be useful for brainstorming and drafting, but requires human oversight:

- **Include voice and audience in prompts:** Specify the Cuesta College voice and intended audience
- **Always review and edit:** Never copy and paste AI text directly
- **Watch for common AI issues:** Overuse of em dashes, wordiness, repetitive phrasing
- **Protect confidentiality:** Never share confidential Cuesta College data in AI tools
- **Maintain human connection:** Ensure final content feels authentic and personal

12. Digital and Channel Guidelines

Writing for the Web

Website content should follow brand voice and editorial style while being optimized for online reading, which is quick and concise.

- **Be scannable:** Use headers, bullet points, and short paragraphs
- **Practice brevity:** Cut necessary words
- **Front-load information:** Put the most important details first, anticipate and answer readers' questions quickly
- **Include clear calls to action:** Tell readers what to do next
- **Use descriptive link text:** Avoid "click here" or "read more"
- **Utilize stylized components:** Announcement boxes, accordions, and tables can help organize large amounts of information in a clean format
- **Keep accessibility in mind:** Use alt text for images, proper heading structure

12.1 Digital and Channel Guidelines

Social Media Guidelines

- **Match platform tone:** More casual on Instagram, professional on LinkedIn
- **Keep it concise:** Especially on Twitter/X or Threads
- **Use hashtags strategically:** Research popular and relevant tags
- **Emojis:** Acceptable for student-facing content, avoid in formal posts
- **Student privacy:** Always get permission before featuring students

12.2 Digital and Channel Guidelines

Email and Business Communications

Cuesta College emails and other business communications should reflect a consistent, professional, and approachable voice. Do not use emojis in internal or external college emails, campus announcements, or official correspondence. This includes subject lines and message content, when communicating with students, employees, or external audiences.

Create a warm, welcoming tone through thoughtful word choice and clear, conversational language. Use standard punctuation and bullet points to organize information and emphasize key details.

13. Resources and Templates

Boilerplates

A boilerplate is a standardized “about us” statement that describes who we are. It is available for campus use in press releases or other communications to the media.

Short: [94 words]

Cuesta College empowers students to imagine and achieve brighter futures through high-quality education, personalized support, and a welcoming community. With a main campus in San Luis Obispo, a North County Campus in Paso Robles, a South County Center in Arroyo Grande, and a variety of online offerings, we offer opportunities that inspire growth, spark innovation, and open doors, helping every student succeed on their unique path. Learn more at cuesta.edu.

Medium: [146 words]

Cuesta College helps students turn potential into opportunity and shape brighter futures. Located in the heart of San Luis Obispo County, we are a welcoming community that empowers students to achieve their goals through high-quality education, personalized support, and dedicated faculty and staff. With a main campus in San Luis Obispo, a North County Campus in Paso Robles, a South County Center in Arroyo Grande, and a variety of online offerings, we provide innovative programs, hands-on learning, and clear pathways to transfer or career success. At Cuesta College, students are encouraged to explore their interests, envision new possibilities, and build a future that is uniquely theirs. We are committed to helping every student thrive, wherever their journey leads. Learn more at cuesta.edu.

Long: [190 words]

Cuesta College is a proud California community college where students can turn their potential into opportunity and shape brighter futures for themselves and their families. Located in beautiful San Luis Obispo County, Cuesta College is committed to delivering high-quality education -- our dedicated faculty and staff empower students through hands-on experiences, transfer opportunities, and career-focused pathways. With a main campus in San Luis Obispo, a North County Campus in Paso Robles, a South County Center in Arroyo Grande, and a variety of online offerings, we offer access to exceptional instruction, innovative programs, and personalized support tailored to the needs of today’s learners. Whether preparing for university, advancing in a career, or exploring a new passion, students will find a welcoming environment and strong sense of belonging at Cuesta College. We believe education transforms lives and strengthens communities. At Cuesta College, we don’t just help students reach their goals, we help them realize their full potential. To learn more, visit cuesta.edu.

14. Contact Information

Marketing and Communications

For questions about this style guide or assistance with communications, contact Marketing and Communications at marketing@cuesta.edu.

This guide is a living document that will be updated as needed to reflect evolving best practices and institutional needs.