Simplified Course Description Style Guide

The purpose of this brief guide is to help you update your course descriptions so that the language of RHC course descriptions, including grammar, punctuation, and syntax, is standard. It will be updated as needed. If you have any questions or concerns, contact a Curriculum Committee member.

• **Tense.** All course descriptions should be in the present tense, not the future tense. So, *In this course, students learn …,* not *In this course, students will learn …*

• **The people taking the course.** Refer to *students* in all descriptions—not *individuals,* not *the student. This course is designed for students …,* not *This course is designed for the individual ...*

• **Commas and semicolons.** Use an Oxford comma in all series (e.g., *planes, trains, and automobiles,* not *planes, trains and automobiles*). In series where commas are utilized for more than series items themselves (i.e., series within series), use a semicolon to separate main ideas (e.g., *This course is an introduction to lions, tigers, and bears; Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, and the Scarecrow; and the natural and built environments of Oz).*

• **Capitalization.** Names of divisions, departments, programs, certificates, and degrees should be capitalized (as should the words *division, department, program, certificate, and degree* when associated with a proper name, e.g., *Orthopedic Technician Program*). Names of majors or subject areas should never by capitalized, with the exception of already-capitalized words (e.g., *Spanish, English*). So *Department of Physics, Associate of Science in Physics, but* a physics major. And *Wildland Fire Academy* but *wildland fire training.*

• **Abbreviations/acronyms.** In abbreviations, use periods only if the abbreviation is not an acronym. So, *U.S.A.,* not *USA,* but *NASA,* not *N.A.S.A.*

• **Degree formats.** The exception to the previous rule is with degree abbreviations (i.e., AS, AA, AS-T, AA-T), but in general, you should spell these out in descriptions: Associate in Science in Mathematics for Transfer; Associate of Arts in Anthropology. Generally, *there is no need to write* degree *if the major subject is included,* but if it is included make certain to capitalize the word, and that it is appended to the end of the degree name, e.g., *Associate of Science in Biology Degree, Associate in Arts in Photography for Transfer Degree.*

• **More on degree formats.** For further information about degree formats, see especially page 31 of https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Files/reports/cccco-report-program-course-approval-web-102819-a11y.pdf. According to official CCCCO standards, the names of different degrees require the use of different prepositions (e.g., *of* and *in*), so for example Associate *of* Arts (AA) and Associate *of* Science (AS), but Associate *in* Arts for Transfer (AA-T) and Associate *in* Science for Transfer (AS-T).

• **Numbers.** Except for *one* (or in cases where the number is the first word in a sentence), use numerals for all numbers regardless of magnitude. So, *one of the following,* not *1 of the following;* but *5 weeks,* not *five weeks.*