

NUA STRATEGY & POLICY COVER SHEET

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COMMUNICATION POLICY

Approved

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy is designed to help the University promote accountability and good communication practice by University staff and students. The Policy is consistent with the University's Information Strategy 2005-10, which includes (section 3.3) the following aim:

Clarify responsibility and accountability, regarding information, of all participants in the business of the University (staff and students)

- 1.2 The University has a commitment to ensuring that students receive clear and effective communication about all aspects of their study at University, including course organisation and management and the resources to support this, and the Policy supports this commitment.
- 1.3 The University commissioned in 2006 its external communication consultants to develop a Crisis Communications Manual for the University and this Policy sits alongside the Manual in providing a reference point for accountability for University communications. Where the Crisis Communications Manual is centred on external communications, this Policy is centred on University internal communications.
- 1.4 In addition to the Information Strategy, the Policy makes reference to existing University documents that articulate with communication procedures, including:

Staff Handbook on QME
Student Regulations & Procedures
IT Security Policy
IT Acceptable Use Policy
Data Protection Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy
Disability Equality Policy
Race Equality Policy
Gender Equality Policy

2. General Principles

- 2.1 The Information Strategy (section 4) identifies good practice principles of relevance to communications. In particular, the University seeks to ensure that:
- i. information created, used and disseminated is accurate, relevant, timely, secure and legal;
 - ii. the validity of information is monitored and invalid documents deleted;
 - iii. information gets to those who need it at the right time, in the right format, and in the most effective medium.
- 2.2 The University will want to manage communication in order to:

- i. provide functional information to ensure that staff and students can fulfil their institutional roles;
- ii. convey policy decisions so that staff and students are informed about institutional objectives;
- iii. explain the purpose of decisions and policies so that staff and students understand the reasons for institutional actions;
- iv. outline progress on long-term projects
- v. explain and manage change;
- vi. convey news.

In seeking to support these principles, this Policy goes on to address responsibility and accountability in specific areas of communication.

- 2.3 Staff and students will want to participate in communication processes in order to:
- i. alert managers to emerging issues and questions;
 - ii. ensure timely feedback as part of the various quality enhancement procedures operated by the University;
 - iii. contribute to ensuring that efficient business processes are maintained in the University.

3. Document Production and Dissemination

3.1 General Principles

This section refers to both paper and electronic documents.

Those responsible for producing documents and disseminating documents are required to:

- i. ensure that documents are accurate and relevant;
- ii. ensure that documents adhere to University's Equality and Diversity Policy
- iii. manage version control and ensure that previous versions of documents are destroyed;
- iv. provide electronic copies for posting on the intranet (see Intranet section below);
- v. adhere to the University's typographic guidelines as published.
[<http://net.University.ac.uk/records-management/documents/typography.pdf>]

3.2 Strategies and Policies

3.2.1 All strategy and policy documents require ratification by Academic Board in order to be operative, and no changes to these documents may be made without further consideration and agreement by Academic Board.

3.2.2 Those responsible for individual strategies and policies are required to:

- i. ensure that any strategy or policy document is received by Academic Board for consideration, using appropriate channels;

- ii. carry out any revisions required by Academic Board on a strategy or policy document;
- iii. provide the final version of the strategy or policy document to the PA to the Vice-Chancellor;
- iv. ensure that any revisions to current strategy and policy documents are submitted to Academic Board

3.2.3 The PA to the Vice-Chancellor will:

- i. maintain latest strategy and policy documents in electronic format;
- ii. send Academic Board ratified versions of documents to the Webmaster for posting on the intranet (see Intranet section below);
- iii. disseminate details of current strategies.

3.3 Agendas and Minutes

3.3.1 All committee agendas and minutes should comply with the University's house-style.

3.3.2 The Committee Secretary is responsible for drafting the agenda and subsequent minutes of the meeting for approval by the Chair of the committee.

The Committee Secretary and Chair are required to:

- i. ensure the agenda and minutes correspond to the style adopted by the University in their entirety;
- ii. include on the agenda all standard items as identified by the University as requiring inclusion on all agendas;
- iii. circulate agendas (with all supporting papers) to committee members at least one week before the date of the meeting;
- iv. draft minutes within 2 weeks of the meeting for the Chair's approval and circulate to committee members marked as UNCONFIRMED in the top left-hand corner;
- v. place a copy of the unconfirmed minutes on the intranet and a hard copy filed in the 'minute book' in the convening secretary's office;
- vi. in time for the next committee meeting, remove 'Unconfirmed' from the minutes for approval and signing and to update the copy on the intranet and in the minute book;
- vii. ensure all agendas, minutes and supporting documentation are appropriately numbered, dated and filed.

4. Intranet

- 4.1 The intranet is the key repository for published information in the University for both staff and students. Those responsible for generating and authorised to disseminate information to staff and students are required to:
- i. ensure all current information is available for posting on the intranet by sending that information in electronic format at point of production to the University's Webmaster;
 - ii. monitor information under their control on the intranet to ensure that outdated information is replaced with updated information as soon as it is available;
 - iii. ensure that only Academic Board approved versions of documents are in circulation on the intranet.
- 4.2 The University's Webmaster is part of the IT Services team and will
- i. arrange for updated information received from line managers and other information providers to be uploaded to the intranet in appropriate format;
 - ii. provide, in consultation with users, efficient navigation for information retrieval on the intranet.

5. Email

- 5.1 All staff and students are provided with an individual University email account, and this email account is required to be used whenever University business is engaged in by email communication.
- 5.2 University email accounts should be checked regularly and responses to email communication given promptly where required, and normally within 3 working days of receipt, to ensure University business operations are supported by efficient communication.
- 5.3 Email users should refer to appendix 3 of the IT Security Policy for guidance about managing their use of email communication.
[<http://net.University.ac.uk/pages/policydocs/it-security-policy-2005.pdf>]
- 5.4 Email users are required to comply with published email guidance, under the terms of the IT Acceptable Use Policy (item 4.14)
[http://net.University.ac.uk/pdfs/it_accept_use.pdf]
- 5.5 Use of University email accounts should be restricted to communication of University business only.
- 5.6 Use of the 'all staff' or 'all students' email address should only be used where University business definitely requires this. Users are expected to consider the target group of their communication and refrain for using general distribution to all where a more restricted group is appropriate.

6. Quality Management and Enhancement

Staff should ensure that they are familiar with the communication responsibilities and requirements found within the Staff Handbook on Quality Management and Enhancement, including for committee members and feedback to students and external examiners and advisors.

The QME Handbook can be found on the QME intranet pages.

7. Communication with Students

- 7.1 Staff should ensure that they are familiar with the Student Charter and the obligation to communicate to students accurate and timely information on different aspects of provision.
- 7.2 Staff should ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the Staff Handbook on Quality Management and Enhancement as it relates to communication with students.
- 7.3 Staff should ensure they are familiar with the requirements of the Student Regulations and Procedures as it relates to communication with students.

8. Use of Telephones

- 8.1 In accordance with the Staff Handbook on Employment, staff should not make private telephone calls at the University's expense. Work telephones should only be used for private calls in the case of an emergency. (SHE para 1.18) [<http://net.nua.ac.uk/hr/documents/staff-handbook-employment.pdf>]
- 8.2 Staff should check their voicemail box for messages daily, respond promptly and normally within 3 working days to inquiries, and ensure that old messages are deleted as appropriate. (SHE para 1.18)
- 8.3 Mobile 'phones should not be used in the workplace where they may cause inconvenience to others. (SHE para 1.18)

9. Disclosure and Use of Data Issues

- 9.1 All staff should ensure that they are familiar with the requirements to hold data securely and not to disclosure data to any authorised third party. Further details and guidance are to be found in Student Regulations & Procedures (section 10) and the Data Protection Policy. [http://net.nua.ac.uk/qa/documents/stu_reggs_procs_0607.pdf] [<http://net.nua.ac.uk/dataprotection/documents/dataprotection-policy.pdf>]
- 9.2 All staff should also ensure they are familiar with the requirement to communicate responses to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act, by referring to the staff guidance document on the FOIA. In

particular, staff are required to respond to requests within the statutory 20 working days.

[<http://net.nua.ac.uk/foi/pdfs/foia-nua-staff-guide.pdf>]

- 9.3 Any question on how to communicate in response to either of the two paragraphs above should be referred to staff to their line manager immediately the issue arises.

10. Training Issues

- 10.1 Staff, particularly new managers, should be briefed by their line manager on internal communication issues at induction, and a hard copy of this Policy provided to them for reference.
- 10.2 All new students receive an induction programme to the University, and communication issues addressed in the Policy should be raised as a part of that programme by both academic staff and support staff.

11. Equality and Diversity

- 11.1 The University is committed to ensuring a learning and work environment that celebrates diversity and eliminates discrimination. Responsibilities on staff and students include the obligation on all those involved in communication processes to develop this aim of the University by ensuring in all forms of communication adhere to principles contained in the Equality and Diversity Policy, Disability Equality Policy, the Race Equality Policy and the Gender Equality Policy.
[http://net.nua.ac.uk/pdfs/equal_opps_policy.pdf]
[http://net.nua.ac.uk/pages/policydocs/dep_100706.pdf]
[http://net.nua.ac.uk/race_equal/documents/Race-Equality-Policy-02004.pdf]
- 11.2 Alternative forms of communication may be required to be considered and acted on in order to ensure equal access to information for any user with inability to use a particular communication process.
- 11.3 The equal opportunities aspects of this Policy will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Committee.

12. Policy Monitoring

This Policy is maintained by the Director of Information and Resources and will be monitored, in conjunction with and as an appendix to the Information Strategy, by the Resources and Estates Committee.