



COMMUNICATION POLICY	
Document name	Communication Policy
Co-ordinating Exec Manager/ Document owner	Executive Manager responsible for Communications
Operational manager/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Manager responsible for Communications • Manager responsible for Communication
Contact & tel. no. for support	Mr. Alan Khan, extension 2106 Ms. Noxolo Memela, extension 2845
Status	Submitted to EMC
Approved by	DUT Council
Last date approved:	23 June 2019
Manager responsible for policy review	Senior Manager responsible for Communications
Manager responsible for monitoring policy implementation	Senior Manager responsible for Communications
Date for next review	30 June 2022
Related policies	DUT Social Media Policy (2018)

COMMUNICATION POLICY

I. PREAMBLE

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) plays a critical role in contributing to the economic, social and political fabric of society in the region especially in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

This is premised on the fact that DUT provides a diverse suite of offerings across several faculties that range from undergraduate qualifications to those at the doctoral level.

DUT is mindful that as part of its communication obligation, there is a need to always generate content and present it in appropriate forms to its diverse audiences. The range of audiences makes it imperative that DUT develops appropriate approaches to sharing of information and to gauge feedback through various communication platforms.

The Communication Policy is a framework for all communications within all operations. It establishes DUT's views on the purpose and importance of communication, responsibilities and roles in the communication process, target groups and channels. The policy also establishes the principles and rules of engagement for communication within the DUT community and with DUT's stakeholders.

This policy is underpinned by Section 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, which outlines the freedom of expression; (a) freedom of the press and other media, (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas, (c) freedom of artistic creativity and (d) academic freedom and freedom of scientific research. The rights prescribed in Section 16, however, do not extend to – propaganda for war; incitement of imminent violence; or advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

2. ACRONYMS

2.1 DUT	Durban University of Technology
2.2 CCMT	Crisis Communication Management Team
2.3 EMC	Executive Management Committee

3. DEFINITIONS

The following words / terms are used in this policy in the context outlined below:

- 3.1 “university” means Durban University of Technology;
- 3.2 “university community” includes DUT staff and students;
- 3.3 “university staff” means academic, administrative and support staff;
- 3.4 “students” mean the students registered at DUT;
- 3.5 “faculty” means the staff within the different faculties at DUT;
- 3.6 “crisis communication” means communication resorted to during a crisis;

3.7 “stakeholders” include staff, students, alumni, parents, donors, funders, University entities, associate organisations, service providers, government, business and the public;

3.8 “media” include mainstream print, radio and television media as well as any other form of media that conveys a message to the public; and

3.9 “electronic media” means media that use electronic devices in order for the audience to access content.

4. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

The policy is developed against the aforementioned backdrop as part of DUT’s commitment to provide all stakeholders with timely, accurate, objective and complete information. The policy seeks to enable a smooth flow of information, create feedback mechanisms and provide a framework in which communication is managed.

This policy statement articulates DUT’s commitment to appropriate and effective communication to and from all stakeholders, both internally and externally. It provides a structural framework for planning and delivery, and it also outlines the roles and responsibilities of everyone working with information and communications within DUT.

5. POLICY PRINCIPLES

5.1 This policy is underpinned by Section 14 (Privacy) and Section 16 (Freedom of Expression) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996.

5.2 This policy subscribes to the prescripts of the Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 2 of 2000, as defined in the DUT Promotion of Access to Information Manual (2017);

5.3 In communicating the goals of DUT, the principles of respect for racial, religious and cultural diversity, transparency, equity and fairness with all stakeholders (including staff, students, alumni, parents, funders, sponsors, media, service providers) are of paramount importance;

5.4 All communication must be devoid of obscene, offensive and discriminatory remarks, ethnic slurs, sexist innuendoes and slang.

5.5 Inappropriate content through various communications and/or information-sharing platforms that is deemed to likely compromise the best interests of DUT will not be permitted by DUT;

5.6 DUT undertakes to transmit clear, uniform and easily-understood information;

5.7 The DUT logo, corporate identity and publications serve to reinforce, clarify and authenticate communication as per the institution’s Brand Identity Manual;

5.8 In its quest to gain as much strategic value as possible, the key drivers are Internal and External Communication; and

5.9 DUT must implement a proactive and honest communication plan for internal stakeholders.

6. POLICY CONTENT

6.1 Information Reach

Information is disseminated with the objective to increase knowledge and awareness about DUT to various internal and external stakeholders, and may thus be communicated using various suitable platforms. However, in times of crisis, DUT will communicate to all students and staff via available electronic communication platforms, including the DUT website.

6.2 Flow of Information

It is critical that there is always free flow of information in order to ensure that information is disseminated timeously and correctly. Without vital information at the right time and in the right place, the decision-making processes may be hampered. Efficient and accurate internal communication within DUT will ensure that all stakeholder's views and ideas are heard and utilised, where necessary. Efficient internal communication is a key precursor to good external communication and engagement ensuring that all staff and students function as ambassadors of DUT at all times.

6.3 Communication between Units in Different Locations

DUT is a multi-campus institution. This can delay communication between faculties/departments/units located within the various campuses. Therefore, in order to enable speedy and effective communication, it is essential to use different modes of communication in order to facilitate communication among leaders, between the management and employees, and between departments or units as well as students.

6.4 Internal Communication

6.4.1 The main areas of focus for Internal Communication are to:

- 6.4.1.1 Make sure that DUT's goals, successes, achievements and challenges are clearly communicated;
- 6.4.1.2 Provide staff with information in order to build commitment and support for DUT's strategies;
- 6.4.1.3 Disseminate and share news stories about DUT's newsworthy activities, including but not limited to teaching and learning, research, community engagement throughout DUT; and
- 6.4.1.4 Promote the sharing of information to inform/improve decision-making.

To maintain a good working environment for the realisation of its Mission and Vision, DUT aims to facilitate efficient and effective internal communication to all staff and students. In this respect, it will utilise, but is not limited to utilising, the following three communication channels:

- 6.4.2.1 Print media: newspaper articles and supplements, electronic media and newsletters will remain a vital component of communication at DUT.
- 6.4.2.2 Broadcast media: news, documentaries, podcasts, advertorials, interviews, and spots.
- 6.4.2.3. Digital platforms: web-based communication (e-mail and intranet) and social media.

All communication must be devoid of slang, obscene, offensive or discriminatory remarks, ethnic slurs and sexist innuendoes. At the same time, DUT shall promote e-learning as an avenue for disseminating educational content.

All attempts must be made to ensure that the aforementioned channels are used responsibly and that all reasonable attempts will be made to ensure that the intended recipients are reached.

The channels are not to be used to forward spam e-mails and virus-laden content or any behaviour that would constitute abuse of the channels.

6.5 Media Relations

DUT shall work towards building and maintaining positive relations with the media. Regular interaction and engagement with the media should be driven by the division responsible for communications. The division responsible for communications plays a co-ordinating role in DUT's internal and external communications and should be informed and/or involved in all communications and information-sharing techniques involving DUT's stakeholders including, but not limited to, its image, branding, marketing, staff and students. Additionally, the division responsible for communications is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Communications Policy. This would ensure the promotion of DUT's brand and identity to internal and external stakeholders.

All members of DUT have the right to freedom of speech as outlined in the principles of this policy. However, that right does not translate to speaking on behalf of DUT. Therefore, it is crucial that the division responsible for communication ensures that the image of DUT is protected at all times by maintaining a professional and healthy relationship with journalists and timeously providing information to the media even after working hours.

Questions from the media relating to DUT matters ought to be responded to timeously. In urgent matters, the division responsible for communication should delegate the relevant person to speak on a particular matter and constantly monitor and evaluate the matter as it unfolds in the public domain.

The division responsible for communications is the primary contact between the external media and DUT. All internal stakeholders of DUT should engage with the division responsible for communications prior to any engagement with external media on all official DUT matters. In the case of expert commentary by DUT staff in the media, such engagement should be shared with the division responsible for communication prior to it taking place.

6.6 Crisis Communication

DUT shall continue to proactively prevent events that are likely to lead to a loss of stakeholder confidence and address issues stemming from rumours, speculation and insider lack of confidence that give DUT negative publicity. In these instances, appropriate crisis communication practices should enable DUT to respond rapidly and effectively to potentially negative situations.

Given the importance of crisis communication:

6.6.1 The Vice-Chancellor and Principal or an authorised person only shall give information to the media.

6.6.2 The Executive Manager responsible for communications shall maintain regular contact with stakeholders and give advice where issues or developments appear to cause problems.

6.6.3 The Executive Manager responsible for communications shall monitor local and international news and events and ensure that appropriate communication briefs and proposals are made to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

6.6.4 Crisis Response

DUT is committed to taking a pro-active stance in a crisis situation thereby mitigating damage. When a crisis occurs, the relevant Division / Department led by a relevant Executive Manager, in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, shall develop and advise on appropriate strategies to deal with the situation and communicate appropriate information to relevant stakeholders. Information shall be provided in a timely and transparent manner.

6.6.5 Crisis Communication Management Team

In the case of a crisis and depending on the nature of the crisis, the Executive Manager responsible for communications will, in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor, establish a Crisis Communication Management Team (CCMT) consisting of persons with the relevant expertise and experience. The Senior Manager and Manager responsible for communications shall be members of the team. Co-option of members is permissible. The CCMT shall constantly monitor, interpret and manage issues which has the potential to escalate into a crisis, gather details about the crisis and approve strategies for internal and external communication.

6.6.6 Releasing of Information to the Media

The division responsible for communications will release relevant, appropriate and verifiable information to the media regarding any crisis. The communications division shall employ systems to continually monitor media coverage and respond accordingly and timeously.

6.7 Corporate Advertising

Utilising print, electronic and support media for corporate advertising, DUT shall use corporate advertising to continually promote a positive image of, and ensure observance of the best advertising principles and practices.

The use of DUT's name and logo in advertising by collaborating with any institution without authority from the division responsible for communications is prohibited and shall be subject to legal action.

The production of promotional DUT items or material shall at all times reflect the correct institutional name and logo. Where there are uncertainties, the concerned parties shall consult with the division responsible for communications.

6.8 Branding

A brand is more than a logo. It is a promise, and an expression of DUT's commitment to its stakeholders. It is about reputation and is based upon one's experience with the brand.

The Principles and Guidelines in DUT's Brand Identity Manual shall at all times be adhered to in order to ensure that DUT's identity and reputation is well managed (DUT Brand Identity Manual, 2012).

6.9 Electronic Communication

E-mail, social media and the web are the primary modes of electronic communication and constitute a key platform for internal and external communications. The division responsible for communications shall have the overall editorial responsibility for DUT website. The content of DUT web pages should always be up-to-date, user-friendly and regulated to align with the objectives of DUT.

The division responsible for communications is the first point of referral for all enquiries regarding a particular social media account. DUT staff and students are strongly advised to contact/refer questions to this division as a very first step, which will channel the request to the appropriate division/department/person and will monitor and ensure that the matter receives the required attention. (DUT Social Media Policy, 2018).

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 The Chairperson of Council and Vice-Chancellor and Principal may issue statements on key issues relating to strategic decisions, Council appointments, corporate governance issues or any other official matters related to DUT;
- 7.2 The relevant authority within DUT is responsible for issuing statements relating to major occurrences or responding to media queries through the division responsible for communications;
- 7.3 All communication by staff and students must be devoid of obscene, offensive and discriminatory remarks, ethnic slurs and sexist innuendoes.

7.4 Responsibility of Leadership

- 7.4.1 DUT operates within a distributed leadership framework. Leaders are not just those with Executive Leadership responsibilities but also those leaders of teams, programmes and projects as well as Heads of Departments;
- 7.4.2 All such leaders are expected to:
 - 7.4.2.1 ensure, as individuals and teams, a culture of free discussion and exploration;
 - 7.4.2.2 ensure all stakeholders are kept updated on relevant DUT activities to enable them to be as effective as possible;
 - 7.4.2.3 promote best practices in communication which is appropriate for the DUT environment;
 - 7.4.2.4 ensure that the Communication Policy is implemented and communication protocols are adhered to;
 - 7.4.2.5 ensure that information is made available to all stakeholders in a timely manner and via appropriate channels;
 - 7.4.2.6 ensure that all stakeholders have appropriate skills and relevant information to enable effective communication with all parties;
 - 7.4.2.7 maintain open two-way channels of communication and listen to feedback and comments from all stakeholders;
 - 7.4.2.8 monitor the effectiveness of the Communication Policy, strategy and infrastructure and ensure the communication action plan evolves to meet the needs of DUT; and
 - 7.4.2.9 respond within a two-hour timeframe to media queries brought to their attention by the division responsible for communication given the media's need for speed in a deadline-driven and highly competitive industry.

7.5 Responsibility of Managers

- 7.5.1 Managers are those who manage people and/or processes across DUT;
- 7.5.2 Managers are expected to:
 - 7.5.2.1 manage and implement strategic communication through the available channels;
 - 7.5.2.2 communicate DUT's Strategic Plan to relevant stakeholders;
 - 7.5.2.3 communicate regularly with their teams, ideally face-to-face, to ensure relevant information is available, communicated and understood;
 - 7.5.2.4 support and encourage teams to communicate about projects, news, updates and success stories;
 - 7.5.2.5 help to ensure all colleagues maintain good communication practices in accordance with this policy;
 - 7.5.2.6 maintain two-way channels of communication to ensure feedback is obtained and to keep DUT's senior team informed.
 - 7.5.2.7 consider the needs of all stakeholders to enable effective communication.

7.6 Responsibility of all Staff

- 7.6.1 Staff refers to those employed or responsible for delivering services on behalf of DUT. This includes colleagues who are permanently employed and those who are fixed-term contractors and part-time employees;
- 7.6.2 All staff are expected to:
 - 7.6.2.1 ensure individual execution of good communication practices in accordance with this policy;
 - 7.6.2.2 be informed and have information in order to be as effective as possible in their respective roles, and be supportive of the strategic direction of DUT;
 - 7.6.2.3 take responsibility for communicating with relevant stakeholders;
 - 7.6.2.4 use open channels of two-way communication to keep line managers, colleagues and stakeholders informed;
 - 7.6.2.5 the need to communicate consistently;
 - 7.6.2.6 inform the division responsible for communications of any newsworthy stories, activities, and/or information that could be shared with the DUT community and the general public;
 - 7.6.2.7 all staff shall act responsibly in their communication by observing the prescripts of Section 14 and Section 16 of the South African Constitution (1996); and
 - 7.6.2.8 act as ambassadors of DUT.

7.7 Responsibility of Students

- 7.7.1 DUT is student-centered. Accordingly, students are key partners. A sound basis for this partnership is effective communication. This entails a shared responsibility in establishing and maintaining effective dialogue and the exchange of information;
- 7.7.2 Students are expected to:
 - 7.7.2.1 participate actively in their learning (i.e. engaging comprehensively with all of DUT's key channels of communication);
 - 7.7.2.2 communicate using their own words or by referencing the work of others;
 - 7.7.2.3 be aware of and actively use communication tools and processes that are designed to enhance and support the overall student experience;
 - 7.7.2.4 act responsibly in the use of internal and external communications as ambassadors of DUT;
 - 7.7.2.5 actively engage with formal and informal feedback processes that provide DUT with an insight into improvement of service and infrastructure for students;
 - 7.7.2.6 take an active role in opportunities provided for student representation;
 - 7.7.2.7 inform the division responsible for communications of any newsworthy stories, activities, and/or information that could be shared with the DUT community and the general public; and
 - 7.7.2.8 all students and student's organizations shall act responsibly in their communication by observing the prescripts of Section 14 and Section 16 of the South African Constitution (1996).

8. THE DESIGNATED STRUCTURE WHICH HAS THE AUTHORITY TO APPROVE, ADJUST AND REVIEW POLICY

The DUT Council is responsible for the approval, adjustment and review of this policy. The Executive Manager responsible for communications is responsible for the monitoring of the policy and the Senior Manager responsible for communications is responsible for its implementation.

9. ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY

The division responsible for communications shall:

- 9.1 develop appropriate strategies for monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Policy;
- 9.2 carry out an evaluation on the implementation of the policy every three (3) years from date of approval, and
- 9.3 define the short-term, mid-term and long-term interventions based on the outcomes of the evaluation reports.

10. PREVIOUS OR RELATED POLICIES

There has been no previous Communication Policy in place, hence the necessity to develop this much-needed policy to be used as a framework for all University communications efforts. DUT Council recently approved a Social Media Policy, which will be implemented in accordance with this policy.

11. THIRD PARTY STAKEHOLDERS

DUT communicates with a number of external stakeholders for a variety of reasons which are often strategic and relate to the importance and value of establishing partnerships and collaborations as an engaged university. Such partnerships would ordinarily be governed by some form of contract which would serve to safeguard the interests of all concerned parties and as such, no slanderous or libelous information should be communicated about DUT by any such individual, organisation or representative thereof.

12. LEGAL ASPECTS

Communication, be it internal and/or external, shall at all times take cognizance of legislation that includes but is not limited to the:

- 12.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996
- 12.2 Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000
- 12.3 Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013
- 12.4 Copyright Act 98 of 1978
- 12.5 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000.