Internal Student Communications Procedure

Section 1 - Governing Policy

(1) ACU Internal Student Communications Policy.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This Procedure applies to University-wide, large cohort and / or segmented audience communications, between the University and its current students. Current students are defined as all students from the point of enrolment through to graduation.

(3) Communications covered by these procedures encompass emails and SMS, print collateral, and content on the University's student-facing digital platforms and on-campus screens. This procedure does not cover one-to-one enquiry or transactional communications (including course-related communications between students and teaching teams (academic and professional staff) in the learning and teaching sphere, and communications between international student advisors or Indigenous Higher Education Units and their specific student contacts). These interactions are the responsibility of individual business units or Faculties.

(4) The standards set in Section 3 of the Internal Student Communications Policy must be met for all student content and communications covered by this Procedure.

Section 3 - Email

Authority to Send Emails to Current Students

(5) Email encompasses electronic direct mail (eDM) sent through the University's CRM, emails sent through Outlook to a student distribution list (DL), and emails sent from other student-facing digital platforms.

(6) The primary mechanism for sending a broadcast email (University-wide and large cohort e.g. all students on a single or multiple campuses, all students in a faculty, all enrolled students – or cohorts of equivalent sizes) to current students is an eDM sent through the University CRM. Emails of this nature require approval from Student Communications in Marketing and External Relations (MER). The exception is emails sent by the following staff members:

   a. members of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee (VCAC); and
   b. Critical Incident Conveners (as per the Critical Incident Management Policy).

(7) The following authorised senders may only send email messages that have originated from and relate to their own areas of responsibility (ie. not on behalf of other ACU business units or any external organisations) and are recommended to first consult with Student Communications about the appropriate channel for distributing their message, unless the message is urgent (both time-critical and unforeseen):

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 1 of 14

<ol type="a" start="1">
Members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Board (VCEB);
State Facilities Managers;
ACU.Announcements@acu.edu.au;
Governance.Elections@acu.edu.au;
ACUevents@acu.edu.au;
Director, Student Experience and Enhancement and National Manager, Student Life (Note: These senders are only authorised to send Dynamic DL emails which pertain to the student election cycle but fall outside the formal communications process. Topics may include, for example, notification of casual vacancies or EOI requests); and
Communications and Operations Coordinator, in the Centre for Education and Innovation (CEI) (Note: this sender is only authorised to send the fortnightly campus-based 'what's on'newsletters).

(8) For further detail of the above authorised senders, see the [Email Distribution List Policy](#) and [Email Distribution List Procedure](#).

Message Categorisation

(9) Student Communications will work with teams to ensure the appropriate audience, channel/s and timing for their messages. When determining whether email is the appropriate channel for any given message, the following parameters and categories will apply. Content will be assessed by Student Communications on a case-by-case basis.

(10) Scheduled, cohort-wide or University-wide messages about essential information related to courses and important administrative matters are suitable for single-topic email. These are to be added to the shared content and communications calendar.

(11) Scheduled cohort-wide or University-wide messages related to student support and services are sometimes suitable (e.g. when introducing significant or new programs and services, as opposed to ongoing BAU updates) for single-topic email and are to be added to the shared content and communications calendar. Ongoing updates and event promotions are to be included in the centrally managed student bulletin / newsletter emails.

(12) Updates, offers, news, promotions and events related to co-curricular activities are generally not suitable for single-topic email and are to be added to the centrally managed student bulletin / newsletter emails. These bulletin emails may be used to direct students to the platform/s where they can sign up for events or join student groups and opt in for future communications.

Other Requirements

(13) Student Communications will determine the appropriate priority and timing of email communications, prioritising the student experience, but balancing this with business needs. The determination of email priority will be based on whether the message is critical, important or general in nature (from the student perspective).

(14) Lead times for email creation / approval requests must be observed. Exceptions may be accommodated in urgent or emergency circumstances. 'Urgent' is defined as both time-critical and unforeseen. Emails will not be considered urgent if they have been inadequately forward planned.

(15) Reminder / duplicate emails will not be sent unless there is a critical need. These emails must undergo the same, centralised approval process.

(16) Where possible, emails are to be sent from an email address associated with the message owner (e.g. [advocacy.service@acu.edu.au](#)), and the email content must contain a point of contact or avenue for students to obtain further information or clarification.

(17) Email content will be reviewed by Student Communications from a holistic, student perspective and may be edited to align the messaging with strategic, brand or style requirements.

Section 4 - Student Bulletins

Overarching Principles

(18) Items included in bulletins and newsletters should be:

   a. Relevant: Content must be for current students and be ACU-affiliated;
   b. Newsworthy: Content should be newsworthy and aim to communicate a specific piece of new information, key milestone, event or activity to students;
   c. New: The same article will rarely be repeated in multiple editions. Stakeholders may submit content about the same topic more than once, however the content should be written from a new angle or contain new / additional information;
   d. Timely: Content is more likely to be read if it is timely. Content should be submitted as close as possible to when the event or initiative will take place / took place (if it is a post-event report / story in Student News).

(19) The bulletins are intended to be a representative snapshot of the University's offerings and news. The Student Communications team will review submitted items from a holistic, student perspective and ensure that the content is balanced and sourced from a range of contributors.

(20) The Student Communications team will endeavour to accommodate all items requested for inclusion in the bulletins, provided these are submitted by the specified content due dates and comply with the above guidelines.

National Student News and Events Bulletins

(21) The MER Communications team compiles, edits and sends the monthly Student News and Events bulletin, which is sent to all students, nationally. This bulletin includes a broad cross-section of news, announcements, events and stories from across the University, and a lead column from a member of the executive, usually the Provost. Students cannot unsubscribe from this communication.

Campus-based "What's On" Newsletters

(22) The co-curricular teams (Campus Ministry; ACU Sport, and Student Life) compile fortnightly campus-based events newsletters to be edited and sent by CEI. These newsletters are intended to provide comprehensive and targeted calendars of the University's co-curricular events, segmented by campus. Students can choose to unsubscribe from this communication.

Section 5 - Digital platforms

Student Portal

(23) Platform purpose: The digital 'front door' for students providing an overview of all ACU services and offerings in one place, with commonly used functionality. Intended to be the starting point for students' online environment, the Student Portal links to Canvas and other supporting platforms.

(24) Content types:

   a. introductory information about all ACU services, offerings and student information;
   b. students' timetable and key information about their course;

c. Newsfeed of updates that students can filter by campus or area of interest; and

d. personalised events calendar that students can filter by campus or area of interest.

(25) Who can add content to this platform:

a. MER Communications team;

b. MER Digital Operations; and

c. communications champions from content stakeholder areas.

Canvas

(26) Platform purpose: Canvas serves as ACU's learning management system (LMS) and facilitates online course/unit management, delivery, assessment, and communication between staff and students.

(27) Content types:

a. learning content in the form of webpages, documents (e.g. PDF, Word, Excel, PowerPoint), online books, videos, and other multimedia formats (audio, images);

b. learning activities and resources such as unit outlines, reading lists, quizzes and assessments, and Zoom/Echo360 materials;

c. communications through internal channels such as Discussions, Announcements, Inbox;

d. assessment grades and feedback.

(28) Who can add content to this platform:

a. teaching staff in faculties with course roles: Editing Lecturer, Course Designer, and PASS Coordinator in Canvas;

b. professional staff with a course role listed above or account role in Canvas, e.g. Account Admin, ACU Admin, Faculty Admin, and Site Designer.

(29) Requirements for communicating from this platform:

a. teaching staff may communicate with students through their Canvas courses;

b. communications to students within a Canvas course must be related to the learning and teaching of the unit;

c. professional staff with the 'Admin/Auditor' role must not communicate with students directly.

Global Announcements

(30) Global Announcements allow for communication to all or specific users, such as faculty sub-accounts, within Canvas. Messages are displayed to users on the Canvas Dashboard.

(31) There are five different types of announcements:

a. warning;

b. error;

c. information;

d. question; or

e. calendar.

(32) Who can make a Global Announcement: Canvas Platform Owners and Learning Technologists within CEI.

(33) Requirements: staff must submit a request via this [Service Central](#) ticket. The ticket outlines the requirements for using Global Announcements.

Course Announcements

(34) Course Announcements communicate important information, updates, and reminders to students enrolled in a course. Staff should avoid duplicating messages across emails and announcements to students.

(35) Content types:

    a. important updates about schedule changes, assignments, or deadlines;

    b. reminders about upcoming events, assignments, or exams;

    c. changes to course policies, grading criteria, or procedures;

    d. clarifications on course materials, instructions, or concepts;

    e. links to additional resources, readings or videos;

    f. general course-related topics.

(36) Who can add content to Course Announcements: Editing Lecturers and Lecturers within the Canvas course.

IMPACT

(37) IMPACT is software that provides support resources tailored to a user's specific action within Canvas.

(38) Content types:

    a. knowledge articles that store guides and information on using Canvas;

    b. pop-up messages, triggered by specific page events;

    c. walkthrough campaigns that guide the user through a specific process.

(39) Who can add content to IMPACT: Canvas Platform Owner and Learning Technologists within CEI.

(40) Requirements: the usage of IMPACT is restricted to the Canvas Platform Owner and Learning Technologists within CEI. Staff are not able to request new content.

Discussions

(41) This is a forum and thread-based tool to facilitate interactive communication, collaboration, and engagement among students and lecturers.

(42) Content types:

    a. student questions about course materials, assignments, or topics for clarification;

    b. students responding to prompts, assignments, or other students' posts;

    c. group work, collaborative projects, or peer review;

    d. updates about the course;

    e. additional materials, links, or resources to support learning.

(43) Who can add content to discussions:

    a. editing Lecturers, Lecturers, Course Designers, and PASS Coordinators;

    b. students can create discussions within the Canvas course.

(44) Requirements: staff will need to decide whether to use a single discussion forum for all students in the unit or set up smaller forums for different Canvas sections (such as campus-based Banner cohorts).

Course inbox

(45) Allows students and staff to directly send and receive messages from one another.

(46) Messages via the Canvas inbox can be sent to the users Outlook inbox using the notification settings in the users' profile.

(47) Content types:

a. clarifications on course materials, instructions, or expectations;
b. direct communication between staff and individual students regarding specific concerns, questions, or feedback;
c. urgent or important announcements that need immediate attention from all students enrolled in the course;
d. assistance with technical issues, access problems, or other course-related issues;
e. general questions.

(48) Who can add content to the course inbox: editing Lecturers, Lecturers, PASS Coordinators, Course Designers, as well as Students within the Canvas course.

New Analytics

(49) Canvas New Analytics is a tool within Canvas that provides instructors with data and insights about student engagement and performance in their courses.

(50) Requirements: staff should not use this tool for direct communication with students. If you would like to explore this tool further, please contact CEI@acu.edu.au for assistance.

Banner (Student Connect)

(51) Platform Purpose: Banner is the ACU student management system. It is a database of student records from application, enrolment, fees, results and graduation. Student Connect is the interface to Banner for use by students and academic staff. The data accessible via Student Connect is drawn from Banner.

(52) Content types:

a. student biographical information;
b. student applications and decisions;
c. student enrolments and fees records; and
d. student graduations.

(53) Who can add content to this platform:

a. ACU staff and students via Student Connect; and
b. approved general and academic staff who require additional functionality can request access to Banner by submitting a Banner Access request via Service Central.

(54) Requirements for communicating from this platform: only communications that need to be recorded against the student record should be sent using Banner. Otherwise, emails should be distributed through MER.

(55) Email communications to students' ACU email accounts:

a. Student Systems, TAC Admissions and Direct Admissions Services, Enrolments and Student Records and Scholarships, Fees, Examinations and Results and Graduations and Protocol (within Student Administration) have access to distribute emails about critical administrative tasks or information to students' ACU email accounts;

b. teams other than the above need approval from the Associate Director, Student Systems to send emails;

c. a 10-day turnaround time is required to distribute emails where the email template needs to be built from scratch;

d. when an email template already exists, a five-day turnaround time is required;

e. emails sent using Banner will be attached to the student record.

(56) Email communications to students' personal email accounts:

a. Student Systems, TAC Admissions and Direct Admissions Services, Enrolments and Student Records and Scholarships, Fees, Examinations and Results and Graduations and Protocol (within the Student Administration) have access to distribute emails about critical administrative tasks or information to students' personal email accounts;

b. approval is sought from the relevant Student Administration National Manager and/or the Associate Director within the directorate;

c. teams other than the above who wish to send emails to students' personal accounts must seek approval from the Associate Director, Student Systems;

d. a 10-day turnaround time is required to distribute emails where the email template needs to be built from scratch;

e. when an email template already exists, a five-day turnaround time is required;

f. emails sent using Banner will be attached to the student record.

(57) SMS communications to students:

a. where SMS communications are necessary due to the urgent or critical nature of the message, bulk SMS can be distributed by Student Systems to students on behalf of directorates within ACU. Requests for the use of SMS beyond critical administrative reminders require consultation with the Internal Communications team within MER and, if approved, may be channeled through CRM instead of Banner;

b. where a list of student IDs and mobile numbers, is not readily available, an Argos report request needs to be requested via [Service Central](#) before the SMS distribution can occur. The report with mobile numbers then needs to be provided to the SStudent Systems team requesting the send date and time, and the content of the SMS;

c. once and where a list of student ID or mobile number is available for distribution, a five-day turnaround time is applicable for SMS distributions;

d. SMS distributions outside of Student Administration needs to have an approval of the National Manager, Student Systems Operations and a cost centre code provided;

e. communications via SMS cannot be attached against student records in Banner.

UniHub

(58) Platform purpose: Secure, 24-hour online booking for appointments, events and courses and a place for relevant services' resources and online functionality.

(59) Content types:

a. introductory or general information about services should live on the Student Portal, with links to UniHub for specific event, course or appointment details and booking functionality;

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 7 of 14

b. information and registration for events, courses and workshops related to support services;

c. appointment information and booking;

d. Student Jobs on Campus job postings and application functionality; and

e. student resources.

(60) Who can add content to this platform: Careers and Employability, Counselling Service, Access and Disability Service, Connect2Uni, First Peoples and ACU International staff who have a presence on UniHub and who require appointment booking, resource and event management functionality.

(61) Requirements for communicating from this platform: UniHub email functionality is only to be used for communicating appointment or event booking information/confirmation to students who have used the platform for this purpose.

ACU Life

(62) Platform purpose: Dynamic co-curricular (social, sport and community-related) content and events aligned with specific, joinable student groups and linked from the static, high-level content on the Student Portal or other key platforms. ACU Life is the place for students to opt in for co-curricular communications from specific student groups. It facilitates peer-to-peer and group communication, group administration, event management, memberships and payments.

(63) Content types:

a. Co-curricular content from Student Life, Campus Ministry, ACU Sport, student associations, and clubs and societies, including:

    i. event listings and registrations;

    ii. group information and updates;

    iii. group discussion;

    iv. surveys and polls;

    v. forms.

(64) Who can add content to this platform:

a. platform admins;

b. group officers – staff;

c. group officers – students (roles and permissions vary); and

d. group members – group feed item, group discussion feed, chat.

(65) Requirements for communicating from this platform – communications requirements for specific groups are detailed below:

a. student-managed clubs and societies:

    i. communications may be sent to group members only;

    ii. users must opt into a specific group;

    iii. users must be able to opt out/unsubscribe from group communications at any time.

b. staff-managed groups:

    i. communications may be sent to group members only;

    ii. communications must not be sent to "all contacts";

    iii. users must be able to opt out/unsubscribe from group communications at any time.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 8 of 14

InPlace

(66) Platform purpose: InPlace is ACU's professional placement management system, used to administer the student placement process for clinical and community engagement units. InPlace allows students to view their personal details, record pre-placement requirements, and view current, past and upcoming placements.

(67) Content types:

a. placement details: current, past and upcoming;
b. student pre-placement and placement compliance requirements;
c. applications for self-placement and opportunities; and
d. shared documents provided by the Faculty Placement Services team.

(68) Who can add content to this platform:

a. Faculty Placement Services team members from Faculty of Education and Arts, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Faculty of Law and Business;
b. Community Engagement Officers within the ACU Engagement team;
c. InPlace team within the Centre for Education and Innovation; and
d. students, when loading compliance information.

(69) Requirements for communicating from this platform:

a. Email communications:
    i. may be sent to students to notify them of confirmed placements, opening of self-select placements, unsuccessful or incomplete self-placement and opportunity applications, surveys, pre-placement compliance, placement documentation, and international placement opportunities;
    ii. must be sent only by Faculty Placement Services and ACU Engagement team members.
b. SMS communications may be:
    i. distributed during emergency / time-sensitive situations;
    ii. sent by the Faculty Placement Team Leader, who must gain approval from Director, Centre for Education and Innovation / InPlace Team prior to the send.

VYGO – Student Mentoring

(70) Platform purpose: Vygo is ACU's student mentoring platform, used to connect current students with student mentors for one-to-one or group mentoring sessions. Student participation is on an opt-in basis.

(71) Content types: Content is limited to information directly related to the facilitation of student mentoring.

(72) Who can add content to this platform: Student Transition and Retention team members.

(73) Requirements for communicating from this platform: No outbound email communications are permitted except for correspondence between mentor and mentee.

Microsites

(74) Various microsites have been developed to respond to specific temporary needs of some business units. Microsites will be decommissioned where the content need can be met by other, pre-existing ACU student digital platforms.

Section 6 - SMS

(75) The Digital Marketing team (MER) facilitates the sending of SMS to current students. SMS is to be used sparingly as an option to support or complement other communication channels. SMS is suitable for very brief follow-ups/reminders/alerts or timely prompts for students to act. Sending SMS carries a cost and this needs to be budgeted and paid for in advance by the requester via credit card.

(76) Please consult with Student Communications (MER) for advice about the use of SMS before approaching Digital Marketing.

Section 7 - Digital TV Screens

(77) The University has several on-campus digital TV screens that are available for the display of student-facing content. Content must relate to ACU or ACU-affiliated events / programs / initiatives relevant to current students and it must meet ACU brand and style requirements.

(78) Student Communications reviews and approves digital screen content; IT uploads and ensures timely removal of content from the centrally managed screens.

Section 8 - Social Media

(79) ACU's approach to social media is governed by its [Social Media Policy](). Staff may request to have content for students promoted on ACU's social media channels. These requests are assessed by the Digital Marketing Social Media team against their appropriateness for these audiences, as well as against other events and activities on the calendar. Organic promotion can be done without cost but will have limited reach. Paid promotion will have a broader reach, but you will need a budget to allocate to this activity. Specific requirements and processes are explained in the [Service Central]() knowledge article.

Section 9 - Student Research

Approval to Send Research Communications to Current Students

(80) Surveys, interviews and focus groups to students are structured by the [Survey, Interview and Focus Group Governance Framework](). The [Survey, Interview and Focus Group Governance Framework]() aims to minimise the risks of over-researching students and to promote a clear and transparent methodology for the governance of research involving ACU students as participants. Applications for permission to collect data from students must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the fieldwork. Applications will be processed within ten (10) working days of being received and are approved in the order they are received. They will be approved based on:

   a. the quality and completeness of the application;
   b. the potential conflicts with other research during the proposed fieldwork period; and
   c. the potential impact of proposed communications.

(81) Student research requests are to be completed using the application form and sent to the Centre for Education and Innovation (CEI) via [CEI@acu.edu.au]() for review and approval by the Director, Centre for Education and Innovation.

(82) ACU research is prioritised over external research.

Research Scheduling/Timing

(83) Projects seeking approval should ensure the proposed dates are scheduled outside of University Block out periods and Institutional Survey dates by consulting the Research Register calendar. No communications or promotion from non-institutional research should take place during block-out periods.

(84) Applications which conflict with other research projects in terms of purpose, fieldwork dates or target population will be declined until recommendations to lower the risk of research fatigue for ACU students have been integrated in the plan.

Research Communications

(85) The number of communications (including reminders / follow-ups) that can be sent to students will be determined by the classification of the research - ranging from:

   a. Tier 1: Internal quality assurance surveys (service and feedback related);
   b. Tier 2: Institutional surveys (government endorsed surveys, national benchmarking surveys);
   c. Tier 3: Internal research (initiated by ACU staff and students);
   d. Tier 4: External research (other external surveys)

(86) The application form requires the inclusion of a communications plan covering the following information:

   a. how the researcher will contact students to advertise the research activity;
   b. when (date) the survey or recruitment for research will be communicated to students and by whom;
   c. the dates of any direct follow-up communications and whether these will exclude students who have already responded to the survey or recruitment communication.

(87) Contact CEI@acu.edu.au for further advice.

Section 10 - Style Guide

(88) Messages for current students are to be drafted in accordance with ACU's brand, verbal identity and style guide. The Student Communications Writing and Style Guide is derivative of the ACU style guide and indicates basic written and visual conventions to be used for consistency and clarity.

Section 11 - Roles and approval processes

(89) Marketing and External Relations will govern student communications when not related to learning and teaching, except in emergent or emergency situations as directed by the Vice-Chancellor and President or delegate. The Communications team will advise teams from across the University on the appropriate audience, channel/s and timing for their messages.

(90) Communication requests are reviewed from a holistic student perspective and will be approved if they follow the required communication principles indicated in the Internal Student Communications Policy.

(91) The guidelines contained in this procedural document inform the acceptable and appropriate use of ACU's different student communication channels.

Student Communication Channels: Area of Responsibility

(92) Digital screens – Content approved by Student Communications (MER). Content uploaded by End User Computing

Services (IT).

(93) Poster/brochure/collateral design – Produced by Design (MER). Content approved by Student Communications (MER).

(94) National student bulletins – Produced and distributed by the Communications team (MER).

(95) Campus-based 'what's on' newsletters – Produced and distributed by the Communications and Operations Coordinator in CEI.

(96) Single-topic eDMs – Student Communications (MER) or Digital Marketing (MER) if part of a comprehensive email campaign.

(97) SMS – Distributed by Digital Marketing (MER). Content approved by Student Communications (MER).

(98) General communications advice – Student Communications (MER).

(99) Communications planning and strategy – Student Communications (MER).

(100) Content review – Student Communications (MER).

(101) Student Portal – MER are platform owners. Digital Operations (MER) look after operational and technical issues. Student Communications (MER) reviews and approves content and advises on content strategy.

(102) ACU Life – Centre for Education and Innovation are platform owners. Content strategy informed by the ACU [Internal Student Communications Policy](#) and this Procedure.

(103) UniHub – Student Experience is the platform owner. Content strategy informed by the ACU Student Content and Communications Policy and procedures.

(104) Canvas – Centre for Education and Innovation are platform owners. Content strategy informed by the ACU [Internal Student Communications Policy](#) and Procedure.

(105) Banner – Student Systems (Student Administration) are platform owners.

(106) Community of Practice – Student Communications (MER).

(107) Student Portal platform access, training or troubleshooting – Digital Operations (MER).

(108) Video production – Design (MER).

(109) Social media – Digital Marketing (MER).

(110) Student research/survey, interview and focus group approval and scheduling – Centre for Education and Innovation.

Section 12 - Review

(111) In line with the University's [Policy Development and Review Policy](#), this Procedure will be reviewed in line with the governing policy and is scheduled for review every five years or more frequently if appropriate.

(112) Unless otherwise indicated, this Procedure will still apply beyond the review date.

Section 13 - Further Assistance

(113) For further assistance, please contact Student Communications within Marketing and External Relations, visit Marketing and External Relations in [Service Central](#) or check the [Student Communications](#) knowledge articles in [Service Central](#).

Section 14 - Associated Information

(114) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	1st February 2024
Review Date	4th November 2025
Approval Authority	Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	1st February 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Kathy Vozella Chief Marketing Officer
Responsible Manager	Louise Crossen National Manager, Strategic Communications
Enquiries Contact	Marketing and External Relations