

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

MARCH 2013

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THE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY, 2013

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THE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY, 2013

(Under Section 40(2) (b) of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001)

IN EXERCISE of powers conferred upon the University Council by Section 40(2)(b) of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001, this policy is made the 14th day of March 2013.

1. Citation

This policy may be cited as the Communications Policy, 2013.

2. Interpretation

In this policy, unless the context otherwise requires-

- (a) “brand” means the University brand;
- (b) “communication function” means activities that involve the generation and transmission of information;
- (c) “crisis communication” means communication resorted to during a crisis;
- (d) “faculty” means the teaching staff of the University;
- (e) “staff associations” means Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), Makerere University Administrative Staff Association (MASA), National Union of Education Institutions in Uganda (NUEIU)-Makerere Branch;
- (f) “students” means the University students;
- (g) “students’ associations” means students’ associations constituted in accordance with Section 91(1) of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001;
- (h) “university” means Makerere University;
- (i) “university community” includes the University staff and students;

- (j) “university facilities” means utilities at the disposal of the University community;
- (k) “university management” includes the officers of the University provided under Part VIII of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, 2001, Directors, Principals, Deans and Heads of Department;
- (l) “university premises” means infrastructure belonging to the University;
- (m) “university staff” means academic, administrative and support staff; and,
- (n) “university website” means the intranet, College websites and websites for non academic Units.

3. Preamble

The last few decades have been characterized by fundamental changes in modern information and communication technologies (ICTs). Triggered by the search for excellence in the conduct of business and governmental affairs, the revolution in modern ICTs has been a mixed blessing. Actors in the public, the private and the not-for-profit sectors that adopt enabling information and communication technologies typically use them to boost their functionality. However, actors that are, institutionally and individually, unwilling to adopt improved ways of doing business are threatened with extinction or irrelevance. It is in light of this realization that this Communications Policy is being developed by the Makerere University Council in consultation with the University Senate and other relevant Units of the University;

CONSCIOUS that, communication plays an essential role in building internal institutional cohesion, advancing organizational goals and promoting core values;

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AWARE that Makerere University has, since its inception in 1922, never had a formal communication policy;

CONVINCED that the communication function plays a strategically crucial role in the realization of the University vision, mission and core values;

AWARE that Makerere University is answerable to a multiplicity of internal stakeholders viz faculty, staff and students; and different external publics, including, but not limited to the government, the tax-payers, the employers of University graduates, the guardians and development partners;

CONCIOUS of the opportunities associated with modern information and communication technologies, as well as the dangers posed to the image of the University by misinformation or under-information;

CONVINCED that the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of thought, conscience and belief, which include academic freedoms in institutions of learning (Article 29(1) (b)) are important in the pursuit of academic excellence, innovations, and other aspects of Makerere's vision, mission, and strategic goals;

DETERMINED to uphold Article 29(1)(b) and Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda; the Access to Information Act (2005); the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedoms (1990); and other international and regional human rights instruments in a socially-responsible manner;

COGNISANT of the cardinal principles of effective communication, namely, accuracy, timeliness, sensitivity, consistence, clarity and transparency;

CONCERNED about the need for faculty, staff and students of Makerere to contribute to the positive image and brand of the University;

NOW THEREFORE the University Council, in consultation with the University Senate, Colleges, Schools, Institutes, Departments and Research Centres, has decided to adopt this Communication Policy as a set of guidelines for the processing, storage and dissemination of information within Makerere University, and between the University and other (external) stakeholders.

4. Policy Context

This policy has been developed in the context of the following laws, norms, and human rights instruments:

Article 29(1)(b) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda: This Article provides, inter alia, that every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief which shall include academic freedom in institutions of learning:

Article 41(1) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda: This Article provides for every citizen's "right of access to information in the possession of the State or any organ or agency of the State." This right may be lawfully denied under exceptional and clear circumstances, namely:

- (a) Where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the State; or,
- (b) Where the release of the information may interfere with the right to the privacy of any other person.

The Access to Information Act, 2005: This piece of legislation was made pursuant to Article 41(2) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. Its main purpose is:

- (a) To give effect to Article 41(1) on the citizen's right of access to information held by organs of the State, other than exempt records and information;
- (b) To protect persons disclosing evidence of contravention of the law, maladministration or corruption in Government bodies;
- (c) To promote transparency and accountability in all organs of the State by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information; and
- (d) To empower the public to effectively scrutinise and participate in Government decisions that affect them.

The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedoms (1990): This Declaration explicitly demands for "Intellectual Rights and Freedoms" (Articles 1-9). It defines the "Obligations of the State" in respect of the rights and freedoms of the intellectual community (Articles 13-18). The Declaration also defines the "Social Responsibility" of members of the intellectual community. Specifically, the Declaration under;

- (a) Article 2 provides that: "Every African intellectual shall be entitled to the respect of all his or her civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights as stipulated in the International Bill of Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.
- (b) Article 3 explicitly states: "No African intellectual shall in any way be persecuted, harassed or intimidated for reasons only of his or her intellectual work, opinions, gender, nationality and/or ethnicity.
- (c) Article 6 asserts: "Every African intellectual has the right to pursue intellectual activity, including teaching, research and dissemination of research results, without let or hindrance subject only to universally recognized principles of scientific inquiry, ethical norms and professional standards."

- (d) Article 9 provides: “The intellectual community shall have the right to express its opinions freely in the media and to establish its own media and means of communication.

It is in the light of the above laws, norms, practices, and related international and regional human rights instruments that this policy has been developed.

5. Purpose of the Policy

This policy seeks to provide guidelines for the timely, effective and appropriate flow of information within Makerere University, and between the University and other (external) stakeholders. The aim is to assist University faculty, staff and students in fulfilling the educational, research, and community-outreach goals of the University.

6. Policy Objectives

The objectives of the policy are;

- (a) To streamline the flow of information within the University, with a view to promoting the educational, research and innovations, information sharing and networking activities of the University faculty, staff and students.
- (b) To streamline the flow of information between the University and other (external) stakeholders in Government, the knowledge industry, the wider society, the labour market, and donor circles.
- (c) To provide guidance for effective and responsible electronic, print and verbal communication.
- (d) To provide a framework for integrated and consistent marketing and branding programmes aimed at enhancing the university’s brand identity.
- (e) To establish a mechanism for communication in times of crisis.

7. Vision of Communication

To provide a pro-active approach to information management and dissemination, strengthen the University’s image and build good will among the stakeholders.

8. Principles of Communication pertaining to this Policy

- (1) All communication shall be delivered in a regular and timely manner and internal communication shall precede the external communication.

(2) Members of the University community who wish to issue out information are encouraged to cross check the accuracy of the information before communicating within and outside the University.

(3) Information from the university should be simple and clear without any ambiguities that could lead to misinterpretation.

(4) The policy shall seek to meet the information needs of the diverse stakeholders and aspirations of staff and students.

(5) The University shall, subject to the principles of privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property rights conduct its activities in an open and socially accountable manner.

9. Internal communication roles and responsibilities

(1) The Chairperson of Council or the Secretary to Council shall communicate the official decisions of the Council.

(2) The Chairperson of the University Senate or the Secretary to the Senate shall communicate the official decisions of the Senate.

(3) The Chairperson of the Appointments Board or the Secretary to the Board shall communicate the decision of the Board.

(5) Members of the University Management shall be responsible for communicating issues within their jurisdiction.

(6) The Dean of Students shall be responsible for communicating all information, decisions and policies concerning students' welfare.

(7) The Dean of Students in conjunction with the Makerere University Students' Guild and student leaders at the Colleges shall be responsible for setting up communication mechanisms for regular dialogue between students and management.

(8) The Academic Registrar shall be responsible for coordinating and or communication of academic matters.

(9) Members of staff are free to communicate on matters within their area of expertise and are encouraged to cross check the accuracy of the information before communicating it within and outside the University.

(10) The Senior Public Relations Officer shall in consultation with the relevant members of the University Management and Communication Officers be responsible for coordinating the communication function at the University.

(11) The Communication Officers in consultation with the College Management and the Public Relations Office shall be responsible for coordinating the communication function within their units.

(12) Colleges and non-academic units shall be responsible for developing specific internal communication guidelines in conformity with this policy.

10. Internal communication channels

- (a) (1) Members of the University may where appropriate use the following channels to communicate with the internal publics: Face to face communication;
- (b) Formal letters;
- (c) Emails;
- (d) Makerere website and Intranet;
- (e) Minutes of Meetings;
- (f) Circulars and Memos;
- (g) Notice boards;
- (h) Mailing lists;
- (i) Newsletters;
- (j) Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype among others);
- (k) Flyers, Posters, Events, Exhibitions and Presentations;
- (l) Academic publications;
- (m) Open-days; and,
- (n) Any other channel that may be identified by the respective units in conformity with this policy.

(2) All members of the various boards and committees are individually responsible for proper handling of information that comes to them in the course of discharging official duties.

11. Media Relations

(1) Makerere University shall work towards building and maintaining positive relations with the media.

(2) The Chairperson of Senate or the Secretary to Senate shall communicate information arising from the University Senate to the news media.

(3) The Vice-Chancellor shall be the Chief Public Relations Officer of the University.

(4) The members of the University are encouraged to check the accuracy of the information before communicating to the media.

(5) The Principal shall be the Chief Public Relations Officer at the College level.

(6) Members of staff are urged to project a positive image of the university in communicating to the media.

12 Branding and Marketing

(1) Makerere University shall work towards building a strong brand in order to remain visible and competitive, communicate a consistent message, influence choices of the various stakeholders and build loyalty among students, staff, alumni and other key stakeholders.

(2) For purposes of this policy, the Makerere University brand shall encompass more than logos, colours, mascots and taglines. The brand shall be reflected and communicated through the quality and competitiveness of its students, expertise of its staff and the nature of collaborations and strategic partnerships it attracts, quality and consistency in services delivered.

(3) The Brand and Marketing Officer shall oversee the promotion and compliance with the University brand specifications and guidelines and advise the University administration on breaches and threats to the brand.

(4) Members of the University and Alumni are encouraged to build the University's positive image and brand awareness in all forms of communication.

13. Advertising

(1) All Units advertising University products or services are urged to ensure that the information contained therein is accurate and up to date.

(2) Makerere University shall refrain from accepting adverts that may be harmful to the positive image and brand of the University.

(3) The University logo shall be included in all official communication regarding Makerere University news or events and presentations

14. Photography and filming

(1) Units within the University are free to identify professionals to take photographs and/or to film events/occasions.

(2) All photography and filming shall be in accordance with procedures and guidelines as may be set out by the University Council.

15. Crisis Communication

(1) Makerere University is committed to taking a pre-emptive approach to public relations crises, using disclosure communication and engagement whenever possible as the preferred strategies for preventing or mitigating the crises.

(2) The relevant University officers in conjunction with the Public Relations Office and Communication Officers shall provide information to the media in a timely and transparent manner.

16. Electronic Communication

(1) Makerere University recognizes Electronic Communication (email and websites) as an official mode of communication and information sharing.

(2) For purposes of facilitating effective official communication, all staff and students shall be assigned a Makerere University Email address by the Directorate for ICT Support for purposes of promoting communication and information sharing.

(3) All staff and students are encouraged to regularly check the University websites and their email addresses to receive official communication from the University.

While on the main Campus, students and staff shall have access to the Campus-wide Wifi network MAK-AIR using their official email addresses.

(4) All staff and student responses to electronic communication shall be made using the official Makerere University email addresses.

(5) All staff and students shall not disguise their identity, user name and origin of email whenever they use the University email system.

(6) Staff and students shall refrain from using insulting language in the email subject or accompanying text.

(7) DICTS shall regularly update mailing lists for ease of disseminating information to all staff and students.

17. Communication Pertaining to Research

The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs) shall in consultation with the Director of Research and Graduate Training and other relevant Units be responsible for the development of institutional mechanisms to disseminate research and innovations, communicating the research agenda and research policy framework to internal and external stakeholders.

18. Visitor and Guest Relations

All staff and students of the University are encouraged at all times to be courteous to visitors and guests of the University.

19. Implementation of the Policy

The Vice Chancellor shall in consultation with the Colleges and other relevant Units develop an implementations strategy to give effect to this Policy.

20. Compliance with the policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action under the Human Resources Manual.

21. Review

The University Senate shall, in consultation with the Colleges, Schools, Institutes, Departments and Research Centres of Makerere University, review this policy every after three years of implementation, and forward the outcome of the review process to the University Council for approval.

.....Chairman, University Council.....14th March 2013.....