

Communication and Transparency Procedure

Version 1 - Approved 4 March 2024

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Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to establish the processes for how the University communicates with our internal and external communities to enable transparency and accountability in the University's operations and decision making and thereby building trust and shared understanding.

Applicable governance instruments

Instrument	Section	Principles
<i>University of Tasmania Act 1992</i>	12 Annual report of the Council 21 Promulgation of Ordinances, rules and by-laws	All All
<i>University Council Ordinance</i>	4 Reserved powers and functions of Council 6 The Vice-Chancellor	4.1(j) 6.2(e), (f)
<i>General Delegations Ordinance</i>	9 Risk delegations	
<i>Communications and Brand Policy</i>	1 Communication	All
<i>Right to Information Act 2009</i>		

Procedure

1. Introduction

The University is committed to communicating clearly and effectively its strategy and operations including decision making.

Engaging with our University community and stakeholders and understanding their points of view are essential to informed decision making, effective management of risks, and enhancing relationships with those who have an interest in the University's activities. We know that in doing so this helps us create deep and sustained partnerships both internally with our staff and students and externally with our community, industry and other stakeholders.

Part of our accountability as a public institution is to be clear and transparent in our decision making.

Developing and fostering strong links between the University and the wider community is a commitment shared across the University for which University Council is ultimately accountable.¹ Our internal guidance for this comes from our *Communications and Brand Policy* approved by University Council.

The University is also fully aligned with the underlying principle of the Tasmanian Government's Right to Information legislation which is that public organisations must be open, transparent and accountable. Schedule A provides further guidance relating to Right to Information.

2. General principles

Consistent with the *Communication and Brand Policy*, the University will:

- 2.1. Ensure appropriate consultation and opportunities for engagement and input in its decision making.
- 2.2. Ensure that its decisions and outcomes are transparent and appropriately communicated both internally and externally with consideration of the categories of disclosure in Schedule A of this procedure
- 2.3. Communicate in a way that is:
 - a) considered, planned and timely
 - b) prioritised for those who are impacted by a decision or an outcome
 - c) clear of purpose and appropriate for their intended audience
 - d) in plain, clear language that facilitates understanding
 - e) accurate, honest and authentic
 - f) consistent with established agreements and legislative obligations
 - g) compliant with privacy and confidentiality requirements.

3. Routinely communicated information

- 3.1. To ensure public transparency and accountability in University operations, the University will routinely communicate a range of institutional information publicly including:
 - a) Organisation structure and financial information (University Annual Reports, Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Annual Information Statement).

¹ University Council Ordinance

- b) Core information in relation to the University, including University mission and strategy, governance instruments and bodies (including key contact staff, membership and terms of reference).
 - c) University Council minutes (including key issues and decisions reported to Council from Council Committees and subsidiary companies).
 - d) Academic Senate meeting summaries (including details of key issues discussed and decisions made).
 - e) A log of all assessed disclosures made under the *Right to Information Act 2009* (Tas) with the applicant deidentified: and where an application fee waiver was sought and granted, and it is in the public interest, some or all of the disclosed information.
 - f) Public submissions made by the University to external organisations.
 - g) Any information that the University is required to make publicly available in accordance with legislative obligations (for example by regulatory bodies such as the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)).
- 3.2. Any additions to the routinely communicated institutional information will be approved by the relevant head of Division or College with responsibility for, and oversight of that information.
- 3.3. Published routinely communicated information will be readily accessible by the public through a single entry-point on the University’s website; the Public Reporting portal. This website is managed by the Office of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor (Division of the Vice-Chancellor) with individual academic and business units responsible for quality assuring, publishing and maintaining information that relates to that academic or business unit, including but not exclusively:

Routine communications	Relevant academic or business unit with portfolio accountability
Annual Reports	Office of Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, Division of the Vice-Chancellor
Public Submissions	Strategic Communications, Division of the Vice-Chancellor
Public Statements	Strategic Communications, Division of the Vice-Chancellor
Right to Information	Legal Services, Division of Student Services and Operations
Governance Instruments Framework	Governance and Compliance; Division of Student Services and Operations
Governance and Management Committees	Office of the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, Division of the Vice-Chancellor
Information required to be made public as part of regulatory compliance	Academic or business unit accountable under the relevant compliance plans

4. Consultation and communications

- 4.1. All projects, initiatives and change processes must be planned to ensure appropriate consultation and communication.
- 4.2. The manager of a project, initiative or change process will assess at the commencement what, if any elements of the project, initiative or change process will be communicated, to whom and by which channel(s).
- 4.3. The assessment process includes the following steps:
 - a) Clearly identify objectives and outputs.
 - b) Ensure all stakeholders and their relative stake in the process/outcomes/outputs are identified and prioritised.
 - c) Use the University's risk matrix and risk appetite statements to assess the residual risk of the project, initiative or change process (see the University's *Risk Management Procedure*).
 - d) Develop a formal or informal stakeholder consultation and communication plan which:
 - i. clearly defines the objective of the plan
 - ii. identifies the methods and tools for communicating with stakeholders to seek feedback (eg emails, surveys, interviews, focus groups, meetings, workshops) and/or to inform (eg email, web, social media)
 - iii. provides clear timeframes, and
 - iv. includes activities that are appropriate to the level of risk associated with the project, for example the nature and extent of the communication required would change in situations where the consequences of the change are more extensive.
 - e) Seek approval of the consultation and communication plan based on the level of risk determined in 4.1 of the *General Delegations Ordinance*.
 - f) Communicate with/engage with stakeholders according to the plan, and in the case of consultation, being clear about how feedback/input will be used and the possible impacts/influence it may have.
 - g) Analyse the feedback and incorporate into the project, initiative or change process.
- 4.4. Communicate final outputs and outcomes as per the stakeholder consultation and communication plan.
- 4.5. All communications to stakeholders will be made consistent with the principles in Section 2 and in accordance with the stakeholder consultation and communication plan and approved by an appropriate person with organisational accountability and delegation to accept the assessed level of residual risk. Advice on appropriate communications may be sought from the Strategic Communications team.

Related procedures

Risk Management Procedure

Versions

Version	Action	Approved By	Business Owner/s	Approval Date
1	Approved	Vice Chancellor	Executive Director, Division of the Vice-Chancellor	4 March 2024

Schedule A: (delete if not appropriate)

A. Information categories

Category	Disclosure type	Definition	Examples
Category 1 (UTAS choice)	Active Disclosure	This is information the University chooses to publish in accordance with the policy principles and procedure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding campus developments, University Council minutes. Summary outcomes of a School or Institute review.
Category 2 (UTAS choice)	Routine Disclosure	This is information that UTAS determines may be of public interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Reference for a project or review
Category 3 (Mandatory)	Required Disclosure	This is information required to be published by law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual reports Information required to be published under contracts or legislation.
Category 4 (Legal process)	Assessed Disclosure	This is assessed disclosures under the Right to Information Act 2009 (RTI Act) and should only occur as a last resort.	All assessed disclosures are undertaken by Right to Information Officers and published quarterly (if in public interest).