Current Students Communications Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) The University recognises that effective student communication benefits both the student and the University and is critical to achieving individual goals as well as University objectives. Engaging with students as partners in a proactive and appropriate manner fosters an informed student body, capable of making decisions that contribute to a fulfilling student experience, and leads to successful progression throughout the course.

(2) Effective communication supports the strategic goals of the University and contributes to an enriching and successful experience, in which students feel informed, engaged and respected. When ineffective, it has the potential to confuse, frustrate and mislead, which may result in disengagement and errors.

(3) The University acknowledges the right of students to expect timely, accurate and meaningful information affecting all aspects of student life and where practicable, delivered using their preferred channel. The University also respects the rights of students to choose which information they wish to receive, with the exception of official university correspondence.

(4) La Trobe employs a variety of methods, including but not limited to email, web, LMS, SMS and social media, to convey information to students related to their course, administration, services and support, co-curricular activities, marketing, surveys and security.

(5) This Procedure sets out the conditions under which the University community will communicate with current students. This Procedure applies to all communications to current students by any member of the university community.

(6) Given its importance to La Trobe University's overall strategy, La Trobe requires that all staff and students are familiar with and adhere to this Procedure in order to avert problems that may arise from engagement with students, and specifically to reduce information overload.

Section 2 - Scope

(7) In scope:

a. All campuses
b. All programs and courses, including online
c. All members of the university community, including casual staff

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(8) The University is committed to student-centric, accurate, timely and channel appropriate communications with current students, recognising that effective communications engage students as partners in the educational

experience, and contribute to a fulfilling student experience and successful progression.

(9) All current student communications should comply with University branding and be:

a. Student-centric: Communications take a student perspective.

b. Audience-specific: Communications are both targeted and tailored to the intended audience. Wherever possible, communications are personalised.

c. Accurate: Information is correct and up to date. Students know that the source of information is authoritative and can depend on it.

d. Respectful: Tone is polite, courteous and professional.

e. In Plain English: Language aligns with the Brand and Editorial Style Guide and is easily understood by a diverse audience.

f. Concise: Information is limited to key points and action-oriented. Links are provided to more detailed information and follow-up.

g. Timely and Responsive: Communications are aligned with the student life-cycle and based on content immediacy/relevance.

h. Channel appropriate: Information is conveyed in the most appropriate manner and where possible, the student's preferred channel.

i. Integrated: Information may compliment but not duplicate other sources.

(10) Official university correspondence is delivered by email as outlined in the Electronic Mail (Email) for Official Correspondence with Students Policy.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Student Communications Responsibilities

(11) Student Communications will:

a. Develop protocols and guidelines for effective communications with students

b. Provide resources, including training, to support staff to communicate effectively with current students and to ensure quality

c. Provide a range of mechanisms, including email, for communicating with students so that students know how and where to find information

d. Provide advice and support in the use of different communication tools to achieve optimum outcome

e. Provide mechanisms that allow students to self-identify areas of interest to opt-in and to unsubscribe from electronic communications relating to service and support, social and general information, and marketing and promotion

Part B - Staff Responsibilities

(12) All staff will:

a. Take a shared responsibility to comply with our obligations under the Threshold Standards

b. Adhere to this Policy, Procedures, Principles and Guidelines at all times

c. Understand and adhere to Commonwealth and State legislation and regulations where this applies to communication with students

d. Seek advice and training as necessary

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e. Respect, as much as practicable, student preferences for method of communication, including the student's right to opt out of communications other than official University correspondence

f. Practice audience segmentation to ensure messages are targeted to defined groups

g. Reduce email traffic and duplication as much as practicable by being aware of other communications that students receive and utilising other communication methods, such as News and Events http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/news-events or unit websites

h. Embed opportunities for student feedback

Part C - Student Responsibilities

(13) Students will:

a. Adhere to this Policy, Procedures and Guidelines at all times

b. Adhere to Commonwealth and State legislation and regulations where this applies to communication with students

c. Respect other student preferences for method and topic of communication, including the student's right to opt out of communications that are not official university correspondence

Part D - Channel Appropriateness

(14) The University communicates with students using a variety of methods and merging technologies, and it is incumbent on all staff to know which delivery method is best fit for purpose, including but not limited to the following:

a. Email

b. SMS

c. University or unit website

d. Unit-specific system

e. Student Portal

f. RightNow CRM

g. LMS

h. Social Media

i. Online chat

j. Print materials

(15) Where a federal or state law or policy or regulation of the University prescribes the manner in which certain correspondence must be sent, such prescription is to take precedence over the provisions of these procedures.

Part E - Nature of Communications

(16) The nature of student communications is varied:

a. Academic (teaching and learning) – including information about subject content, reading lists and assessments

b. Academic (non-teaching) – including organisational and/or administrative information about courses, programs, professional events, academic group events/activities and relevant milestones to current students

c. Administrative (academic and general) – including information about enrolment, fees, exams, timetabling, academic standing, academic integrity, graduate and general health and safety, library notices

d. Service and support – including developmental opportunities, service changes, updates

e. Social and general

f. Marketing and promotion

g. Surveys and feedback

h. Emergency, critical incident and security

(17) Director, Student Experience or the representative body will provide advice and support and monitor so that business units can achieve objectives within the effective student communications framework.

Part F - Channel and Responsibility Matrix

Communication Type	Communication Channel	Responsibility
Academic (teaching and learning)	Subject and course-based cohorts: - Primarily email and posts generated through the LMS - Web for general information - Appropriate mix of channels as advised by Student Communications	- Academic staff
Academic (non-teaching)	Subject and course-based cohorts: - Primarily email and posts generated through the LMS - Web for general information - Appropriate mix of channels as advised by Student Communications	- Academic staff - School staff
Academic (administrative and general)	To large cohorts: - weekly student blog* - blast emails* To individual students: - email - hard copy mail - SMS if requested by the student - Unit-specific system	- Student Communications - Academic and professional staff
Services and support	- Weekly student blog* - Events calendar* - La Trobe University Facebook* - Twitter - Unit-specific system - Appropriate mix of channels as advised by Student Communications	- Student Communications
Emergency	- Appropriate mix of channels as advised by Student Communications	- Director, Student Experience
Social and general information	- Weekly student blog* - Events calendar* - La Trobe University Facebook* - Twitter - Unit-specific system - Appropriate mix of channels as advised by Student Communications	- Academic and professional staff
Surveys and program evaluations	- University survey software** - Appropriate mix of channels as advised by Student Communications	- Data and Performance Analytics

* Must submit for approval or access to relevant authority.
** Must submit for approval for surveys in accordance with the Surveys Policy.

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Part G - Records Management

(18) The University is committed to compliance with standards established by [Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV)](#) and the Australian Standard for Records Management, ASISO 15489-2002.

(19) In order to ensure legislatively compliant recordkeeping practices are followed by all staff, the University has a framework for the creation and management of records within the University. Staff and business units involved in communicating with students are responsible for complying with the University's [Records Management Policy](#).

Section 5 - Definitions

(20) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

a. audience segmentation: the process of dividing people into sub groups based on defined criterion and characteristics, e.g. year level, career level and program or self-identified interest areas

b. current students: all students currently enrolled at La Trobe University, including those enrolled in online courses and through third party teaching partners, at all levels of study:
    i. Undergraduate
    ii. Postgraduate
    iii. Research Higher Degree
    iv. Non-award / short courses

c. official correspondence: correspondence created or received by a staff member or contractor of La Trobe University in the conduct of University business relating to the obligations or entitlements of students.

d. student communications: correspondence between La Trobe University and current students, using a variety of channels, including but not limited to mail, email, Facebook, web, Twitter and which can be:
    i. Academic (non-teaching) – including organisational and/or administrative information about courses, programs, professional events, Academic Group events/activities and relevant milestones to current students
    ii. Administrative (academic and general) – including information about enrolment, fees, exams, timetabling, academic standing, academic integrity, graduate and general health and safety
    iii. Service and support – including developmental opportunities, service changes, updates
    iv. Social and general
    v. Marketing and promotion
    vi. Surveys and feedback
    vii. Emergency, critical incident and security

Status and Details

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