UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA

COMMUNICATION POLICY

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The University of Rwanda is committed to effective communication, building relationships with its internal and external stakeholders and to form partnerships with the public and private sectors. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear principles and guidelines for internal and external communications in UR. The different roles and responsibilities within UR are made clear, what is communicated, and by whom. This policy will ensure that communication takes place in a coordinated and uniform way.

2.   GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

This Communication Policy seeks to ensure that the UR community acknowledges the importance of communications as a strategic management function and as an integral part of its daily functioning. It demonstrates that UR is committed to a transparent and effective exchange with internal and external stakeholders and that it will do so by a process of consultation and information dissemination. UR acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its internal and external stakeholders on relevant issues pertaining to its mandate, progress made and results achieved. The Corporate Communications Unit has the responsibility to ensure that all communications activities are done in accordance with this policy and procedures therein. This requires all communication and related activities to be coordinated and recommended by the Unit.

3.   POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Rwanda is committed to provide information to its internal and external stakeholders relevant to their respective roles and responsibilities in an accurate, timely and understandable manner. All communications must reflect and contribute to the achievement of UR's vision and core mission of teaching, doing research and community outreach activities.

4.   PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- This Policy seeks to provide guidelines for timely, effective and appropriate flow of information within UR and between the University and its external stakeholders. The aim is to assist University
- staff and students in fulfilling the educational, research and community outreach goals of the University.

5.   POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are:

- To streamline the flow of information within the University to promote efficient and effective management of the University and the educational, research and innovation, information sharing and networking activities of the University staff and students.
- To rationalize the flow of information between the University and its external stakeholders.
- To provide guidance for effective and responsible electronic, print and verbal communication.
- To provide a framework for integrated and consistent marketing and branding programmes aimed at enhancing the University's brand identity
- To establish mechanism for communication in times of crisis
- To provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of communication at UR with all its stakeholders

6.   COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure effective communication and compliance to the University Communication Policy, the following roles and responsibilities are adopted:

6.1   The Vice Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor is the Spokesperson of the University. S/he can delegate this responsibility to somebody else, though normally this would be one of the DVCs or Head of Corporate Communications Unit. The Vice Chancellor together with the Head of Corporate Communications Unit will be responsible for defining the annual communication priorities, objectives and requirements.

6.2   Heads of Units (Principals, Deans, Heads of Departments, Directors)

Heads of units are responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with the University communication policy and procedures
- Attending to media inquiries through the Corporate Communications Unit
- Ensuring that key communication issues and priorities are identified annually in line with the University communication strategy and
- Ensuring that their programmes have a communication action plan elaborated in consultation with the Corporate Communications Unit.

6.3   Head of Corporate Communications Unit.

The Head of Corporate Communications Unit serves as the key contact on all communication issues. S/he is responsible for co-coordinating all communication activities of the University. S/he is responsible for coordinating all interaction with the media, arranging media conferences, the issuing of media statements and handling media queries. S/he must ensure that the Communication policy and procedures are communicated to all staff and adhered to. S/he provides communication advice and counsel to the Vice Chancellor, DVCs, and all Heads of Units who need to interact with the media.

6.4   University Spokesperson

Although the Vice Chancellor is the spokesperson of the University, the University may designate a spokesperson depending on certain circumstances. S/he must be one of the most informed people about the University's vision, mission, objectives, values, challenges and activities after the Vice Chancellor to be able to articulate these to the media. S/he must attend important meetings or be briefed about them as soon as possible.

6.5   Corporate Communications Unit

The Corporate Communications Unit is responsible for coordinating all communications activities in the University. In this regard, the Corporate Communications Unit must support and coordinate all communication efforts with the main aim of enabling the Vice Chancellor or designated spokesperson to perform all functions as chief communicator of the University. The Unit shall provide strategic advice and counsel with regard to communication policy development, develop and implement communication plans and produce publications for information dissemination.

Communications officers are responsible for identifying communication issues, developing communication strategies, implementing and managing communication actions such as: campaigns, events, advertising, design and printing of communication materials, audio-visual, marketing and communication research.

6.6   Communication forum

Although Heads of Units are required to share all information they get access to (which has the potential of helping the staff to better understand and execute their responsibilities and thus contribute to the overall achievement of the University's vision, mission and objectives) there shall be established a University Communications Forum to ensure that important information is shared with academic and administrative managers of the University. This forum shall be convened quarterly and shall bring together members of the Senior Management Committee, Deans, Heads of Departments, Directors, Professors and Associate Professors. Besides, Colleges and Headquarters should plan for general meeting of both academic and administrative staff; such meeting should be held twice a year to inform staff about the University state of affairs.

7. COMMUNICATION PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS.

All the communications must be delivered in a regular and timely manner and internal communication must but not always precede the external communication. The following procedures and regulations govern this Communication Policy:

7.1 Media relations.

Corporate Communications Unit is the University's line of contact with the media and is responsible for coordinating all University media relations. The following procedures will guide how UR relates with the media.

- Before responding to media queries, the Corporate Communications Unit must be consulted. In a situation where this is not possible, the response must be given by the relevant Head of Unit and copied to Head of Communications.
- All media queries must be referred to Corporate Communications Unit who will then engage with the relevant line manager for appropriate response.
- Media queries should expeditiously be dealt with ideally within 24 hours. Inquiries received after working hours will only be dealt with the following working day unless there is obvious urgency or instructions to do so. Responses to media should be made through the respective channels of media houses. However, Corporate Communications Unit might use other means of communication that it deems appropriate.
- UR shall work towards building and maintaining positive relations with media
- Any information that goes out to the media must be approved by the Vice Chancellor or the designated spokesperson of the University.
- The Principal shall be the spokesperson at the College level and shall seek guidance from the Corporate Communication Unit when interacting with the media.
- Members of staff and students are urged to project a positive image of the University when interacting with the external world. When approached by the media they should always direct them to the Corporate Communication Unit or the Spokesperson of the University.
- Any communication having an impact on staff should be copied to members of SMC in advance or as soon thereafter.
- If a communication has an impact on students it should also be sent to the Student Guild President in advance or as soon thereafter, and every effort must be made to consult with the Guild President before sending out communications of this nature.

7.2 Internal communication

The main purpose of internal communications is to facilitate and manage the flow of information within the University in order to create an informed community that share the same vision and is committed to achieve it. Internal communication involves information about the University's core business and other useful information that staff need in order to perform their duties or projectthe good image of the University.

The following communications tools and techniques may be used for internal communications, although some of them are also used for external communication:

- Meetings of the staff in various units (College organs, School organs, Department organs, Administrative Units) where the Heads share all important information, especially resolutions of higher organs that they are members of;
- University website
- Intranet
- E-mails to members of Units or to categories of staff (academic staff, administrative staff, technical staff)
- Internal Management communiqués
- Notice Boards
- Posters and flyers
- Newsletters
- Workshops
- Short messages (SMS, WhatsApp)
- Minutes of meetings
- Memos
- Mailing lists (the use of a mailing list must be approved by a competent authority)
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Skype)
- Events, exhibitions, Open days and presentations
- Academic publications
- Any other channel that may be identified in accordance with this polic

7.3   External communication

The main purpose of external communications is to inform stakeholders of the University's vision, mission, objectives, activities, services and programmes. Different communication tools and techniques will be used to communicate and establish good relations with stakeholders:

- Billboards
- Broadcast media – Radio and Television
- Print media - Newspapers and the UR newsletter
- Road shows
- Conferences
- Internet
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Skype
- Events, exhibitions, Open days and presentations
- Academic publications
- Guest speeches
- Book launches
- Ceremonies (e.g. graduation, prize-giving, etc)

All external communication campaigns must be organized in collaboration and under the guidance of the Corporate Communications Unit.

7.4   Advertising

The Communication Unit is responsible for coordinating all advertising activities.

- All units advertising University activities must ensure that the information contained therein is accurate and up to date.
- The University logo must be included in all official communication regarding University of Rwanda, including presentations at scientific conferences, workshops, seminars. Staff and students should ensure that they do not misrepresent the logo in form or colour, and that when using it in conjunction with other organisations that they seek permission first. Similarly, staff and students must ensure that they do not use official logos or imprimaturs without permission.
- University of Rwanda shall refrain from adverts that may cause a reputation risk and erode its positive image and brand.

7.5   Corporate image

The Communications Unit is responsible for the corporate image of the University. This responsibility includes the following:

- The look and feel of the University in general
- The type of communication material to be used by the University such as the folders, letterheads, business cards.
- The way communication material is used and produced that is the font, use of logos, corporate identity and so forth. The logo shall be used as prescribed in the Branding Manual.

7.6   Marketing and branding

University of Rwanda branding aims at building a strong image in order to increase visibility, credibility and communicate a uniform message, influence choices of the internal and external public and build commitment among students, staff, alumni and other key stakeholders.

The Marketing Officer shall oversee the promotion and compliance with the University brand specifications and guidelines and advise the University administration on gaps and threats to the brand.

7.7   Procurement of communication materials

Communication materials include any type of publications such as newsletters, magazines, brochures, audiovisual materials and any other material intended to convey information to the public. The Corporate Communications Unit must be consulted on procurement of communication to

ensure consistence with the University Brand.

7.8   Website

The University website serves as its window to the public and as such the Corporate Communications Unit has the following responsibility:

- The Head of Communication Unit or a delegated official has the full responsibility of managing the University website.
- There shall be only one UR website and Units should not develop separate sites.
- Information will be uploaded on the website only after the approval of a Unit head or a delegated official.
- It is the responsibility of individual Units to provide information for their web pages.
- The creation of links on the University website and or acceptance of a link of the University website to another website will only be done after the approval of the Head of Corporate Communications Unit.
- The Chief Information Officer (CIO) is responsible for approving all IT related projects.
- The Corporate Communications Unit shall accommodate staff and students blogs on UR website as long as they reflect the mission and vision of University
- Webmasters shall be responsible for regularly scanning the website and advising heads of units to provide and update content
- Each academic unit shall designate a focal person for providing content for their Web pages as per UR ICT policy on its page 31 section B II.
- UR withholds the rights to use photographs and videos featuring its staff and students whenever deemed fit.

7.9   Social Media

- Staff and students should observe principles of integrity, professionalism and privacy when posting on social media.
- Corporate Communications Unit is the sole office responsible for posting content on the University social media accounts.
- The Student Guild Council shall create its own social accounts whose content will be managed by Student Guild President.
- The University shall not be held liable for any repercussions the employees and students' content may generate.
- On a general note, content pertaining to sensitive University information should not be shared with the outside online community. Divulging information such as the University's plans, internal operations and legal matters are prohibited and shall normally lead to disciplinary action.

7.10 Electronic communication

University of Rwanda recognizes Electronic Communication (e-mail and website) as an official mode of communication and information sharing to facilitate effective and efficient official communication. The University wishes to increase its 'green' credentials while maintaining appropriate formality in communication. The burden of paper used and then archived must be reduced.

Note

- The University does not support the use of physical letters when they can be scanned and sent electronically. Similarly, administrative officers in receipt of letters should refrain from printing them for the staff they work for.
- The University does widespread use of copying letters in physical form to multiple recipients; this should be done electronically.
- All staff and students must be assigned a University Email address by the Directorate of ICT.
- All staff and students are urged to regularly check the University website and their inbox for any official communication from the University. The Android app is another means to check for communications.
- To reply to any official electronic communication all staff and students must use official University e-mail address. Staff and students should use the recognized template for email signatures.
- All staff and students shall not disguise their identity, user name and origin of e-mail whenever they use the University e-mail system. Staff should not send anonymous emails.
- Staff and students must avoid from using abusive or discriminatory language in the e-mail subject or accompanying text.
- Staff and students must not share discriminatory or insulting messages, images or clips that do the rounds on social media.
- Staff and students should not press 'reply all' unless the group consent.
- The Chief Information Officer must regularly update mailing lists for ease of disseminating information to all staff and students.

7.11 Research communication

Communicating University research is first and foremost the responsibility of the Directorate of Research, Innovation, and Postgraduate Studies under the guidance of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research. This Directorate must develop mechanisms on how to disseminate research information to internal and external stakeholders. The Directorate must ensure that Intellectual Property is protected before dissemination. However, it must involve the Corporate Communication Unit to ensure that communicating research results is done in compliance with University brand guidelines.

8.   LANGUAGE POLICY AND TRANSLATIONS

English is the language of internal communication. Administrative and academic staff share the responsibility to ensure that our graduates are confident communicators in English.
For external communication, the University shall use either one or more of the official languages

of the Republic of Rwanda depending on the target audience.

9. EXHIBITIONS

All Units taking part in fairs and exhibitions on behalf of the University must do so in consultation with the Corporate Communication Unit that is responsible for branding and corporate identity of the University.

10. EVENTS

Events must be organized in consultation with Corporate Communication Unit. The Communications Unit shall take full responsibility for media, publicity and branding.

11. CAPACITY BUILDING

To be effective communicators, staff skills will be continuously upgraded. The Corporate Communications Unit shall identify needed training courses for communicators and other officials who interact with media and public.

12. COMMUNICATION IN SITUATION OF CRISIS

A crisis is an unusual situation that requires a quick and immediate reaction. Every organization is likely to face a situation of crisis. However, it is important that a framework for such context exist. In the event of crisis, the following quick action should be taken:

- The manager in whose area of responsibility the crisis occurs must quickly inform her/his Head of Unit.
- The Vice Chancellor as the Spokesperson of the University must be informed immediately, and s/he will in turn immediately inform members of SMC.
- A Crisis Committee involving at least one member of the Senior Management Committee, relevant officials and Head of Communications Unit is a standing committee of the University.
- The committee is responsible for the plan of action in the event of crises, including the cascade of communication.
- The Crisis Committee will manage the issue, communication thereof and release the necessary statements to relevant stakeholders.
- Depending on the situation and the language of engagement the Vice Chancellor will designate a University Senior Manager, who is a member of the Crisis Committee, to act as spokesperson.
- In the event of a crisis no-one except the Senior Manager is permitted to deliver a media statement or interview.
- Staff members and students will be kept informed of the situation using all means of communication.

13. STRUCTURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There shall be established at the University Headquarters a Corporate Communications Unit which reports to the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Institutional Advancement. The Corporate Communication Unit shall be responsible of coordinating all communication activities of the University as elaborated above. The Corporate Communications Unit shall be adequately staffed by competent communication officers responsible for protecting the brand image of the University. Colleges will be supported by communications officers who work under the strategic guidance of Corporate Communications Unit to ensure that all Public Relations activities of the College are adequately and timely covered. Some campuses will have resident PROs.

14. ENFORCEMENT

- The University Senior Management will ensure that UR has the structures and procedures necessary to secure effective communication both internally and externally.
- Each member of staff and student is responsible for quality of their personal communication. Senior managers will be responsible for communication standards within their area of expertise

15. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The University Senior Manager and the Corporate Communication Unit will monitor the implementation of this policy and review and update it every 3-years to ensure that UR is effectively and efficiently communicating with its internal and external stakeholder.

16. PROCEDURES AND COMPLIANCE

This policy is initiated to ensure that the University engages in a well-coordinated manner with regards to communication and communicates in a standardized manner with consistent messages. Adherence to the policy will result in a coherent image for the University. This communication policy and its procedures are applicable to all staff members and students of the University.

November, 2017

Prof Philip Cotton
The Vice Chancellor