

# T20/21 Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

**School/ Directorate**

Everyone

**Person Responsible**

Roddy Isles

**Created**

19th August, 2020

**Last Review**

19th August, 2020

**Status**

Complete

**Next Review**

11th January, 2021

## Screening Data

What is the name/title of the policy/activity?

T20/21 Communications and Stakeholder Engagement work stream

Describe the aim, objective and intended consequences of the policy/activity.

To provide information on the T20/21 programme deliverables, plans and priorities, to influence students(returners) and applicants to come to Dundee, to present the T20/21 programme in a transparent way and to engage with and listen to stakeholders to inform the overall project

Who is responsible for the policy/activity and who implements it?

The Work stream is being led by the Deputy Director of IT and is part of the wider Toward 2020/2021 project, which is led by the Vice Principle Education.

It is implemented by all of the work streams that form part of the Toward 2020/2021 project.

Who is effected by this policy?

The activity impacts on all staff, current and prospective students and all those involved in the T20/21 project.

Is there any indication that this policy is relevant to equality and the protected characteristics or that those with any of the protected characteristics will have a different experience in relation to the intended outcomes of the policy?

The activity is relevant to EDI in so far as the staff and student body of the university is diverse and includes those with disabilities, those with caring responsibilities and those from different nationalities. In communicating with a wide audience the work must take account of different media, communication styles and also needs of individuals. Communication needs to be clear, supportive, accurate and accessible

In relation to disability, communications need to be accessible and therefore the use of a range of media platforms used to engage with staff , students and visitors.

Communications cover a broad range of subjects including advice on Covid 19, details of courses and modules, opening campus, graduation, support for staff and students, welcome procedure for new students and staffing

arrangements and activity.

All of these need to take account of disability. Around 4% of staff have disclosed a disability, although this is known to be higher, and around 1700 students are registered with our Disability Services for support and this number continues to rise year on year.

In relation to age, there are two distinct age groups in relation to communication - staff who have an average age in the 40's and students, whose average age is in the early 20's. This requires making use of a variety of communication methods, including social media

In relation to race, around 3000 to 4000 of our students are either European or international students and communication relating to the ability to study or return to campus is vital. Without clear communication, those students may not come or choose to study at Dundee.

## Recommend this EA for Full Analysis?

Yes

## Comments

The Communication and Engagement aspect of the Toward 2020/2021 Project is relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion and in particular the protected characteristics of age, race, disability and gender. The approach to our communication and engagement can contribute to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for both staff and students.

In relation to age, the main point to make is the difference in the communication methods used by the students and staff and to have information available across different platforms to ensure both groups have access to that information.

Disability is relevant because of the various types of disability that are related to communication and information. For that reason messaging should be clear, available for use on a range of platforms that provide assistance for those with disabilities and also inclusive of the situation for staff and students with disabilities or health concerns. This provides reassurance that the disabled persons experience is being taken into account throughout the project.

In relation to gender, the concern for both staff and students is the disproportionate impact on women who are also carers for children and others. The continuous message to reassure people that their position is understood and the understanding that their work performance is likely to be affected by those additional responsibilities is vital. In addition clarity on 'no detriment' decisions that caring responsibilities are taken cognisance of is important. This will extend to the return to campus, with concerns of returning whilst caring for a vulnerable person.

In relation to race, there are a number of issues that can be reflected and considered in communication. The first is how communications are available to all staff and students, nationally and internationally. This is related to the digital reach and availability. Another is to the continued messaging relating to how teaching will deliver the necessary level of knowledge remotely; information on the situation as it changes in Scotland and the UK and in particular what has been done on Dundee to re-assure and encourage students and staff that the campus is safe to return to. Information to international current and potential students about how they will apply, matriculate, come to Dundee, study and graduate are all important to the reassurance we provide. Another issue that has arisen is the continuing change in lock down and travel restrictions imposed by the UK and other countries. Acknowledgement of this should be reflected in key messages to reassure students. Although not a protected characteristic, there is an impact of the situation on those who are more financially challenged and messaging about availability of financial support should be clear, particularly in the event of rising costs of travel and equipment. This will support students for the MD20 and MD40 categories, as well as those international students affected by increased travel costs and reduced availability for flights.

## Rate this EA

Low

## Impact Assessment Data

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Age?

- Yes

It is relevant in so far as there are two clear age groups of people affected by the pandemic in the university setting; the staff group which has an average age over 40 and the student body, with an average age in their early 20's. Each of these age groups rely on different modes of communication, with the younger group more likely to engage through social media and apps. Communications should be available across a range of platforms to accommodate the different groups.

It should also be noted however that communications, irrespective of how they are delivered, should be clear, accessible, accurate and relevant.

Although different platforms should be available, messages should be through a controlled route to avoid mixed messaging and confusion (External Relations)

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Disability?

- Yes

Those with disabilities or limiting conditions may have a number of issues to contend with in relation to communication and information. The first is whether information will be in an accessible form that will allow individuals to access it and understand it, for that reason information should be clear and in a format that can be easily accessed and understood by assistive technology where required. In addition, relevant information should reflect the needs of disabled staff, for example information on return to campus should include specific directions for those with disabilities.

A single point to access information on any platform removes potential for anxiety and confusion.

Engagement with Disability Services and the Disabled Staff Network in the wider planning should be a key part of the overall project.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Gender Reassignment?

- No

In relation to the T20/21 project there is no relevance specific to gender re-assignment. However information on support for gender re-assignment should be easily available as a norm.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Marriage and Civil Partnership?

- No

There is no specific relevance to Marriage and Civil Partnership in the T20/21 project that necessitates communication and engagement

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Pregnancy and Maternity?

- Yes

Only in so far as those staff and students who are pregnant or caring for small children are on the 'at risk' group for returning to campus and this should be taken account of in all communications relating to returning and risk assessment. They should continue to be supported through the university policies for maternity and other family friendly leave.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Race?

- Yes

Race is relevant for a number of reasons:

A significant number of the University students body are international and European students. The Covid 19 situation, although a worldwide pandemic, has had different implications across the world, resulting in different steps being taken with regard to testing, quarantine, distancing, travel and culture.

To ensure that messages for overseas students are relevant, the University must be aware of this changing landscape and ensure that the key messages regarding employment, matriculation, study, safety and support are clear. These messages need to take cognisance of the broad range of circumstances staff and students find themselves in.

The use of a variety of messaging options supports the international reach of information and engagement through University links to the international audience is vital to understanding what is required and what the challenges are.

One area that has raised growing concerns is the apparent increased risk to minority ethnic groups to Covid 19 and it is important that this is recognized in the information being distributed, especially with regard to travel and arriving on campus procedures.

Language differences can be overcome by the use of clear English in messages and information, to ensure there is clarity for the reader.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Religion and Belief?

- Yes

Although there has been some evidence of gatherings of worshipers identifying as 'hot spots' for the virus across the world, the overall guidance and government rules relating to Covid 19 are all encompassing, irrespective of faith groups.

University communications should include Chaplaincy support as part of the wider messages of support for staff and students. The Chaplaincy supports all faith groups.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Sex?

- Yes

There is clear evidence of differences in risk relating to gender and age and those risks should be identified in any relevant communication.

There has also been a disproportionate impact on women as the main carers of children and family members and this has come about because of the lock down situation and trying to balance workload with these responsibilities.

Although not directly linked to communication, engagement with staff to gauge the level of this and other issues is important, in order that support can be provided and an understanding of the limitations of the individuals work performance and risk of stress is gleaned. Messages reminding all staff and their managers and students and their advisers of the need for self care and balance is vital and should be given out regularly to support any staff or student member, irrespective of gender, who find themselves in this challenging situation.

Is this policy relevant to the protected characteristic of Sexual Orientation?

- No

The communications and engagement for the overall project do not have a specific relevance to sexual orientation.

Taking account of the findings so far, is there a possibility that the implementation of this policy would result in a different experience or a detriment for those with protected characteristics?

- Yes

Working remotely and communicating remotely raises a number of equality related issues for the University to address:

How do we ensure everyone can get access to the information?

Is the information clear and can be understood across a broad, international audience?

Does the information address the challenges and anxieties of the reader?

Does the information provide a point of contact for support?

Does the information make specific reference to those that are likely affected more by the different aspects of the T20/21 Project?

Is the information flexible enough to take account of the ever changing landscape and focus on key matters?

These issues are a particular relevance to the protected characteristics of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race and sex. In relation to age, there are two clear age groups that need to be reached and engaged, the older staff group and the younger student group. For disability there are the issues of accessing information, increased risk to Covid for some, information on specific matters that may affect those with disabilities i.e. wearing face masks and changes to routes around campus.

For pregnancy, the issue around increased risk to Covid and the continued support through existing University leave policies, and the increased workload and workload management when combined with caring responsibilities or home education needs.

In relation to race there are implications for access to information due to connectivity and also reassurance relating to the international situation around Covid 19.

Information to support these has come through from Disables Staff Network members, Athena SWAN groups, Disability Services feedback, news reports, information from THE and Advance HE amongst others.

Based on your findings so far, what recommendations or changes (if any) would you make in relation to the

policy and its implementation?

The overall aims of the policy are inclusive, however it is important that the Working Group continue to take feedback from staff and students through a variety of means, as well as changing guidance and information coming from external sources, such as Advance HE and others.

Information on emerging evidence of vulnerability of specific groups should also be monitored to ensure that information is cognizant of that where relevant.

No changes are required at this stage, other than to ensure that the monitoring of the landscape relating to Covid and its implications for the protected groups are taken account of.

Continued supportive messages relating to all aspects of the University will help support all staff, current and prospective students to feel confident in the work being done by the University.

Pulse or experience surveys of staff and students - these have successfully led to some improvement in the messaging and information going out to improve clarity

Monitoring of current news, Home Office and NHS information on travel, quarantine, vulnerability should be reflected in information to ensure information is current

Engagement with staff and student groups, including BME, Disables and LGBT groups to identify any gaps in the current information being disseminated.

Where you have recommended actions/changes to the policy, what are the timescales for completion of these

30-09-2020

What monitoring arrangements do you have in place to identify changes in any impact or relevance?

Pulse checks for staff

Student/applicant feedback through complaints or compliments

Student surveys

Disability Services surveys

## Comments

The communication and engagement work provides an opportunity to eliminate unlawful or unintended discrimination and promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that the different circumstances faced by staff and students, related to protected characteristics, is recognised if message, information that is distributed. Using a variety of communication means, listening to feedback and continually understanding the landscape around Covid19 helps ensure current messaging and information is relevant where required.

The strategy for engagement and communication is sound and the activity needs to continue to take account of the changing landscape and monitoring of feedback from staff, student and concerned parties regarding the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy.

In addition, transparency in the Toward 2020/2021 project through effective communication and engagement provides a wide understanding of the Universities commitment to supporting its community.

## Organisation Sign-off Data

Having read the EIA, do you approve its findings and recommendations?

- Yes

What are your reasons for approving/not approving the EIA?

This covers all of the areas of communications for the T20/21 programme.

If you have approved the EIA, do you agree with the monitoring arrangements in place?

- Yes

Good governance in messaging, with robust sign-off procedures to help ensure quality, clarity and consistency of messaging.

Where you have not approved the monitoring process, what other steps do you require to be taken?

No other steps recommended at this time

## **Comments**

We have good procedures in place to ensure flow of information to staff and students in relation to the T20/21 programme.

## **Next Review Date**

2021-01-11

## **Outstanding Actions**

No outstanding actions