



MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MUST)

COMMUNICATION POLICY 2024

Approval Level 1	Communication Office	Approved
Approval Level 2	Internal University Policies Committee	Approved
Approval Level 3	University Top Management	Approved
Approval Level 4	Legal, Rules & Privileges Committee	Approved
Approval Level 5	Finance, Planning & Development Committee of Council	Approved
Approval Level 6	University Council	Pending

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

COC:	Communication Oversight Committee
CO:	Communication Officer
IRO:	International Relations Officer
IP:	Intellectual Property
MUST:	Mbarara University of Science and Technology
PRO:	Public Relations Officer
PWDs:	People With Disabilities
UOTIA:	Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act
VC:	Vice Chancellor

Definition of Key Concepts

In this policy, unless the context otherwise requires-

- a) “**Brand**” means a process of creating a strong and positive perception of Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) and its products to the public, by using the University logo, colors, name and motto.
- b) “**Communication function**” means activities that involve the generation and transmission of information;
- c) “**Communication Officer**” means the Public Relations Officer and or International Relations Officer of MUST.
- d) “**Crisis communication**” means communication resorted to during a crisis.
- e) “**faculty**” means the teaching staff of the University.
- f) “**MUST convocation**” means an association that brings together all MUST alumni for a purpose of developing their alma mater.
- g) “**Non-verbal communication**” means the process of conveying information and ideas through non-linguistic means such as body language, facial expressions, gestures, visual aids and branding elements.
- h) “**Official communication**” means any formal communication that involves the exchange of vital University information among its stakeholders through official channels and designated persons.
- i) “**International Relations Office**” means the office within MUST that focuses on global connections and collaborations. It is a bridge between the institution and the international community.
- j) “**Public Relations Office**” means the office where the communication officers in charge of public relations and international relations are based.
- k) “**Staff associations**” means Mbarara University of Science Technology Academic Staff Association (MUSTASA), MUST Staff Administrators’ forum (SAF), National Union of Education Institutions in Uganda (NUEIU)-MUST Branch.
- l) “**Students**” means fully registered University students of MUST.

Declaration

This policy is approved and admitted with all its modifications by Mbarara University of Science and Technology Council as per the Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 (as amended) as **“MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMUNICATION POLICY”** on this.....day of2024.

Signed

.....
Prof. Celestino Obuga
VICE CHANCELLOR

.....
Dr. Warren Naamara
CHAIRPERSON, MUST COUNCIL

Preamble

Mbarara University of Science and Technology was founded in 1989, as laid out in the MUST Statute of that year. It stands today as a distinguished institution under the governance of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA) of 2001, as subsequently amended.

Understanding the crucial role communication plays in an organization, MUST prioritizes clear and effective communication. It recognizes that for the University to meet its objectives while maintaining a harmonious work environment, a well-structured communication strategy and policy is vital.

In the absence of a clear communication policy, the University could face challenges stemming from misinformation. Such challenges can disrupt internal operations and tarnish MUST's external reputation. Thus, to prevent the spread of incorrect information and ensure that all stakeholders are accurately and timely informed, MUST has instituted this communication policy.

This policy will serve to channel information efficiently within the University community. It aims to make sure that crucial decisions and announcements reach the appropriate parties through both internal and external means.

Consequently, for the seamless functioning of MUST, it is mandatory for staff, students, and all associated stakeholders to adhere to this communication policy.



Foreword by the Vice Chancellor

This communication policy stipulates how Mbarara University of Science and Technology will handle communication with all stakeholders. As an institution, we need a well-defined system of communication to avoid confusion about how we communicate, how information is shared, and whom it should be shared with.

As management, we encourage communication between the University and its stakeholders as a two-way process. This is referred to as open communication from the governance organs to its stakeholders and a system that encourages feedback. The University pledges full support to provide the necessary communication infrastructure to ensure that information reaches its targeted stakeholders using the most effective means.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the MUST University Council led by Dr. Warren Namaara, the Legal Rules and Privileges Committee led by Ms. Sarah Nyachwo Mwaka, Top Management, the Internal University Policies Committee, staff, students and staff associations. Special thanks to Ms. Angella Nakato Muyingo, the Public Relations Officer, Ms. Niinye Sheila Twinamatsiko, the International Relations Officer and Mr. Timothy Mugumya (Esq), the Legal Officer for their exceptional contributions to developing this policy. Their dedication ensures that our communication strategy aligns with our strategic goals, enhancing our engagement and outreach.

The policy puts in place a solid communication structure that will give every face of the University adequate visibility. The structure will ensure that academic, research, innovation and community engagement activities are anchored on different communication platforms to reach the targeted stakeholders.

Communication of research from scholars and students will be prioritized as a primary output of the revamped communication office to ensure that the University capitalizes on digital communication or web-based technology, which has become a new norm of communication. We shall support the communication team to always have timely and effective communication to the stakeholders.

Our major goal is to focus on creating mutual understanding with our stakeholders and ensure that our products and services are available through different interactive forums. The policy demonstrates that MUST is among organizations that have embraced best communication practices. It defines how communication is structured and practiced. The University has chosen this path to realize its vision, mission and goals of moving towards world-class academic excellence and become an icon of Science, Technology and innovation.

We appreciate feedback in any format as the best way of strengthening the MUST brand and creating visibility at national and international levels. Management commits itself to the implementation of this policy and will subject it to a periodic review to ensure its relevance in line with changing times.

Prof. Celestino Obua

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1. Introduction

The MUST communication policy aims to promote a clear understanding of the University's mission, vision, and strategic goals among its diverse stakeholders. According to its vision and mission, MUST aims to become a centre of academic and professional excellence in science and technology emphasizing its application for community development. The overarching goal of the MUST strategic plan is to offer efficient and effective education in science and technology for development, a precondition for prosperity for all. This policy outlines the communication channels and responsible offices, highlighting the University's commitment to its effective implementation.

2. Policy Context

At MUST, communication is a pivotal element in executing the strategic plan set for 2020/21 through 2024/25. From its humble beginnings in 1989 with a single faculty serving 43 students, MUST has now evolved into a comprehensive institution, comprising 6 faculties, a research institute, and the Centre for Innovations and Technology Transfer (CITT). Today, the University proudly educates over 5,000 students.

This notable expansion in the University's structure underscores the need for well-defined policy and legal frameworks. These guidelines will direct and shape the interactions among the various stakeholders within the MUST community. This policy applies to both internal and external stakeholders.

This policy outlines the essential requirements for all communications within the University. It is complemented by detailed communication policy guidelines, which provide comprehensive strategies, procedures and standards for implementation, ensuring a cohesive approach across all University communications.

3. Problem Statement

Historically, MUST's communication practices predominantly relied on informal and discretionary methods, rather than established institutionalized processes. This approach occasionally led to miscommunications, casting a shadow over the University's image and reputation. Notably there was a lack of clarity in coordinating both internal and external communication, threatening to compromise the integrity of MUST. Several instances of such unstructured communications had culminated in misunderstandings, fostering discord among students, staff, and external stakeholders. In response to these challenges, MUST University Council instituted this robust communication policy designed to establish clear structured and institutionalized communication processes. This policy is aimed at rectifying past issues by enhancing transparency and coordination, thereby upholding the University's integrity and improving its overall communications framework.

4. Legal Framework

This policy is crafted considering a wide range of guidelines: from existing institutional regulations to national and international legislative norms, human rights instruments, and communication standards.

a) National Context

- (i). **Article 29(1)(a) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda:** This Article safeguards every individual's right to freedom of speech and expression which shall include freedom of press and other media.
- (ii). **Article 29(1) (b) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda:** This Article safeguards every individual's right to freedom of thought, conscience, belief, and, notably, academic freedom in learning institutions.
- (iii). **Article 41(1) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda:** It grants every citizen the "right of access to information held by the State or any of its organs or agencies." Exceptions to this rule, under specific and clear circumstances include, releasing information might compromise the security or sovereignty of the State and disclosing information might infringe on another person's right to privacy.
- (iv). **The Access to Information Act, 2005:** Aligned with Article 41(2) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, its primary objectives include fostering transparency, accountability, and public empowerment.
- (v). **The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility (1990):** This emphasizes "Intellectual Rights and Freedoms" and defines state obligations and the intellectual community's responsibilities.
- (vi). **The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA), 2001** (as amended).
- (vii). **MUST's policies**, accessible on the MUST website <https://www.must.ac.ug/university -policies/>

b) International Context

- (i). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** Article 19 emphasizes the freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to hold opinions without interference and seek, receive, and impart information and ideas.
- (ii). **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966):** Article 19 safeguards the right to freedom of a person's opinion and expression, which encompasses freedom to seek, receive, and impart information of all kinds regardless of frontiers, orally either in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his/her choice.
- (iii). **UNESCO's Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989):** This emphasizes the importance of access to information and the role of communication in educational institutions. With respect to the aforementioned National and International laws, norms, practices, and Human Rights instruments, this policy is sculpted to be comprehensive and all-encompassing.

5. Policy Statement and Justification

The communication policy is premised at streamlining the MUST communication processes and generates proper communication outputs. The development of this policy therefore aims at enhancing communication processes within and outside MUST.

6. Purpose of the policy

The Policy seeks to provide a framework for MUST's communication activities and to create effective and transparent communication channels that align with the values and goals of the University, enabling stakeholders to efficiently fulfill their mandate in support of the University mission and vision.

7. Objectives of the policy

The objectives of the policy are to;

- a) Streamline the flow of information within and outside the University in order to promote transparency and openness in all University operations,
- b) Provide a framework to strengthen and uphold the University's corporate brand to promote visibility.
- c) Enhance collaboration and partnerships among all stakeholders,
- d) Provide efficient and effective communication mechanisms among management, staff, students and other stakeholders,
- e) Promote the use of appropriate channels of communication.

8. Scope

The MUST Communication Policy covers all members of staff, students and related parties such as alumni, service providers and the public. The policy applies to all involved in University activities regardless of whether in, on or off campus setting.

9. Principles of Communication

MUST emphasizes the following principles of communication

- a) **Transparency:** All communications will be open, honest, and transparent, without compromising the University's confidentiality agreements.
- b) **Responsibility:** All individuals representing the University must take responsibility for the accuracy and appropriateness of their communications.
- c) **Timeliness:** Information, especially critical updates, should be communicated promptly.
- d) **Respect and Inclusiveness:** All communication must respect privacy laws, cultural sensitivities, and individual rights. Communication shall be accommodative to all stakeholders regardless of one's disability, gender, ethnicity, social status, age and race.
- e) **Consistency:** Communication shall always be consistent with the policies, plans, programmes and objectives of the University.
- f) **Clarity:** The objective for communicating shall be clear from the outset.
- g) **Accuracy:** Communication shall be accurate and precise.

10. Spokesperson of the University

- a) The Vice Chancellor or his delegate shall be the Chief Spokesperson of the University.
- b) The University Secretary who is the secretary to both University Council and Top management shall be their delegated spokesperson.
- c) The Academic Registrar who is the secretary to the Senate shall be the delegated spokesperson.
- d) The Dean of Students shall be the delegated spokesperson about students' affairs.
- e) The Head of the Public Relations Office shall be the delegated public relations official spokesperson of the University.
- f) The International Relations Officer shall be the delegated staff in charge of International Relations.
- g) The Guild President on behalf of the Students' Guild, shall communicate to both students and management.
- h) The chairpersons of the recognised staff associations shall be their delegated spokespersons.

Depending on the subject matter, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Heads of Administrative Departments, Heads of Faculties, Heads of Units and / or their designated representatives will provide the Vice Chancellor or delegate, or any authorized substantive officer with the required information on matters within their areas of expertise.

- i) Each Faculty will have a designated Communications Coordinator who will coordinate the Faculty's communications needs with the Communications Department and be a point of call on technical matters where a need arises, to create synergies and enable the communication of all the University's services at any given opportunity.

11. Stakeholders

The University recognises a broad range of stakeholders that are both internal and external. The University appreciates and considers the needs, interests and roles of stakeholders to ensure effective and inclusive communication. This is vital for building connections, managing expectations and achieving success.

11.1 Internal Stakeholders

This policy recognizes the following as primary stakeholders; students, academic staff, administrative staff, support staff and University governance. The University's internal stakeholders play an important role in shaping, implementing and adhering to the communication policy.

11.2 External Stakeholders

The University recognises that the external stakeholders are integral to its communication ecosystem and include; alumni, parents/guardians, governmental and regulatory bodies, suppliers, media,

national partnering institutions and organisations, international partners and collaborators and the public.

12. Types and forms of communication

The University commits to using diverse communication types. The different types of communication intersect and complement each other to facilitate effective communication and collaboration within the University environment, supporting its vision and mission.

12.1. Written communication

Written communication is crucial for conveying information in a clear, concise, and documented manner. It helps maintain records, facilitates academic and administrative processes, and ensures that messages are accurately conveyed and understood. Written communication at MUST will take on various channels including; emails, letters, newsletters, reports, memos, academic papers, assignments, syllabi, noticeboards, and official documents such as policies and procedures manuals.

12.2. Verbal Communication

Oral communication fosters interpersonal connections, facilitates immediate feedback and clarification, and enhances engagement and interaction among students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders within the University community.

Oral communication includes the use of spoken words, either face-to-face conversations, lectures, presentations, discussions, meetings or through telecommunication devices like phone calls and online engagements.

12.3. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is an important aspect of communication at MUST and can convey just as much information as spoken words. The University is mindful of inclusivity in communication. Non-verbal communication, including facial expressions, gestures, body language, and the space between people during interactions, is crucial at MUST. It often conveys as much information as spoken words. MUST is committed to promoting an inclusive environment that values these non-verbal cues in both in-person and virtual settings.

12.3.1 Non-verbal Communication for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

- a) The University is committed to create an environment that is safe for PWDs.
- b) Appropriate alternatives shall be provided to ensure communication accessibility for PWDs. This is essential for promoting inclusivity and equal access to education and information fostering a supportive for all members of the University community.
- c) Communication for PWDs involves providing accessible formats such as Braille, large print, or audio recordings for written materials. It also includes using sign language interpreters for oral communication and ensuring that digital content is compatible with screen readers and assistive technologies.

12.3.2 Non-verbal Communication in form of branding

Branding communicates the University's identity, values, reputation, and academic offerings to internal and external stakeholders. It helps establish a distinct and memorable identity, builds trust and loyalty, and influences perceptions and attitudes toward MUST, contributing to its overall success and competitiveness in the higher education landscape. Nonverbal communication through branding includes the university's logo, colors, typography, imagery used in marketing materials, signage, websites, and promotional campaigns.

12.3.3 Electronic Communication

The University will utilize electronic communication that enables real-time communication across geographical distances, facilitates collaboration and information sharing, and supports remote learning, administrative functions, and outreach efforts in a technologically interconnected world. Electronic communication encompasses emails, instant messaging, University website, online forums, video conferences, social media platforms, and other digital channels.

Public Relations Office shall work with the Information Technology Department to consider, evaluate and recommend new digital communication channels for use by the University. The University shall retain and specify ownership of all its Social Media handles and further clarify on the management and use of access/login credentials.

12.4 Meetings

Meetings in a university context can include faculty meetings, departmental meetings, committee meetings, student council meetings, academic advising sessions, and project team meetings. Meetings provide opportunities for stakeholders to collaborate, make decisions, address issues, disseminate information and share updates. They promote transparency, accountability, and teamwork, facilitating effective communication and decision-making processes within the University community.

13. Internal and External Communication

A structured flow of communication is maintained within the University hierarchy, facilitating clear and efficient exchange of information internally and externally. Designated heads communicate on behalf of their Units or Department through the approval of the existing structures.

14. Language of Communication

English will be the official and business language. Whenever necessary, the University will endeavor to communicate in the different local languages to the extent possible. Communication between and amongst the MUST community shall be professional at all times. The use of vulgar, obscene, insulting, sexist, racist, insensitive or defamatory language and or remarks is prohibited.

15. Crisis Communication

The University shall undertake a proactive and pre-emptive approach in dealing with crisis communication, i.e. appropriate and timely disclosure of information before, during, and after a crisis.

The University shall leverage and integrate the use of digital communication in the delivery of its crisis messaging.

16. Communication Oversight Committee (COC)

The Communication Oversight Committee (COC) will be established to ensure the effective formulation, revision, and oversight of the MUST communication policy. Comprising diverse representatives such as the Communication Officer in charge of Public Relations, Communication Officer in charge of International Relations, Faculty communication coordinators, and the Head of the Computing Service Unit, the COC will be chaired by an appointee of the Vice Chancellor, who holds discretion in finalizing committee appointments.

To support the COC's functions, a dedicated communication office will be established, staffed by relevant personnel, and supervised by the Vice Chancellor to ensure effective operation. This office will serve as the secretariat, providing administrative and logistical support to the COC. Additionally, for the efficient implementation of the communication policy, the Vice Chancellor will oversee its execution in collaboration with relevant offices, developing an implementation strategy in consultation with faculties, institutes, directorates, and other relevant units.

17. Events, Protocol and Guest Relations

To ensure seamless coordination and a favorable experience for all stakeholders, the Public Relations Office and/or Communication Office will take the lead in managing protocol and organizing events. Their responsibilities include overseeing guest relations and upholding the professional standards that reflect the values of MUST.

18. Corporate Branding and Marketing

- a) The University shall develop a Corporate Branding and Marketing Manual/Guidelines for the promotion of MUST's identity and visibility. Branding shall include name, logo, colors, taglines and flag.
- b) Corporate Advertising: MUST engages in corporate advertising to enhance its visibility and partnerships. Such advertising efforts must be consistent with the University's brand identity and uphold the standards of ethical marketing. All corporate advertising campaigns are subject to review and approval by the Communications office to ensure alignment with the University's values and strategic goals. Corporate advertising shall:
 - i. Be truthful and non-deceptive and must comply with existing legal frameworks.
 - ii. Respect the cultural values and norms of all stakeholders.
 - iii. Be placed in contexts that reflect positively on the University's image.

19. Protection and use of MUST Intellectual Property

All Intellectual Property (IP) of MUST, including but not limited to logos, names, patents, and trademarks, is the exclusive property of the University. The use of any such intellectual property for any purpose requires prior clearance from both the Legal and Public Relations Offices, with final approval by the Vice Chancellor in accordance with the relevant University IP policy.

Unauthorized use, reproduction, misrepresentation, or representation of MUST's intellectual property is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action for staff and students and legal action for external parties. The University reserves the right to seek all available legal remedies to protect its intellectual property rights.

20. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Public Relations Office holds the primary responsibility for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) pertaining to communications and the communications policy. Regular reports highlighting the key performance indicators will be presented to the University management on both a quarterly and annual basis.

21. Dissemination of the Policy

To ensure all stakeholders are abreast with the policy and any of its changes, the following measures will be undertaken:

- a) Organising workshops and seminars specifically designed for policy dissemination, promoting clarity and understanding among all members of the University.
- b) Digitally distributing the policy in the form of soft copies to students, staff, and external stakeholders. This will be achieved through dedicated email campaigns and easy accessibility on the University's official website.

22. Violation

Any breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action, which may include but is not limited to written warnings, suspension, or expulsion for students and written warnings, suspension, or termination of employment for staff, based on the severity and nature of the violation. The disciplinary process will be conducted in accordance with the University's established disciplinary procedures for staff and students.

23. Force Majeure

In no event shall the University officers be responsible or liable for any failure or delay in performing its obligations hereunder resulting from or caused by forces beyond its control, including, without limitation, strikes, work stoppages, accidents, acts of war or terrorism, civil or military disturbances, pandemics, nuclear, natural disasters and interruptions, loss or malfunctions of utilities, communications or computer (software and hardware) services.

24. Policy Implementation

- a) The MUST Communication policy shall be implemented in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations such as the UAOTIA , Access to information Act, Electronic transactions Act, Electronic Signature Act and the Computer misuse Act.
- b) The Head of Public Relations Department shall;
 - (i). be responsible for the implementation of this policy.
 - (ii). propose various guidelines; to support this policy and that the MUST community must adhere to these guidelines.
 - (iii). Report on the progress of its implementation to Top management and the Council, the Communications Policy and Strategy will be provided with a reporting structure.
 - (iv). be responsible for ensuring that the various public awareness activities across the University are planned and budgeted for under a centralised vote.

25. Review and Amendment Procedures

This policy will be reviewed every two years or if significant changes in communication technology or practices are identified. The Communication Oversight Committee (COC) will lead the review process and gather feedback from all University stakeholders to guarantee the policy's relevance and effectiveness. Amendments will be proposed in response to the comments and evolving needs, subject to approval by the University Council.

Annex I: Communication Policy Guiding Principles

Annex II: Budget for the implementation of the Communication Policy

