

**JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
OF
AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**COMMUNICATIONS POLICY
MAY 2011**

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OUR VISION

A University of Global Excellence in Training, Research and Innovation for Development

OUR MISSION

To offer accessible quality training, research and innovation in order to produce leaders in the fields of Agriculture, Engineering, Technology, Enterprise Development, Built Environment, Health Sciences and other Applied Sciences to suit the needs of a dynamic world.

PHILOSOPHY

JKUAT values the need for visionary leadership, innovation and teamwork. The University shall endeavour to attract, develop, motivate and retain a multi-skilled workforce while nurturing a consultative working environment. The University shall adopt ethical standards and best practices and utilize up to date and appropriate technology. The institution shall strive to contribute to the communities and environment among which she operates to realize both her vision and mission

MOTTO

Setting Trends in Higher Education, Research and Innovation

CORE VALUES

Quality

Integrity

Team work

Innovation

Transparency

Professionalism

Accountability

Dynamism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	VI
1.0 Purpose	1
2.0 Application	1
3.0 Justification	1
4.0 Goal and objectives	2
5.0 Guiding principles	3
6.0 Principles of good communications practice	5
7.0 JKUAT spokesperson	6
8.0 Audiences	7
8.1 Internal audiences.....	7
8.2 External audiences	8
9.0 The media as a key audience	9
10.0 Internal communication	10
10.1 General guidelines for internal communication	10
10.2 Flow of information.....	11
10.3 Methods of communication.....	11
11.0 External communication	17
12.0 Crisis communication	18
12.1 General guidelines for crisis communication	18
12.2 Crisis response	19
12.3 Crisis communication team.....	19
12.4 Releasing information to the news media	20
12.5 Recovery.....	20

13.0	Corporate advertising	20
14.0	Responsibilities for all staff	22
15.0	Training	24
16.0	Monitoring and evaluation	24
17.0	Review	25

FOREWORD

Effective communication in a corporate environment provides all stakeholders with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and obligations. For academic institutions, effective and efficient communication enhances performance of staff and students. Ineffective communication on the other hand leads to conflict and poor performance.

Against this backdrop JKUAT, through this policy document, makes a commitment to provide stakeholders with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about information flow, communication channels, feedback mechanisms and crisis communication management.

This policy establishes principles, rules and procedures applying to communication among all members of the University community and with stakeholders.

With the world being a global village and with rapid expansion of the University, this communications policy provides guidelines on the use of Information Communication Technology to facilitate sharing information and knowledge in support of our core business of training, research and innovation. Therefore, this Policy contributes towards the achievement of our Vision and Mission.

Prof. Mabel O. Imbuga Ph.D EBS
Vice Chancellor

Definitions of Terms

Corporate communications: the activities undertaken by an organisation to communicate with internal and external stakeholders, and the wider public. The term implies an emphasis on promoting a sense of corporate identity and presenting a consistent and coherent corporate image.

Crisis communication: communication designed to protect and defend an individual or organisation facing a swelling public challenge to reputation, brand and/or community.

Internal communication: communication between employees or departments across all levels or divisions of an organisation.

External communication: the exchange of information and messages between an organisation and other organisations, groups or individuals outside its formal structure.

Spokesperson: someone engaged or elected/appointed to speak on behalf of others.

Collaborating institutions: institutions with which JKUAT has entered into formal agreements.

Stakeholders: a person, group or organisation that has a stake in an organisation.

Media: the means of communication that reach or influence people widely.

1.0 Purpose

This policy document aims to foster excellent internal and external communications among staff, students and other stakeholders, so as to maintain a good working environment, promote efficiency and generate better understanding of the University's objectives. The document is also tailored to facilitate realisation of the University vision and mission.

2.0 Application

2.1 The policy applies to the conduct of JKUAT Council members, Management, Senate, staff and students. The document also guides on recommended methods for corporate communication, within the institution, including:

2.1.1 Written communication such as news releases, advertisements, speeches by senior management, presentations, correspondence, conference and exhibition calls, e-mail, social media, blogging and the University website.

2.1.2 Oral communication such as face-to-face or group meetings, telephone conversations, teleconferences, interviews and news conferences.

3.0 Justification

To support JKUAT as a thriving and successful institution, we must communicate effectively with one another, students and our external stakeholders. Students must be provided with the information they need to achieve success in their

studies, while the staff must have all information they need so as to be productive in their varying roles. Hence the need for a comprehensive communication policy.

The policy document is designed to support JKUAT goals and mandates as spelt out in the JKUAT Act of 1994 and other policy documents and guidelines, including Strategic Plan, the statutes, and the University calendar. JKUAT's core goal is to participate in the discovery, transmission and preservation of knowledge while proclaiming its mission anchored on quality training aimed at producing leaders in the various disciplines on offer. These goals are achieved through the promotion of accountability and good communication practice by the Management, staff, and students.

Communication will as well be an important tool for propagating JKUAT's values and philosophy to both the external and the internal publics. Internal communication is particularly vital in strengthening JKUAT organisational culture and feeling of commitment among staff and students. Overall, the policy will ensure at all times a viable approach to communication by identifying responsibilities for staff at all levels.

4.0 Goal and Objectives

The goal of this policy is to support aspirations and mandates of the University as spelt out in the JKUAT Act of 1994, the institutional vision, mission and other relevant documents.

The objectives of the JKUAT communications policy are to:

- 4.1** Provide effective and efficient communication mechanisms among staff and students in line with the University vision, mission and values.
- 4.2** Promote coherence and consistency in information flow, both internally and externally.
- 4.3** Minimise communication breakdown and delays.
- 4.4** Promote the use of appropriate channels of communication.

5.0 Guiding Principles

JKUAT endeavours to provide its stakeholders with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programs, services and initiatives. In order to realize the University communication goal, this policy outlines the following core principles.

5.1 *Efficiency*

The University will ensure that all communication is effective and appropriate to the recipient. The University will convey information and respond without undue delay to requests by the media and other stakeholders by utilizing appropriate communication channels.

5.2 *Clarity*

The University undertakes to transmit clear, uniform and easily understood information that is not open to misinterpretation. The use of the University logo, corporate colours and publications will be purposed to reinforce clarity and authenticity.

5.3 *Proactivity*

The University will demonstrate leadership and proactivity in line with its vision and mission by actively seeking external contacts on areas of mutual interest.

5.4 *Transparency*

JKUAT endeavours in its communication to be as transparent and open as possible. The reasons for any decisions made will be disclosed and their will be readiness on the part of the management for open engagement and dialogue. Where information cannot be disclosed, the reasons for non-disclosure will be articulated.

5.5 *Timeliness*

The University will ensure that all information reaches intended recipients at a time when it is needed, relevant and able to be interpreted in the correct context.

5.6 *Cultural awareness*

As a national institution that is also international in character, JKUAT will embrace cultural diversity of all stakeholders in its communications.

6.0 Principles of Good Communications Practice

The following principles of good communications practice are provided as a guide to staff, students and other stakeholders. It is appropriate to adapt these principles to suit the working environment.

6.1 *Meetings*

Faculties and all service departments should provide opportunities for all staff within to meet as often as is necessary with a view to developing working relationships and enhancing communications. All staff should be updated on operational issues and strategic developments, which directly affect their work. During such meetings:

6.1.1 Opportunities should be provided for all staff to contribute equally.

6.1.2 The agenda should be open to input from the whole team.

6.2 *Open door policy*

Managers should strive to develop a system that enables them to be easily accessible to staff. To allow this to happen, managers are encouraged to either set open door times, or to communicate their weekly diary to staff showing times they

are available for consultation. Managers should also aim to regularly visit members of staff at their places of work on informal basis to discuss work-related issues. This will help to build mutual understanding and improve overall communication and decision-making within departments and the University.

6.3 *Feedback*

Where staff members have raised issues, made suggestions or forwarded ideas for change, the management should ensure they receive adequate feedback. It is also important that all staff are kept informed and updated as necessary by senior managers and directors. Deans of faculties, directors, heads of departments, and section heads therefore have a role in ensuring that feedback is provided on institutional and strategic issues, and on operational issues in the University.

7.0 JKUAT Spokesperson

7.1 The JKUAT Statute Section V, Sub-section 7 names the Vice Chancellor as the spokesperson of the University. The Head of Corporate Communications is, by duty, an authorised spokesperson. From time to time, the Vice Chancellor may authorise other officers to be spokespersons.

7.2 Staff and students shall not respond to requests for information from external sources unless with express permission from the Vice Chancellor, Head of Corporate Communications or other authorised persons.

- 7.3** All official policy inquiries or correspondences to and from foreign missions and subsequent response should be channelled through the Kenya Government ministry in charge of universities. The same procedure applies to other ministries and international organisations. Staff and students are discouraged from directly corresponding with the various arms and organs of Government without the express permission of the Vice Chancellor.
- 7.4** Staff and students participating in external forums must ensure that any information they divulge on JKUAT is in compliance with this policy. They should contact the Head of Corporate Communications if in doubt about the appropriateness of sharing certain information.
- 7.5** Authorised spokespersons shall be fully informed on all developments within the University that could potentially require external communication or response. It is the responsibility of JKUAT Heads of Departments and units to keep the spokespersons fully apprised on significant developments within the University.
- 7.6** Staff members participating in local and international conferences should inform the Vice Chancellor prior to such engagements.

8.0 Audiences

8.1 Internal audiences

8.1.1 Council and Senate

The University Council is the ultimate governing body of the University charged with the responsibility of overall policy formulation. Such policies are communicated to staff and students by the Vice Chancellor. Senate decisions shall be communicated by the Vice Chancellor.

8.1.2 Staff and students

8.2 External audiences

8.2.1 Government of Kenya

8.2.2 Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology

8.2.3 Commission for Higher Education

8.2.4 Collaborating Institutions

Communication between the university and collaborating institutions shall be done through the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Production and Extension Division.

8.2.5 Alumni

The University will communicate with its Alumni through the Alumni and International Students' Office (ALISO).

8.2.6 Media

8.2.7 General public

8.2.8 Other stakeholders

9.0 The Media as a key audience

9.1 The Corporate Communications Office is the University's link with the media and stakeholders, serving as a key source of information. This information will be generated, processed and disseminated through appropriate communication channels and in liaison with relevant University organs. All press releases, conferences and briefings must be approved by the Vice Chancellor or authorised person(s).

9.2 JKUAT will be impartial in providing information to the various media outlets. Such information will be released only at appropriate times.

9.3 This policy recognises the fact that JKUAT can better be understood if the messages carried in the media are authentic. The Corporate Communications Office will seek to achieve this through:

9.3.1 Maintaining a culture of open-door policy.

9.3.2 Channelling all media enquiries to the Corporate Communications Office.

9.3.3 Packaging information emanating from the University to make it newsworthy and current.

9.3.4 Providing accurate and objective information.

9.4 JKUAT will not commit itself to inaccurate and unfounded information. The University will at all times

be obliged to give the correct position on any matter at hand.

10.0 Internal communication

The University aims to facilitate efficient and effective internal communications among staff, students, and all stakeholders so as to maintain a good and conducive working environment to enable the achievement of its vision and mission.

10.1 General guidelines for internal communication

10.1.1 The University will encourage openness in internal communication and sharing of information unless the content or the message is deemed sensitive likely to compromise healthy relationship with stakeholders.

10.1.2 The University will be committed to consultation with staff and students over all affairs in a way that is consistent with effective management.

10.1.3 The University will seek constantly to improve customer care for students, particularly in the provision of information. Student needs and views shall be monitored through surveys, focus groups, liaison groups and committees.

10.1.4 All internal communications will be expressed in simple and clear language.

10.1.5 As far as possible, staff and/or students will be informed of important University issues through their representatives before the same information is conveyed to the media or other external bodies.

10.2 Flow of information

10.2.1 Communications will be two-way; encouraging dialogue, listening and feedback, and not just informing.

10.2.2 Internal communications will at all times be championed by leadership.

10.2.3 Effective communication will be a responsibility of every member of the University.

10.2.4 Grapevine communication is part of the workplace and cannot be ignored. The University encourages staff and students to use the office of the Ombudsman to handle any emerging grievances.

10.3 Methods of communication

10.3.1 Written Communication

10.3.1.1 Written communication will remain a vital component of communication in the University. All written communication should be simple and easy to understand, and devoid of slang, offensive and discriminatory

remarks, ethnic slurs, or obscene and sexist innuendo.

10.3.1.2 Correct format of written documents will be used all the time.

10.3.1.3 The University will use letters, memos, minutes, circulars, notices and any other appropriate form of written communication.

10.3.1.4 Letters used for internal communication will provide clear, exhaustive and accurate information. They will be dispatched in good time, and with confidentiality.

10.3.1.5 Memos will be drafted clearly and accurately and dispatched promptly, the recipient(s) and confidentiality status being clearly indicated.

10.3.1.6 Appropriate language style will be used in memo writing to avoid communication breakdown.

10.3.1.7 The standard format for writing minutes will be observed.

10.3.1.8 Minutes once documented shall not be altered in for personal/departmental interests and concerns.

10.3.1.9 Minutes will be circulated within one week after the meeting.

10.3.1.10 All written communication shall be treated with integrity and confidentiality.

10.3.1.11 A copy of all written communication shall be filed both at the source and destination for future reference.

10.3.1.12 All communication circulars will be released in time and strategically posted for staff and students to access with ease.

10.3.1.13 All notices shall be displayed conspicuously, in the right places.

10.3.1.14 Fax messages shall be correctly documented and delivered to recipient(s) as soon as possible.

10.3.2 Oral communication

10.3.2.1 Telephone

10.3.2.2 The recommended procedure for handling incoming calls will be adhered to for both landline and mobile phone communication.

10.3.2.3 Mobile phone voice communication, where necessary, will be complemented with written communication.

10.3.2.4 Taken telephone messages shall/will be well and correctly documented and delivered to the recipient as soon as it is possible.

10.3.3 Meetings

10.3.3.1 The University will use meetings as a forum for involving staff members in decision making and problem solving.

10.3.3.2 The University will provide opportunities for all staff to contribute equally.

10.3.3.3 Meetings will be held at a time and in a venue which allows and encourages input.

10.3.3.4 The agenda items for a given meeting will be communicated in time and open to input from the whole membership.

10.3.3.5 Notices of meetings will be sent in good time to give members ample time to prepare in order to make informed contributions.

10.3.3.6 Meetings will be effectively time managed and action focused as well as providing a forum for debate and discussion.

10.3.3.7 Information from meetings will be made available to relevant staff and feedback should be provided via the membership and chair to the broader community through appropriate communication channels.

10.3.4 Face-to-face

10.3.4.1 The University recognises the importance of face-to-face communication.

10.3.4.2 All University staff and students will be expected to show respect to one another and to stakeholders. At no time should a University community member communicate in a manner that makes the second party feel slighted.

10.3.5 Communication for people with disabilities

10.3.5.1 The University will create a work environment that is safe and supportive of people with disabilities. Alternative methods of communication will be provided to enable effective and efficient communication with people with disabilities.

10.3.6 Non-verbal communication

10.3.6.1 The University recognises the use of non-verbal communication to reinforce, complement, regulate and substitute verbal communication where necessary.

10.3.6.2 The University will promote corporate branding to create corporate image and identity. Friday is designated corporate day and all staff and students are encouraged to don University-branded attire. The use of University corporate identities such as logo and letterhead for personal purposes by staff and students is prohibited.

10.3.7 Electronic communication

- 10.3.7.1** E-mail and the web are the primary mode of electronic communication for all academic, administrative, clerical and technical staff.
- 10.3.7.2** JKUAT's website (<http://www.jkuat.ac.ke>) is a key platform for external communication. It will always be up-to-date, user-friendly and while clearly communicating the University's vision and mission.
- 10.3.7.3** Colleges, faculties and departmental websites shall only be established after approval by the Vice Chancellor to ensure coherence and consistency with the University website.
- 10.3.7.4** Departmental websites will be the primary source of information about a department.
- 10.3.7.5** The Corporate Communications Office has the overall editorial responsibility for all University websites.
- 10.3.7.6** Intranet and internet are also recognised as official means of communication.
- 10.3.7.7** The University e-mail address for staff shall be used for official communications at all times.
- 10.3.7.8** University e-mails may not be used for personal business or gain. Advertising or sponsorship within the University website is not permitted except where such is clearly

related to or supports the mission of the University.

10.3.7.9 The University encourages all staff to respond to incoming e-mail messages appropriately and timely.

10.3.7.10 University academic staff members are encouraged to use e-mail for communication with students.

10.3.7.11 IT access will be made available to the widest possible number of staff.

10.3.7.12 The University will embrace the use of social media, blogging and micro-blogging for communication purposes, particularly from the senior management to the external community and the students.

10.3.7.13 The University will encourage generation of general podcasts and video clips for marketing and enhancing the corporate image. However, these must be authorised by the Corporate Communications Office.

10.3.7.14 The University will promote e-learning as an avenue for disseminating educational content.

11.0 External Communication

11.1 JKUAT will provide factual, adequate and timely information to all stakeholders on all major events.

- 11.2** The University will disclose necessary information that stakeholders would be interested in provided that;
- 11.2.1** Such information does not in any way interfere with the normal operations of the institution.
 - 11.2.2** Such disclosure will not be in breach of the JKUAT Act, Statutes and other policies.
 - 11.2.3** Such disclosure will not compromise JKUAT's interests.
- 11.3** Where the need for disclosure is not clear, advice will be sought from the Office of the Vice Chancellor.
- 11.4** From time to time, staff may in the line of duty access confidential university information. Such information must not be disclosed or used for purposes not originally intended. Where the said confidential information is conveyed to another party, the staff must ensure that the confidentiality of such information is protected.

12.0 Crisis communication

12.1 General guidelines for crisis communication

- 12.1.1** The University is committed to taking a pre-emptive approach to crisis management.
- 12.1.2** No one is authorised to submit information to the news media without clearance from the Vice Chancellor.

12.1.3 The Corporate Communications office will maintain regular contacts with stakeholders and give advice where issues or developments appear likely to cause problems.

12.1.4 The Corporate Communications office will monitor local and international news events and advise the Vice Chancellor on issues and/or trends relevant to the University.

12.2 Crisis response

12.2.1 When a crisis occurs, the Corporate Communications Office will assess its severity and develop strategies to deal with it. The Vice Chancellor shall make appropriate communication to relevant stakeholders in such an event.

12.3 Crisis Communication Team (CMT)

12.3.1 The University Crisis Communication Team shall constantly monitor, interpret and manage issues with potential to escalate to crises.

12.3.2 The Team will gather details about the crisis and recommend strategies for internal and external communication. Final approval of the strategies will rest with the Vice Chancellor.

12.3.3 The Team shall consist of; the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Dean of Students, Chief Security Officer, Chief Medical Officer, Corporate Communications Officer and

others co-opted as the situation may demand. The Corporate Communications Office shall be the Team's Secretariat.

12.4 Releasing information to the news media

12.4.1 The Corporate Communications office shall work to release relevant, appropriate and verifiable information to the news media regarding any crisis. The Corporate Communications office shall continually monitor media coverage and respond accordingly.

12.5 Recovery from crisis

12.5.1 The University will provide stress and trauma counselling to crisis victims where possible.

12.5.2 The University will analyse and learn positively from the crisis management efforts and integrate the lessons to the institution's crisis management system.

12.5.3 The University will keep stakeholders updated on the progression of crisis recovery efforts including any corrective or disciplinary measures being taken.

13.0 Corporate advertising

13.1 JKUAT shall continually use corporate advertising to promote consistent positive image and ensure that best advertising practices and principles are observed.

- 13.2** The University shall utilise print, electronic and other support media for corporate advertising.
- 13.3** All University advertising requests shall be coordinated by the Corporate Communications office after approval by the respective Deputy Vice Chancellor(s).
- 13.4** All advertising engagements and commitments with the media shall be solely executed by the Corporate Communications office. The office shall also ensure that all advertisements are consistent with the University corporate identity.
- 13.5** All JKUAT newspaper advertisements shall be placed on Wednesdays only, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Where such advertisements are run more than once, this shall be done through different mainstream media.
- 13.6** Proposed advertisements and information shall be received by the Corporate Communication office latest on the Monday of the week the advertisement is to run.
- 13.7** The use of the University name and logo in advertising by collaborating and other institutions without authority from the Vice Chancellor is prohibited and shall be subjected to legal action.
- 13.8** Production of promotional University items shall at all times reflect the correct institutional name and logo. Where there are uncertainties, the concerned parties

shall consult with the Corporate Communications office.

14.0 Responsibilities for All Staff

14.1 All employees have a responsibility to demonstrate the institutional standards in communication. Specifically, all staff:

14.1.1 Shall be aware of the Communications Policy and demonstrate the principles of good practice.

14.1.2 Are responsible for ensuring that they communicate effectively and appropriately in line with the standards for communication.

14.1.3 Shall be aware of the various methods of communication and utilise them appropriately in their work.

14.1.4 Shall tackle incidents of poor communication in a proactive and constructive way.

14.1.5 Shall ensure that information is shared openly, appropriately and in a timely manner.

14.1.6 Shall, in situations where stakeholders constructively raise issues relating to poor or inappropriate communication, consider carefully this feedback and adjust their communication style accordingly.

14.2 In addition, supervisory and management staff shall:

- 14.2.1** Ensure that communication systems and processes actively support the vision and mission of the University.
- 14.2.2** Act as role models – demonstrating good practice in all aspects of communication.
- 14.2.3** Ensure effective two-way communication between senior management and staff.
- 14.2.4** Ensure effective, timely and appropriate feedback is provided to staff and students.
- 14.2.5** Reflect on communication standards and practices within their respective teams and identify opportunities for improvement.
- 14.2.6** Where staff and students raise issues of poor communication, take action to ensure they are resolved amicably.
- 14.2.7** Ensure effective lateral communication between the staff, students and other stakeholders.
- 14.2.8** Support and promote a culture that encourages inclusion and involvement of all concerned parties.
- 14.2.9** Ensure all staff members in their areas of responsibility have an understanding of the strategic direction of the institution, faculty and service departments.

14.2.10 Ensure that staff members are aware of the Communications Policy.

14.2.11 Ensure consistency, equity and parity in communications processes across the University.

14.2.12 Ensure that communication related issues that cannot be addressed at their level are referred to the next level.

14.2.13 Regularly review and seek to enhance the University's approach to communications.

14.3 Implementation

14.4 For effective implementation, the University Management Board members shall lead the sensitisation training on the new communication policy.

14.5 The relationship of this policy with the other university policies shall be clearly spelt out during the training.

14.6 The faculty and non faculty staff shall also undergo a one day sensitisation seminar.

14.7 The university management shall provide resources for this training.

15.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

15.1 The Corporate Communications Office shall:

- 15.1.1** Integrate strategies and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of this policy.
 - 15.1.2** Undertake regular check on implementation of the policy.
 - 15.1.3** Carry out annual evaluation on the implementation of the policy.
 - 15.1.4** Use the evaluation reports to define the short-term and long-term requirements for effective implementation.
 - 15.1.5** Use the information for planning and management.
 - 15.1.6** Suggest possible areas for review.
- 15.2** The University management shall provide the requisite resources for monitoring and evaluation.

16.0 Review

- 16.1** To be in tandem with the emerging global trends in communication, and to enhance uniformity with national and international higher education aims, this policy shall be reviewed after every 3 years.