

## Communications planning template

### 1. Background:

*Include background around what has led to the project/change that requires the comms plan. For example, if there is to be an organisational change, why was the decision made, by whom, when and what was the initial impact.*

*This could include information about what activities may already have taken place and when, and who was involved. Thinking about the background to the project, makes you really think about whether there is actually a need for a comms plan.*

### 2. Objectives :

*Clearly define what the purpose of the comms plan will be. Sometimes the detail may be more specific to a particular audience.*

*For example (for an organisational change):*

- *To provide both internal and external stakeholders with a clear understanding of the decision that has been made.*
- *To highlight how the decision will impact on these audiences*
- *To ensure internal staff have a clear understanding of the process for making the change, timescales etc*

*The objectives must be SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-bound) and you should have, ideally, no more than 5 or 6.*

### 3. Strategy:

*The following few sections explain how you will communicate your objectives.*

*For example, you may meet your objectives by :*

- *Preparing a range of communications to various audiences – internal and external*
- *Creating a timetable for release of messages*
- *Continuing to provide regular communications to staff as appropriate*

#### 3.1 Target audiences:

*Think about all the internal and external stakeholders that may be affected by the development/change, whether directly or indirectly.*

*For example:*

- *Humanities staff*
- *Specific Institute or department staff*
- *Other internal stakeholders*
  - *PSS Leadership Team, Faculty leadership team, Uni SLT*
  - *Other central teams*
- *External stakeholders – Partners, potential students, alumni, trade unions, media, student union*

### **3.2 Key messages:**

*It is important to decide on a set of key messages and to get these approved by the relevant senior member of staff. These will then be used across all channels of communication which ensures consistency and avoids mixed messages. These should be tailored to each audience.*

*You may also decide to have a basket of messages - some to be used proactively and others which you prepare for reactive use (so not something you necessarily want to highlight but information that you may need to have to hand should senior staff be asked other questions at open meetings.). These may include FAQs.*

*For example:*

- *The decision was made in the best interests of the University, the School, the team etc*
- *The University is committed to maintaining the high standards that students have come to expect*
- *There is a commitment from the University that work/the service will continue as normal*
- *A meeting for staff to ask questions has been arranged for xxxxx xxxx in the xxxxxx Building.*

### **4. Channels of communication (Tactics)**

*Once you know your audiences and you know what you want to say to them, you need to decide on what channels/ tactics you use to deliver your messages and meet your objectives. It is always advisable to think about a number of channels that can complement each other, rather than relying on a sole activity. Equally it is not advisable to take a scattergun approach – your plan needs to be targeted.*

*For example:*

- *Emails to internal staff, external stakeholders and specific Uni internal stakeholders*
- *Open meetings*
- *Newsletters*
- *Intranet/website*
- *Reactive statement – Humanities Media Relations Officer*
- *Press conference*
- *Monthly staff meetings to keep staff informed*
- *Roadshows/launch events*
- *Printed/online marketing content*

At this stage, depending on the scale of your campaign/activity, you may also need to consider your budget and resources.

### **5. Timescales**

*Highlight any key dates*

*It is also worth creating a table of activity which is clear to view and includes the activity, timescales, who is responsible and any other comments as the example below. You may find that for some smaller projects, you only need to produce a basic comms activity table, as opposed to a full comms plan – however it is still worth thinking about the various sections above as part of your research. Below is an example of a timetable of activity which might enabled senior staff in Faculty to update staff in a particular area about a change to their organizational structure.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<i>W/c 23 Sept</i>	<i>Draft comms plan and draft emails to be written for all staff and stakeholders</i>	<i>Comms Manager</i>	<i>Completed</i>
<i>Tuesday 1 Oct</i>	<i>Meeting to confirm decision</i>	<i>DoFO/Dean</i>	<i>Completed</i>
<i>Tues 1<sup>st</sup> /Wed 2nd</i>	<i>Notify President's Office of decision</i>	<i>Russell Ashworth</i>	<i>Does the decision need to be approved by Nancy?</i>
<i>Wednesday 2 October</i>	<i>Approval of comms from senior staff involved (eg DoFO or Head of Function)</i>	<i>Nicola Watkinson</i>	<i>Completed</i>
<i>Thursday 3 October</i>	<i>Approval of comms with any other appropriate stakeholders</i>	<i>Nicola Watkinson</i>	<i>Completed</i>
<i>Thursday/Friday</i>	<i>Senior staff to meet with directly affected staff</i>	<i>xxxxxxxx</i>	
<i>Thursday/Friday</i>	<i>Approval of Reactive media statement</i>	<i>Comms Manager</i>	<i>Media Relations Officer already been given heads up and will be sent reactive statement once approved.</i>
<i>Monday 7 October</i>	<i>Email to all directly-affected staff – from appropriate senior staff</i>	<i>xxxx</i>	
<b><i>After 2pm</i></b> <i>Monday 7 Oct</i>	<i>Email to external stakeholders</i>	<i>xxxxxx</i>	

<b>2.30pm</b> Monday 7 October	<i>Email to internal stakeholders not directly affected</i>	<i>Comms Manager</i>	
<b>10am, Tuesday 8 October</b>	<i>Staff meeting to answer any questions (short discussion followed by Q&amp;A)</i>	<i>xxxxxxx</i>	<i>FAQs to be prepared in advance</i>
<i>Monthly staff comms (or as appropriate)</i>	<i>Email communications to update staff on operational changes</i>	<i>Comms Manager</i>	<i>FAQs from meetings for those unable to attend.</i>
<i>Monthly staff meetings</i>	<i>Using existing monthly staff meetings to update on the change and to enable staff to ask questions</i>	<i>Head of Function or senior staff</i>	

## 6. Evaluation

*To assess whether your comms plan has been successful, you will need to be able to evaluate the response. This is not always easy to do, depending on the project.*

*The evaluation may be an ongoing process throughout the delivery of the comms plan and may lead to you needing to amend the comms plan as you work through it. For example, if the responses to your communications are negative and concern is escalating, then you may have to rethink how you engage staff etc.*

*Alternatively, your evaluation may be a reflection at the end of the delivery. For example, have you reached X no of website hits, have you had a newsletter open rate of XX%, have you seen an increase in student numbers? You should think about what you want your outcomes to be when producing your comms plan and setting realistic, achievable targets.*

## 7. Next Steps:

*Include any details of further action here, eg sign-off/approval of comms plan or key messages.*