Communication Guidelines for Staff of The University of the South Pacific

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1. Purpose

1.1. These Guidelines are based on four pillars that are essential for positive and effective communication. In all **Communications,** USP staff should ensure that they are

- **Careful**: Be sure not to cause offence, and to make the point you intend;
- **Clear**: Choose words wisely and organise your thoughts to make the message accessible;
- **Concise**: Everyone is busy, so short messages are well-received; and
- **Courteous**: Everyone deserves respect; good manners are always appreciated.

1.2. Acceptance of the above-named pillars, the basis of these Guidelines, will help staff decide how and what to communicate. These Guidelines are a resource which will assist staff to better understand what is expected from them in terms of communication, as staff of USP. It covers various communication modalities, suggests how one might choose which modality is most appropriate for a situation, and provides information on issues such as accessibility, specific notes on common forms of communication, such as email, and raises topics such as boundaries, risks, safeguards, and professionalism.

2. Objectives

Internal Communications

2.1. USP is undergoing a process of transformation, and effective internal communication is critical to success. Good communication helps staff to understand their role in the changes taking place. Managers tend to make the right decisions if they have all relevant information. Well-informed staff are more likely to feel and appreciate that they have a real stake in the change management process. Better communication across USP's campuses, located throughout the region, will help to build a stronger sense of community.

2.2. Staff and student satisfaction is a priority concern of USP management, and it is believed that more and better communication, grounded in mutual respect and the spirit of cooperation, will enhance both the staff and student experience at USP. These Guidelines are an attempt to support the development of better communication across the University and therefore improve the experience of all.

External Communications

2.3. External communication is crucial to USP's transformation being understood and appreciated by those outside the organisation. The education that USP delivers, the research undertaken, and the role played by the University in advising other regional organisations; member countries, development partners and other stakeholders will be less impactful unless staff engage professionally and purposefully and communicate this to external contacts and constituents. Better communication helps stakeholders appreciate USP's role and the value it delivers. In the face of limited resources and increasing competition, it is all the more important that USP's messaging is reflective of all the work that it does and the accomplishments of its staff and students.

2.4. Good external communications help to ensure that USP's campuses and people are recognised as important and contributory members of their communities. The outstanding work done at USP must be publicised so that USP's value is appreciated, especially in the face of limited resources and increased competition.

2.5. The objective of all external communication is a) to provide clear and accurate information; and b) leave the external party with a positive impression of the University. These Guidelines support staff to develop a genuinely professional approach that adheres to the four pillars of good communication.

2.6. This document will help all employees of the University to communicate better with internal and external parties. Staff are invited to contact the Manager Communications of Strategic Partnerships, Advancement and Communications (SPAC) office with any communication-related concerns or queries that are not addressed in this Guidelines.

3.   Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. All USP Staff Members are responsible for communicating well and appropriately with their colleagues and the people for whom they provide services, be they other staff, students, or external parties. All USP staff members are the "face of USP" when they communicate with external parties. External parties include a range of actors, from prospective students and vendors to partner universities, development partners and government contact points.

3.2. Staff members are responsible for reading through this document and discussing it with their supervisors. Not all sections will be immediately relevant to all staff; staff should adapt the guidance to their own positions and scope of work. Staff members are also urged to post their feedback on this resource to the SPAC office's web page at www.usp.ac.fj/communications. Feedback will be used to improve future editions of these Guidelines, and examples of both positive and negative exchanges and experience may be used (while preserving the absolute anonymity of all parties) in staff workshops.

3.3. Supervisors have different obligations. Supervisors must ensure that their staff members completely understand these Guidelines and can implement these. Supervisors are encouraged to workshop this information, and are welcome to seek out the support of the Communication Unit.

3.4. The Communication Unit,   is part of SPAC in the Vice-Chancellor and President's Office. The Communications Unit in consultation with Director SPAC is responsible for revisions to this document and for supporting its implementation across the University.

4.   Types of Information and Modes of Communication: Getting Started

4.1. Communication seems that it should be natural and simple. We all know how to engage with each other and were hired by the University in part because we are good at that. But if good communication really were so simple, then we would not hear of misunderstandings, missed deadlines, and ignorance of major decisions and developments. As USP transitions from being a good university to being a

truly great institution, we need to improve the quality of our communication. This is an area in which all staff can improve. **The basic questions of:**

- **Who** needs to know?
- **What** do they need to know?
- **When** do they need to know it?
- **Where** should the information be available?
- **Why** do they need to know?
- **How** should it be communicated?

are useful starting point. Staff can ask themselves those questions to ensure that they are communicating appropriately. However, when a member of staff considers all of those questions, communication suddenly seems less simple. There are numerous points where problems can occur and, if the information is highly sensitive, the impacts of mistakes and misjudgments can be severe. Therefore, it is important to look carefully at various situations, types of information, and modes of communication.

4.2. All members of staff must carefully choose their mode of communication to match each situation and should periodically assess, in cooperation with their supervisor and colleagues, their communication output and outcomes to identify areas for improvement.

4.3. There are various types of information that staff are tasked with communicating, and staff should first "classify" the information they need to deliver or disseminate so that they are sure to use the correct method. Communicating effectively with students requires a different approach than communicating with other staff or external contacts. Staff members are responsible for being aware of all relevant USP policies when they communicate with students, and must remember that privacy and dignity are rights of all.

4.4. Members of staff will communicate with many different people using a variety of modalities on a daily basis. The tables below are a simple listing of various types of information and suggestions as to how it should be handled. Staff should use this chart as a starting point to develop guidance for their own sections.

5. Effective External Communication

5.1. Staff members have a special responsibility when communicating with external parties versus internal parties. As representatives of the University, staff must take extra care when sharing information, maintain consistently high standards of professionalism, and actively seek to portray the University accurately and, as often as possible, in a positive light. Those concerns are different than the primary concerns of internal communications, which centre around efficiency, transparency and politeness.

5.2. Staff members should be confident in engaging with external contacts in the normal course of their work. Confidence results from a good understanding of one's work and of the outcomes that are desired from the interaction. Staff must also understand the limits to their interactions with external parties, and be able to identify situations where it is appropriate to "pause" communications and refer to a supervisor.

5.3. All members of staff must carefully choose their mode of communication to match each situation where they communicate externally, and should periodically assess, in cooperation with their supervisor and colleagues, their communication output and outcomes to identify areas for improvement.

6. Types of External Communications

6.1. There are several different modes through which staff communicate with external parties, and certain situations preclude the use of certain modes. Staff should familiarise themselves with the table below, which includes suggestions on the most appropriate type of communication for common situations, and can be used as a starting point to develop guidance for individual sections of the University.

Simple Guide to Expectations Relating to Communication at USP (Internal)

Type of Information	Level of Urgency	Mode of Communication	Expected Speed of Communication	Expected Response Time
Natural Emergency Notification	Emergency	SMS, Phone Loudspeakers, Radio, Digital	Immediately	Immediate
Mass Communication of Legal Matters or General News	Non-Urgent	Email, Printed matter, Radio, Digital	Promptly	No response required
Routine Information	Non-Urgent	Email, Printed Matter, Face-to-face Digital	Promptly (normally 1-2 days)	No response required
Targeted Information- Recipient needs to know or take action	Variable	SMS, Email, Phone Face-to-face	Promptly	As per deadlines
Highly Sensitive/Personal Information	Variable	Face-to-face Email (marked as confidential)	Promptly	Promptly
Topic-based or Discussion Groups	Variable	Face-to-face, Printed Matter Digital	As need arises	As desired
Mass Information (e.g. alerts, reminders, marketing and admissions applications)	Urgent, if there are deadlines	Email, Printed matter Radio adverts Digital	Promptly	As per deadlines
Pulled Info -recipients access information as wanted or needed	Variable	Printed matter Digital	As it becomes available	N/A

6.2. Some universities use permission-based communication to disseminate routine information. This involves the delivery of messages on specific topics to people who have opted in; this method of communicating means that the information is given to an audience that is likely to pay more attention to it[1]. Staff members are encouraged to discuss with their supervisors alternative methods such as permission-based communication to disseminate the information that is relevant to their position.

Simple Guide to Expectations Relating to External Communications

External Party	Approach to USP	Expected Response Time from USP Staff	Expect Mode of Response

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[1] University of Montana Report on University Communications: full of good ideas, including the concept of permission-based communication. Accessed at http://www.umt.edu/communicate/docs/Report.pdf

Prospective Student	Email, Phone, Letter, Face-to-face	Promptly	Same mode as approach
Vendor or Supplier	Email, Printed matter Phone, Face-to-face	Promptly	Same mode as approach, or telephone if urgent
Non-Member Government Representative	Email, Printed Matter, Face-to-face; Digital	Promptly (normally 1-2 days)	Same mode as approach. Inform supervisor for advice on response and/or escalation
Member Government Representative	SMS, Email, Phone Face-to-face	Immediate	As per advice from supervisor
Highly Sensitive/Personal Matters relevant to the job or situation	Face-to-face, Email (marked as confidential)	Immediate	Same mode as approach
Topic-based or Discussion Groups	Face-to-face; Printed Matter, Digital	As need arises	As desired
Mass Information (e.g. alerts, reminders, marketing & admissions applications)	Email, Printed matter, Radio adverts, Digital	Reply promptly to incoming queries that follow up on the information	As per deadlines
Pulled Info -recipients access information as wanted or needed	Printed matter Digital	N/A	N/A

7. Presentation and Tone of Voice

7.1. The previous section noted some of the many messages that USP staff are expected to communicate, and the modes that are most appropriate for each type of information. It is also important to consider the presentation and tone of each modality. As employees of the region's premier university, it is important that USP staff conduct themselves with professionalism, impartiality and good manners.

7.2. Administrative Staff in non-desk or front-desk roles are expected to pay particular attention to the manner in which they engage with others. All who visit the University or access its services should feel welcomed and respected, and first impressions do matter. It is USP's aim that students and staff feel very positive about all their interactions with staff throughout the duration of their time as part of the USP community.

7.3. In general, staff should use the type of language they would use in a formal written academic assignment for all written work, including email. Email messages do not need to be exceedingly formal, but they should be neatly presented so, if printed, they read like a well-composed letter.

7.4. As with internal communications, it is important to consider one's presentation and tone in external communications as well. External parties should view doing business with USP as a pleasure. All who visit or contact the University or access its services should feel welcomed and respected.

7.5. USP staff are expected to speak and write clearly and to respect differences, relating to ability, language, and culture, amongst other things. They should reflect the professional atmosphere of USP, and must ensure that their communication with external parties is reflective of USP's core values.

7.6. Staff members are advised to maintain a reasonable level of formality and professionalism. Staff must refrain from using slang in both oral and written communication and must use correct English grammar.

8. Accessibility and Telephones

8.1. 28. USP staff should be generally accessible for communication with the University management, other staff, and students; the level of accessibility, and the parties involved, varies according to position.

8.2. 29. Very few staff are expected to be accessible to students outside of normal office hours. This can be clarified with one's supervisor. Staff members must be careful to maintain boundaries, and, if their duty hours extend to evenings and weekends, special safeguards for all parties involved must be put in place.

8.3. 30. Some USP staff are required to be accessible to their supervisors via mobile telephone outside of office hours. Staff with this obligation are informed by their supervisors and establish times where accessibility is not expected (family funerals, annual leave, etc.) in regular discussions. Employees with USP-issued mobile devices are expected to be in contact and responsive between the hours of 7 am and 10 pm.

8.4. All USP staff are expected to be accessible to their supervisors, colleagues, and students/constituents/customers during regular duty hours. Staff are not expected to answer landline telephones outside of office hours. Supervisors are required to respect their employees' privacy after hours and to refrain from contacting them unless there is a pressing and legitimate concern.

8.5. USP staff should be accessible for communication with external parties during office hours. Staff in their offices should answer telephone calls and text messages promptly and courteously. Staff should return missed calls as soon as possible, and preferably within two hours or the next morning, if the message is left within two hours of the end of duty hours. For staff who are extremely busy with telephone calls, a different arrangement may be agreed with the supervisor, or staff can share responsibilities to meet return-call targets.

8.6. Staff members must be readily accessible via email, and should reply promptly. Staff must also always set up an out-of-office auto-response when they will be out of the office for 1 working day or longer. This response should include the contact information of an alternative contact.

8.7. USP staff must not, in their capacity as USP employees, engage with external parties outside of normal office hours, except at official USP functions. Should a member of staff meet an external party during non-work hours incidentally or in the course of their normal leisure time, this is fine, but the member of staff must not discuss USP business at any time. Staff members must be careful to maintain boundaries, and, if their duty hours extend to evenings and weekends, special safeguards for all parties involved must be put in place.

8.8. Some staff must be frequently accessible for face to face meetings with students, other staff members, and external contacts. Staff members should decide, with their supervisor, whether there is a need to publicly display (i.e. posted on the department notice door, web site, and/or office door) set "office hours" or whether they will have an open-door policy.

8.9. Face to face meetings enable staff to respond in real-time to the external party's interests and requests, but it can be risky to not have a written record of discussions. Therefore, before a formal face to face meeting concludes, it is advisable for the staff member to write up the content of the meeting and ask the person with whom they are meeting to sign and date the bottom of the record. This is essential when a decision has been made, but is not required for more casual interactions. It is advisable to avoid closed-door meetings with any external parties, unless more than one member of staff is present.

8.10. Response times for email and telephone and general availability for face to face meetings varies for part-time employees. It is essential that the people for whom we work are attended to promptly, and so part-time employees and their supervisors should make arrangements to ensure seamless communication with customers, regardless of the duty hours of the part-time employees.

9. Email

9.1. Email is a convenient mode of communication. Email can help boost efficiency, but also has the potential to hinder productivity. This method of communication must be used wisely; there is different guidance for sending email and for managing the receipt of email messages.

9.2. In terms of receiving email communications, staff should certainly answer emails as politely and promptly as possible. Staff must remember that email is a form of written communication, albeit informal, and as such, email can be saved, printed, and circulated. All reasonable care must be taken to represent the University in a professional manner. Staff should agree target times for email responses with their supervisor, based on 1) email traffic load; 2) importance of the message; and 3) urgency of the message. Staff must mark urgent messages accordingly, and should follow up with telephone calls in cases of extreme urgency.

9.3. Sending email messages is a convenient way of conducting conversations at convenient times for all parties involved. In general, email should be used to convey information and to conduct conversations of which there should be a written record. Staff should take care not to send unnecessary email messages, and to compose messages that adhere to the 4 C's stated at the beginning of these Guidelines.

9.4. When an email message is sensitive, then staff should consider "copying in" their supervisor. However, staff should refrain from "copying in" people unnecessarily, and should consider deleting previous messages on the email trail before hitting "send". Generally, when a colleague is mentioned in the message, or is/will become involved in a situation, it is courteous to "copy in" that person.

9.5. Staff should print emails that contain 1) decisions; and 2) important details leading up to a decision. Staff may wish to print other emails for their records. Printed emails are useful for files, and staff should generally keep printed copies of emails exchanged with students. These, however should be electronically filed as well.

9.6. Supervisors must talk with their staff to ensure that all members of staff have set periods of the day where they may work without the need to reply immediately to email messages. "Time off" of email enables staff to complete other tasks without interruption.

10. Face to Face Interaction

10.1. Many people value face to face meetings, which vary greatly in terms of formality, size, and venue. Personal interactions are what give most people a sense of belonging to a community, and positive interactions build loyalty and a sense of communal purpose. Face to face meetings include a range of interactions, from large lectures to information sessions for prospective students to private meetings with students in academic difficulty. Face to face meetings are especially useful for the communication of highly personal and sensitive matters. Staff should consider that discussions that are held face to face, rather than conducted via email or telephone, are more private and enable staff to respond in real-time to the recipient's reactions/feelings.

10.2. Before a face to face meeting concludes, staff should jot down the content of the meeting and ask the person with whom they are meeting to sign and date the bottom of the record. This is essential when a decision has been made. This written record can be added to a file and provides the member of staff with some evidence that the meeting took place.

10.3. Members of staff should use their own discretion when meeting with students. Staff should consider how the meeting will appear to others, whether or not to close the door, and whether or not to involve other members of staff.

10.4. All staff members should exercise caution when meeting with students alone in their offices. It may be appropriate to keep the door open. Staff members should never invite students to their homes. Any social contact with students is ill-advised. In certain cases, staff may mix socially with postgraduate students, but this contact should be limited and take place only in public places or on University property with others present. In cases where a staff member is concerned that a situation may look suspicious, the staff member should not meet a student. Staff members must be careful to maintain absolute propriety at all times.

10.5. No USP staff member may engage in a non-professional relationship with any student or communicate with any student with regard to personal matters, except where a student shares personal information relevant to their academic performance (in that case, staff must refer the student to Student Services and/or the Counselling Centre).

10.6. All members of staff should familiarise themselves with the University's Sexual Harassment Policy and Guidelines and are encouraged to seek help immediately if they feel they might be a victim of harassment, sexual or otherwise, or they have any concerns that their colleagues or students may be victims.

11. Printed Materials

11.1. The University aims to produce written materials that are, at all times, professionally-presented and free of errors. University publications should be presented with perfect English and, when printed in the languages of the University's Member Countries, utilise the standard form of those vernacular languages. Written materials do not include slang and all acronyms are spelled out.

11.2. The photographs featured in written materials must be truthful and accurate depictions of the University, its staff, and its students, and reflect the diversity of the USP community. Written materials should be accessible; materials should be available in large print, and in an audio version where appropriate.

11.3. Printed materials are produced for a variety of reasons. Print advertisements are used for marketing, the University Handbook & Calendar presents the courses that are available, and the USP Prospectus guides potential students to apply to the University. Printed matter must be consistent with the USP Branding Guidelines.

12. News and Social Media

12.1. Dealing with the media is a weighty responsibility; however, given the proliferation of digital platforms and social media, these days everyone can quickly get their message out online. This has huge risks as well as considerable potential benefits. Staff members must negotiate media relations and digital media usage very carefully, and are advised to work closely with their supervisors.

12.2. Certain members of staff have permission to represent the University and to speak with the media about specific matters directly relevant to their work as per the University's Media Relations Policy and Guidelines. These are generally the Members of the SMT and senior staff from SPAC office and as delegated by the Vice-Chancellor and President. All other staff members must refer all media enquiries to their supervisor, who will then alert the relevant SMT.

12.3. All staff members must refrain from discussing their work on social media. As social media and the news media are increasingly difficult to separate from each other, communication over social media is considered by the University to be synonymous with making statements to the (traditional) media.

12.4. Members of staff should be responsible in terms of social media and, at all times, must bear in mind that any opinions they express may be associated with the University if (1) it is known that they are employees; and (2) they do not explicitly note that the opinions expressed are their own and not those of the University. If members of staff do express an opinion on social media without also issuing a disclaimer, then they may face disciplinary action from USP.

12.5. Members of staff must, at all times, maintain boundaries with students in online interactions and on digital media. These boundaries will be similar to those that are advised for face to face meetings. Staff members would not invite students to their home, and so should not give them access to their family and personal lives on media such as Facebook, for example. The staff-student relationship must be professional, which precludes the sharing of personal information.

12.6. The USP Web Site, and departmental web pages, are highly effective platforms for disseminating information. This is USP's face to the world, and much of it is not password-protected. Staff members must be careful, as the web site contains official information that is formally presented. All materials put on the web site must adhere to professional standards and be factually correct. The Communications Unit of SPAC can provide editing and formatting assistance.

13. Inclusivity

13.1. It is very important that staff members ensure that their communication style is inclusive. There are four main items to consider when self-assessing the inclusivity of one's communication. Firstly, staff members should consider their language. USP is comprised of 12 Member Countries, all have different languages, so it is very important to use Standard English in all University communications. The language used should be clear and to the point, and must be free of any judgments or assumptions that might cause offense. All communications should be consistent with USP's values and Style Guide.

13.2. Staff must also bear in mind that USP operates across several different time zones. This will impact response times, but does not cause any problems if the parties communicating acknowledge it. Staff should refrain from contacting each other outside of office hours.

13.3. Staff with diverse backgrounds may have different comfort levels with various communication modalities. This must be respected. Staff are obliged to make clear to one another their preferred communication modalities, which should be accommodated when possible. This also applies to students. Some people find that face to face communication on sensitive issues is confrontational or uncomfortable. Staff should do their best to be aware that, the more comfortable the person with whom they are communicating is, the better the outcome for both parties, and the more likely that the message is received as intended.

13.4. Lastly, staff should be aware that many disabilities and differences at not immediately obvious, yet impact communications. Examples include hearing loss, vision issues, and difficulties relating to fine and gross motor skills. Staff should take measures to assist people with disabilities, i.e. printed matter can be also made available in large format and in an audio or online version, information can be typed up for people with hearing differences, and people with motor differences can be offered assistance to access information that is found on the web site or requires typing.

13.5. The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) provides useful information on how to communicate more inclusively, and can advise staff that are seeking to improve their communication with people with disabilities.

14. Proactive vs Reactive Communication

14.1. USP staff should be proactive, eager to engage with external parties, proud of the University, and dependable in terms of prompt responses to queries and adherence to deadlines. The University has set itself ambitious goals, which will be achieved if staff confidently and efficiently communicate with external parties.

14.2. Staff should be aware that proactive communication is different to reactive communication. Self-assessment of communication styles can help staff to clarify whether or not they are communicating effectively and in a manner that will make the achievement of their work objectives possible or probable. Staff members should, in consultation with supervisors, determine whether the specific nature of their work is better served by proactively contacting external parties or by reacting to requests from those parties. Most members of staff will need to be both open and proactive, as well as highly efficient in their reactions, to maximise the impacts of their efforts.

14.3. Reactive communication is important. Many external parties approach USP for information, to establish relationships, or to continue and deepen cooperation. The University should prides itself in its rapid responses to queries and management of all types of situations, and so staff should ensure that decision-making in their section is clear to all members, enabling external communications to be both fast and accurate.

14.4. At certain times, it is inappropriate to provide an immediate response to an external party. One may need to take advice from a colleague or supervisor, or simply take some time to prepare a clear, complete and professional response. It is important to provide a "holding message" type of response in these situations; it gives the external party assurance that the communication was received and that action is being taken, without providing a detailed or complete response. In these situation, the USP staff member must provide the external party with an expected (complete) response date and then make note of and keep to that date.

15. Confidentiality and Respect

15.1. Respect for others is a core USP value and should underpin all the activities and communications of USP staff.   Staff members respect the personal space, time, efforts, abilities, and trust of all with whom they interact. This respect is outwardly expressed to all external parties through the actions of USP staff. Likewise, all members of staff have the right to expect respect from the external parties with whom they do business. If a staff member feels uncomfortable or unsure during the course of their communication with external parties, they should immediately report this to their supervisor.

15.2. Should a member of staff have access to or gain knowledge of any information on a student, vendor, government representative, university partner or any other external party that is unrelated to their interactions with that external party, this information should be disregarded. No favour or prejudice should be shown toward the external party in any way, nor should the information be shared with any other university staff member. All information that members of staff come across during the course of their work is confidential, must be stored securely, and should not be publicly or privately shared without the express permission of the parties involved.

15.3. Confidentiality and respect also relate to the business of the University itself. Information about USP's affairs should be kept internal to the University. Members of staff are advised to adhere to internal channels of communications in terms of dealing with most internal matters, such as personal grievances and allegations against other staff members. Respect toward others must inform all staff actions.

16. Make Friends - Not Adversaries

16.1. A large network of friendly external contacts is a huge benefit to staff members. The larger and more positive a network one has, the more advice, information, and opportunities that are available. For example, strong links with secondary school teachers can generate more admissions applications, and a greater number of links with academics abroad will increase the chances of hearing about funding and research opportunities. USP staff are highly encouraged to see every interaction with an external party as an opportunity to build a professional network that will help USP   goals.

16.2. Staff are expected to be friendly and polite during all interactions with external contacts, even in the case of disputes. This level of professionalism will strengthen networks and make future business dealings and interactions more positive. Staff members should aim, in all of their external communications, to create advocates for USP. This is an important way that all staff can contribute to the strengthening of USP's reputation.

16.3. Likewise, all staff should make it their business to get to know their main external contacts and biggest "helpers". Extra thoughtfulness in dealing with these main contacts is essential. Staff will, at some point, need assistance or advice from those main contacts and will be wise to cultivate very positive relationships. "Extra thoughtfulness" does not imply favour, but the expectation that staff will be very familiar with the needs and expectations of those contacts and respond efficiently in accordance with them.

16.4. Staff must be careful to avoid situations that have the potential to damage USP's reputation in any way. If significant disputes arise with any external contact, or if information comes to light about an external contact that has the potential to affect the University, the staff member must report it, in detail, to their supervisor so that appropriate damage control measures can be undertaken.

17. Relevance

17.1. External contacts depend on all USP staff to be up-to-date in terms of the latest technologies and trends in their area of work. As USP is positioned as the region's leading university, and aspires to globally-recognised excellence, it is crucial that staff demonstrate that they are excellent in their field. This excellence requires knowledge of what is going on outside of USP and being able to demonstrate how the latest trends, methodologies, technologies, etc. are used at and impact work at USP. Staff should read extensively on their area of work and share and discuss news with their supervisors.

17.2. Relevance depends on the University's continuous improvement, and it is most efficient to learn from counterparts. Staff are encouraged to embrace innovations and take up opportunities to modernise and digitise their work or work process. Methods that improve efficiency and broaden the impact of the work done at USP should be communicated to external contacts, as this will help to build trust in the University and will enhance its profile as a successful and modern regional organization.

18. Building Professional Business Relationships

18.1. Some members of staff need to establish and grow long-term professional links with external parties in order to carry out their duties well. It is important that staff remember that, although they may personally like their contact persons, this relationship is professional in nature, and so conversation should be restricted to business matters. Staff should avoid in-depth personal discussions and must be careful to refrain from divulging any information about the University which is not publicly available in the mainstream media.

18.2. Staff who need to develop relationships with external contacts should remember that good partnerships are built on trust. Staff should engage warmly and professionally, should use their best manners, and should always respond promptly to any requests or messages. Joking is generally fine, in keeping with the personality of the contact, but it is wise to avoid jokes that could be easily

misinterpreted as off-colour or prejudiced. Staff representing the University are expected to act in accordance with its vision, mission, and core values.

19. Crisis Communication

19.1. In cases of emergency, as deemed by the Vice-Chancellor and President, the University adheres to its Emergency Management Procedures??

19.2. In terms of communication, this means that SMS and IM have priority over email. Staff should use SMS and IM first to communicate with each other and as the first and primary means of communicating with students and other staff. Staff must use a USP-issued device to issue most crisis communications. In exceptional circumstances that require staff to use their personal devices to communicate, staff must include a disclaimer that they are communicating in their capacity as a USP employee and are dealing with USP business. Staff who do this agree to adhere to USP's standards of communication.

19.3. Further information on Crisis Communication can be found in the USP Emergency Management Procedures, and all staff should review this document.

20. Communication Guidelines Usage, Monitoring and Improvement

20.1. This document comprises Guidelines for clear, effective, and cordial communication at USP. These Guidelines are institution-level; campuses and sections may have their own guidance, but, in all cases, this document should take precedence. It is meant to serve as a reference for staff in their daily work. The Guidelines are general, and do not cover every situation, but assume that all staff members have the capacity to accept general guidance and adapt it to their area of work.

20.2. The Communications Unit of SPAC office will review these Guidelines every two years, and will conduct annual studies on communication at the University. These studies may be limited to one aspect of communication so that they can be carried out in-house, in a reasonable amount of time, and produce realistically actionable recommendations for improvement. Regular staff feedback on communication styles, concerns, effectiveness of crisis management, and professionalism will assist the Communications Unit to support staff better.

DO'S AND DON'TS OFEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AT USP

Do's

- Speak respectfully and kindly to everyone;
- Reply promptly to communications you receive; everyone is busy but we must all do our best;
- Understand how to gauge the urgency of the information you need to communicate, and choose the best communication modality for the situation;
- Ensure that all written communications are concise and both factually and grammatically correct;
- Check to make sure that the information that you wanted to convey has been received and understood;
- Understand that everyone is busy, and reach out in person or by telephone when responses are slow;
- Represent the University with pride and loyalty;
- Know your boundaries- do not communicate on behalf of the University unless authorised;
- Understand all USP Policies and the University values, and appreciate that they impact the way you should communicate;
- Protect yourself by acting professionally and refraining from personal-level interactions with students and subordinates;

- Remember that your status as a USP employee means that people will expect you to act in accordance with the University's values and mission; and
- Consult with your supervisor when you feel uncomfortable or unsure about anything related to communication.

<u>Don't</u>

- Speak or write with slang, many abbreviations, or in an overly casual manner;
- Purport to speak or write on behalf of the University unless asked to do so;
- Issue crisis communications without clearance from your supervisor;
- Share your own or your colleagues' personal contact details with anyone other than Human Resources;
- Put yourself in a situation where your professionalism could be questioned (i.e. a closed door meeting with a student);
- Ignore any form of communicated message (phone call, email, instant message, written memo) that you receive;
- Forget that USP operates across several time zones and that staff come from a range of diverse backgrounds;
- Delay responding to messages that you receive;
- Neglect to set up an out-of-office response when you are out-of-the-office for more than one day;
- Use USP resources or your remunerated time to communicate for personal reasons, except in special circumstances (i.e. during a natural disaster); and
- Be complacent and forget to self-evaluate- we can all improve our communication skills to build a more integrated, productive and happier workplace!