

Communications Policy

Introduction

Purpose

The reason for this policy is:

To ensure consistent, regular and effective communication both internally, between members of staff and with current students and externally, between staff, students and possible students, to enhance satisfaction and engagement and improve the learning, and work, environment for everybody associated with the City College.

Policy Statement

It is essential that the College provides effective communication within, and beyond, the College, in order to provide a good service to both staff and students. All staff are expected to:

- Demonstrate good communications with other work colleagues and students.
- Demonstrate a positive attitude towards work and colleagues.
- Have clear ideas of how to raise the ambitions and achievements of the students.
- Make sure there are opportunities for feedback to be given, by staff and students, and be responsive to it.
- Communicate well and be available for both colleagues and students to contact you, either by email or in person.
- Create clear and effective internal and external channels for staff and students.
- Increase the profile and reputation of the City College and communicate the College's values, vision and strategic plan to staff and students.

This document sets out the college's policy and procedure on communication by and between staff and summarises staff responsibilities in striving for effective communication. For effective communication to take place, the following needs to be in place:

- All staff take responsibility for ensuring methods of communication are effective, appropriate and clear.
- Where possible, messages should be sent as simply as possible.
- Appropriate training in communication methods should be given.

- Communication should be professional and not abusive or inappropriate.

Channels of Communication

Below, we will cover the guidelines and standards for the main channels of communication within the college.

The main internal Channels of Communication are:

1. Face to Face communication
2. Letters
3. Emails
4. Telephone
5. Memos and notes
6. College Email Accounts
7. College Calendar
8. Student/Staff Handbooks
9. HESA
10. Posters/Notices
11. Sharepoint
12. Complaints/Appeals
13. Tutorials
14. Behaviour
15. Student Files
16. Meetings
17. DSA

1. Face to face communication is an effective way of communicating and most communication can be dealt with this way. The City College has an 'Open door Policy' which benefits both students and staff and allows the message to be conveyed and receive a response. If the initial contact needs further reflection the appropriate process will take place.

2. Letters

Letters are effective for communication on specific issues. There is a 'Letter Request Form' available in Reception, so students can request letters for various standard issues: opening a bank account, council tax exemption, etc. This is an effective way of dealing with student letters during busy times, such as the beginning of term. The Receptionist/Administrator is responsible for ensuring letters are typed, signed by one of the Senior Management team, copies kept in student files and giving the letters to the appropriate student, etc. If individual,

rather than standard, letters are required, these can be provided by members of the admin team.

3. Emails

Email is an effective way of sending simple messages that require a response, or to send general information to students (a time change for a class, for example, along with a notice in Reception). In order for emails to be effective they should be:

- Short and to the point.
- Subject headings should contain key information and level of importance.
- The sender should be clear about whether they wish for a quick response.
- Only copy the message to relevant recipients.

It is important that you view emails as being suitable to be seen by anybody and should, therefore, not contain personal or embarrassing information.

Information should not be open to misinterpretation and should be clear to the person/people receiving the message.

Email etiquette should be followed – for example, refrain from typing messages in capital letters and remember that some people may find jokes, links to 'funny' messages, etc as offensive.

Remember that emails are not always secure or confidential. Messages are not private and may be seen by other people. Do not put anything in a message that should not, or you would not wish, to be seen by other people. Legally, libel laws apply.

All students will have a College email address which should be used for college related purposes. This can be used externally, and provides students with a way of using a non personal email address for correspondence and also helps them to contact staff easily. It will also enable staff to send messages easily to particular groups of students and send messages quickly and efficiently throughout the College.

4. Telephone

Incoming telephone calls to the College are usually dealt with initially by the Receptionist. Additions to the staff and student telephone directory are updated by the Receptionist and/or the Lead Assessment Administrator. Students are contacted by telephone if they fail to respond to email messages, or if the message that needs to be relayed is sensitive and it is felt to be better made in person.

5. Memos and Notes

Memos can be paper-based or electronic. Paper memos are given out with results or sometimes by the Principal to lecturers. Electronic memos are sometimes sent out to students – either individually, or as a group – to relay small amounts of information quickly. Phone messages are sometimes taken by the Receptionist and left on the desk of members of the admin staff, or in the pigeonholes of lecturers.

6. College Email Accounts

These have been covered previously in the 'email' section. All members of staff have College email accounts which should be used for college related purposes only. Using the student's name, or student number, they can easily find them on college database and be able to send emails to students and relevant teaching groups. Having College email accounts prevents users from having to use personal email addresses. A complaints procedure will be put in place if any member of staff, or student, receives inappropriate or abusive emails and email accounts can be blocked. When using the computer network, all users should be careful never to reveal their password to anyone as they are responsible for anything done while using their user-id. The City College reserves the right to monitor use of electronic mail and internet.

7. College Calendar

The College Calendar is available to all staff and students online. Updating the HND/DET College Calendar is the responsibility of the Director of Assessments and aided by the Lead Assessment Administrator. It must be approved by the Director of Studies and a second member of the Management staff. Updating the Acupuncture and Tui Na Calendar is the responsibility of the course leader and must be approved by another CCA staff member.

8. Student/Staff Handbooks

Handbooks are available to students and staff on Sharepoint. These are updated each term and is the responsibility of the Management Staff.

Handbooks contain key information about who everyone in the College is, what their responsibility is, how to request letters, information on fees, etc. A member of the Management Staff goes through the handbook at Induction for new students. In the same way, Management staff will also

discuss the Staff Handbook with any new member of staff. These contain essential information and are available online on Sharepoint.

9. HESA

It is a legal requirement that The City College supplies student information to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). In order to do so, details are included in the Student Handbook and questionnaires are given out to the students at induction for them to complete. This is done within the rights of the student under the Data Protection Act and the purposes and uses for the information the College is required to supply is fully explained.

The City College sends information gathered about the students to HESA. HESA is responsible for the database in which the HESA information is stored and is used to publish statistics about students in higher education. With the College, the Director of Student Services and the Administrator are responsible for collecting and uploading this information.

10. Posters/Notices

There are notice-boards throughout the College, most notably in Reception. These are used to display information of use to the students, including time tables (although each student is emailed/ and can be given a paper copy to keep), information on student discounts or travel, updates about classes, telephone numbers they may need for student help-lines, etc. Updated posters are approved by the Director of Assessments and displayed by the Receptionist and Lead Assessment Administrator. As these notice-boards are in public places, with lots of student traffic, they are designed to be eye-catching and give students useful advice.

If there is ever an urgent message – for example, a lecturer suddenly taken ill and unable to teach – it will be on the College notice board and shared on Sharepoint. Students and staff should regularly log into Sharepoint for any news updates whilst away from the College.

11. SharePoint

SharePoint is a college intranet accessed by Microsoft Office 365 and is used by staff to upload items such as news/updates/handouts, presentations, assignment questions, lecture notes and more. This cuts down use of paper and means that students have access to information from home. All staff have the ability to place documents on SharePoint and all students can access it, either at college or from home.

12. Complaints/Appeals

All students have access to a complaints and appeals procedure, the details of which are found on Sharepoint. They are all aware of how to complain and/or appeal and it is made clear to them that they have every right to complain if they are not fully satisfied with the service that the College provides.

The Staff Handbook also has details of the complaints procedure and staff are also encouraged to openly express any worries or dissatisfaction.

The City College prides itself on having open communication with staff and students about any complaints or issues they may have and on addressing them proactively.

13. Tutorials

Tutorials are designed to give the students a chance to discuss their work and assignments with their tutors and to give them guidance in their studies. Students are encouraged to take full advantage of their tutorials and to use the time to ask any questions about their studies.

14. Behaviour

There is a zero tolerance policy of bad behaviour at the City College. This is outlined to the students at their interview and all new students sign an agreement to show that they have understood what is expected from them. This makes the College policy and expectations clear to students and increases effective communication between staff and students, as they are aware of what is expected from them before they begin attending classes.

While the City College encourages both staff and students to voice any concerns, it is also very clear in its expectations about the behaviour of everyone in the college. There is a Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook which lays out the behaviour/attendance expected from students while they are studying at the College – and of the behaviour they can expect to receive from staff at the College.

Regarding social media the City College supports free speech and students may comment via digital methods. However, where comments are regarded as defamatory to the reputation of the College, they will be removed and disciplinary action may be taken against the author of the comments. There are several other, internal channels through which students can make comments, provide feedback or complain about any

aspect of the college and these should be first choice for anything students wish to communicate to the college.

Any facility used to threaten, harass, pester or annoy anyone else will be dealt with very seriously.

15. Student Files

Each student at the City College has a student file, with copies of all the relevant documents and information about them. This includes examination results, any relevant medical histories, any correspondence between them and the college, etc. The files are maintained by the Receptionist/Lead Assessment Administrator. These help the College to keep track of students individual needs and respond to any queries by them, or about them, to the relevant agencies.

16. Meetings

Meetings are designed to meet the wide range of need for face to face discussions and these change to reflect the changing priorities and structures throughout the academic year. Meetings are held with various members of staff, student representatives and also outside agencies throughout the year.

It is expected that staff will attend any meeting they are required to, that they will be positive and participate in meetings, that agendas will be provided and minutes taken and that all relevant participants will be informed of any outcome decided upon or decisions made.

17. DSA

The City College is committed to ensuring that any disabled people are treated fairly and any reasonable adjustments to provision will be made to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged. The Student Welfare Officer and Student Disability Officer are responsible for liaising with the student in question and any outside agency to discuss their needs and helping arrange any individual equipment, etc that may be required.

When interviewing prospective students, all applicants are asked about their health and any long term issues that may affect their studies. It is made clear that the college is willing and open to helping any prospective students to the best of the College's ability and all students are encouraged to talk openly to the Director of Student Services, or any of the admin staff, about any concerns they may have.

The Main External Channels of Communication are:

1. Facebook/Twitter
2. College Website
3. Advertising
4. Open Days/Promotion
5. Newsletters

1. Facebook/Twitter

The City College has Facebook and Twitter accounts, which all staff and students are encouraged to access for up to date information about the college. These include any class changes, assignment deadlines, open days and other information. Management staff are responsible for keeping information relevant and up to date.

2. College Website

The City College is aware that many people's first experience of the college is through the website and, therefore, it is important that this is clear, easy to navigate and contains all essential information that prospective students may require. All Management are responsible for the website, with the Director of Studies being involved in making sure that the website is updated and relevant.

3. Advertising

The Director of Studies is responsible for advertising. Advertisements contain information on courses and need to be clear, concise and relevant.

4. Open Days/Promotions

All Open Days and Promotions are approved by Management. These could include pop up shops/fairs/expos/open days and all other appropriate events. This is a good way to publicise the College and be able to communicate with interested parties

5. Newsletters

Newsletters are a good way to summarise events and publicise upcoming events/programmes. Management are responsible for designing and distribution. Newsletters would be emailed externally to appropriate recipients and uploaded/emailed internally to the relevant sections and or persons.