Communication Guidelines

1 Purpose

The objective of the communication guidelines is to provide clear, concise, respectful, and timely communication from the institute. These guidelines serve as a comprehensive framework designed to enhance consistent and efficient communication among staff, students, and external stakeholders.

The scope of the communication guidelines encompasses various aspects, such as communication modalities, crafting cogent messages, writing toolkits, preferred stylistic approaches, illustrative examples, as well as supportive resources and assistance.

The communication guidelines should be read along with the Brand Guidelines, Social media Policy , Marketing Policy and associated documents and templates to ensure a unified voice and identity for the institute.

2 Methods of Communication

There are various methods of communication available to convey information effectively. It is crucial to select the most suitable method based on your intended audience and purpose. Email is one of the most used methods to communicate with the stakeholders.

2.1 Drafting Effective Email

Effective email communication is essential in the workplace for clear and concise exchanges of information. Drafting effective emails ensures that messages are easily understood, and professional, and bring out the desired response.

Tips for Drafting Effective Workplace Emails

2.1.1 Subject Line Clarity:

- Keep it concise and informative
- Indicate the purpose of the email (e.g., action required, information, decision needed)

2.1.2 Structure and Organization:

- Use headings and subheadings for clarity
- Organize content logically, with the most important information first
- Use bullet points and numbered lists for easy scanning

2.1.3 Clear and Concise Language:

- Avoid jargon and overly complex language
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Use active voice and straightforward wording

2.1.4 Proper Tone and Formality:

- Maintain a professional and courteous tone
- Avoid using slang, emojis, or informal language
- Consider the relationship with the recipient and adjust the level of formality accordingly

2.1.5 Call-to-Action (CTA) and Deadlines (where required):

- Clearly state any required actions or responses
- Specify deadlines, if applicable
- Make it easy for the recipient to comply with the request

2.1.6 Proofread and Edit:

- Check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors
- Ensure the email is easy to read and understand
- Confirm all links, attachments, and references are accurate

2.1.7 Follow-Up and Response Management:

- Monitor and respond to replies in a timely manner
- Provide additional information or clarification as needed
- Keep email threads organized and easy to reference
- Place call to action at the top

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- Include all relevant information
- Maintain a professional, relaxed, and friendly tone
- Avoid nicknames, slang, and emoticons

2.1.8 Hyperlinks

- Embed links for additional or background information
- Describe the linked content with the anchor text
- Mention if a link downloads a document and state file size

2.1.9 Attachments

- Include only relevant attachments
- Keep file sizes small

2.1.10 Signature

- Use official MIT signature with logo and contact details
- Follow brand guidelines
- Avoid generic signatures

2.2 Official letter

The letter can be formal and automated to convey critical information professionally and establishing credibility. An effective letter ensures clear communication and fosters positive relationships. Regulators often require formal, precise communication, while students and staff need varying levels of formality and accessibility.

Additionally, the tone and language use should reflect the purpose of the communication and the relationship with the recipient. By tailoring the tone and language to each audience, you can establish and maintain appropriate professional relationships while ensuring the clarity and effectiveness of your communication.

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2.2.1 Letter to a Regulator:

- Tone: Maintain a formal and professional
- Language: Use precise, industry-specific terminology
- Focus on facts and evidence as needed
- Address recipient with their proper title and full name

2.2.2 Communicating with Students:

- Tone: personal, attentive, approachable, and friendly
- Language: Use simple, easy-to-understand, focused on the outcome
- Be supportive, caring and encouraging - learning and curiosity
- Address students by their first names or as a group (e.g., "Dear students")

2.2.3 Communicating with Staff:

- Tone: Adopt balance between professional and approachable
- Language: Use clear, concise, and jargon-free for accessibility
- Foster collaboration and open communication
- Address staff by their first names or as a group (e.g., "Dear team members")

2.2.4 For all the formal or automated letter, it needs:

- Proofread and edit for accuracy and clarity
- Follow institute templates
- Use always official letterhead which has MIT logo and contact details, or be printed on MIT letterhead
- Always sign and provide contact information

2.3 Newsletter

A newsletter serves as an effective communication tool to inform students, staff, and other stakeholders about relevant news, events, and updates. Creating a well-designed and informative newsletter, whether printed or digital, can foster a sense of community and engagement within the institute.

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2.3.1   Establish Objectives and Target Audience:

- Ascertain the newsletter's purpose and objectives
- Identify the primary audience, such as students, staff, or alumni
- Nominate someone to be responsible for the content
- Select for a digital or format based on audience preferences and budget constraints
- Ensure a consistent layout and design

2.3.2   Content Development:

- Compile relevant news, updates, and events
- Highlight academic accomplishments, research breakthroughs, and student success stories
- Promote forthcoming workshops, conferences, and seminars
- Feature guest articles or interviews with esteemed faculty, alumni, and industry professionals

2.3.3   Visual Design and Institutional Branding:

- Adhere to the institute's branding guidelines, encompassing colours, fonts, and logo
- Incorporate visually compelling graphics, images, and infographics (always caption pictures) especially when they have people in them (making sure to spell their names correctly).
- Images: Use good, eye catchy and 'hero' images with appropriate resolution that can deliver better impact
- Maintain a clean and well-organized layout

2.3.4   Writing Style and Tone:

- Employ an engaging and informative tone
- Ensure language is cogent, succinct, and accessible to the target audience
- Meticulously proofread and edit content for grammatical, spelling, and punctuation accuracy

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2.3.5 Distribution Strategy:

- For printed newsletters, designate distribution points (e.g., campus mailboxes, common areas)
- For digital newsletters, leverage email lists or online platforms for distribution
- Encourage sharing and engagement through various social media channels

2.3.6 Performance Evaluation:

- Monitor reader engagement through metrics such as open rates, click-through rates, and feedback
- Utilize insights to refine content, design, and distribution strategies for future editions

2.4 Out-of-office message

Creating an effective out-of-office message involves specifying the duration of your absence, optionally providing a reason, designating an alternate contact, setting expectations for response time, and maintaining a clear and concise message. Proofread for errors and accuracy to ensure clear communication and manage expectations during your unavailability.

2.4.1 Sample out-of-office message

- *Thank you for your email. I am currently out of the office from [start date] to [end date] and will have limited access to my email. I will be able to respond to your message upon my return on [return date]. If urgent matters, please feel free to contact my colleague [Alternate Contact's Name] at [Alternate Contact's Email] or [Alternate Contact's Phone Number], who will be able to assist you during my absence.*
- *If you wish to apply for a course, please lodge an application via our online application portal if you are domestic and onshore prospective students and if you are offshore prospective student, refer to this link https://www.mit.edu.au/about-mit/contact-us/education-agents-your-country*

  I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding. Thank you for your patience, and I will get back to you as soon as possible upon my return.

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2.5   SMS

To write effective SMS messages, ensure clear, professional communication while respecting recipient's time and:

- be concise and direct
- Be to the point (don't use background information)
- Be clear that it is an official message from MIT
- Use proper language and tone (refer above)
- proofread for errors
- double-check recipient details and consider timing and urgency

These tips ensure clear, professional communication while respecting the recipient's time.

2.5.1   Sample SMS template

Hi/Hey [Student's Name],

Hope you're doing well! Just a heads up, there's an interesting workshop on career development happening on [date] at [time] in [location]. It's a great opportunity to learn and network. Don't miss out!

Or

Hi [student's Name]

Do you need assistance on completing your enrolment/timetable? Reply 'YES' to request a callback from our Student Engagement Team. If no assistance require 'SMS reply 'NO'.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

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2.6 Social media

Social media is a powerful tool, offering increased visibility, engagement, promotion of news and events, recruitment, networking, reputation management, and real-time communication. By using social media strategically, the institute can enhance its reputation, foster a strong sense of community and effectively communicate with its target audience.

2.6.1 Guidelines for creating Social Media Posts:

- Define objectives and target audience
- Choose the appropriate platform
- Share only relevant content (news, achievements, events)
- Only comment on issues withing your area of expertise and separate your personal opinion
- Follow branding guidelines and optimize visuals
- Use friendly, conversational and engaging tone and be polite
- Maintain a consistent posting schedule during peak hours
- Monitor engagement and respond to comments
- Evaluate performance to refine future strategies

Additionally, refer to our Social Media Policy and Procedure

2.7 Website

MIT website provides a comprehensive, user-friendly platform that showcases the institution's offerings, enhances brand visibility, and supports engagement with students, staff, alumni, and other stakeholders. It serves as a hub for sharing essential information, fostering connections, and promoting academic programs, research, events, and achievements. A well-designed website provides a positive user experience, effectively represents the institute and supports its goals and objectives.

2.7.1 Guidelines for Developing a Website

1. Define Objectives and Target Audience:
   - Determine the website's primary goals and objectives
   - Identify the target audience (e.g., prospective students, current students, staff, alumni)

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2. **Choose a Suitable Domain and Hosting Service:**
   - Select a relevant domain name that represents the institute
   - Opt for a reliable hosting service that ensures optimal performance
3. **Plan the Website Structure:**
   - Create a sitemap outlining the hierarchy and organization of pages
   - Ensure logical and intuitive navigation
4. **Develop Responsive Web Design:**
   - Optimize the website for various devices (desktop, mobile, tablet)
   - Ensure fast loading times and smooth user experience
5. **Visual Design and Branding:**
   - Adhere to the institute's branding guidelines, including colors, fonts, and logo
   - Incorporate visually appealing graphics and multimedia content
6. **Content Creation:**
   - Develop informative, engaging, and accessible content
   - Highlight academic programs, research, events, and achievements
   - Ensure content is regularly updated to maintain relevancy
7. **User Experience (UX) and Accessibility:**
   - Prioritize a user-friendly interface and easy navigation
   - Ensure the website is accessible to users with disabilities, following Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
8. **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):**
   - Implement SEO best practices to improve visibility and search engine ranking
   - Use relevant keywords, meta tags, and optimized URLs
9. **Monitor and Update Regularly:**
   - Track website performance using analytics tools
   - Regularly update content and address technical issues
   - By following these guidelines, Melbourne Institute of Technology can develop a professional and effective website that provides an exceptional user experience while effectively representing the institution's values and offerings.
10. **Website Administration and Content Publication Policy** [Policy and Procedure to be developed]

    The material on our website is overseen, developed, and sustained by site proprietors, content portfolio managers, and the System Development Department (SDD). The SDD team offers training and assistance, while our Web Publishing Guidelines detail their obligations as well as our established policies and procedures.

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2.8 Student Guide/Prospectus

2.8.1 Guidelines for producing prospective student guide:

A prospective student guide is a vital tool for showcasing the Melbourne Institute of Technology's (MIT) academic offerings, campus life, and unique features to potential students. Ensuring that the guide adheres to the institute's brand guidelines and relevant policies and procedures guarantees a consistent, professional, and compelling representation of MIT while maintaining compliance.

2.8.2 Guidelines for Producing a Prospective Student Guide Align with Brand Guidelines:

- Use MIT's approved logo, colour palette, fonts, and design elements
- Maintain a consistent visual identity throughout the guide

2.8.3 Adhere to Relevant Policies and Procedures:

Follow MIT's policies on privacy, confidentiality, and data protection

Ensure compliance with any applicable regulations, such as advertising or accessibility standards.

i. Define Objectives and Target Audience:

- Identify the primary goals of the guide (e.g., attracting new students, showcasing programs)
- Tailor content to the needs and interests of prospective students
- Outline Content Structure:

ii. Organize information logically, using headings and sub-headings for easy navigation

iii. Ensure a balance between text, images, and white space for readability

iv. Include Essential Information:

- Present an overview of MIT's history, mission, and values
- Showcase academic programs, faculty, and research opportunities
- Highlight campus facilities, services, and extracurricular activities
- Provide information on admission requirements, application procedures, and important dates

v. Use High-Quality Images and Visuals:

- Feature professional photographs of the campus, events, and student life
- Include infographics, charts, or diagrams to present data and statistics effectively

vi. Ensure Accurate and Up-to-Date Content:

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- Verify all information and statistics are current and accurate
- Update the guide regularly to reflect changes in programs, policies, or offerings
- Use Clear and Engaging Language:
- Write in a concise, informative, and accessible style that appeals to prospective students
- Avoid jargon and overly technical language

vii. Emphasize Unique Features and Success Stories:
- Highlight MIT's unique selling points and competitive advantages
- Share success stories and testimonials from alumni and current students

viii. Design for Accessibility:
- Adhere to accessibility guidelines for fonts, colors, and layout
- Ensure the guide is available in accessible digital formats (e.g., screen-reader friendly)

ix. Collaborate with Relevant Departments:
- Coordinate with academic departments, admissions, and marketing teams to gather accurate and comprehensive information
- Involve key stakeholders in the review and approval process

2.9 Institute banner

Designing a visually appealing banner requires a deep understanding of the institution's brand guidelines, resonate with the target audience, and effectively communicate its message. To create the Institute banner, follow the above requirements.

Writing an Effective Message

2.9.1 Plan

1. Define the purpose and audience:
   - Identify the primary objective and desired outcome of the message
   - Determine the target audience and their needs, preferences, and expectations
   - Gather relevant information
   - Collect necessary details, facts, and figures related to the message
   - Organize the information in a logical order

2.9.2 Draft

2. Compose the message:
   - Begin with a clear introduction, stating the purpose of the message
   - Present key points in a logical sequence
   - Conclude with a call to action, specifying any required actions or next steps for the recipient

2.9.3 Review

3. Edit and refine:
   - Review the message for clarity and conciseness
   - Revise sentences or paragraphs to improve readability and flow
   - Ensure the message is tailored to the target audience
   - Proofread for grammar and spelling:
4. Seek feedback (optional):
   - Share the message with a colleague or supervisor for feedback
   - Revise the message based on their suggestions, if necessary

Design and Layout

5. Format the message:
   - Use headings, bullet points, or numbered lists for easy readability
   - Ensure consistent font type, size, and colour throughout the message
   - Ensure politeness and professionalism
   - Use appropriate greetings, salutations, and sign-offs

To make sure all our material looks consistent, your document should follow MIT brand guidelines. By creating an effective message that clearly communicates your intended information, maintains professionalism, and fosters positive interactions with the recipient(s).

2.10 Supporting documents and References

MIT Brand Guidelines Style Guide

Student Charter

Marketing Policy and Procedure

Social Media Policy and Procedure

Website Administration and Content Publication Policy [Policy and Procedure to be developed]

Records Management Policy and Procedure

https://federation.edu.au/staff/business-and-communication/communication-guidelines

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