

INSTITUTIONAL REGULATORY CODE

Policy Framework		Regulations/rules	
Policy	X	Constitution	
Procedure (Manual)		Local document	
Guidelines		Other (name)	

Title: Communications policy

Category: Management

Approval authority: Council

Responsible Officer: Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Operations

Designated Officer: Director: Communications and Marketing

First approved: 2020-11-01

Last amended: N/A

Effective implementation date: 01-12-2021 **Review date:** 01-07-2024

Reference number: 1/P/2/C/22/01/16/02

Section reference (please indicate below):

Teaching and Learning		Registrar	
Research, Innovation and Engagement		Vice-Chancellor's Office	
Resources and Operations	X		

Approved by:

Council

Resolution: CM 28/21/11

Approval date: 01 December 2021

Signature of approval: 

1. POLICY STATEMENT

This document outlines the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT)'s communications policy, and was developed with the aim of regulating and reducing the reputational risk of communication engagement through the creation of set standards and procedures applicable to CUT and its stakeholders.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to guide all stakeholders of CUT particularly, employees, students and alumni, on communication best practices, and reducing the potential for reputational risk when engaging on any digital platform in a professional or personal capacity.

3. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

“Communication”

Communication is defined as an act of imparting or exchanging information by speaking, writing, or various communication platforms, including conventional tools/static media or digital platforms.

“Crisis”

Any potential protests or unrest incidents, hostage-taking, occupation of buildings, accidents involving stakeholders, energy blackouts, natural disasters, toxic leaks, terrorist attacks, criminal activities, threats and pandemics, or any occurrence relating thereto.

“Digital platforms”

Digital platforms include all platforms that are used to share, discuss and create content digitally.

“Law”

(a) The common law, and any applicable constitution, statute, by-law, proclamation, regulation, rule, notice, treaty, directive, code of practice, judgement or order having force of law in South Africa, and any interpretation of any of them by any court or responsible authority; and

(b) any applicable guidance, direction or determination with which CUT and/or the service provider is bound to comply, to the extent that it is published and publicly available, or its existence or contents have been notified to the service provider by CUT.

“Stakeholders”

All CUT employees (including full time, part time, fixed term, contract, visiting academics and researchers included); CUT students; CUT alumni and

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convocation members; partners; affiliates; as well as service providers or third parties conducting business with CUT.

“Reputational risk”

The threat or endangerment of the good standing of CUT, which may lead to financial or social capital loss, or may cause reputational harm to CUT.

“Personal capacity”

Refers to a stakeholder who is acting outside of their professional capacity as a private individual. However, this stakeholder, in his/her personal capacity, is known, or can be proven as affiliated with CUT, or one of CUT’s affiliates.

“Policy”

This communications policy.

“Principles”

A set of moral, social, educational, political, economic, financial, environmental, physical and/or other parameters that guide the policy.

“Professional capacity”

The official designation held by any of CUT’s stakeholders in respect of CUT.

4. PRINCIPLES

As a juristic person established in terms of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997), CUT has the responsibility to uphold the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), as amended, including upholding the following constitutional rights:

- 4.1. The right to equality.
- 4.2. The right to privacy.
- 4.3. The right to freedom of association.
- 4.4. The right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion.
- 4.5. The right to freedom of expression.

5. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

The policy applies to all CUT stakeholders, and is guided by the following legislations, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996):

- 5.1. Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-related Information Act (Act No. 70 of 2002), as amended;
- 5.2. Promotion of Administration Justice Act (Act No. 3 of 2000), as amended;
- 5.3. Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended; and
- 5.4. Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (Act No. 25 of 2002), as amended.

6. APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHY/PRINCIPLES

- 6.1. This policy is guided by the vision, mission, and core values of CUT.
- 6.2. Misconduct while engaging on social media, whether in a professional or personal capacity, comprises of behaviour that breaches the CUT Statute, policies, codes of conduct, terms of use, or rules and regulations. This includes, but is not limited to, CUT digital and other digital platforms.
- 6.3. Misconduct also involves bringing CUT, its affiliates or stakeholders into disrepute through the actions of an individual (whether in a professional or personal capacity) or entity on social media.
- 6.4. Behaviour on social media that interferes with the governance, administration, teaching and learning, or research activities of CUT is also misconduct. Concerns and difficulties experienced, whether with CUT as an organisation or a stakeholder, must be reported through the proper channels of communication. Examples would be through whistle-blowing, reporting to line managers, or reporting student-related matters to Student Affairs.
- 6.5. No stakeholder may make official statements on social media on behalf of CUT or any of its stakeholder groups, unless they have been authorised by the Communications and Marketing Section to do so in terms of section 9 of this policy (“Authorisation to make official statements”).

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities pertaining to this policy are clarified in the procedure to this policy.

8. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

- 8.1. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Resources and Operations hereby delegates the authority for the management and monitoring of digital platforms to the Director: Communications and Marketing.
- 8.2. The Director: Communications and Marketing may, in writing, delegate authority to the Deputy Director: Web and Print Editing, if and when deemed necessary.

9. AUTHORISATION TO MAKE OFFICIAL STATEMENTS

All stakeholders must obtain written authorisation from either of the following offices prior to making an official statement on behalf of CUT, or any department/unit at CUT:

- 9.1. the DVC: Resources and Operations;
- 9.2. the Director: Communications and Marketing;
- 9.3. the Deputy Director: Web and Print Editing, provided that the Director: Communications and Marketing has delegated the authority to him/her in terms of section 8.2; or
- 9.4. any media liaison delegated by the DVC: Resources and Operations.

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10. GENERAL GUIDELINES ON COMMUNICATION

When communicating digitally or making statements on any digital platform, all stakeholders acting in professional capacity must refrain from the following:

- 10.1. Communicating in abusive or offensive language.
- 10.2. Being involved in a topic that displays and promotes any form discrimination based on race, gender, religion, gender, marital status, nationality, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, colour, ethnic or social religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, or any other ground, as purported in section 9(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996).
- 10.3. Soliciting commercial activities for personal gain.
- 10.4. Encouraging or participating in illegal or crime-related activities.
- 10.5. Disclosing confidential information obtained in their professional capacity as a stakeholder of CUT.
- 10.6. Communicating in the name of CUT, or the use of its logo, without obtaining authorisation from the persons listed in sections 9.1 to 9.3.

11. CRISIS COMMUNICATION

- 11.1. Should a crisis occur:
 - 11.1.1. any communication made on behalf of CUT in relation to the crisis must be made with the prior written consent of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, either of the DVCs, or the Registrar; and
 - 11.1.2. stakeholders must refrain from engaging in any hearsay, gossip and statements on digital platforms that could pose reputational risk to CUT.
- 11.2. During normal operational times, stakeholders may, in their personal capacity, engage on digital platforms with honesty, integrity, and sincerity of intention, as would be reasonably expected from any stakeholders, in consideration of their knowledge and experience.

12. INTERACTION WITH THE MEDIA

Any stakeholders approached by media reporters or journalists must not make any statements on behalf of CUT in their professional capacity, unless authorised to do so in terms of section 9 of this policy.

13. SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOUR MONITORING

CUT reserves the right to monitor any online activity on all digital platforms for behaviour that may be misleading or inaccurate, and that may cause reputational risk to CUT's brand.

14. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

- 14.1. Should a stakeholder contravene this policy, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the relevant human resources (HR) disciplinary procedures and rules, student policies and codes of conduct, the CUT Statute, and other relevant policies and procedures that deal with the improper behaviour of stakeholders.



- 14.2. Should the contravention breach any law, CUT must report the contravention to the relevant authorities.

15. PRESS OMBUDSMAN

The following persons may lodge a complaint with the Press Ombudsman on behalf of CUT:

- 15.1. the Vice-Chancellor and Principal;
- 15.2. the DVC: Resources and Operations;
- 15.3. the Director: Communications and Marketing; and
- 15.4. the Deputy Director: Web and Print Editing.

16. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

This policy should be reviewed every three years from the effective implementation date, unless there is an urgency for revision earlier than the effluxion of the three-year period.

17. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 17.1. CUT Statute;
- 17.2. Code of Conduct for Students (published in the annual CUT Calendar);
- 17.3. Disciplinary Rules for Students (published in the annual CUT Calendar);
- 17.4. Terms of Reference of CUT Students' Representative Council (SRC) (published in the annual CUT Calendar);
- 17.5. HR disciplinary procedures (K/4.1) and rules (B/8.3); and
- 17.6. communications procedure.

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