Policy Name:	Student Communication Policy
Originating/Responsible Department:	Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment)
Approval Authority:	Senior Management Committee
Date of Original Policy:	March 25, 2015
Last Updated:	October 2020
Mandatory Revision Date:	October 2025
Contact:	Vice-President (Students and Enrolment) and University Registrar

Introduction

In order to support student success, Carleton University departments, faculty, and staff must communicate regularly with undergraduate and graduate students about their academic and extra-curricular activities as well as important dates, deadlines and university rules and regulations.

To do this, Carleton has a variety of communication tools including email, websites, portals, the learning management system, event calendars, a mobile application and new and emerging forms of digital and social communication.

As a result of the number of tools available, the number of departments, units, faculty and staff wishing to communicate with students, and the selection of email as the communication channel of choice, undergraduate and graduate students receive a high volume of messages from the University.

Scope

The Student Communication Policy applies to communication to undergraduate and graduate students (hereafter referred to as students) using Carleton University's communication tools and systems.

Purpose

The objective of the Student Communication Policy is to increase the awareness and use of communication tools available and to promote best practices in the selection of communication tools when communicating to students.

To achieve this objective, the Student Communication Policy has identified three principles to guide student communications:

1. Consistency: Use communication vehicles consistently based on the type of message
2. Consolidation: Aggregate messages using communication vehicles such as websites, portals and newsletters
3. Simplification: Make it easy for students to find what they need

Email to student email accounts (cMail) is the university's official form of communication to our students. Through the above objectives, this policy and its resources look to encourage departments, units, faculty and staff not to rely solely on email and instead incorporate a variety of useful tools to effectively communicate important content to our students.

It is a natural inclination for departments, units, faculty, and staff to see the need to communicate to students as an opportunity to send another email. However reasonable this may appear, the end result is a perception by students that Carleton is *spamming* them, leading not only to frustration but also the obscuring of high priority messages vital to a students' academic success.

Policy

Communicating to students is important for all departments at Carleton – whether you are trying to reach all students or targeted audiences.

This policy outlines appropriate content to communicate to students and the most appropriate tool for the message. Email communication with students should be distributed collaboratively based on the guidelines outlined here within. All student communication should be planned while considering the impact on students receiving a high-volume of email from the University.

Appropriate content:

Messages to all students or targeted groups of students across any communication tool must be in regard to university business. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Official messages about the normal operations of the university: This might include information about academics; the academic year; changes to governance, policy or practice; student support services; information about academic programs; academic program requirements; official undergraduate and graduate newsletters; and significant news that impacts the student body.
- Messages from the President's Office: In some cases, it may be necessary to send out official messages from the President's Office. This might include: a welcome message in the fall or significant occasions at the university. Every effort will be made to accommodate these messages using the most appropriate communication channel.
- Emergency message: In urgent or extraordinary circumstances, it may be necessary to send an emergency message (via the Emergency Notification System, the university list serves, the student portal and/or the push notification system through the mobile app) to all students or to targeted groups of students. This might include an immediate threat to health and safety, or property.

Messages to students across any communication tool must not be in regard to:
- Messages outside of the University's core business
- Any message in contradiction with Canada's Anti-spam Legislation
- A message without a direct connection to Carleton University
- Unsolicited email without a direct connection to Carleton University
- Commercial messages
- Phishing scams (Carleton University will never ask students for their password)

Communication tools:

The University's approach to student communication distinguishes between all students, targeted populations of students and targeted individuals. Communication to all students and targeted group(s) of students should be

considered public information that is relevant for all students to know. The tools to communicate these types of messages should be public websites and tools. Communication to targeted individuals should be considered private information that is only relevant to individual students or targeted populations. The tools to access these types of messages should be available only to that student such as their student email or Carleton's learning management system.

Determining your audience leads to the selection of the most appropriate communication tool. The University uses a variety of tools, including, but not limited to:

- Carleton Email (official)
  - Sent via official university list serves
  - Sent via the student portal to undergraduate and special students – by the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment), and to graduate students by the Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, or their delegate(s)
  - Sent via Outlook as bulk email to a targeted group of students pulled from a Banner GReport, in collaboration with the Dean's Office or the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment), or their delegate(s)
- Email newsletters
  - Undergraduate and Special students - State of the Raven – Students cannot unsubscribe from these official university communications
  - Graduate students – Graduate@Carleton – Students cannot unsubscribe from this official university communication
  - Faculty or department newsletters – it is recommended that students be provided the option to unsubscribe
- Student Information Systems
  - Carleton Student Portal
  - Carleton Central
  - Carleton's Learning Management System
- Electronic signage
  - Digital Signage System (TV screens)
  - Electronic LED signs
- Websites
  - Carleton Homepage
  - Undergraduate student site - Current students
  - Graduate student site
  - Faculty
  - Department and Units
- Emergency Notification System (ENS)
- Mobile app
  - News post
  - Student events
- Push Notification through the Carleton Mobile App
  - In crisis situations where safety is deemed to be at risk
  - For immediate notification of last-minute class or exam cancellations and room changes
  - When new grades are available for the user
  - When disruptions to regular service require a message be sent

- - - Where deemed business-critical by the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment), or their delegate(s)
- Event calendar(s)
- Residence Constituent Relationship Management System
- Social media

In order to create a clear and more coordinated approach to student communications on campus the Student Communications Committee has developed guidelines and resources to improve the sharing of information:

1) Communication tool chart
2) Approval processes for communication tools
3) Guidelines for Staff Communicating with Students

All resources are found online at carleton.ca/studentsupport.

Survey policy
If you are planning to survey students via their email account, the University has a survey policy (carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Survey-Policy.pdf). This policy manages university surveys in order to ensure their effective use. Surveys are a key source of information on our students. Some surveys are required as part of our agreements with the provincial government, and the results are made public, so obtaining a good response rate is essential. Consequently, care must be taken to avoid survey fatigue, the low response rate that can result from students being burdened with too many surveys.

Contact for Student Communication Policy
Vice-President (Students and Enrolment)

Student Communications Advisory Committee Members
- Vice-President (Students and Enrolment) and University Registrar – Chair
- Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment)
- Communications Officer, Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment)
- Graduate Communications and Strategic Enrolment Officer, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
- Representatives from each of the Faculties
- A representative from the Library
- A representative from University Services
- A representative from Information Technology Services
- A representative from the Teaching and Learning Services
- A representative from the Department of University Communications
- A representative from the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- A representative from the Privacy Office
- Two undergraduate student representatives
- Two graduate student representatives

Links to related policies
- Acceptable Use Policy for Information Technology carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Acceptable-Use-Policy.pdf
- Advertising Policy carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Advertising-Policy1.pdf

- Anti-Spam Compliance Policy carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Anti-Spam-Policy.pdf
- Crisis Communication Policy (in development)
- Emergency Notification System carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Emergency-Notification-System.pdf
- FIPPA (Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy) carleton.ca/fippa/policies/
- Posting Policy carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Posting-Policy4.pdf
- Social Media Guidelines carleton.ca/socialmediacommunity
- Survey Policy carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Survey-Policy.pdf
- Web content policy carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Web-Content-Policy.pdf
- Mobile App Policy (in development)