



## Communications Policy

Policy no:	
Version no. & date:	V02 25/07/2022
Next review due:	July 2023
Responsible Committee:	Marketing & Communication Committee
Approved by & date:	
Linked policies:	Internal IT network user guide & Policy Whistleblowing Policy Academic Freedom VLE Policy
External reference :	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)
Audience:	All Staff, Students and other Stakeholders

## 1. Introduction

This communications policy outlines the rules and regulations that govern the representation of Oxford Business College to all internal and external audiences. The Policy extends to all communication forms and applies across all channels and communication vehicles. This Policy is designed to provide a framework for Oxford Business College (OBC) to:

- Manage its marketing, communications, media and public relations activities in order to connect with its stakeholders strategically.
- Embed processes which manage OBC's brand, enhance its reputation and support its strategic goals and vision.
- Ensure that all communication that takes place for and on behalf of the College is done in a manner that is consistent with OBC's quality standards, branding and visual identity, and strategic positioning.
- Ensure consistent, regular and effective communication both internally and externally.
- Enhance satisfaction and engagement and improve the learning and work environment for everybody associated with the College.

## 2. Responsibilities

The Department of Media & Communications is responsible for strategising and providing accurate, timely, and pertinent information about the College to internal and external audiences through all mediums, including social media, website, media stories, advertising, and marketing collateral.

The Department of Media & Communications acts as the official voice for OBC through direct initiative, responsive contact or orchestration with other stakeholders/Departments of the College.

The PR and media relations, publications, website, and social media accounts of the College are being managed by the Department of Media and Communications. It ensures that all marketing campaigns, advertising and communications must adhere to the College vision, mission, values, strategic priorities and branding guidelines. The Department promotes and protects the College voice and reputation. It is responsible for keeping the College's social media and digital presence relevant, promoting and publicising the college programmes, achievements and activities, and engaging with prospective students, relevant communities, and other stakeholders.

Most of the activities and processes referred to in this policy come under the purview of the Marketing and Communications Committee, which reports to the Senior Management Team (SMT). All the senior managers including programme leaders and campus principals are responsible for monitoring the information provided on the College website and through social media and instantly informing the media and communication Department about any iterations, updates, amendment and giving feedback.

## 3. Detailed guidelines for the channels of communications

### 3.1. Internal Communications

Communication within the College takes place mainly through the channels mentioned below, where guidelines and standards for these channels are elaborated. There may be more ways of internal communications with stakeholders, and these will follow similar guidelines and be expected to comply with high standards.

Channels for Internal Communications:

- Emails
- Instant Messaging, WhatsApp or similar platforms
- SharePoint
- Mobile/Telephone
- Mailers
- Letters
- Noticeboard
- Student/Staff Handbooks
- Meetings
- Internal Events

#### 3.1.1. Emails

Email is an official, legally acceptable and effective way of communication internally as well as externally. All staff members have official email accounts that should be used for college-related purposes only. Having an OBC email account prevents users from using personal email addresses for official communication.

All students also have a College email address, which should be used for college-related purposes. Student emails provide students with the ability to use a non-personal email address for correspondence and helps them contact staff easily. It also enables staff to send messages to particular groups of students quickly and efficiently throughout the College. All College staff should use the same OBC email address for any communication with students, unless requested otherwise by the student in writing. Policy guidelines for emails are mentioned below, which make official communications effective and clear:

- The Emails 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.
- 'Reply all' should be used judiciously. Reply/copy the mail only to relevant recipients.
- Emails should be suitable to be seen by anybody and should not contain personal or embarrassing information.
- Information should not be open to misinterpretation and should be clear to the person/people receiving the mail.
- Email etiquette should be followed. For example, refrain from typing messages in capital letters and remember that some people may find jokes and links to 'funny' messages offensive.

- Sending or circulating emails having grossly inappropriate content such as pornographic material, depictions of vulgarity, inhumane treatment of animals, violence or abuse of children, sexual assault, excessive and crude swearing, sexual harassment and any other abusive behaviour may lead to disciplinary action that may further lead to dismissal/expulsion.
- Emails are not always confidential. Messages are not private and may be seen by other people. Nothing should be put in a message that should not, or you would not wish, to be seen by other people.
- OBC reserves the right to monitor the use of College email.
- UK libel laws apply.
- A complaints procedure should be put in place if any staff member or student receives inappropriate or abusive emails, and the sender's email accounts should be blocked.
- When using the College IT facilities, all users should be careful and keep their passwords and access codes safe and secret as they are responsible for any activity from their user-id.

### **3.1.2. Instant Messaging/WhatsApp or similar platforms**

‘Instant Messaging’ refers to a mode of communication whereby text and multimedia in the form of text, audio, photographs or video clips are sent from one digital device to another through an application specifically designed for that purpose. Since WhatsApp is the most widely used application for instant messaging these days, Instant Messaging (IM) has been used interchangeably with "WhatsApp" in this policy document.

- Communication through IM/digital messaging apps and SMS should be used only for urgent communication, dissemination of general information or making announcements as it does not have the same legal bindings as emails do.
- Sharing inappropriate content, whether in a WhatsApp group or Direct Message (DM), where there exists a link to or mention of the College, is considered a disciplinary offence.
- Any behaviour that insults or diminishes anybody else personally or professionally should be avoided. Arguing in a group is not appropriate. Conflicts should be resolved in person or through DM.
- Sharing grossly inappropriate content such as pornographic material, depictions of vulgarity, inhumane treatment of animals, violence or abuse of children, sexual assault, excessive and crude swearing, sexual harassment, sexual innuendo and any other abusive behaviour may lead to disciplinary action that may result in dismissal/expulsion.
- Employees should be mindful of data-intensive media files which may not be appropriate to share in a group.
- Ask three questions to yourself before sharing any content, especially in Group environments: 1) Is it necessary? 2) Is it appropriate for the audience? 3) Is now a good time to send it?

### **3.1.3. Mobile/Telephone**

Mobile phones have become an essential part of personal and professional life, and many official tasks are being executed through mobile phones, so the College does not completely restrict mobile phone usage at the workplace. But there are a few guidelines for the judicious use of the mobile phone while at work.

Using a mobile telephone in the office is acceptable for business-related calls. Personal calls can be made at times but should be kept to an acceptable level and not affect your work or the people around you. All employees are expected to:

- Keep their phone in their pocket or on their desk
- Have their phone set to silent or vibrate mode
- Not use the phone during meetings
- Students should also be careful not have long conversations on their mobile phones during a lesson
- Teachers should not use their mobile phones whilst teaching except for emergencies

Students should be contacted by telephone if they fail to respond to emails or if the message that needs to be relayed is sensitive and better made in person. Incoming telephone calls to the College are usually dealt with initially by the Receptionist.

### **3.1.4. SharePoint**

SharePoint is a College intranet accessed by Microsoft Office 365. It may be used by staff to upload items such as important documents, programme details, timetables and schedules, shared data, news/updates/handouts, presentations, assignment questions, lecture notes and more. Sharing documents through SharePoint is deemed to be official and legal.

Staff should regularly log into SharePoint for any updates whilst away from the College. In addition, all staff should be able to place documents on SharePoint and access them either at College or away.

### **3.1.5. Microsoft Teams**

Microsoft Teams is the hub for teamwork. It allows for collaboration, chat, calls, meetings, and much more and is also part of Microsoft 365. It may be used by staff to upload items such as important documents, programme details, timetables and schedules, shared data, news/updates/handouts, presentations, assignment questions, lecture notes and more. Sharing documents through Microsoft Teams is deemed to be official and legal.

Staff should regularly log into Microsoft Teams for any updates whilst away from the College. In addition, all staff should be able to place documents on Microsoft Teams and access them either at College or away

### **3.1.6. Letters**

Letters are effective for communication on specific issues. They are an effective way of dealing with students at particular times, such as the beginning of term. Letters are typed, signed by one of the Senior Management team, copies kept in student files and given to the appropriate student, etc. Letter may be sent by email to students as an attachment.

### **3.1.7. Student/Staff Handbooks**

Handbooks contain essential information and are available to students and staff on the College website. Updating Student Handbooks at the beginning of each term is the responsibility of the Head of Programme or person they have delegated. The HR team must update the staff handbook at least once every year.

Student handbooks contain essential information about the College. During induction time, members of the admission/academic Staff should ask new students to go through the handbook. In the same way, HR personnel should inform and discuss the staff handbook with every new staff member.

### **3.1.8. Noticeboard**

There are e/noticeboards throughout the College, most notably in Reception. These boards display information of use to the students, like updates about classes, telephone numbers they may need for student helplines etc. Updated posters should also be displayed on the noticeboard.

### **3.1.9. Meetings**

Meetings are meant to meet the wide range of needs for one-on-one or group discussions and decisions making.

Online or in-person meetings are an effective way of communicating, and most communication can be dealt with this way. The College has an 'Open door Policy' which benefits students and staff and allows people to discuss any issues in-person.

Meetings may be organised with various staff members, student representatives and outside agencies. It is expected that staff will attend mandatory meetings whenever possible. They need to be positive and participate constructively in meetings. The agenda of all meetings should be provided in advance, minutes should be taken, and all relevant participants should be informed of any outcome or decisions made.

### **3.1.10. Internal Events**

The College organises many events – virtual or physical, of an academic and non-academic nature. These events should have the following as the main objectives:

- a. Engagement with alumni, students and staff
- b. Wellbeing, and motivation of students
- c. Student skills development to enhance their employability
- d. Activities under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives

Proposals to organise internal events should be submitted to the events committee (details mentioned further in this document). The Student Council should elect an Events Coordinator according to their Terms of Reference and the Events Coordinator should set up an Events Committee with staff and students to ideate, propose and organise a few events every term.

## **3.2. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

Communication with organisations and individuals outside the College takes place mainly through the channels mentioned below. The guidelines and standards for these channels are elaborated further. There may be more ways of communication with clients, prospective students, and stakeholders as and when required that would be governed by similar guidelines and standards. The main external channels of communication are:

- College Website
- Advertising & Branding
- Media Relations & PR
- Social Media
- Publications
- External Events/Open Days

### **3.2.1. College Website**

The College is aware that many people's first experience of the College is through the website. Therefore, it is important to keep the website updated, clear and easy to navigate, containing all essential information that prospective students may require. The website should comply with all the legal as well as regulatory requirements of the day. It must comply with data protection legislation and make use of security tools.

The website is administered and managed by a dedicated team in the Department of Media and Communications. The Head of the Department is the custodian of the website who provides restricted access to the backend for selected members of the team. This team ensures the website remains updated and relevant, showcasing, promoting and publicising the college programmes, achievements and activities and engages with prospective students, relevant communities, and other stakeholders. The team must ensure that the College remains compliant with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) regulations in respect of accurate information that allow students to make informed decisions about their studies.

All the Heads of Departments and principals are responsible for monitoring the information provided on the website. They must instantly inform the website team in the media and communication Department about any iterations, updates, amendments and provide feedback.

### **3.2.2. Advertising & Branding**

All advertising and branding at the College must reflect the OBC brand principles and promote consistent messaging. Advertisements, containing information about the College, courses, campuses and people, should be clear, concise and relevant. The ROI (Return on Investment) of the advertising/marketing campaign should be measurable.

The policy authorises the Department of Media and Communications to review all advertisements and branding exercise/campaigns to ensure that the College is presented to the public in a consistent and coherent manner, adhering to College brand guidelines and strategies. In addition, this Department is responsible for ensuring the College's design and copy standards.

All advertising copy and creative content shall have input and supervision from the Media and Communications Department and get released only after its approval. This includes all forms of paid and free advertising, including but not limited to print (newspaper, magazine, etc.), broadcast (radio and television), digital, web, billboards, direct mail, movie theatre screens and signage. No advertising commitment should be carried out without consultation with the Department of Media and Communications and approval of the Managing Director and Head of business development.

Any use of name and logo by outside agencies should be coordinated with the Department of Media and Communications. (Example: Event organised by an outside agency displaying the College logo and name on its marketing collateral).

These guidelines apply to all types of advertising, including:

- Traditional print advertisements
- Digital advertisements
- Social media advertisements
- Out-of-home display ads, including flyers and posters
- TV and radio advertisements
- Internal & external branding
- Sponsored content advertisements
- Classified advertisements

*Job postings and legal notices are exempted from the ad review process.*

### **3.2.3. Media Relations & PR**

Oxford Business College needs to communicate accurately, effectively and consistently with diverse audiences, including the media. The Department of Media & Communications is the primary and official liaison to the media and public relations (PR) outlets. It is responsible for initiating, developing and maintaining effective, productive and beneficial relations with the media in communicating College news, publicity, and responding to media requests. In addition, the Department is responsible for coordinating official comments on all matters regarding the institution with consultation and supervision of the Managing Director. This includes both proactive interaction and responses to requests.

The Department of Media & Communications is responsible for disseminating and pitching news stories, responding to media inquiries, visual productions, and handling information requests including but not limited to the OBC campuses, partnerships, programmes, plans and initiatives.

All inquiries seeking an official response from the College should be directed to the Head of Media & Communications. Authorisation to speak on behalf of the College may only be given by the Managing Director (MD). No faculty or staff member may make official statements on behalf of the College without consultation with the Head of Media & Communications and express authorisation from the MD.

Any employee not authorised by the MD to speak to the media must direct inquiries on all matters to the Head of Media & Communications. No employee is authorised to speak "off the record" on behalf of OBC to the media on any subject pertaining to the College at any location. If any staff member, including full-time teachers, is contacted for their scholarly or professional expertise, they should notify the Department of Media & Communications regarding the same.



### **3.2.4. Social Media**

Social Media guidelines provide guidance and set rules and processes to administrate official social media accounts and use of social media through the OBC computer network, systems, or equipment and/or the use of social media to represent or discuss matters related to OBC and/or members of OBC community, including all staff, students, and alumni.

The College has an active social media presence on multiple platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn. These platforms must be administered and managed by a dedicated team in the Department of Media and Communications. The Head of the Media and Communications Department will provide restricted admin access to the selected members of the team. This team is responsible for ensuring that accounts remain relevant and engaging and promote and publicise the College programmes, achievements and activities and attract prospective students, relevant communities, and other stakeholders in an engaging way on a daily basis.

All content posted on such platforms must be planned in advance. The team will create a monthly calendar to be approved by the Head of Media and Communications. No content will be allowed to be posted on the official social media accounts of the College without the written approval of the Head of the media & communications or somebody delegated by him/her.

The College supports free speech, and staff and students may provide comments related to the College via social media and other digital methods. However, if the comments are regarded as defamatory to the reputation of the College, without being in the public interest where malpractice, wrongdoing or danger have been identified (see the College Whistleblowing Policy), 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 comment, provide feedback or complain about any aspect of the College. Those should be the first choice for anything students wish to communicate to the College.

For all the staff and students at the College, circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious, or political solicitations or content defamatory to the College or any of the members of the Board of Governors and senior management team and/or inappropriate content mentioning, connecting, linking or tagging OBC or any of its allied organisations is strictly prohibited. Such activities, including threatening, harassing, pestering or annoying in nature and tone, will be dealt with very seriously and may lead to disciplinary action to the extent of Dismissal/expulsion from the College.

### **3.2.5. Publications**

College publications including Newsletters, magazines and academic publications are an excellent way to communicate, connect, engage and encourage students, staff and other stakeholders, including the partners.

The College aims to maintain a publication calendar. A publication committee may be constituted to discuss and decide the publication calendar, and content and theme of the publications. The committee should be chaired by the Managing Director and its members may include Head of Media and Communications, principal/s and programme Heads. Newsletters may be exempted from the publication committee purview.

While the newsletter will summarise events, provide information and make announcements, the magazine should provide in-depth stories about staff and students' success, College achievements, and academic successes. The Department of Media & Communications is responsible for the content, design and distribution of magazine and newsletters. For academic publications, senior academic staff will be responsible for collating and providing content to the Department of Media and Communications who will be responsible for publishing it.

Spamming with newsletters should be avoided, so besides staff and students, it should be emailed only to registered recipients. The magazine will be available digitally on the website and in print at OBC locations.

### **3.2.6. External Events/Open Days**

External events include OBC events where outside guests are invited and/or open to anybody from outside the College. Besides such events the College should have an allocated budget for sponsorships. These events and sponsorships should have objectives like community engagement, brand visibility and reputation enhancement. This will support recruitment of students directly or indirectly.

The College events committee decides upon the events calendar and reviews sponsorship opportunities. This committee may include the Head of business development, Head of media & communications, senior members of admissions, the Events Coordinator of the Student Council and Operations Managers in every campus. Events may be organised by different teams as appropriate.

The College aims to hold Open Days at least thrice a year, in order to publicise the College and engage interested students and other stakeholders, including local communities.