Communications Policy

Policy no:	5.8
Version no.	V24.11
Next review due:	September 2025
Last review date:	November 2024
Responsible Board:	Corporate and Planning Board
Approved by & date:	SMT July 21
Linked policies and documents:	Whistleblowing Policy
	Academic Freedom and External Speakers code of practice
	VLE Policy and Procedure
External reference points:	Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)
Audience:	All Staff, Students and other Stakeholders

Table of Contents

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:

1.1   Manage its marketing, communications, media and public relations activities in order to connect with its stakeholders strategically.

1.2   Embed processes which manage OBC's brand, enhance its reputation and support its strategic goals and vision.

1.3   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.

1.4   Ensure consistent, regular and effective communication both internally and externally.

1.5   Enhance satisfaction and engagement and improve the learning and work environment for everybody associated with the College.

2   Purpose

This Communications Policy is designed to provide a structured framework for managing Oxford Business College's marketing, communications, media, and public relations activities. Its primary aim is to ensure that all communication—internal and external—aligns with the College's strategic goals, enhances its reputation, and maintains consistency in messaging across all channels. The Policy supports the College in effectively connecting with its stakeholders, managing its brand, and embedding communication processes that reflect OBC's quality standards, visual identity, and strategic positioning. Additionally, it fosters an environment of engagement and satisfaction, promoting a positive learning and work atmosphere for all associated with the College.

3   Scope

This Communications Policy applies to all internal and external communications conducted on behalf of Oxford Business College (OBC). It covers all communication forms, including but not limited to emails, instant messaging, mobile communication, social media, advertising, media relations, publications, and the College website. The policy governs communications across all channels and media, involving staff, students, and other stakeholders. It is applicable to all OBC staff, students, and any external stakeholders involved in representing or interacting with the College in a communications capacity. Additionally, the policy ensures compliance with relevant regulations, such as data protection and competition laws, and aligns with the College's

branding, visual identity, and strategic objectives.

4 Aims and Objectives

4.1 Aim of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline the responsibilities and operational framework of the Department of Media & Communications in delivering accurate, timely, and relevant information about the College. This policy seeks to establish effective communication strategies that enhance the College's visibility, maintain brand integrity, and foster engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

4.2 Objectives of the Policy

4.3 Strategic Information Dissemination:

To strategize and deliver accurate, timely, and pertinent information about the College through various channels, including social media, the college website, media stories, advertising, and marketing materials.

4.4 Official Communication Channel:

To serve as the official voice of the College, ensuring cohesive and coordinated communication across all departments and stakeholders.

4.4.3 Management of Media Relations:

To effectively manage public relations and media interactions, ensuring that all communications align with the College's vision, mission, values, and branding guidelines.

4.4.4 Promotion of College Programs and Achievements:

To actively promote and publicize the College's programs, achievements, and activities, enhancing its reputation and visibility in the community.

4.4.5 Engagement with Stakeholders:

To engage proactively with prospective students, relevant communities, and other stakeholders, fostering relationships that support the College's goals and initiatives.

4.4.6 Oversight and Accountability:

To ensure that all marketing campaigns and communications are monitored and evaluated by the Marketing and Communications Committee, with feedback mechanisms established for continuous improvement.

4.4.7 Digital Relevance and Presence:

To maintain a relevant and engaging digital presence, ensuring that the College's social media and online platforms reflect its strategic priorities and engage its target audiences effectively.

4.4.8 Collaboration with Senior Management:

To collaborate with senior managers, program leaders, and campus principals to ensure accuracy and timeliness of information shared on the College's website and social media, and to facilitate prompt updates and feedback.

5 Internal Communication

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.

Each department should maintain it's own workflow for email approvals. Where emails are being sent to staff this can be managed by HR or a designated individual/department. Where students are being emailed the workflow and service level agreements should be in accordance to the individual departments.

6 Emails

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

All students may have a College email address or an email address provided by partners, which should be used exclusively for college-related purposes. Student email accounts allow students to use a non-personal email address for correspondence, making it easy for them to contact staff. It also enables staff to communicate efficiently with specific groups of students throughout the College. All College staff should use their OBC email address for any communication with students, unless the student requests otherwise in writing. Where consented students may be sent emails to their personal account as well.   Policy guidelines for email usage are outlined below to ensure official communications are effective and clear:

6.1   Departments should inform students and staff by Auto-Reply to inform students of when they can expect a reply and how to escalate the matter if necessary for urgent attention.

For example

Thank you for emailing the Graduation Team at Oxford Business College. We aim to reply to your email within 5 working days and we thank you for your patience.

If you have not already, please visit our website where there is information regarding graduation that may be helpful: https://www.oxfordbusinesscollege.ac.uk

For urgent matters please call us on the number below.

For our students and staff:

If you need to talk to someone for emotional support, please use the following free 24/7 services: call Samaritans on 116 123; email Jo@samaritans.org; or text 85258 to reach SHOUT.

Kind regards,

The Graduation Team

7 Email

7.1 Subject Headings should contain key information and level of importance.

7.2 The sender should be clear about whether they wish for a quick response.

7.3 'Reply all' should be used judiciously. Reply/copy the mail only to relevant recipients

7.4 Multiple recipients should be "Bcc'd" where possible to prevent sharing of personal information.

7.5 Emails should be suitable to be seen by anybody and should not contain personal or embarrassing information.

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

7.7 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.

7.8 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.

7.9 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.

7.10 OBC reserves the right to monitor the use of College email.

7.11 UK libel laws apply.

7.12 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.

7.13 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.

8 Messaging / WhatsApp and Similar Platforms

Instant messaging (IM) refers to digital communication via text, audio, images, or video clips exchanged through applications like WhatsApp. In this policy, "WhatsApp" is used as a representative term for all similar IM platforms. All employees and students are expected to follow the guidelines set out in their respective staff and student handbooks when using these

messaging platforms. staff and student handbooks when using instant messaging platforms, including WhatsApp.

9 Guidelines for Instant Messaging Use

9.1 **Purpose of Communication**: Use instant messaging or SMS only for urgent updates, general information sharing, or announcements, as these methods lack the formal and legal standing of email communication.

9.2 **Appropriate Content**: Sharing inappropriate content, whether in a group or direct message where there is any reference to or association with the College, is strictly prohibited and may lead to disciplinary action.

9.3 **Respectful Conduct**: Avoid any communication that could insult or diminish another person, either personally or professionally. Conflicts should not be argued in groups but resolved in person or via direct message.

9.4 **Prohibited Content**: Sharing of grossly inappropriate material, such as pornography, vulgar or abusive content, violent or abusive depictions (including those involving animals or children), excessive profanity, sexual harassment or innuendo, and other abusive behavior, is grounds for disciplinary action, potentially leading to dismissal or expulsion.

9.5 **Mindful Sharing of Media**: Employees should be considerate when sharing data-intensive media files, which may not be appropriate or necessary in a group setting.

9.6 **Adherence to Handbooks**: Employees and students are required to follow the conduct guidelines set out in the staff and student handbooks while using instant messaging platforms.

9.7 **Content Sharing Checklist**: Before posting in a group, consider the following:

9.8 Is it necessary?

9.9 Is it appropriate for the intended audience?

9.10 Is this the right time to send it?

This policy promotes a respectful, efficient, and legally compliant use of instant messaging in line with the College's standards.

10 Mobile/Telephone

Mobile phones are an essential part of both personal and professional life, and many official tasks are now executed through mobile devices. Therefore, the College does not impose a complete restriction on mobile phone use in the workplace. Staff may also Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) to carry out College-related tasks if they prefer. However, there are a few guidelines for the responsible and appropriate use of mobile phones during work hours.

10.1 Using a mobile phone in the office is acceptable for business-related calls. Personal calls

are allowed occasionally, but they should be kept to a reasonable level and must not disrupt your work or those around you. All employees are expected to:

10.2 Keep their phone in their pocket or on their desk

10.3 Have their phone set to silent or vibrate mode

10.4 Not use the phone during meetings

10.5 Students should also be careful not have long conversations on their mobile phones during a lesson

10.6 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.

11 SharePoint

SharePoint is a collaboration and document management platform that allows users to store, share, and manage content, knowledge, and applications . 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.

12 Intranet Usage

The College intranet serves as a centralised digital platform designed for secure, efficient communication and information sharing among all staff. It provides access to essential resources, announcements, policy updates, and departmental communications. Employees and students are expected to use the intranet responsibly and in accordance with The College guidelines to ensure effective and respectful communication.

The Intranet can be found on:

 https://oxfordbusinesscollegeacuk.sharepoint.com/sites/OBC-Intranet

12.1 Guidelines for Intranet Use

12.1.1 **Primary Communication Channel**: The intranet should be the primary platform for accessing official College information, announcements, and updates. It is intended to support collaboration, reduce dependency on email for general communication, and foster a cohesive flow of information.

12.1.2 **Appropriate Content**: Only relevant and appropriate information should be posted on the

intranet. Content shared must uphold professional standards and align with The College policies, avoiding any inappropriate or sensitive material that may be offensive or disrespectful.

12.1.3 **Respectful Interaction**: When engaging in any forum, message boards, or collaborative tools within the intranet, employees and students should communicate respectfully and avoid language or behaviour that may be deemed unprofessional or harmful to others.

12.1.4 **Data Privacy and Confidentiality**: Employees and students must ensure that any confidential information or sensitive data is shared in compliance with The College privacy policies and is only accessible to authorised individuals.

12.1.5 **Resource Accessibility**: The intranet provides access to important resources, including policy documents, guidelines, forms, and instructional material. Employees and students should use these resources effectively to reduce unnecessary queries and ensure they remain informed of The College policies and updates.

12.1.6 **Adherence to Policy**: Use of the intranet is governed by The College IT and conduct policies, and all users are expected to comply fully. Breaches of policy or misuse of the platform may lead to disciplinary action.

The intranet is intended to streamline communication, promote transparency, and improve access to information across the College community. All employees and students are encouraged to make the most of this valuable resource while maintaining a respectful and professional online environment.

13 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

13.1   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.

13.2 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.

14 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.

15 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.

16 Internal Events

16.1   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:

16.2   Engagement with alumni, students and staff

16.3   Wellbeing, and motivation of students

16.4   Student skills development to enhance their employability

16.5   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.

17 External Communication

17.1   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:

17.1.1   College Website

17.1.2   Advertising & Branding

17.1.3   Media Relations & PR

17.1.4   Social Media

17.1.5   Publications

17.1.6   External Events/Open Days

18 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.

ll 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.

19 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).

19.1 These guidelines apply to all types of advertising, including:

19.2 Traditional print advertisements

19.3 Digital advertisements

19.4 Social media advertisements

19.5 Out-of-home display ads, including flyers and posters

19.6 TV and radio advertisements

19.7   Internal & external branding

19.8   Sponsored content advertisements

19.9   Classified advertisements

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

20 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.

aging 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.

21 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 Marketing Department. The Head of Access Participation & Marketing 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 Access Participation & Marketing. 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 Access Participation & Marketing 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.

22 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 Access Participation & Marketing, 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 is 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.

23 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. If the college wishes to engage external speaker, approval must be sought following the process in the Academic Freedom and External Speakers code of practice .

The College events committee decides upon the events calendar and reviews sponsorship opportunities. This committee may include the 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.