

## Internal Communication

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The final strategic aim in *Our Strategy* is to ensure that we are a well-run, sustainable and functional organisation, positioning people and resources to best service our members now and in the future.
- 1.2. Internal communication has been identified as a challenge for ICU through a number of channels – staff surveys, 121s, PDRs, exit surveys and other anecdotal evidence. Inadequate internal communication can pose several risks to organisations, while the effects of good communication are outlined below. In brief, poor internal communication poses a risk to staff cohesion, morale and effectiveness, in turn risking our organisational impact and our strategic objectives.
- 1.3. High-quality internal communications can contribute to our success in many ways:
  - 1.3.1. Ensuring *Our Strategy & Our Plan* are in people's minds by reinforcing our values, aims and objectives; this in turn improves productivity and impact by helping teams prioritise and maintain a focus on key targets
  - 1.3.2. Creating an ethos of professionalism and integrity by demonstrating that senior managers are responsive and that front-line staff are valued
  - 1.3.3. Connecting our staff to our student-led democracy and our governance through better dissemination of Council and Board discussions and decisions
  - 1.3.4. Raising staff morale by demonstrating the impact and success of our work on our members and staff
  - 1.3.5. Easing cross-team tensions by exposing each other's' priorities and workload
  - 1.3.6. Creating a 'community spirit' that encourages staff to contribute to challenges across the organisation rather than working in silos
- 1.4. In general, effective internal communication is not merely a useful "extra" over and above effective planning and collaboration. It is in fact a vital companion, even a prerequisite, of those outcomes. Therefore, effective internal communication should be a behaviour that is explicitly supported through organisational practice, demonstrated by leaders, and encouraged through reward and recognition.

### 2. Suggestions

- 2.1. That we place strategic responsibility for internal communication with Communications Committee, who will set the strategic direction and vision for internal communication

- 2.2. That we continue and develop our Internal Communications working group to embed positive practices across the organisation
- 2.3. That we embed the internal communications calendar and grid, which has been led by Shakira, outlining communications priorities such as strategy progress, Board/Council/Leadership/SMG updates, and cross-team communication
- 2.4. That we discuss and establish some basic principles for our internal communication, which may be similar or identical to those for student-facing communication. These principles can be used as a guide for anyone producing internal communication. These could include:

2.4.1. *Connect to Our Strategy*

All communications should be written to take opportunities to reinforce and emphasise the content of Our Strategy, by referencing specific themes, aims or objectives

2.4.2. *Connect to Our Values*

All communications should be written in a manner that reinforces Our Values, by naming them explicitly, referencing their meanings, and celebrating examples of when people have used them in their work

2.4.3. *Integrity & positivity*

All communications should be honest, with ownership taken for mistakes or unexpected outcomes, challenges acknowledged openly, and clear guidance given as to how we will overcome them.

2.4.4. *Expose complexity*

All communications should treat our staff with respect, helping them understand the organisation and the complexity of decisions by discussing factors and considerations as fully as is appropriate. This way, we can help our staff feel valued by resisting the urge to over-simplify and help their development by demonstrating the wide range of factors that can influence senior-level decision making

2.4.5. *Balance formality and accessibility*

All communications should be only as formal as is appropriate for the subject matter, with care taken to explain any acronyms or unusual terminology, in order to make messages as useful to our part-time and front-line staff as well as managers and senior managers.

- 2.5. In a related project, that we expand the Brand Guidelines to include a basic set of content guidelines establishing in consultation with content-producing teams.

### **3. Discussion points**

- 3.1. Have we identified the right strategic imperatives and control for internal communication?
- 3.2. Is the rationale for prioritising effective internal communication well-understood?
- 3.3. Are the principles sufficient and appropriate?
- 3.4. How can we embed the calendar and grid, as well as the principles, effectively across the whole organisation?
- 3.5. How can we measure and report upon achievements in internal communication?

### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1. That internal communication be added to the Communication Committee work plan, with progress and achievements to be reviewed on a timescale to be determined by the Committee.
- 4.2. That the internal communications working group consider how to implement the calendar and grid, as well as other positive behaviours, across the organisation.
- 4.3. That the internal communications working group engage briefly with staff on defining principles of internal communication, potentially as part of a wider project on our content principles for student-facing output.
- 4.4. That ongoing progress be measured through an entry on our Balanced Scorecard if possible.