Communications toolkit for staff

The University of Wolverhampton is a large, multi-site employer with over 2,500 members of staff and 23,000 students from a diverse range of backgrounds. As staff, we are all ambassadors for the University and communicators too. Each of us will have ‘good news’ stories about our areas of work, updates, information and events that we will want to share with colleagues. You also may have information to share with students too. Some of your news may also be relevant for an external audience or have a newsworthy angle to target the media. This toolkit will inform you about what communication channels are available to you and the next steps to take.

Advice and support

The Corporate Communications team within External Relations can give you guidance on the best channels for your news, stories and updates. Take a look at the staff news web pages or the news web pages to see what kind of stories we use.

If you’d like to discuss your potential stories and communications further, please contact:

Head of Corporate Communications
James Allen
Tel: ext 2003
Email: james.allen2@wlv.ac.uk

PR Manager – Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing; Faculty of Social Sciences; International; Equality & Diversity
Vickie Warren
Tel: ext 2736
Email: v.warren@wlv.ac.uk

PR Manager – Faculty of Arts; Faculty of Science and Engineering; Apprenticeships; Digital PR
Mags Winthrop
Tel: ext 8647
Email: mags.winthrop@wlv.ac.uk
PR Manager – University research
Emma Pugh
Email: emmap@wlv.ac.uk

Stakeholder Communications Manager (staff and students)
Claire Tallentire (currently on maternity)
Tel: ext 2448
Email: c.tallentire@wlv.ac.uk
*In the interim please contact James Allen in the first instance

Stakeholder Communications Graduate Intern
Joshua Rochelle-Bates
Tel: ext 3567
Email: josh.r-b@wlv.ac.uk

Digital Content Editor
Tashon Reid-Palmer
Tel: ext 2348
Email: t.reid-palmer@wlv.ac.uk

Social Media Co-ordinator
Andrew Brooks
Tel: ext 3586
Email: a.brooks@wlv.ac.uk

Find out more about the team.
Why is communication important?

In any organisation, people are the most valuable asset and to keep your people happy they need to feel valued, engaged, informed and recognised.

Our staff play a crucial role in delivering services to students and the public and are our ambassadors.

If staff and students feel they have a good working and student experience, this will show when they talk to others about the University of Wolverhampton.

We want our staff to have a “voice” to be given the opportunity to be listened to and communicated with effectively, giving clear and consistent messages using a range of communication networks.

This is why it is vital that, wherever possible, we think of communications as a two-way process. Face-to-face communication is always the most effective way to communicate but that isn’t always practical so we use a variety of other channels to help us get our message out to a range of different audiences.

This toolkit has been designed to help you take positive action to further improve communications with your teams, colleagues and students.

It will provide a comprehensive package of tools to support you. Not everyone is a natural communicator but the most important advice to remember is “be human.”

What do you want to say and why do you want to say it?

Before you start getting your messages out across the relevant channels, we advise taking some preparatory time to think about what you want to communicate and why, who you’re trying to reach with your messages and what actions you want them to take from your messages.

A potential story may not always make a suitable external press release to the media and could be suited more to the internal audience. Likewise, you may have a story which can go across all available communication channels – externally to the media, as well as in-house to staff and students.

What’s the difference between external and internal stories?

There will be some crossover and some stories are suitable for both audiences but sometimes staff-related awards, successes and achievements may be better placed internally.

What makes a good external PR or press story?

Is your story heart-warming, does it have human interest, is it quirky or unusual, will it make a difference? Is it timely, topical, different, a first, a best? Does it pass the “so what” factor? Will it be something that will get people talking whether that is in the community, locally, regionally, nationally or in specialist areas such as among businesses?
Think about the details:

- How many people were involved?
- Where do they live?
- How old are they?
- What course do they study?
- What was the outcome?
- What were the benefits?
- Were any partners involved?

The media deal in facts – press releases are not descriptive, they are factual and present the facts in a way that makes it easy for journalists to understand and use it as a basis for their story. It is about catching their attention using a short, sharp and punchy style.

Add colour to the facts through quotes from key people involved in whatever you’re writing about – whether they are students, employers or partners.

What are we looking for generally for internal and external stories?

Think about what your key messages are and whether they cover the vital ingredients needed for all stories i.e.

- WHO
- WHY
- WHAT
- WHERE
- WHEN
- HOW

Aim to have a call to action – what is it you want your intended audience to think, do or say as a result? Who or where should they go to find out further information? Is there a web link available? Ensure if you are directing them via a web link that the information on the pages in question is up-to-date before you communicate.

The way we communicate with our audience has evolved over time. We no longer rely solely on the written press release or internal news story. Supporting imagery is increasingly becoming the norm. Wherever possible, we look at whether we can add video content alongside written content to bring it to life more and also because it’s easily shareable via social sharing apps and social media channels.

The news or social team can work with you to produce short and shareable video content for the website and social media platforms – or you may already have a video on YouTube which can be incorporated into the story.

You will need to consider images which may go with the story to illustrate it or images that may need capturing. If you are supplying a photograph of yourself or a member of staff for a professional, work-related story this should be a head and shoulders shot and of good quality (usually 300 dpi). Think about the background, where you are and what you are doing. A picture of you having a sangria on holiday may not be the most appropriate!
For media stories, think about how you can place yourself in a setting, such as in front of a University building, and try not to have other people in the picture with you. Landscape images work best on social media.

For our staff and students, they will access different communication channels at different times. Some may not have 9-5 access to a PC or email. We have multiple campuses and centres. What are the most effective communication channels for reaching your target internal audience?

**Working with the media**

The Corporate Communications team works to facilitate reactive media requests as well as proactively releasing good news.

As most media outlets work to tight deadlines, our aim is to provide as responsive a service as possible.

If you, or a member of your team, is contacted by a member of the media, please take advice from the Corporate Communications team before responding.

When talking to a journalist, remember that anything you tell them they will fairly assume is usable information for their report either as background information or as an attributable quote.

As well as trying to gain coverage for our own news stories, we also try to respond to the current news agenda. In this world of 24 hour breaking news, the media are always looking for an expert to comment on a story whether that is via a broadcast interview, written comment or blog post.

We deal with requests from the media for experts but also proactively put our experts forward for topical commentary opportunities. The most important factor to note here is that you need to be available and flexible – often, the media will contact several different universities for an expert and will go with the one that responds quickest. For other opportunities, the media will more often than not want to speak to someone that same day within a matter of hours.

A story can break at any time. With that in mind, the media have access to contact details out-of-hours, as kept in the [News and Events section of the website](#).

We have an [experts directory for the media](#) where journalists can search for particular academics. If you are interested in being part of the guide, please contact James Allen or Emma Pugh.

We can also arrange media training for academic experts with external trainers. Again, if this is something you are interested in, please contact James Allen or Emma Pugh.
**External digital news channels**

There are several digital channels we utilise to maximise the reach and potential of external stories, with the focus being on creating engagement.

**Facebook – University of Wolverhampton.**

**Twitter - @wlv_uni** is the main corporate account and **@wlv_uniNews** the news account that engages with journalists, outlets, partners and the community.

**LinkedIn – The University of Wolverhampton’s official company page** which drives engagement relating to business stories, successes, economic growth and skills and graduates.

**Instagram – wlvuni**

**YouTube – University of Wolverhampton** host videos and searchable content.

**Flickr – The University of Wolverhampton** account contains photo albums from events and photo shoots across the University.

**News and Events website** – For stories, blogs and videos.

If you don’t work office hours or have regular access to a PC or desktop, these channels will help keep you updated with external news about the University on your mobile or tablet.

**Staff communications**

Across the University, we have many communications channels for staff but not all will be relevant for all messages. Detailed below are the channels, a brief synopsis of their advantages/disadvantages, submission details and, where relevant, who to contact for more information.

**Staff News**

The **Staff News** section of our staff home page is the most frequently updated communication channel for staff – new stories appear daily and there is a lead time of three working days during the working week for stories to appear on here. From September 2017, staff will be directed to use this form for submitting any staff news stories – submit directly through the **Staff News web form**, through which you can also submit a photo.

Advantages: updated regularly; ease of use; positive tone; measurable.

Disadvantages: not all staff will access home page; relies on colleagues to ‘go to’ the information.

**Staff home page web banner**

A scrolling banner runs across our **staff home page** which is good promotion to link back to another web page where you will host information. **Submit a banner request.**

Advantages: updated regularly; measurable.
Disadvantages: not all staff will access home page; relies on colleagues to 'go to' the information; only limited number of banners can be displayed at any one time.

**WLV Insider**

**WLV Insider is a weekly publication.** This is an e-newsletter to all staff at the University and will be published on a Tuesday/Wednesday each week. Please submit any articles for consideration in Insider at the latest by 5pm on the Monday that the newsletter is issued. Submit directly through the [Staff News web form](#), through which you can also submit a photo.

Insider is also making more use of video content so we may come out and video, in relation to the story you’ve submitted.

Advantages: proven and popular internal comms vehicle; positive tone; directly received in inbox; measurable.

Disadvantages: not all staff will have access to email/staff news online; email fatigue.

**All-staff email**

All-staff emails will only be sent when they are of corporate, top-level priority to the University and affect the majority of staff across all campuses. In the main, they will not be issued for events (please see below for What’s On at the University of Wolverhampton).

All-staff emails are issued by External Relations or the Offices of the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of External Relations/Offices of the Vice-Chancellor has approval over what is issued on this channel.

The contacts who can send out all-staff emails are:

- Claire Tallentire – External Relations
- James Allen – External Relations
- Mags Winthrop – External Relations
- Vickie Warren – External Relations
- Kulvinder Chohan – External Relations
- Natalie Sumner-Cole – Offices of the Vice-Chancellor
- Louise Tonks – Offices of the Vice-Chancellor

In addition, Estates Mitigation will also send all-staff emails for Estates project updates and DAS/IT Services for IT updates and system issues.

Advantages: authoritative communication for top-level, corporate, urgent information; recipient receives direct; quick tool for reaching mass audiences.

Disadvantages: not all staff have access to email; email fatigue; can't tell if emails have been read.
Emails to your own faculties and directorates

If you are looking to send information or news internally to your own faculties or directorates, we can provide a branded template to do this. Please contact: c.tallentire@wlv.ac.uk or josh.r-b@wlv.ac.uk if you would like a copy of the template.

Advantages: directly received in inbox; will grow into an expected vehicle for Faculty and Directorate information; can be used across other corporate comms channels.

Disadvantages: email fatigue; do all of your colleagues have access to email?

Departmental newsletters

Insider is the regular, weekly University e-newsletter to staff and all stories and updates should be publicised through the Staff News section, for consideration for Insider. Submit directly through the Staff News web form, through which you can also submit a photo. Bespoke departmental newsletters will not be emailed to all staff. Website issue needs checking with webteam

What’s On at the University of Wolverhampton

What’s On at the University of Wolverhampton is issued fortnightly on a Monday and profiles those events which are taking place in the two week period, which are open to all staff or that staff should be aware of. To submit your event, please email: whatson@wlv.ac.uk and also create an online events calendar listing.

Advantages: directly received in inbox; will grow into an expected vehicle for events and lectures information.

Disadvantages: frequency; not all staff will have access to email; email fatigue.

Communications cascade

External Relations can send details and updates directly to faculties and directorates for distribution amongst colleagues via our PAs’ network. Please email: c.tallentire@wlv.ac.uk or james.allen2@wlv.ac.uk with one week’s lead time of when you would like information sent out.

Advantages: second tier to an ‘all staff’ email; directly received in inbox.

Disadvantages: not all staff will have access to email; email fatigue.

Corporate social media

The University has many social media accounts, run directly by faculties, departments and project teams. The main Twitter account for staff is @WLV4Staff – if you have a message that is suitable for this account, please email: faye.crosbee@wlv.ac.uk.

Our corporate social media team can also help cascade your messages out to social media accounts across the University. Please email: social@wlv.ac.uk.

Sometimes your messages and information will not be suitable for a public forum such as social media, so this may not be the right channel for you.
Advantages: updated regularly; measurable.

Disadvantages: not all staff will be on the social networks or have access to these channels; not suitable for confidential information to staff.

**Geoff’s Update**

The Vice-Chancellor’s newsletter – Geoff’s Update – is issued monthly. The content is determined at Offices of the Vice-Chancellor level and will be by corporate priority.

**University screens**

Plasma screens are for student-facing content across the University. See more guidance under ‘Student Communications’.

**OVC Briefing**

OVC Briefing is a regular monthly senior management meeting, and information from the sessions is cascaded to all attendees after the event for dissemination to their staff reports. Staff can bring to the attention of their line managers items they’d like to put forward for mention at OVC Briefing.

Advantages: bringing attention to information at senior level.

Disadvantages: ensuring all staff receive the cascade information post-briefing; measurement.

**Staff briefings/ roadshows**

Staff can organise their own briefings and roadshows directly for other members of staff. These can be very engaging but thought needs to be given to locations, timing in the year, target audience and potential footfall for the return on investment and we would recommend events are part of an overall communications plan. The events can be promoted through the other communication channels mentioned here and we recommend early lead times to ensure maximum promotion opportunities.

Advantages: face to face engagement; two way communication.

Disadvantages: potential footfall against your return on investment; how do you reach the other members of staff who do not attend?

**Staff surveys**

Regular staff surveys are carried out to gain insight into important issues within the organisation. Data and feedback gathered can help the organisation ensure it is delivering what it said it would and, if not, what it needs to do to fix it. Corporate Communications can help advise ways of reaching staff and gaining feedback.

Advantages: good for gaining feedback; reach large amount of staff.

Disadvantages: some staff may not wish to engage with survey
VC's roadshows/ open sessions

The Vice-Chancellor stages a number of open sessions during the academic year where he will visit different campuses, schools, institutes or departments. These are usually based around a specific subject matter e.g. TEF, Strategic Plan or are generally open sessions where staff can ask questions of the VC. These are publicised via External Relations using many of the available channels mentioned.

Physical sites:

Poster boards

Please see ‘Student Communications’.

Main external banner sites

Please see ‘Student Communications’.

Zap stands

Zap stands are an engaging way of getting information across to staff and could be considered for launches, networks, events, etc. Contact your External Relations Account Manager if you would like to produce zap stands.

Advantages: high profile; seen by a large footfall.

Disadvantages: relatively expensive; not direct targeting; measurement.

Other publications:

Knowledge News

This business to business corporate newsletter is issued four times a year. Contact: louisa.ackling@wlv.ac.uk if you have a suitable business-related story you would like to discuss putting into this publication.

Advantages: well established and read publication.

Disadvantages: specific target audience.

Research Matters

This research corporate newsletter is issued four times a year. Contact: emmap@wlv.ac.uk if you have a suitable story you would like to discuss putting into this publication for the research community.

Advantages: well established and read publication.

Disadvantages: specific target audience.
Academic Matters

This newsletter is issued at least twice a year and is aimed mainly at the academic community. Contact: academicmatters@wlv.ac.uk if you have a suitable story you would like to discuss putting into this publication for the research community.

Advantages: well established and read publication.
Disadvantages: specific target audience.

WLV Life

The University of Wolverhampton alumni magazine is issued by the Alumni Team in External Relations on an annual basis. The magazine features the latest alumni news alongside stories about inspirational graduates and insightful academics. Contact: alumni@wlv.ac.uk if you think you have a suitable story.

Advantages: well established and read publication.
Disadvantages: specific target audience.

Student communications

Digital

Student News home page

The Student News section of the current students’ web page is one of the most frequently updated communication channels for students – new stories appear daily and there is a lead time of three working days during the working week for stories to appear on here. Staff should use this form for submitting any content targeted at students – submit directly through the Staff News web form, through which you can also submit a photo.

During 2018-19, we’ll be looking to get more students providing content for these pages and social media.

Advantages: updated regularly; ease of use; positive tone; measurable
Disadvantages: not all staff will access home page; relies on colleagues to ‘go to’ the information.

WLV Student

WLV Student is the bi-monthly University e-newsletter issued to students (issues are not published in July and August). This utilises the content from the Student News web page.

All student email

We are provided with data at the start of each academic year for current students. We tend to use this facility sparingly for matters of high importance.

Student information – changes to courses
Any proposed amendments to modules or courses should be directed to the Quality and Collaboration Unit in the first instance. Changes for current students should be then communicated by Registry.

Changes to course/modules for applicants should be communicated by Admissions.

Social media

We communicate with current students using corporate University social media channels on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Plasma screens

The University-wide plasma screens run student-facing content throughout the year. Content is changed every Friday so this channel is most suitable for campaigns and updates that affect all students across all campuses. It is not effective for one day events’ promotion or guest lectures. For more information, email: screens@wlv.ac.uk.

Advantages: updated regularly; high profile; in areas of high footfall.

Disadvantages: messages displayed for a limited time; can only display limited information on one page.

Poster boards

We own a number of corporate poster board sites in buildings across the University estate. In the main, these are A0 in size and are situated in areas of high footfall – for example, Ambika Paul corridor. The sites are bookable and we can provide advice on sizing and design. For more information, contact: josh.r-b@wlv.ac.uk.

Advantages: high visual profile; seen by large footfall.

Disadvantages: may only be up for limited time periods due to demand; posters can often blend in as wallpaper.

Banners and vinyls

You’ll often see large banners and vinyls across our campuses – on buildings, on windows, across entrance doors, etc. These are booked in throughout the year based on corporate campaigns but there may be opportunities for booking the spaces, if you have budget available for your project or campaign. Contact: c.tallentire@wlv.ac.uk or josh.r-b@wlv.ac.uk who run the booking calendar and has the location details for these sites to discuss further. For producing artwork for these spaces, please book in via your External Relations Account Manager.

Advantages: high profile; seen by a large footfall.

Disadvantages: expensive; suitable for large corporate messages and events promotion only; measurement; the wallpaper effect.
Focus groups or surveys

Focus groups and surveys are a good way of gathering direct feedback from students on important issues and finding out their views.

Advantages: good face-to-face form of communication; qualitative responses.

Disadvantages: can be time-consuming; administrative burden of setting up groups and engaging enough respondents; can be subjective, dependent on the groups that take part.

Do I need a comms plan?

Not necessarily. If it’s a one-off message, you probably don’t. However, if you’re working on a project or event, having a plan about what messages you’re communicating, what channels you’re utilising and a timeline is a good idea. Also consider how you’ll evaluate if your communications have been successful – this could be number of web page hits, building ‘did you see our communications?’ into any post-event or activity analysis, or how many people you reached with your communications.

A comms plan template should include:

- Brief background to the project/event/activity
- The aim of your communications
- Timing/timeline
- Your target audiences
- Your key messages
- The communication channels you’re going to utilise
- How you’ll evaluate if your communications were successful

Communications focus

Throughout our communications, we focus primarily on the following:

- Tailoring the right message to the right audience
- Utilising the right channel for the right message
- Putting students first and aligning our messages to the Strategic Plan
- Promoting engagement and feedback wherever possible
- Supporting the overall recruitment strategy
- Customer satisfaction

Version 1.2

June-Sept 2018

JPA/CT