3.4 Policy on Communication for Learners

QA Area (s)	Learner Responsibilities
Applies to	☐ Staff only ☒ Learners only ☐ Staff and Learners
Policy Owner	Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes

3.4.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and guidelines of appropriate and professional communication for Innopharma Education learners.

3.4.2 Scope

This policy has been written as a guide for learners in terms of appropriate communication in the learning environment. In the next section, you will find the principles for professional communication for learners along with guidelines and examples.

This policy applies to all Innopharma Education programmes, inclusive of those delivered under collaborative provision arrangements, excepting where this policy directly conflicts with the QA procedures of a collaborative partner.

This policy applies to learners while enrolled on a programme with Innopharma Education or its partner colleges, TU Dublin, and Griffith College.

This policy does not apply to non-enrolled learners.

3.4.3 Policy

3.4.3.1 Principles

Communication within Innopharma Education must follow the principles[4] outlined below:

- Confidentiality
- Completeness
- Conciseness
- Consideration
- Concreteness
- Clarity
- Courtesy & Respect
- Correctness

3.4.3.2 Guidelines

All communication by learners within Innopharma Education will adhere to the guidelines[5] outlined below. In practice, this means that when you communicate, you should always:

[4] Adapted from: Zani, R. M., Ali, S. & Samanol, S. (2011) 'Effective communication leads to productivity improvement in the organization', *Elixir Management Arts*, 39 (2011), 4818-4821.

[5] Adapted from:
Student Guidelines for Communicating in Online, Professional Contexts. *Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo.*
Hoffman, J. (no date) *Nettiquette.* Available at http://tlinnovations.cikeys.com/netiquette/ (Accessed: July 2021)

Respect the privacy and confidentiality of fellow learners (Confidentiality)

- Do not share personal information pertaining to others with third parties. For example, if someone emails/messages you, requesting a classmate's phone number or email address, ***always*** check with the individual first, before giving out their contact information.
- Do not store/keep personal information pertaining to others without their knowledge and consent.
- Always check with the individual if sharing their contact details within the College.
- Be prudent in terms of personal information and/or personal details that you share about yourself. For example, do not post contact details/sensitive information in group chats, forums, online activities or discussions.
- Do not Cc peers/classmates on emails without their consent.
- Do not forward emails from peers/classmates without their consent.
- Be mindful of chain emails and sensitive information within that may be shared inadvertently. Always create a new email for a new query or topic.

Provide all necessary information (Completeness)

- When communicating with staff or lecturers, ensure that you have provided all the necessary information in order for them to assist you with your query. For example:

Incorrect: Hi Joe, I can't find the lecture slides.

Correct: Hi Joe, I can't find the lecture slides from Wednesday's lecture on Learning Strategies.

- If you are emailing staff or lecturers about a particular issue, make sure to include what you would like them to do in order to assist you with the particular issue. For example:

Incorrect: Hi Joe, I can't attend the workshop on Academic Integrity.

Correct: Hi Joe, I can't attend the workshop on Academic Integrity. Is it possible to access the presentation slides or will the workshop run again during the semester?

- Always sign off on emails with your full name, the name of the programme you are studying and the name of your cohort. For example:

Kind regards,

Joe Bloggs,

Level 6 Food Science and Technology – Dublin, September 2021

Communicate in a concise and succinct manner (Conciseness)

- Avoid writing paragraphs of text when emailing a member of staff or a lecturer.
- Evaluate what the best method of communication is for the query that you have (call Vs email).
- In order to communicate concisely, avoid repetition.
- Avoid unnecessary jargon and emoticons in professional communications.
- Write in clear, concise sentences. For example:

Incorrect: Thanks. Will do.

Correct: Thank you for your email. I will attend the workshop on Tuesday 2nd of February at 3pm.

- Avoid using short forms of words such as "u 2" instead of "you too" or abbreviations such as "prob" instead of "probably"/"doc" instead of "document".
- Avoid informal acronyms like LOL or BTW. Formal acronyms such as ASAP are acceptable.
- Avoid using all caps in written communications as it can be interpreted as shouting. For example: "THANK YOU FOR YOUR EMAIL".

Be considerate of the individual receiving your message (Consideration)

- Prepare communication with the message receiver in mind.
- Be mindful that humans are at the other end of communication; put yourself in their shoes before communicating.
- When sending emails, make the subject line of the email specific and clear. For example:

Subject: Query regarding second assessment – Learning to Learn module

- For emails, use standard font styles such as Times New Roman, Calibri, Ariel in a size 12 or 14. Avoid elaborate font styles.

Incorrect: Hello/Hello/Hello

Correct: Hello/ Hello/Hello

- If an email asks you to RSVP or acknowledge receipt of it, make sure to do so as this is important for the recipient in terms of planning.
- If someone is consistently being negative in the online environment (discussion forums, chat box, WhatsApp) or in the physical environment, bring it to the attention of your Programme Manager.

Ensure your communication is specific (Concreteness)

- When communicating, ensure that communication is specific and detailed rather than general.
- If communicating to staff on behalf of the class, use specific information. For example:

Incorrect: Some of the class can't access the lecture recording.

Correct: I have been contacted by five classmates stating that they can't access the lecture recording for the Learning to Learn module that took place on Tuesday 14th August.

- Be specific when engaging in group work or group study in person or online. For example:

Incorrect: I will send it next week.

Correct: I will complete the notes for lecture 4 and share them with you by 12pm next Wednesday.

- Follow the plain language guidelines to avoid misunderstandings. Click here for more information.

Avoid ambiguity by communicating in a clear manner (Clarity)

- Be clear in the purpose of your communication.
- Information and required actions should be clear to the reader.
- Avoid long sentences conveying multiple points. If emailing staff or a lecturer, communicate clearly. For example:

Incorrect: I thought the lecture was on Friday and I talked to work and they said I can have Friday off but only if I work Thursday but I can't work Thursday because I have my WP assignment due.

Correct: Please note that I will not be able to attend the online lecture on Friday this week for the Learning to Learn module. I will watch the recording and get in touch if I have any questions regarding the content.

- If you are calling the office, have at hand the details of who you would like to speak to and what you are ringing about.

Practice courtesy and respect when communicating with staff and fellow learners (Courtesy & Respect)

- When communicating, it is important to be polite and have good manners.
- Do not post insulting messages on forums or chat groups.
- Respect all individuals equally without discriminating on the nine grounds of equality legislation: age, gender, race, religion, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, disability (physical, mental, or intellectual) or membership of the Traveller community.
- Be polite, considerate, and mindful of other individuals.
- Always be courteous when communicating with staff and fellow learners. For example:

Incorrect: What?

Correct: Could you please repeat that?

- Be mindful of humour and sarcasm as it can easily be misinterpreted.
- Be mindful that tone may not be obvious in written messages. For example:

Incorrect: I didn't see the email!?!

Correct: Apologies for not seeing the email sooner.

- In terms of online communication, do not say anything that you would not say to someone in person. Before you write something or respond to something in the online environment, ask yourself "Would I say this out loud?"
- Communication and contributions in the online environment also represent you, so ensure you act professionally at all times.
- Respect other people's opinions and be open to new perspectives.
- Do not expect instant responses to emails from staff or classmates. For staff and lecturers, it is reasonable to expect a response within 48 hours of sending an email.
- Do not interrupt others while they are speaking. Rather, wait for them to finish or in online sessions, use the Raise Hand function.
- Use a lecturer's proper title, such as "Dr."

- Address lecturers and staff as they have introduced themselves. For example, if a lecturer introduced themselves as Dr. Blogg, don't address them by their first name.
- Use the preferred names of your classmates and staff. If someone signs off as Catherine/Alison/Michael, don't shorten their name to Cathy/Ally/Mike.
- When individuals have indicated preferred pronouns (such as "he", "she", and "they"), use their preferred pronouns when referring to them.
- Always maintain professionalism. If you are required to create a username for an online activity or online tool, do not create an offensive or silly username. Likewise, for online activities where answer submission is required, do not use bad language or submit inappropriate answers.
- If someone writes something offensive or hateful in the online environment (discussion forum, chat box, WhatsApp), says it verbally or in the physical environment, immediately bring it to your Programme Manager's attention.

Ensure that you are using the correct/appropriate language (Correctness)

- Ensure that you are using the correct level of language (formal with staff members or informal with your classmates). For example:

Incorrect: Hiya/Howdy Jane

Correct: Hi/Hello/Good morning/Good afternoon/Good evening Jane

- Ensure that written communications are error-free. For example, check that dates/times are correct if applicable or spell the recipient's name correctly. If the recipient's name is Gregory:

Incorrect: Hi George, thanks for your email.

Correct: Hi Gregory, thanks for your email.

- For written online communications, check the email address/name field to ensure that you are sending your message to the correct person.
- Limit the use of emoticons and avoid using outlandish ones when speaking to staff or lecturers. For example:

Incorrect: Thanks Jane, I appreciate your help 🥳🤩🏆💖

Correct: Thanks Jane, I appreciate your help 😳

3.4.4 Responsibility

- The overall responsibility for communication principles and guidelines for learners, lies with the **Director of Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Programmes**.
- The **Head of QA** and the **Learner Support Coordinator** are responsible for communicating the policy to learners and providing supporting resources.
- **Programme Managers** and **Lecturers** are responsible for monitoring and enforcing the policy to learners.