Academic Communication with Students Policy

This document is rescinded from July 2022. The provisions of this policy can be found in the [Course and Subject Delivery and Management Procedure](#) (regarding response times and use of communication technologies), the [Course and Subject Information Procedure](#) (regarding contact and consultation information) and the [Harassment and Bullying Prevention Policy](#).

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) This Policy applies to all undergraduate and coursework postgraduate students of Charles Sturt University.

Section 2 - Objectives

(2) The objectives of this policy are to facilitate effective and timely communication and consultation between students and teaching staff in support of student learning and the student experience. This policy also acknowledges and contributes to the expectation of mutually responsive and respectful communication. As such this policy is guided by the underpinning principles in the University Degree and the rights and obligations outlined in the University [Student Charter](#) and Common Teaching Standards. It is predicated on admission to the University that requires all students to have access to an internet-connected computer capable of communication with the University online systems (refer to the [Admissions Procedure](#)).

(3) This policy is framed to reflect learning and teaching in the online learning environment (OLE). It acknowledges the diversity of student cohorts, and in particular, the physical isolation and disadvantage of some students. It also acknowledges the increased communication flow between students and teaching staff in the OLE through the availability of a range of communication technologies.

(4) This policy seeks to achieve its objectives by:

a. ensuring that students have access to teaching staff for information, advice and support and are adequately informed of approved staff absences and procedures for obtaining advice during periods of staff absences;

b. ensuring that students receive prompt response to communications with teaching staff; and,

c. establishing procedures that foster mutual respect and co-operation in the communication between students and teaching staff.

Section 3 - Minimum requirements

Response times

(5) Students should not contact teaching staff until three working days before the commencement of the teaching session, unless otherwise advised by the Subject Coordinator.

(6) All teaching staff (including casual, partner and adjunct staff) must set aside time to communicate with students during the teaching session.

(7) Where a teaching staff member, appointed on a casual basis acts as Subject Coordinator, the Head of School must

ensure that the teaching staff member is accessible to students.

(8) Where a student directly contacts a teaching staff member for information, advice and/or support (except in online teaching spaces) the teaching staff member must respond to the request within three working days. Where an answer takes longer to obtain than three working days students should be informed of steps being taken to respond to their enquiry.

(9) If it is not possible to respond within three working days, students should be informed of alternative arrangements for obtaining advice during such periods. Appropriate information shall be provided to students in subject outlines, through email out-of-office messages, appropriate communication via Interact or answer phone messages. The message must advise the response time. The School Office should also hold this information.

Staff contact details and consultation process

(10) All teaching staff must notify students of their contact details and the consultation process in the subject outline.

(11) This information must include School Office numbers as well as the name(s) of teaching staff who will teach the subject. It must include the Subject Coordinator (and where relevant the Subject Convenor), their contact details and details of the processes for consultation.

(12) If this information is not available when the subject outline is prepared, advice on how and when the information will be provided to students must be published in the Interact subject site.

(13) Where a student needs to make telephone contact with a teaching staff member but is unable to do so, they should contact the School Office. The School Office will advise the student of a time and number at which the teaching staff member will be available. In making such a request students must clearly specify their own availability and contact details.

(14) Teaching staff should make themselves available for consultation with students. Subject to the agreement of the Head of School, teaching staff may choose to provide set consultation hours or respond to specific requests. Details of consultation arrangements should be published in the Interact subject site. Students must be able to gain synchronous consultation with their teaching staff member within one week of requesting it in person or by email.

Section 4 - Selection of educational technologies

(15) In accordance with the [Subject Outlines Policy](#) all subject outlines must be available online in CSU Interact no later than 14 days prior to the commencement of the teaching session.

(16) CSU Interact subject sites will remain open for at least 140 days after the end of the teaching session. It is not expected that teaching staff will be responding to postings in Interact during this period. If students require a response to their query they should email the teaching staff member directly.

Choice of educational technologies

(17) The University's OLE provides a range of collaborative communication tools (e.g. chatrooms, collaborative writing spaces, collaborative student project sites, virtual meeting rooms). In recognition of diverse student needs and teaching pedagogies, only a small number of educational technologies are mandated. However, unless otherwise approved in exceptional cases by the Head of School, in the delivery of their subject all teaching staff must use at least one online technology that offers direct collaborative communication between student-student-academic in a public teaching space.

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Page 2 of 5

Statement of mutual expectations and engagement

(18) Irrespective of the choice of educational technology, teaching staff must offer a clear statement in the Learning Design Section of the Subject Outline that outlines: the educational technology and online learning spaces that will be used to deliver the subject; how the teaching staff member will use the educational technologies, analytics and spaces to facilitate student learning; and the teaching staff member's expectations of how students will engage their learning through their participation in and contribution to those collaborative spaces.

Use of online discussion and communication technologies

(19) The University's OLE (with CSU Interact at the Centre) provides a range of options to facilitate asynchronous communication and discussion (such as announcements, forums, online discussions). For each subject, the Subject Coordinator will be expected to set up and/or activate an appropriate asynchronous communication technology and respond at least once a week to student messages that request information and advice.

(20) In accordance with the University's [Computing and Communication Facilities Use Policy](), the University's [Communications and Marketing Procedure - Website and Social Media Platforms]() and the University's [Communicating without Bias Guidelines](), teaching staff shall not censor the comments posted online by students except where such comments promote or display blatant and active racism, sexism or harassment of fellow students and/or staff on the basis of a person's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, physical characteristics, level of ability, religion or class.

(21) Should offensive comments occur that are in breach of the [Computing and Communications Facilities Use Policy]() teaching staff member must gain the written authorisation of their Head of School before removing the offensive posting. If the Head of School deems the offensive comments to be of a serious nature they will be dealt with in accordance with the Computing and Communications Facilities Use Policy.

Section 5 - Mutual respect between staff and students

(22) Teaching staff and students should maintain a professional manner in their communication that is honest and timely. In accordance with the [Communicating Without Bias Guidelines](), they should take care to use non-discriminatory language that avoids reference to a person's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, physical characteristics, level of ability, religion or class unless such information is relevant to the learning activity or discussion. The tone of communication between teaching staff and students should be mutually respectful.

(23) Where a teaching staff member has concerns about the communication pattern of a particular student (frequency, timing, content of communication) in collaboration with their Head of School and the student they may develop a communication management plan in support of both the student and teaching staff member.

(24) If the Head of School decides to vary arrangements for, or place a restriction on the provision of services this should be communicated in writing directly to the student.

Section 6 - Communication with students in isolated locations

(25) The University admission requires students to have access to an internet-connected computer capable of communicating with the University online systems (refer to the [Admissions Procedure]()).

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Page 3 of 5

(26) The [Admissions Procedure](#) states the arrangements that may be made in exceptional circumstances for students in remote or isolated locations.

Section 7 - Complaints under this policy

(27) Complaints under this policy should be dealt with at the School level by the relevant Head of School in accordance with the provisions of the University [Complaints Management Policy](#), thereby facilitating a prompt and mutually agreeable resolution of alleged breaches.

(28) If, after following the steps set out in this policy for contacting teaching staff, students believe that the minimum standards have not been observed, they may bring the matter to the attention of the Head of School responsible for the teaching of the subject.

(29) Students should be advised in the subject outline of their right to lodge a complaint. Students should be advised that in the first instance they should send an email to the Head of School outlining the issue and their concerns.

(30) If a teaching staff member is experiencing unreasonable demands under this policy they may seek the approval of the Head of School to vary the requirements within the broad framework provided by this policy.

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