



University of
South Australia

Guidelines on Electronic Communications with Students

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REFERENCE AUTHORITY: Director: Student and Academic Services

AMENDMENTS:

- January 2011
- July 2017
- March 2020
- February 2021

CROSS REFERENCES:

[Code of Conduct for Students](#)

[Assessment Policy and Procedures Manual](#)

[Confidentiality of Students' Personal Information](#)

[Acceptable use of information technology \(IT\) facilities](#)

[Guidelines for Staff on Use of IT Facilities, including email and the internet](#)

[Records management policy](#)

[Social media guidelines](#)

[Inclusive language policy](#)

[The Spam Act, 2003](#)

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The University communicates with students for both formal and informal purposes. These guidelines set out the University's expectations regarding electronic communications with students, and define which channels to use for different purposes.

2. Scope

- 2.1 These guidelines apply to all campuses, all programs and courses (including online), and all staff and students of the University.

3. Definitions

Official communication is defined as correspondence created by a staff member relating to the obligations or entitlements of students.

Student is any current student of UniSA.

4. General expectations

- 4.1 The University recognises that effective communications engage students in the educational experience and it is committed to ensuring that its electronic communications with students are accurate, timely, relevant, and channel appropriate.
- 4.2 The University complies with *The Spam Act, 2003* which regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages in Australia.
- 4.3 All electronic communication with students should:
- use inclusive language
 - provide relevant, consistent and accurate information
 - refer to UniSA webpages where appropriate
 - be appropriately targeted
 - be timed to fit with the student life-cycle
 - avoid University jargon and acronyms
 - be compliant with relevant legislation, UniSA policies, procedures and guidelines, and
 - be consistent with UniSA brand and style guidelines.
- 4.4 Official University communications are sent to students by email to their student email accounts, unless otherwise required by legislation or University policy. Examples of official University communications include matters relating to enrolment, academic progress, financial standing, and graduation.
- 4.5 Students are responsible for checking their student email account to ensure that they receive official correspondence from the University.
- 4.6 Students who do not have access to electronic communication are identified at the point of enrolment, and an indicator will be placed on their record in the UniSA student system so that official communications can be sent by post.
- 4.7 With the exception of official University communications and the student portal, the University should enable students to choose which information they wish to receive and provide mechanisms for students to self-identify areas of interest to opt-in, as well as the option to unsubscribe.

5. Electronic communication channels

- 5.1 The electronic communication channels used by the University include email, the student portal, the learning management system (*learnonline*), SMS, social media channels, and UniSA mobile apps. Appendix A provides examples and recommended channels to be used for different types of communication.
- 5.2 *Email*
- 5.2.1 Email communications should be kept to a minimum. When emailing to groups of students the 'Bcc' line should be used for all student email addresses.
- 5.2.2 As a general rule staff should not email a student group that is broader than their role is responsible. For example, the largest group a course coordinator should email is all students in that course, whereas an Executive Dean or General Manager can email all students in the relevant Academic Unit. Email communications to 'all students' need approval by the Director: Student and Academic Services or the Vice-Chancellor.

- 5.2.3 Approval by the Director: Student and Academic Services is needed for any communications for which Student and Academic Services is asked to provide email lists or other student data.
- 5.2.4 Official communications sent via email form part of the official student record.
- 5.3 *Student portal*
- 5.3.1 Student portal announcements are the preferred method for informal communication with students. Informal communications relate to information about a particular event, activities or services that might be of interest to students but are not essential to their enrolment or progress at UniSA.
- 5.3.2 Official communications sent to students by email may, in addition, be announced on the student portal.
- 5.3.4 The online form for submitting a student portal announcement is available on the staff portal. Staff must clearly indicate the intended audience from the available target audience lists.
- 5.4 *UniSA SMS*
- 5.4.1 SMS should not be used as the primary method for official communication but may be used to provide additional assistance, for example to notify students of a formal communication sent by email or to remind students of an upcoming deadline. It can also be used to supplement formal communications in urgent situations, for example:
- notification of a critical incident
 - notification of last minute change to class scheduling
 - notification of a last minute change to an examination timetable/venue
- 5.4.2 Authority to contact students via SMS is restricted and subject to approval by the relevant cost centre manager.
- 5.4.3 Staff should not assume that all students sent an SMS will receive it.
- 5.5 *Social media channels*
- 5.5.1 Staff wanting to post content on UniSA's official social media profiles need to submit a request to the Communications and Marketing Unit.
- 5.5.2 All communication with students via UniSA's social media profiles should be consistent with the University's [Social Media Guidelines](#). The Communications and Marketing Unit is responsible for monitoring UniSA social media content to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and University policy.

Appendix A: Categories of Communication and Appropriate Communication Channels

Communication Category	Examples	Communication Channels
Academic (teaching and learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices regarding key academic dates and events • Notification of changes to published curriculum information • Correspondence regarding assessment, including examinations • Correspondence regarding academic integrity matters • Correspondence regarding academic progress, including results and academic review 	Email, LMS, option to use SMS to send reminders or alerts regarding formal communications
Academic (administrative and general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission, enrolment, financial notifications, graduation • Sanctions placed on any University services or accounts • Promotion of official University support services • Notices relating to University policies and procedures • Statements by senior officers of UniSA on important or strategic matters 	Email, LMS, option to use SMS to send reminders or alerts regarding formal communications
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities disruptions (non emergency) • IT service disruptions 	Email, portal, option to use SMS to send reminders or alerts regarding formal communications
Social and general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News re events/social activities • Staff movements • Student awards/recognition • Student jobs/volunteering 	Portal, social media, website

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University wide news stories 	
Marketing and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional events • Recruitment to short courses 	Portal, social media, website
Surveys and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student feedback regarding programs and courses • Student feedback regarding student services 	Portal, social media
Emergency/serious incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localised incidents • Safety concerns 	Email, portal, option to use SMS to send reminders or alerts regarding formal communications