

NOGUCHI MEMORIAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH



COMMUNICATION POLICY

2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global competitive environment has made branding an integral part of organizational growth, and since brand identity can make or unmake an organization, handling corporate communication professionally and effectively cannot be overemphasized. In today's world, where information communications technology is the order, an organization's survival tends to depend heavily on its ability to engage in effective and timely communication with its internal and external stakeholders using appropriate technology.

The Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research generates knowledge, discovers new ways of doing things and faces challenges in the course of its works, and all these knowledge, discoveries and challenges must be appropriately and timely transmitted to stakeholders. This policy was developed as part of the Institute's commitment to provide stakeholders with timely and accurate information. It is envisaged that, the policy will promote a smooth flow of information, create the enabling atmosphere for feedbacks. To attain this, the policy establishes the principles, rules of engagement and procedures for communication within the Institute internal stakeholders and with the external stakeholders.

The purpose of this policy is to outline communication principles, guidelines, practices, and processes that will guide the Institute to embrace and foster effective internal and external communication that promotes the realization of its vision, mission, and core values in harmony with its stakeholders. The policy analysed the existing communication practice and available infrastructure in the Institute and found that there was no clear structure on how the communication function works within the Institute, which has rendered the Public Relations office largely to an event organization and media contact unit.

The policy covers principles of good communication practices, which among other things include, the provision of timely, accurate, clear, and complete information about its policies, programs, services, and initiatives to both internal and external stakeholders. Also covered in the policy are the types and methods of communication, internal and external communications, which are very vital for the survival of the Institute.

Given the importance of crisis management and communication, the policy covers it comprehensively. The policy emphasized that crisis communication demands that the Institute proactively lookout for traits of crisis and take steps to either prevent them or respond appropriately. The policy recommends the formation of a Crisis Management Team to be headed by the Director.

The policy also discusses branding as a powerful identity tool for any organization, and this must be clear to all stakeholders of the Institute. The importance of the Institute to enhance communications on its reputation as a place of excellence in research and academic mentorship to sustain the goodwill of stakeholders, especially the funding agencies and the public cannot be overemphasized, and this has been well captured in the policy.

It is the duty of every staff to ensure that they do not only make known the good name of the Institute but also to protect same in course of their work and communication. Employees must always demonstrate the institutional standards in all communication. The policy was couched such that staff in all categories, including those in supervisory and management positions have their roles and responsibilities clearly defined.

Also outlined in the policy document is monitoring and evaluation plans which are very essential to ensure continuous evaluation that are necessary for the adoption of new technologies to enhance efficiency and effectiveness to keep pace with the ever-changing communication technology.

INTRODUCTION

In this global competitive environment where brand identity can make or unmake an organization, handling corporate communication professionally and effectively cannot be overemphasized. In today's world, if an organization must survive and thrive, it must communicate effectively, efficiently and timely with all its stakeholders, being it internal or external. The Noguchi Memorial Institute generates knowledge, discovers new ways of doing things and faces challenges in the course of its works, and all these knowledge, discoveries and challenges must be transmitted to stakeholders in an appropriate and timely manner.

Thus, the way the Institute communicates to its stakeholders and the public as well as the feedback it gets are useful indicators to guide the Institute to strategically brand itself to stakeholders and the public.

A major challenge facing the Institute has been how to update the content of information and present same appropriately to its diverse stakeholders. The range of stakeholders (employees, donors/funding agencies, government officials, public agencies including ministries and departments, the public and students) makes it imperative that the Institute develops appropriate methods and approaches of sharing information that will elicit feedback from the various stakeholders.

This policy was developed as part of the Institute's commitment to provide stakeholders with timely and accurate information. It is envisaged that; the policy will promote a smooth flow of information and create the enabling atmosphere for feedbacks. To attain this, the policy establishes the principles, rules of engagement and procedures for communication within the Institute's internal stakeholders and with the external stakeholders.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline communication principles, guidelines, practices, and processes that will guide the Institute to embrace and foster effective internal and external communication that promotes the realization of its vision, mission, and core values in harmony with its stakeholders.

EXISTING COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Currently, there is no clear structure on how the communication function works within the Institute, which could be partly attributed to the lack of a communication policy to guide management and staff. In the circumstance, the Public Relations office is not clear about its functions, and is therefore reduced largely to an event organization and media contact unit. The office lacks the requisite trained human resources and therefore rarely take initiatives on communication of happenings at the Institute. Given, the three-level structure of universities, we proposed that either we employ someone with the requisite qualification and competences or support the current officer to acquire the necessary qualifications to fit the role.

In effect, communication activities are not properly coordinated and sometimes even management is not aware of what information goes out to stakeholders, especially the media and the general public. Best practices dictate that for purposes of uniformity in messages to portray

a common identity of the Institute, the communication function should be centralized and coordinated by a Communication Team, headed by the Director.

The Communication Team shall oversee all communication related outsources, such as:

- Photographers
- Documentary producers,
- Media liaison and mobilization staff,
- Writers and Editors, and
- Branding and Advertising liaison officers.
- Social media communicators/bloggers

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTE

Information reach

The assumption is that the usual modes of communication (such as emails, memos, and circulars) send important information to everyone who needs to know and that everyone will receive this information. It is possible, however, that information does not reach people who do not use some of these methods of communication, (such as email) which may not always be read by some category of workers.

Flow of information

Information may not get to employees when and where they need it. Without vital information at the right time and in the right place, the decision-making process is hampered. This delay impacts negatively on project completion and outcomes.

Clarity of expectations

The existing structures that are designed to establish effective information sharing and ownership have not yet produced the desired impact with respect to harmonizing expectations. The structures have not been utilized optimally to benefit the wider membership among management, staff, and students.

Sharing of trust and information

Some employees are not freely sharing information with one another. This failure has a bearing on trust, which is an integral element of our institutional core values: a lack of trust has the impact of allowing unhealthy intra-institutional competition, which undermines productivity of teams, departments, or units, and in the end, the Institute.

Sequencing and systematizing of information

Every organization must solve the problem of what pattern and content of communication shall be created, and what information shall be directed to which offices. There are limits to the

amount and nature of information that can be received, processed, and effectively handled by any one unit.

The apparent absence of clear communication policy guidelines results in unduly large amounts of information being channelled to units at once, resulting in information overload. Worst of all, messages that concern only a member of a group are sent to all group members. For example, why should you send a congratulatory message to every staff when there is only one person to be congratulated?

Communication Infrastructure and service

Since the Institute joined the collegiate system, one of the key challenges has been ICT Infrastructure and support services.

The use of communication technologies

Various communication technology platforms are available to the Institute. Currently communication technologies such as data-based sharing systems, e-mail, social media, bulletin boards, and websites could be used. They are cost-effective in eliminating distance barriers and providing information to large numbers of people quickly.

Notwithstanding the existing ICT infrastructure in place, the uptake in use of these technologies by many members has not been impressive. If at all, it is the e-mail system that has been overused and abused variedly.

Communication within the Institute tends to be fragmented, in that it is perceived only as a tool for passing on information, rather than a thread within a system that requires feedbacks, which therefore requires collaborative, well-coordinated and concerted efforts towards achieving the overall goals of communication for the Institute.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the communication policy are broadly to:

- a. Provide efficient and effective communication mechanisms among management, staff, and other stakeholders
- b. Promote coherent and consistent information flow among internal and external stakeholders
- c. Minimize communication breakdown and delays including the coordination and promotion of stakeholder feedbacks
- d. Promote the use of appropriate, efficient, and effective channels of communication
- e. Keep the employees of the Institute informed of upcoming events, policy changes, engagement initiatives, and updates

Specifically, this Communication Policy seeks to:

- a) **Integrate** information emanating from the Institute and present it in meaningful and sustainable ways that enhance relations with stakeholders,
- b) **Correct** lapses in the flow of information between and among departments and units that constitute the Institute for coordinated and consistent presentation of relevance information in and outside the institute,
- c) **Facilitate** the branding of the Institute to take up its place in society as a leading Research organization in Ghana hosted by the University of Ghana
- d) **Facilitate** the articulation of the role and interests of the Institute to direct attention to its activities through the development of long-term visible community public relations outreach programme for training opportunities, research dissemination and uptake.

JUSTIFICATION

This policy emphasizes professionalism in communication and serves as a guide to members (staff) of the Institute with respect to their responsibility to always serve its interests. It is said that “you cannot fault people for doing something, when you did not inform them on the appropriate way of doing it”. In this direction, therefore, the policy outlines the planned effort to influence opinion both within and outside the Institute through effective and responsible communication that meets the needs of all stakeholders.

There is a need to gain public goodwill and acceptance for the sustenance and expansion of the Institute in this changing research environment to remain relevant, and there can be no better way of doing it than effective communication and branding of the Institute, the products and services it offers. Effective internal and external communication will build confidence in what is done in the Institute for the critically needed impact that will help to protect the reputation and integrity of the Institute in Ghana and elsewhere in the world.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD COMMUNICATION PRACTICE

The Institute will endeavour to effectively provide timely, accurate, clear, and complete information about its policies, programs, services, and initiatives to both internal and external stakeholders. For objectivity and consistency, this policy document outlines core principles of good and effective communication practice to guide stakeholders in their dealings with the Institute. The following will be the guiding principles for every communication with internal and external stakeholders:

Effectiveness

The Institute shall ensure that all internal and external communication is effective and appropriate to convey the right information to stakeholders to attract the appropriate response from them. This will be done by using appropriate communication channels for the appropriate target audience.

Clarity

The Institute shall transmit clear, uniform and easily understood information in simple languages. All information will be communicated using the Institute/UG logo and corporate colours. Information disseminated through whatever means appropriate may be followed by publications and the use of approved internet channels to reinforce, clarify, or authenticate it.

Proactivity

The Institute shall demonstrate leadership in communicating with its stakeholders by proactively seeking for engagement with both existing and new external contacts to advance the visibility of the Institute in areas that will be of mutual interest. This must be done within the context of the Institute's vision and mission. This will help the Institute to expand its national and international collaborations and goodwill.

Transparency

To win the trust of internal and external stakeholders, the Institute shall be transparent and accountable in its communications. This will be done by disclosing reasons for every decision made. Management shall openly engage in dialogue with stakeholders as and when appropriate.

Efficiency

Appropriate channels and tools shall be employed in all instances of communication to ensure that information reaches the intended recipients on time and in an undistorted form.

Cultural awareness

The Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research is a national institution with an international character in shape and form and therefore, shall respect cultural diversity of all stakeholders in its communication. This shall always inform the choice of communication channels.

Responsibility

The institute shall endeavour to ensure that editorial operations and marketing of products, which constitute an integral part of the institution's communication process, reflect a high level of accountability and responsibility.

Integrity

Internal and external communication, like all other Institutional activities, shall be guided by high levels of integrity.

Best practices

Best communication practices call for clarity. All communication processes in the Institute shall be guided by the same values that characterize the best communication practices worldwide. These practices are embedded in the code of conduct of the University of Ghana, which shall be adhered to at all communication levels and operations.

The Institute Spokesperson

On all matters pertaining to the Institute, the Director is the spokesperson, acting in consonance with the Public Relation unit and the Communication Team.

AUDIENCES

The Institute has two types of audiences, which are the internal and external stakeholders. Both audiences are very critical for the survival and sustenance of the Institute as an Africa centre of excellence with a global recognition.

Internal audiences

The internal audiences of the Institute include all categories of staff and management who are employed to work for the Institute, it does not matter wherever they may be working from.

All communication exchange, including external announcements to be posted within the premises of the Institute should get permission and approval from the office of the Director.

External audiences

The external audiences are defined to include the:

- Government of Ghana, including ministries, departments, and agencies,
- Local and international collaborating institutions,
- students,
- suppliers, industry,
- donors, the mass media, and the general public,
- University of Ghana – VC Office, College of Health Sciences and other schools, other colleges in the University, Public Affairs, ORID and Centres and Departments etc.

For effectiveness, the public relation office will be supported by the Communication team to:

- Provide accurate, objective, and timely information
- Maintain an open-door communication culture,
- Package and share current information as newsworthy to stakeholders
- Monitor the media continuously to respond to bad press concerning the Institute.

TYPES AND METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

To maintain a good working environment for the realization of its vision and mission, the Institute shall facilitate efficient and effective internal communication between management and all internal stakeholders on one hand and among the staff on the other hand.

The following communication channels will be utilized in varied forms.

Print Media

Newspaper articles and supplements, Institute newsletter, calendars, banners, brochures, posters, fliers, annual report, scientific writings (journal publications, policy briefs) and ad-hoc publications like press releases, will constitute a vital component of communication between stakeholders and among internal stakeholders in the Institute.

Broadcast

Documentaries, podcasts, advertorials, interviews, spots, photographs, videos, movies, etc to communicate to the public when appropriate.

New Media

Web-based communication will continue to play vital roles in communication between stakeholders and the Institute going into the future. This requires professional control of content and design for the desired impact. Among the new media are Website, social media like Facebook, Twitter etc. Others are Online TV, Blogs, etc.

Promotional Materials

Printed T-shirts, bags, hats, mugs, other souvenirs etc. are equally important to promote the face of the Institute.

Meetings

Both electronic and physical face-to-face including conferences, seminars, public lectures, durbars, exhibitions.

Unless otherwise determined by the Public Relation unit and the Communication Team under the leadership of the Director, all communication should be in English. All communication emanating from the Institute shall be devoid of slang, obscene, offensive, or discriminatory remarks, ethnic slurs, or sexist innuendoes among others.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Electronic communication

- a) This is one of the widely available means of communication with external stakeholders. The Institute webpage must be the primary modes of electronic communication and must be viewed as a key platform for external communication. The ***Communication Team*** has the overall editorial responsibility for the Institute website, making sure that the content of the webpage is always up-to-date, easily accessible, user-friendly, regulated and managed by professional hands to conform to the vision and mission of the Institute.

- b) Additionally, every staff member must use the Institute email address to communicate with external stakeholders. The Institute shall promote the generation of general podcasts and short video clips for marketing to enhance its corporate image.
- c) The Institute shall have official social media outlets/ handles including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other blogging online avenues. In the long term, the Institute should consider an Online Television, which should be featured on the approved YouTube and Facebook channels with the Communication Team ensuring that its content is well censored in line with the objectives of the Institute.

Public lectures

Public lectures shall be one of the tools of delivery and engagement with external audiences. In addition to national and international seminars, workshops and conferences and open days shall be used to communicate with the external stakeholders, The Institute shall attract prominent personalities and international academics/scientists from within Ghana and beyond as visiting scholars and experts to present seminars on topical issues of importance to national and international audiences. This shall provide a platform for interaction between internal and external stakeholders to enhance the international image of the Institute as a reputable brand.

Conferences, meetings, and stakeholder engagements

Meetings, both virtual and physical in-person, are important means of communication with external stakeholders, it provides platforms for instant questions and answers or immediate response to nagging issues and clarifies positions on important issues. The Institute shall use conferences, meetings, in the form of courtesy calls, meetings with collaborating institutions, staff meetings, governance and management meetings, durbars, press briefings, policy briefs among others to communicate with stakeholders.

Meetings shall be used to share and disseminate information. Institutional leadership must regulate meetings to ensure that the agenda, lists of participants and timing are known to the Communication Team and the Public Relations Office. It is also critical that minutes or records of every meeting is available on the file of the Institute appropriately for referencing.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The Institute shall encourage openness in internal communication and sharing of information unless the content is deemed likely to compromise its interests. All staff shall have access to information technology (IT) to facilitate internal communication.

Flow of information

The Institute shall use communication channels that facilitate dialogue and feedback among employees and management, which shall be multidimensional in nature.

Management shall prescribe ways by which staff should freely communicate with their supervisors, heads of departments, Management, and colleagues without the fear of victimization and intimidations.

Confidentiality will be enforced to encourage individuals to share information with their superiors or with someone they can trust internally, however, the University frown on unanimous communications and this will apply in the Institute. Thus, staff must sign or owned up to any information that they share or report to leadership of the Institute. This is important to avoid or at least limit anonymous gossips.

Several channels of communication, including regular staff surveys, polls, feedback portals, focus group, suggestion boxes, questions and answer sessions and E-mails shall be used among others for internal communication vertically and horizontally. Staff should be assured that management will protect them when they always communicate facts truthfully.

Change Communications

Management shall inform employees of any important changes that have occurred or is occurring in the Institute, this may include the introduction of a new policy and a new way of doing things in the Institute and opening of a new office or facility among others.

Information communications

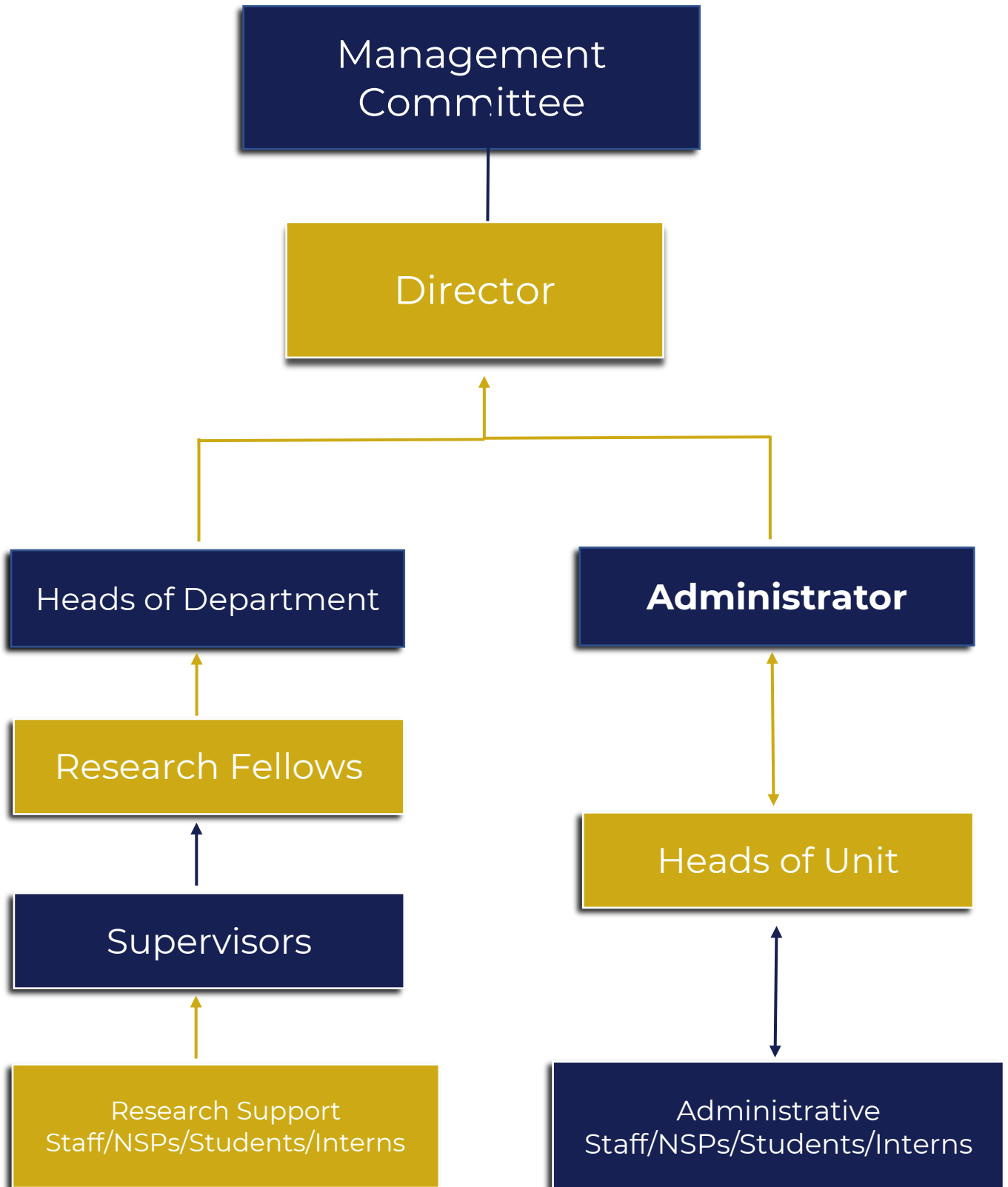
Management shall equip employees of the Institute with adequate information required to perform their duties in the most effective and efficient way. This shall be done through the provision of handbooks, training tools and manuals and discussions.

Culture communications

The Institute must develop and promote a particular culture that it must be noted for, such that wherever the name of the Institute is mentioned, its culture may come into mind without thinking about it twice. This culture must permeate the working life of staff. Examples include “Centre of excellence”, “Teamwork and togetherness, “Punctuality and timeliness” Noguchi Excellence, Working as a Team” etc.

Management shall also cultivate internal culture values such as sharing upcoming social events like birthdays, anniversaries, marriages etc. congratulatory messages to achievers, highlights individuals’ initiatives and successes among others to build a collective identity and sense of belonging.

NMIMR COMMUNICATION FLOW CHART



CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Given the importance of crisis management and communication, the Director of the Institute shall head a crisis management and communication team. During crisis and controversies, only the crisis management and communication team under the leadership of the Director shall give information to the internal and external stakeholders including the media and general public when necessary. The team, under the direction of the Director could co-opt any informed person to be the spokesperson on specific issues.

Crisis communication

Crisis communication demands that the Institute proactively seek and lookout for traits of crisis and take steps to prevent events and issues that are likely to generate problems that have the potential to cause loss of stakeholder confidence. The Crisis management team must be ready to rapidly respond appropriately and effectively to address emerging events or issues, being it rumours, speculation or mistrust or controversial findings that may give the Institute negative publicity. Thus, appropriate crisis communication should enable the Institute to respond rapidly and effectively to potentially negative situations.

To be on top of potential crisis events and issues, the Institute's Public Relations Office shall be in constant touch with stakeholders and the public to give advice where events or issues appear to cause problems.

The Public Relations office shall monitor local and international news and events to advice the Director on issues or events relevant to the image of the Institute.

Crisis response

When a crisis occurs, the crisis team under the leadership of the Director shall develop appropriate strategies to deal with the situation and how to communicate appropriately and in a timely manner to relevant stakeholders and to keep the crisis under control.

Communication during crisis

The crisis management team under the leadership of the Director will take charge of all communication and release timely relevant, appropriate, and verifiable information to the media and the public regarding any crisis. Under such circumstances, the Crisis management team shall establish appropriate mechanisms to continually monitor media coverage of the situation and respond to them accordingly on timely basis.

During crisis, no authorized staff in any category is allowed to speak on behalf of the Institute, not even in their own capacity, so long as they work with the Institute. Any breach shall be referred to the College disciplinary committee/board for appropriate sanctions to be applied.

BRANDING ADVERTISING

Branding is a powerful identity tool for any organization, and this must be clear to all the stakeholders of the Institute. It cannot be overemphasized that the Institute's survival depends on its reputation as a place of excellence in research and academic mentorship as well as the goodwill of the stakeholders, especially the funding agencies and the public. There is a need to maintain its strong brand by using the correct logo, name, and paraphernalia staff uniforms as well as the right fonts and colour always to reflect the identity to its stakeholders.

The Institute shall use print, electronic and social media for corporate branding. Corporate advertising shall be used to continually promote a positive image of the Institute. The communication team, under the leadership of the Director of the Institute shall determine from time to time, the kind and mode of advertisement to place in the media and ensure the observance of the best advertising principles and practices that protect the corporate image of the Institute and for that matter the College of Health Sciences and the University of Ghana.

It is prohibited to use the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research's name and logo in advertising by collaborating institutions or any stakeholders without authority from the Vice Chancellor, through the Provost, College of Health Sciences and the Director of the Institute and shall be subject to legal action.

The conception and production of promotional items shall always use the correct institutional name and logo. When in doubt, the parties involved shall consult with the Director of the institute for appropriate advice.

RESPONSIBILITY

All staff are duty bound to promote the good name of the Institute, and all employees have a responsibility and are duty bound to demonstrate the institutional standards in all communication and shall not disclose any information related to the Institute without authority to the public including stakeholders. Failure to comply will attract sanctions. Internal communication between and among staff should be decorum and any dissatisfied person must share his/her experience in writing to the immediate supervisor or the Head of the Department for amicable resolution of any work-related disagreements as much as possible.

Staff of the Institute shall:

- a. Be aware of the communication policy and demonstrate the institutional standards in communication set out in the policy
- b. Demonstrate the principles of good communication practice
- c. Be responsible and ensure that they communicate appropriately and effectively in line with the communication standard put forward in this policy
- d. Be aware and make themselves conversant of the various methods and modes of communication, and utilize them appropriately to enhance their work and relationship with colleagues at the workplace
- e. Tackle incidents of poor communication in proactive and constructive ways by making use of the provisions spelt out in this policy document
- f. Ensure that information is shared appropriately and in a timely manner.

- a) Every staff must carefully consider feedback from stakeholders, especially when they constructively raise issues relating to poor or inappropriate communication to adjust the mode of communication with them appropriately.

Supervisory and managerial staff shall:

- b) Ensure that all staff members are sensitized on the Communication Policy to appreciate their roles and responsibilities to ensure compliance
- c) Ensure that communication systems and processes enshrined in this policy are actively implemented in line with the vision and mission of the Institute
- d) Act as role models and lead by example, demonstrating good and effective communication practices in all aspects of works in the institute
- e) Provide effective, timely and appropriate feedback to staff and stakeholders through the acceptable channels of communication as established in this policy document
- f) Reflect on communication standards and practices within their respective teams and identify opportunities for improvement to enhance productivity
- g) Act and resolve amicably any report of poor communication that are raised by internal stakeholders and advice the Communication team headed by the Director on external stakeholders' communication concerns that relate to their departments or units
- h) Promote effective communication between the staff on one hand and management on the other hand to ensure harmony that is required to enhance productivity.
- i) Support and promote an organizational culture that encourages inclusiveness, transparency, and involvement of all internal stakeholders
- j) Ensure that all staff members under them understand and are able to communicate the strategic direction of the institution in terms of research, training, and public service to promote the corporate image of the Institute
- k) Ensure that there is consistency, equity, and parity in the communication processes across the Institute to promote the sense of belonging and trust among employees.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M& E)

The Institute's Communication Team together with the Public Relation unit shall:

- ✓ Develop appropriate strategies for monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Policy.
- ✓ Carry out (quarterly or annually) evaluation on the implementation process of the policy.
- ✓ Define the short-term, mid-term and long-term communication intervention strategies based on the annual implementation outcomes evaluation reports.
- ✓ Audit Human resources (skills and availability) for communication.
- ✓ Communication Team meetings- regular meetings of the Communication Team to review the implementation process and activities in the policies.
- ✓ Monitor the communication channels, especially social media, and other electronic media to document traffic to the sites, frequency of postings, updates, feedback, comments, and share among others.
- ✓ Monitor meetings and media engagements to document attendance, coverage, etc.
- ✓ Prescribe recommendations and interventions to address policy implementation gaps identified during M & E.

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

To keep pace with the advancement of modern communication technology and ensure uniformity with national and international trends in information sharing, this policy shall be reviewed every two years. This will help to incorporate emerging global trends in communication that will enhance the work of the institute as well as satisfy the communication needs of the stakeholders.