

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR ADHERENTS

This document has been produced by the Centre for Administrative Activities, or 'CAA'. The CAA supports participation within the Fontys University of Applied Sciences and is involved in: the Central Participation Council, or 'CPC', Service Department Participation Councils, or 'SDPC's', Institute Participation Councils, or 'IPC's', (Joint) Degree Programme Committees, or '(J)DPC's' and Fontys LINK!. The CAA can be contacted via the advisor associated with your council and/or committee, or by e-mail, via cba@fontys.nl.

In this document, a number of tips have been included in relation to communicating with the adherents of participation councils and degree programme committees. Successively, we have listed the golden rules of communicating with adherents, we have provided a number of tips in relation to the utilisation of various media and we have also listed the tips that have been provided by other councils and degree programme committees.

Golden tips

In order to be able to communicate successfully with your adherents, it is important to commence by clarifying the following points:

1. Who are you and what is it that you wish to communicate?
2. To whom you wish to convey your message (who does your network include?)?
3. Which methods of communication are appropriate in relation to your target group and/or your various target groups?

Basic rules:

- Personal contact works the best
- Make matters recognisable / appealing
- Communicate what you have achieved
- Advise in advance what you intend to do with the opinions of your adherents (expectation management)
- Communicate what you have done with the input provided
- Thoroughly consider what it is that you are asking of your target group, i.e. to inform, to request action, (which will determine the method of communication)
- Repeating standpoints is not a bad thing
- No news is also news (avoid radio silence!)
- Do not use abbreviations and/or jargon

Various media

Portal

The portal is not necessarily perused regularly by everyone. Consider whether or not this would be your best choice for your communication requirements.

Social media / Facebook

Social media, such as *Facebook* and *WhatsApp*, are used extensively as tools for communication between members of councils as well as with adherents. However, media such as *Facebook* should be carefully used. Here follow some tips:

- Do not share confidential information via such media
- Be aware of the fact that such media should not be used as formal communication tools
- Ensure that they are not used as depots for complaints but request input that may help to improve the organisation
- Ensure that the good name of Fontys is not compromised, i.e. good management
- Regularly advise what has been done with the input received
- Thoroughly consider your target group, i.e. a closed group is obvious

Written media

Newsletters

Some IPC/SDPC's and/or DPC's supply written announcements to their adherents. Sometimes, such written announcements may be called simply 'The IPC/SDPC Newsletter', or sometimes, they may be given names such as 'The Spokesperson', or 'Having Your Say'. The format can vary from a simple A4 sheet to a multi-coloured leaflet. With the help of the checklist below, take a critical look at your own IPC/SDPC announcements.

In advance:

- In determining the *issue frequency*, opt for feasibility and regularity. It is better to produce a newsletter that reliably appears in the first week of each new quarter than a newsletter that appears ten times per year at very irregular intervals.
- Select a *distribution method* whereby the chance that each staff member and student receives his/her own copy is the greatest.
- Treat any *reactions received* extremely carefully. Ensure that you advise the senders of non-anonymous reactions that you have received their reactions, what you plan to do with their reactions and what you have done with their reactions. If possible, utilise such information in a subsequent issue. Other individuals will then also see that there are staff members and students who indeed react.
- From time to time, check with some *readers* to ascertain their opinions of how the newsletters come across and what they think of the content. Make use of these reactions to make adjustments to the format and content.

Checklist:

- Content
 - Are the subjects included of interest to the majority of the readers?
 - Are the (consequences of) developments outlined at the levels of work/the classroom and the workplace?
 - Is the word choice and sentence structure appropriate for the average reader?
 - Are the contributions likely to invite reactions?
 - Does every issue provide clear details of how staff members and students can submit their reactions?
- Format
 - Is the appearance of the newsletter eye-catching?
 - Is the appearance of the newsletter likely to invite readers?
 - Does the newsletter contain illustrations?
 - Is the issue recognisable by way of the cover page, logo, colour, et cetera?
 - Does each newsletter include a surprising element?
- In addition
 - Does the council or the DPC as a whole approve of the content?
 - Is it possible to produce the newsletter at fixed, regular intervals?
 - Does every staff member and student receive the newsletter?
 - Does the IPC/SDPC or the DPC respond to non-anonymous reactions?
 - Does the council check what the readers think about the newsletter?

Annual Reports

DPC's are obliged to draft Annual Reports for the Directorate and the IPC. An Annual Report is often a summary of the most important points included in the meeting Minutes from the past year. You can also utilise such an Annual Report as an information tool for your adherents. Below, we have included a number of tips to promote the readability of such reports:

- Outline a selection of themes that were of relevance during the past year rather than a chronological report
- Keep it brief
- Use active language
- Keep use of abbreviations and jargon to an absolute minimum
- Incorporate a clear structure
- Be honest and composed
- Do not include summaries, facts and appendices in the running text

Tips from councils and degree programme committees for communicating with adherents

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| - Staff lunch / drinks | - Guest speaker in class (IPC member) |
| - Utilise the CAA to strengthen position | - Team consultation |
| - Dinner with the Directorate | - Class representative consultation |
| - IPC on agenda of working consultation | - Video log |
| - Circulate in the classes | - Study Days |
| - Present news on TV screens | - Speak to field of work |
| - Utilise the members' networks | - Various councils physically together |
| - Social media | - Notice board |
| - E-mail addresses | - Newsletters |
| - Portal – publicly accessible component | - Corridors/coffee machines/round table |
| - Utilise the SCA's and Tutors | - Study associations |
| - Celebrate/publicise successes | - Wishing wells |

If you have any golden tips, please send the details in an e-mail to cba@fontys.nl.

Source: *ORnet.nl*