



University of
South Australia

Guidelines on Electronic Communications with Students

DATE OF APPROVAL: 29 October 2007

REFERENCE AUTHORITY: Director, Student and Academic Services

AMENDMENT: January 2011

- [Introduction](#)
 - [Principles](#)
 - [Guidelines](#)
 - [Formal communication through student email](#)
 - Communication through the "MyUniSA" student portal
 - Communication through the SMS notification tool
 - Notes on using SMS communication
 - Communication with students without access to online facilities
 - Approval to access research participants
 - [Review](#)
-

Introduction

The University uses electronic methods of communication to keep in regular contact with its students.

This includes the delivery of formal communications (see examples below) from the University, such as information about particular requirements or entitlements, about particular actions that must be taken by students, or about important events in the University calendar such as graduations and enrolments.

It also includes more general announcements (see examples below) to students about a range of university activities and events, and other matters that are deemed important, about which details are provided by way of general information, but which do not constitute a formal communication by the University.

The main methods by which the University communicates electronically with students are student email, and messages posted on the University's student portal, myUniSA, and SMS notifications to a student's nominated mobile phone number.

These guidelines are intended to provide direction on the form of electronic communication to all students, large groups of students or a particular cohort of students.

Compliance with the Spam Act

- The Spam Act 2003 regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages in Australia.
- In compliance with the Spam Act, electronic messages which might be deemed to be commercial in nature (because they offer or advertise goods or services, or promote a particular supplier or business opportunity) should only be sent where the recipient has provided consent, the communication has a functional unsubscribe facility, and accurate information about the sender is provided.

- Further information on the requirements of the Spam Act are available at <http://www.unisa.edu.au/res/legal/legal.asp#spam>

Principles

Communication by email from the University to all students or large groups of students should be considered to be equivalent to written communication sent by post. It should therefore be used sparingly, in order to preserve both the impact of the medium, and its utility to students.

More general announcements to students should not be sent via email, but should instead be posted on the University's student portal, *MyUniSA*.

Guidelines

1. Formal communication through student email

- 1.1 Email communications sent to all students, or to a large group of students through a standard distribution list, should therefore be restricted to matters which might be considered to be formal communications from the University about a particular matter.
- 1.2 Examples of such matters might include:
 - The provision of information about significant University processes, for example, dates and major events in the University calendar;
 - Notification of the provision of important information (such as notification that a student's Commonwealth Assistance Notice has been provided on-line);
 - Communication about matters affecting an individual student's enrolment, results, financial standing, graduation, etc.;
 - Notification of the requirement for a particular action to be taken by a student or group of students;
 - Statements on important or strategic matters by senior officers of the University.
- 1.3 Email communications sent to the distribution list 'all students' must be approved by the Director, Student and Academic Services. Depending on the content, formal authorisation may also need to be sought from an appropriate line manager.
- 1.4 Communication should only be sent through the University's standard student email distribution lists when it is material to the interests of the audience to whom it is sent (this is also required under the provisions of the Spam Act, 2003).

2. Communication through the "MyUniSA" student portal

- 2.1 General announcements for students should be posted on the University's student portal, *MyUniSA*.
- 2.2 Examples of announcements which might be posted to the portal include:
 - Information on a particular event, activity or service which might be of interest to students, but which does not form a major part of the University calendar and which not all recipients are expected to attend, participate in, or take advantage of;
 - Information which is provided by way of interest, and which is deemed to be relevant to its audience, but which is not essential to their enrolment and progress at the University.
- 2.3 Formal communications that are sent to students by email may, in addition, be announced on the student portal, eg. letting students know that results are available.
- 2.4 Announcements posted on the student portal consist of a single line heading, followed by a one or two sentence subheading, along with a hyperlink to further information (provided either on a

web page, or as a document in Microsoft Word format). Please use the portal message request form which can be found on the [staff portal](#).

- 2.5 All announcements should be given a clear commencement date, as well as a date for removal, which should not be later than 14 days after first posting.
- 2.6 Announcements should clearly indicate their intended audience. Currently available target audiences are:
- All students
 - Domestic students
 - International students (onshore)
 - Research students
 - Transnational students (offshore)
 - Transnational Research students
 - Students in studies with partner organisations, such as SAIBT, CELUSA, Open Universities Australia, or students undertaking short programs of the University
- 2.7 Announcements sent to any of these groups will only be available or visible to these groups
- 2.8 As the operation of the portal is progressively improved, the list of target audiences and level of detail at which it is possible to target students will be increased.
- 2.9 In cases where it is not possible to communicate directly with a target group of students through the student portal (as the technical ability to select this particular audience does not currently exist), it may be appropriate to use an email distribution list to target these students directly, provided the communication is material to the interests of the audience to whom it is sent. Examples of such targeted communications might include:
- Announcements to students on a particular campus about relevant events, services or facilities;
 - Announcements to particular subgroups of students - for example international students by country of origin.

3. Communication through the SMS notification tool

- 3.1 The SMS application should NOT be used for formal communication to students. Written communications, student emails and messages via MyUniSA are the methods of formal communication.
- 3.2 If time is of the essence to communicate with students, then the SMS application may be used to supplement email and announcements for formal communications.
- 3.3 Examples of appropriate use for using SMS to supplement formal communications include:
- notifying students when classes have been moved or cancelled at the last moment
 - notifying students if there has been a crisis on campus which may effect them
 - last minute changes to exam timetable/venue
 - notifying students that results are available
- 3.4 Where staff are providing additional customer service and reminding students of upcoming deadlines the SMS application can be utilised.
- 3.5 Example of appropriate use for value added customer service include:
- reminding students of assignment deadlines

- 3.6 The ability to contact students via SMS will be restricted and any staff requiring access to this service will have to have approval from their cost centre manager.
- 3.7 The application should NOT be used for promotion of non-University related events or for personal use.
- 3.8 Examples of inappropriate use by UniSA staff (NB UniLife staff may use SMS to communicate information about social and sporting events being organised by UniLife to its members only)
- notifying students of happy hour at the local pub
 - notifying students of a free concert on campus
- 3.9 The SMS application has an auditing application which records the following information:
- who sent the message
 - when the message was sent
 - the recipients of the message
 - the message content
- 3.10 Staff will need to provide cost centre information when applying to use the application. The application will summarise the total cost for the message being sent, and this cost will be charged back to the cost centre that the user provided.

4. Notes on using SMS communication

- 4.1 Not all students will receive these messages for a variety of reasons e.g.:
- they may have opted not to receive SMS communications
 - they may have not have their mobile phone switched on
 - they may have lost their mobile phone
 - they may have a flat battery in their phone
- 4.2 This service should be considered as a value added service only.
- 4.3 Do not assume all students in any particular target group or cohort will receive the message

5. Communication with students without access to online facilities

- 5.1 Not all students of the University have access to online facilities. These students will be identified at the point of enrolment, and an indicator noted on the student and email systems.
- 5.2 Where communications are sent to all students or to a large group of students via electronic means, consideration must be given to appropriate methods of communicating the information to students without access to online facilities.
- 5.3 Where an email is sent through a distribution list to a student who does not have access to online facilities, a message will be sent to alert the sender that the communication must be delivered to the student at their physical mailing address.
- 5.4 Email messages approved by the Director: Student and Academic Services will be sent by SAS to the relevant student at their mailing address.

6. Approval to access research participants

- 6.1 If you require assistance or agreement from another organisation to undertake your research, you will need to gain written organisational permission/approval to access staff members,

clients or other information for research purposes. This approval is separate from the ethics approval process and is usually required from the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent authorised person.

- 6.2 Approval to contact University of South Australia staff or students, and/ or to access data for research purposes should be sought in the following ways:
- For access to email contact details of staff or students in one School approval should be sought from the Head of School.
 - For access to email contact details of staff or students in more than one School within the same Division, approval should be sought from the Pro Vice-Chancellor of that Division.
 - For access to email contact details of staff or students in the UniSA College approval should be sought from the Head of UniSA College.
- 6.3 Approval should be sought from the [Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation](#) when access is sought to staff or students within different Divisions or if the University itself is the object of the research.
- 6.4 Approval to access information held in University databases should be sought from the holder of that database eg. Director: Student and Academic Services for student data.

7. Review

- 7.1 These guidelines will be reviewed in light of an assessment of changes to the student portal which are intended to enable announcements to be sent to a larger range of specific target audiences as well as a review of the practical implementation issues.