



Final Report

5 Feb 2021

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Insight	8
Content & Communication Principles	19
Recommendations	23
Key Initiatives & Next Steps	39

Executive Summary

Project overview

Project context

One of the major insights from the Student Journey Mapping project completed in 2019-2020 was that **"Information is inconsistent or inadequate across channels."**

The Student Content and Communications project sought to understand this insight more deeply from both a staff and student perspective, and co-design concepts for a new content and communication model. The project focused on current students, not prospective students or alumni.

The scope of the project covered both:

- content – the long-lived information students refer to throughout their journey e.g. unit outlines, and
- communication: timely messages and updates e.g. email reminder to enrol.

Method

Over 10 weeks, the project team engaged with staff members and students, in one-hour, in-depth conversations about their current experiences with content and communications at ACU, as well as designing and testing concepts for new ways of working.

33 students

Across ACU campuses and faculties. Including international students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, online and on-campus, undergraduate and postgraduate.

42 staff members

Representing OSS, Student Engagement and Services, Academic Skills Unit, Library, First Peoples, Learning and Teaching Centre, Campus Ministry, Student Administration, International students, Connect2Uni, CRM, MER, and academic representatives from all four ACU faculties.

Project Deliverables

- Current state insights (Diagnose Phase showcase, and p 8–18 in this report)
- Current state processes map (Appendix A)
- Communications Principles (p 19–22)
- Future state Content and Communications Model (Recommendations p. 23–41)
- Key initiatives (p 42–51)

Next steps

- Policy and guidelines developed and endorsed
- Scoping programs of work related to key initiatives
- Implementation of first steps of key initiatives

Insight that shaped our recommendations

Throughout interviews with students and staff, over the course of the project, key themes emerged again and again, that could be grouped into three themes for students and three for staff. This insight underpins the Content and Communication Principles, Recommendations and Key Initiatives outlined in this document.

Each insight is explained in more detail on p. 8–18.

Overarching Insight

ACU is a diverse place and different teams have unique content and communication needs, but we can all agree that the student experience is our priority. Clear guidelines, combined with a collaborative approach that has the student experience at its heart, will help to create visibility and improve content and communications across the university.

Student Insight

- Before I consider other information, I need to feel confident that I am across all of the information that is core to my studies.
- Discovering things I might not have been looking for elevates my university experience... but if it's too hard, I'll just stick to what I know.
- I will go to a trusted person within the university to help me navigate or understand information.

Staff Insight

- We want support and up-skilling, so that we can communicate with students more effectively and confidently.
- A significant barrier in creating a considered communications experience is that we don't have a clear view of how students receive and engage with what we're publishing.
- Increased visibility and collaboration across teams will help staff communicate with students more effectively and break down silos.

Content & Communication Principles

The Content and Communications Principles have been developed to guide communication activities across different teams at the University to create a cohesive student experience. To be effective, they must be shared and referenced when developing, reviewing and giving feedback on content and communications: ideally, they would form part of the Comms Champion training.

These principles define our goals for both the student and staff experience at ACU, as detailed on p 32-34.



ACU Content & Communications Principles:

1. **Start with the student experience**

A student-centric content and communications approach is planned with an understanding what is going on in a students' world. We will achieve this through a shared view of key dates and communications being sent to students and intelligent use of student feedback and analytics to drive improvement.

2. **Informed and ready to help**

ACU staff are students' most trusted guides, but to play this role effectively, they need to have a clear view of student-facing content and communications: what they are being told, and when.

3. **Support active information seeking**

Publishing content on the right platforms, giving clear CTAs and points of contact and using filters and targeting will all help to support students to be active participants in their information seeking and will encourage exploration and discovery.

4. **Confidence through learning**

For staff, more training, resources and collaboration on content and communication will increase their confidence in not only providing information to students, but in understanding how it is received and used. For students, confidence in navigating online platforms relies on building a clear mental map of what to find where.

Recommendations & Key Initiatives

This project makes three key recommendations for a future-state content and communications model, and proposed seven key initiatives to start working towards these recommendations.

Each recommendation links to key initiatives and includes detailed requirements and considerations, based on staff and student needs as well as initial technical considerations. Key initiatives include proposed actions that will require further prioritisation and review.

Recommendations

- **How we work together: Content & Communications Community of Practice.** A holistic content and communications operating model that aims to decentralise and upskill staff in communications skills, while facilitating collaboration and transparency across teams. See p 30–35.
- **How we publish content: Platform ecosystem.** A model for how current ACU platforms can work together to create a more easily navigable online experience for students, with recommendations for platform uplift and governance. See p 36–43.
- **How we communicate: Email guidelines** Guidelines for how different categories of information should be sent to students, based on how students prioritise and use different types of information. See p 44–48.

Key Initiatives

1. **Content & Communications Policy:** Clarity and an agreed way of working
2. **Community of Practice:** Establishing new ways of working
3. **Digital platforms working group:** Ongoing improvement to create an effective online environment
4. **Student feedback and analytics:** Providing a clearer understanding of the student experience
5. **Staff communications:** Continuing the conversation and engagement
6. **Student communications:** Helping students to navigate and encouraging discovery
7. **Role review and resourcing:** Creating efficiencies to support new initiatives

See p 49–58 for details of key initiatives.

Insight: *Overview*

*ACU is a diverse place and different teams have unique needs,
but we can all agree that the student experience is our priority.*

A challenge in developing a new content and communications model is catering to the diverse perspectives and needs of professional and faculty staff, while creating a more consistent way of working.

Consistency, transparency and collaboration are all essential in creating a more consistent and easy to navigate experience for students. And despite the different needs and goals of teams at ACU, they are united in working for the best outcome for students.

"If we're doing things so that they work best for students, we will all get the cut through we're seeking anyway." – ACU staff member



Our ideal online experience is a supermarket, *but right now we've got a market bazaar*

For students, the ideal online experience would be for everything to be accessible from one well-organised, easy to navigate place, rather than on disparate platforms.

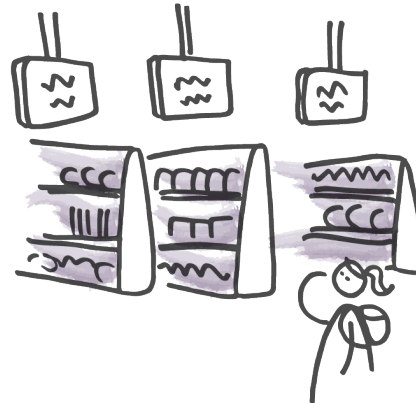
One exception to this rule is LEO, which students use for direct engagement with course material, their lecturers and classmates, and which should be kept as focused on core information and academic content as possible.

A 'supermarket' online experience delivers a single front door, easy to navigate, logically ordered information architecture and consistent naming, tone of voice and language across different types of content.

"I use Google to connect to the other platforms because I don't know how to find them. If there was a website to connect these things that would be good." – ACU student

While it is apparent that this is the experience students desire, and the Student Portal goes some way to playing this role it is also evident that Student Portal platform will require additional investment and development to fully meet the needs of students and staff.

"I like the idea that when it's already in one spot you'll accidentally realise what else is available, otherwise you have to really actively think 'I am going to look for social clubs' and then search for them." – ACU student



The current 'market bazaar' experience, with multiple platforms, content duplicated across platforms, and no clear rules about who can publish where, has evolved because teams have not felt confident that their content was being seen on existing platforms.

Looking for alternative platforms, chasing eyeballs across multiple platforms and over-communicating are all ways that teams have sought to work around the current platforms. This has created confusion for students and some simply choose to disengage with anything other than core course content because it is so overwhelming and difficult.

Insight: *Students*

Before I consider other information, I need to feel confident that I am across all of the information that is core to my studies.

1 Information essential to my studies

There is consensus amongst students about the importance of information essential to their enrolment and course completion. Details relating to enrolment, timetabling, examination, assessments, results and unit-specific information fall within this category.

Students look for this information on LEO and the Student Portal or Student Connect (there is some confusion between these platforms), in addition to emails from Student Administration and faculty staff.

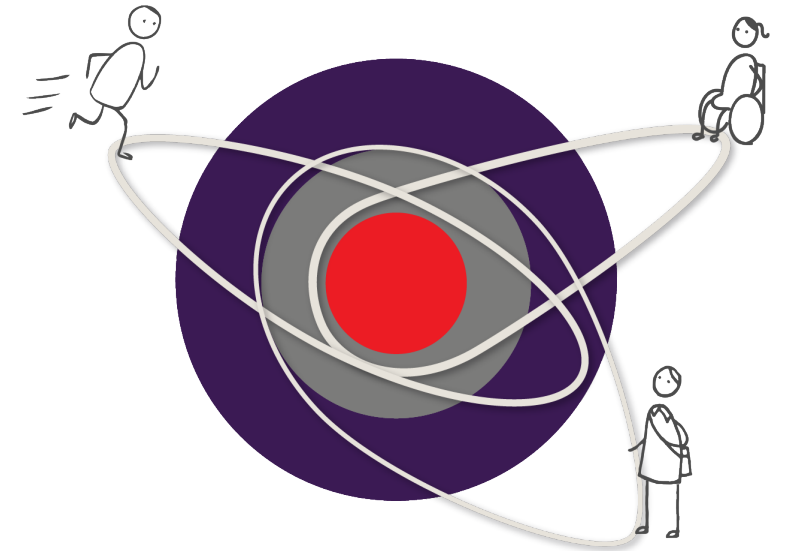
"Send us the unit outlines and important stuff then start drip-feeding everything else."
 – ACU student

2 Support and services available to me

Students also agree on the importance of information regarding academic support, student services, counselling and careers advice. These services are important to students at different times of the semester or at different stages of their student journey.

It is important students know these services are available and can easily access them when they need them, to remove any barriers to seeking help or accessing opportunities.

"I like the bulletins – I tend to scroll through and click on what's interesting to me."
 – ACU student



3 Opportunities to get involved or related to my specific interests

Information about social, co-curricular and enrichment opportunities, such as clubs and societies, sports, social events on campus and groups such as Campus Ministry are relevant and desired by individual students based on their unique interests and needs. There is a wide range of information in this category, and only some of it will matter to each student.

Discovering things I might not have been looking for elevates my university experience... but if it's too hard, I'll just stick to what I know.

It takes time for students to learn how to navigate platforms. If they have a frustrating experience, they're likely to look for workarounds, most often by going straight to LEO, bypassing the Student Portal except for core administration tasks. Students also avoid other platforms either because of low awareness or platform overwhelm, instead relying on email to break through the noise and deliver the information they need.

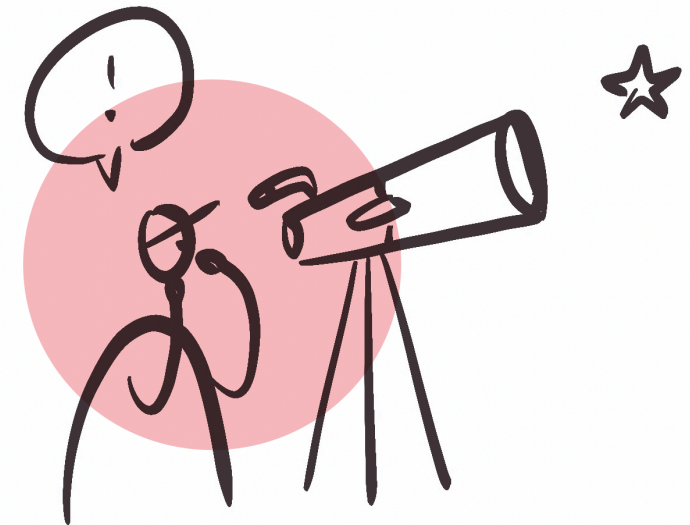
"I generally read all the ACU emails. To remain informed, especially with COVID. Some lecturers only use email to send messages."
– ACU student

Students have a low level of understanding about the purpose of different online platforms and do not have a clear mental map of where to go for different types of information. This leads to the common solution of using Google to search for information or contacting AskACU so they may be directed to the right place.

"I use Google to connect to the other platforms because I don't know how to find them. If there was a website to connect these things that would be good." – ACU student

Students would like co-curricular opportunities and events to be discoverable online, rather than emailed to them, but this relies on platforms being inviting, easy to navigate and consistent, so students don't feel disoriented or lost. While the improved Student Portal Information Architecture will help, there is also a need for better filtering of the portal news feed and tutorials or guides on how to use platforms.

Campus-specific bulletins can help raise awareness of co-curricular opportunities and events without adding to email overwhelm, and opt-in emails and other communications from events and groups that students have joined will ensure they stay engaged with their specific areas of interest.



I will go to a trusted person within the university to help me navigate or understand information.

Students see ACU staff as helpful and accessible, and rely on them to help navigate confusing systems or understand duplicated or conflicting information.

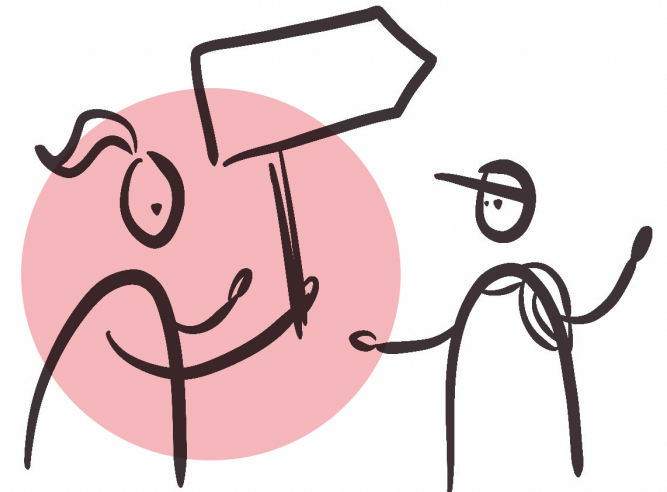
"Whenever I have a question that cant be answered by a lecturer or friend, I go to AskACU." – ACU student

This highlights the importance of informing student-facing staff about content and communications going out to students, so these staff are better equipped to help with student enquiries. In particular, there is a need for more visibility between faculties and professional teams, as well as regular updates to key student-facing roles, eg. AskACU, academic staff, ISAs, IHEUs and Connect2Uni.

Ensuring content and communication have a clear call to action and point of contact will help students to take action more directly.

Directing students to the right team or online platform location is more helpful in the long term than simply answering their questions for them, or finding a work-around. Helping students navigate the ACU online environment requires staff to have a clear understanding of (and confidence in) all of the different platforms students are expected to interact with. It is therefore beneficial for staff to access a student view of essential platforms, the student portal in particular. If staff are not able to see a live student view of the portal (which is the current state), then they struggle to help students navigate it.

Inconsistent and duplicated messages and platform use leads to lower student confidence and more cross-checking. Reducing duplication across and within platforms will support students in navigating their information ecosystem more independently.



Insight: *Staff*

We want support and up-skilling, so that we can communicate with students more effectively and confidently.

Communicating with students is an important part of every team's role at the university, from academics to professional staff, but it's not a core strength in everyone's skillset. Professional staff, in particular, see a need for building communication skills within their teams, so that they can more effectively create and share student-facing content and communications.

Up-skilling 'Comms Champions' within each team who can publish events or updates on the portal newsfeed, for example, will also ease frustrations with communication workflows and bottlenecks, simplifying the process for all teams involved. This will allow the MER team to step into a leadership and advisory role, focussing on forming strategic ideas for how teams can target and engage students, rather than progressing updates through platform workflows.

"We don't have the communications knowledge within our team to get the oomph we need." – ACU staff member

Providing staff with endorsed and easily accessible guidelines, resources and clear processes for publishing and communicating with students will provide clarity and direction for student-facing announcements and content, curating a more positive and consistent experience for students.

Clear guidelines and processes could be combined with information about the strategy behind the brand and approach, so that staff understand not only what to do, but also why.



A significant barrier in creating a considered communications experience is that we don't have a clear view of how students receive and engage with what we're publishing.

Creating a student-centric communications experience requires visibility of the student experience and an understanding of how content is being accessed by students.

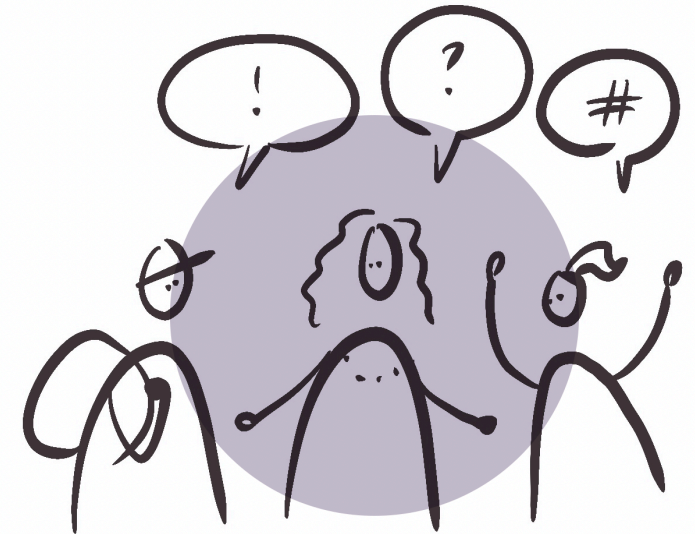
"Everybody is craving student insight. We need the student experience to underpin all that we do." – ACU staff member

Without feedback from students, staff do not feel confident that they are communicating enough, in the right places or with the right messages. As a result, they tend to share the necessary information in as many places as possible (a 'catch all' approach), leading to information overload and confusion from a student's perspective.

Lack of access to a student's view of the student portal has contributed to the low confidence staff have in the portal as a channel. As a result, staff find ways to work around the portal or move content to other platforms, such as LEO and UniHub, where they have more visibility of student activity and analytics.

"I've always found navigating communication channels really challenging, I've never felt confident the message was getting out there consistently." – ACU staff member

Staff from across the university are seeking a clearer understanding of the student communication experience, and believe that taking a student-centric decision-making approach would be the most transparent and effective approach.



Increased visibility and collaboration across teams will help staff communicate with students more effectively and break down silos.

There is a strong desire from professional staff to collaborate and share knowledge across teams, and all of the staff that the project team spoke to see a need for more visibility between professional staff and faculties as a way to start breaking down traditional silos.

“There is no overview of what other areas are doing, there could be a lot more cross-referencing between the services and what they do. There would be less communications, but they would be more coordinated.”
– ACU staff member

Professional teams see value in working with faculties and AskACU to ensure that the staff who students go to for information have a clear view of what is being communicated, and are equipped to answer students' questions.

There are already groups of teams collaborating on student communications and sharing calendars, such as AskACU and Student Administration, and the co-curricular forum. These teams, and staff who are not yet collaborating with other teams see great potential for impactful outcomes by working together and sharing knowledge.

However, with every team having their own goals and targets to meet, there can be a sense of competing for students' attention and therefore concern from co-curricular teams that 'non-essential' communications (i.e. not directly related to course content) will be stifled from too much oversight.



Content & Communication Principles

Content & Communications Principles

Themes that underpin our goals for staff and students

The Content and Communications Principles have been developed to guide communication activities across different teams at the University to create a cohesive student experience.

To be effective, they must be shared and referenced when developing, reviewing and giving feedback on content and communications: ideally, they would form part of the Comms Champion training.

These principles define our goals for both the student and staff experience at ACU, as outlined on the following pages.

ACU Content & Communications Principles:

1. Start with the student experience
2. Informed and ready to help
3. Support active information seeking
4. Confidence through learning

What this looks like for students: *What we are aiming for*

1. Start with the student experience

- A considered, logical online environment that's easy and intuitive to use.
- Understand what's going on in my student life, be guided by what will help me succeed.
- Planned and just-in-time communications – tell me what I need to know when I need to know it.

2. Informed and ready to help

- Make it easy to take action with a clear point of contact.
- Give content an owner, without confusing me with organisational structure and details.

3. Support active information seeking

- Encourage discovery, through inviting, accessible online experiences that are easy to find and navigate.
- The ability to search and filter content on ACU platforms, so I can find what I need efficiently.
- Show me what's available through bulletins that are relevant to my campus and study mode.

4. Confidence through learning

- Help me build a mental map of information and platforms so I know where to find information and updates when I need them.
- Onboarding when I first start studying at ACU to get me on track quickly and simply so that I can jump right in without feeling lost from the beginning.

What this looks like for staff: *How we'll achieve our goals*

1. Start with the student experience

- Plan content and communications around the student experience.
- Use data and feedback to continuously improve and make collective decisions.
- Collaborate and improve visibility across teams so that we don't lose sight of the bigger picture.
- Before publishing new information, check if it conflicts with other information online.

2. Informed and ready to help

- Provide student-facing with information students need.
- Answer questions in a way that equips students to find their own answer next time by showing them how to use platforms and find information for themselves.
- Provide a clear point of contact for students, and be available for follow up.

3. Support active information seeking

- Post the right content in the right place and take responsibility for updating out of date information or removing information which is no longer relevant.
- Make use of bulletins, tag content to allow for effective filtering, give students the ability to opt-in for communications.
- Point to further information so students know how to take the next step.

4. Confidence through learning

- Build my confidence through communications training, so that I may more effectively communicate with students.
- Show me what good looks like with best practice examples and guides on content and communication.
- Encourage feedback and peer support to help our team learn and improve in collaboration with other teams.

Recommendations

How we work together:

Content & Communications Community of Practice

How we work together: *Content & Communications Community of Practice*

Overview:

A model of collaboration and decentralised communications skills, to empower teams to publish content and communicate with students more effectively and confidently. The Content & Communications Community of Practice operating model proposes a holistic approach to a range of challenges ACU staff face in creating and publishing effective student-facing content and communications.

"All the issues we experience – not having great email content, not knowing whether the email we've sent is effective, not having communications skills in our team, not having visibility of what each other are doing, not having reference guides or peers to bounce ideas off – this model addresses all of that, and that is really positive to me." – ACU staff member

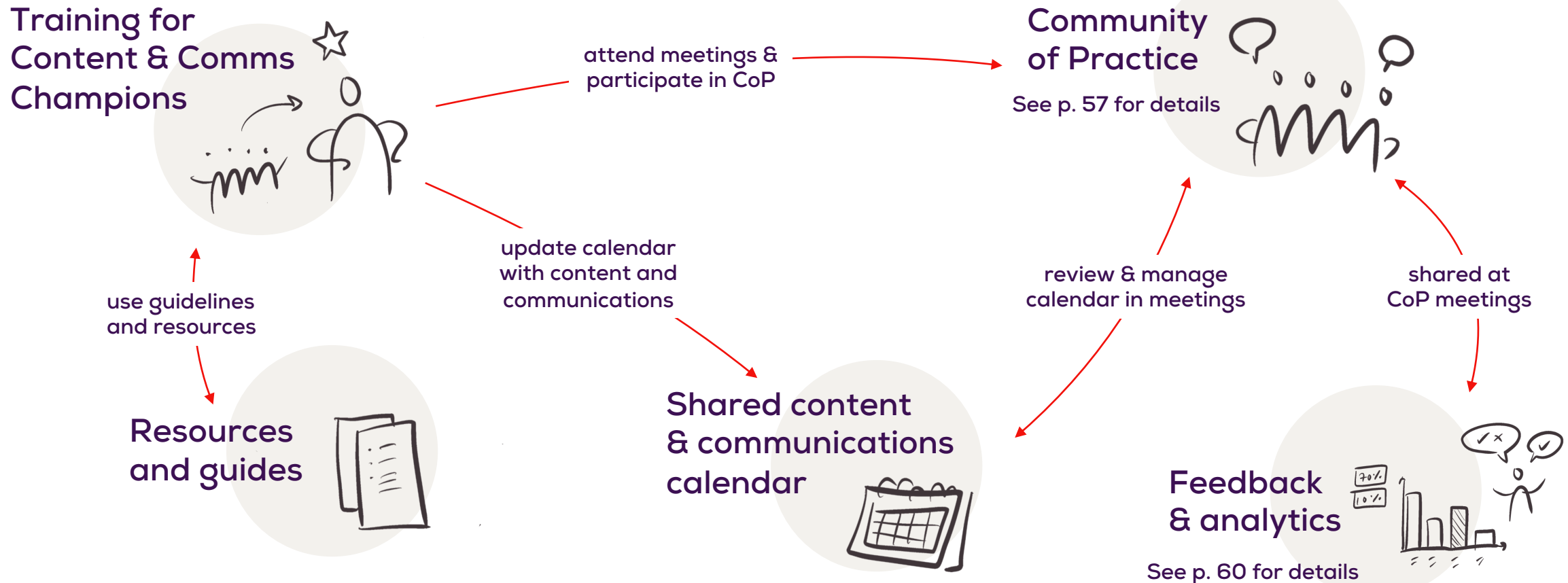
Requirements and considerations

- Each team or Directorate will be required to nominate a Comms Champion to participate in training, maintain the shared content and communications calendar for their team, attend Community of Practice meetings, review and edit their team's content and communications and publish updates and events to platforms including the Student Portal, UniHub and ACU Life.
- The Community of Practice will need leadership and oversight to be successful and efficient; MER is generally seen by staff as the logical team to lead the CoP.
- Before rolling out the Community of Practice model to all of ACU, a pilot group will need to work together to develop and refine processes, tools and resources.

Related Key Initiatives

- Content and Communications Policy
- Community of Practice
- Staff communications
- Student feedback and analytics
- Role review and resourcing

How we work together: *Content & Communications Community of Practice*



Recommendations

How we publish content:
Platform ecosystem

How we publish content: *Platform ecosystem*

When the Student Portal was implemented it was envisaged as the "front door" into the University's landscape of digital systems. While our approach was always to be multi-platform, the notion of the Student Portal as the front door has been eroded as teams have sought more direct publishing access, been frustrated by the ease of use of the Portal, because they needed specific functionality or because they perceived other platforms to have more student engagement.

Having multiple entry points into our platform ecosystem does not make sense to students and they struggle to understand the purpose of each platform and how to access it.

A single front door is preferable for students, however it is not enough for everything to just be in one place – it must also be easy to navigate and search. The way that students avoid engaging with the Student Portal demonstrates that if it's too confusing, they will simply disengage.

The Content and Communications Policy will need to define a clear purpose for each platform, that is communicated to staff and students. Leadership and guidelines are also required to ensure consistency in the way platforms are used and content is structured on them. The Community of Practice and digital working group will need to have shared oversight on platform use and content.

Long-lived, university-wide content on all platforms except LEO should be approved by MER Internal Communications, to avoid duplication and ensure consistency and accuracy.

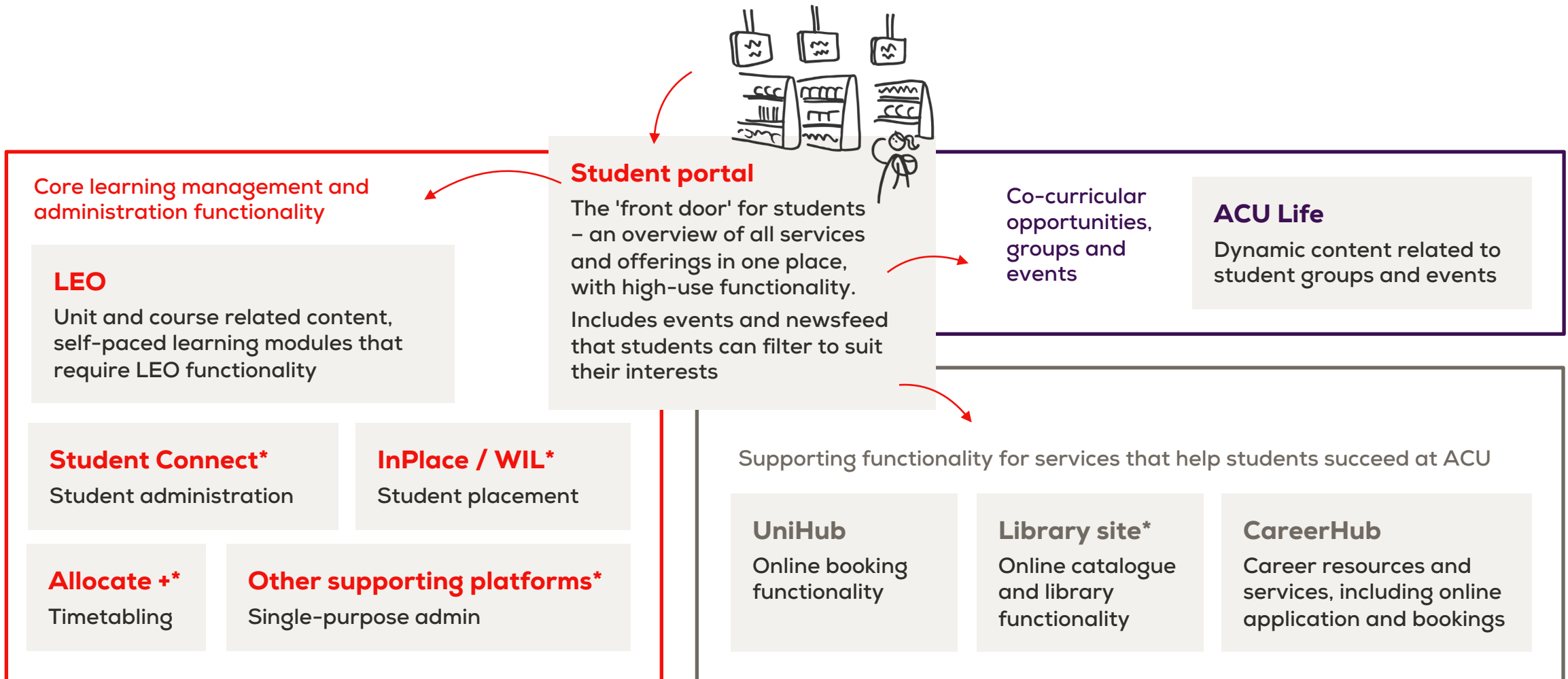
Dynamic content, related to events, groups or news updates, would ideally be published directly by Comms Champions who have completed training and demonstrated competence at content writing and publishing.



Related Key Initiatives

- Content and Communications Policy
- Digital platforms working group
- Student communications
- Student feedback and analytics
- Role review and resourcing

How we publish content: *Platform ecosystem*



*There are no specific recommendations for new content guidelines or publishing processes for these platforms

How we publish content: *Student Portal*

Platform purpose:

The digital 'front door' for students – an overview of all services and offerings in one place, with commonly used functionality.

Intended to be the starting point for students' online environment, it links to LEO and supporting platforms.

Content type:

- Introductory information about all ACU services, offerings and student information.
- Students' timetable and key information about their course.
- Newsfeed of updates that students can filter by campus or area of interest.
- Personalised events calendar that students can filter by campus or area of interest.

Who can publish to this platform:

- MER Internal Communications
- Comms Champions from each team

Publishing approach:

- Long-lived, university-wide content on the Student Portal (i.e. not updates, events or student-specific information) must be approved by MER Internal Communications, to avoid duplication and ensure consistency and accuracy.
- Comm Champions who have completed both content and technical training may publish updates and events on behalf of their team.

Recommendations:

- The establishment of a Digital platform working group to prioritise and deliver platform uplift, including the Student Portal.
- Access to a student view of the Student Portal that staff can access to review content they have published.
- Improved search functionality across the Student Portal and public ACU websites.
- Student communications about ongoing improvements to Student Portal functionality, including filtering and search, to encourage uptake.
- Staff communications about ongoing uplift, including Information Architecture and search functionality.

DRAFT: How we publish content: *LEO*

Platform purpose:

The online learning environment for unit content and delivery and essential information related to courses and units.

In the short term, it may also host specific academic support services, based on functionality review – ideally, support services would be on the portal.

Content type:

- Unit content and functionality: assessment, resources, discussion forums and delivery of content including video, audio and documents.
- Self-paced learning modules that require LEO functionality, and have been approved in functionality review. May include Academic Skills Unit and Connect2Uni Quest.

Who can publish to this platform:

- Faculty staff
- Professional teams who are publishing content that requires LEO functionality (will be determined as part of the platform functionality review)

Publishing approach:

- Academic staff are able to publish content and send notifications to students in their units directly, as always.
- If professional teams want to add new pages to LEO, it has to go through LEO UX governance to determine if the functionality is available on the portal or if another ACU platform would be better suited to content.
- Comms Champions for teams with approved LEO presences may publish directly to LEO.

Recommendations:

- The establishment of a Digital platform working group to prioritise and deliver platform uplift, including LEO.
- LEO UX governance and guidelines about the sort of content that should be hosted on LEO, and which teams should be using it.
- Resources and best-practice guidelines and training for academic staff to improve quality and consistency of units on LEO (there is work in this area already underway).
- Teams currently use LEO to host videos and slideshows. While it may be easier to upload and host this content on LEO, a process for uploading or embedding videos to the Student Portal should be developed and formalised as part of the Content and Communications Policy.

How we publish content: *CareerHub*

Platform purpose:

The online home of career resources, services and jobs on campus.

Content type:

- Careers resources.
- Information and registration for events, courses and workshops.
- Booking for careers advisor appointments.
- Jobs on campus postings and application functionality.

Who can publish to this platform:

- Comms Champion for Careers
- Jobs on campus staff

Publishing approach:

- For general, university-wide content, MER Internal Communications should be consulted to ensure consistency and avoid duplication across platforms.
- Comm Champions who have completed both content and technical training may publish updates, events and resources.
- Emails may be sent to students who have signed up for courses, events or booked appointments. This includes follow-up emails about upcoming courses or events that students have previously attended.

Recommendations:

- The menu of UniHub makes it confusing when switching between CareerHub and other UniHub functionality, and while students have a high awareness of CareerHub, most did not recognise UniHub as a platform name. Consider UX testing with students to address any confusion.
- In order to get events and courses into student bulletins, they should also be added to Student Portal updates, and linked to CareerHub.

How we publish content: *UniHub*

Platform purpose:

Secure, 24 hour online booking for appointments, events and courses.

Content type:

- Introductory or general information about services should live on the Student Portal, with links to UniHub for specific event, course or appointment details and booking functionality.
- Information and registration for events, courses and workshops related to support services.
- Appointment information and booking.

Who can publish to this platform:

- Comms Champions from any teams who fall into the 'support and services' category:
 - Academic Skills Unit
 - Counselling and Disability Services
 - International Students
 - First Peoples.

Publishing approach:

- For general, university-wide content, MER Internal Communications should be consulted to ensure consistency and avoid duplication across platforms.
- Comm Champions who have completed content and technical training may publish updates, events and resources.
- Emails may be sent to students who have signed up for courses, events or booked appointments. This includes follow-up emails about upcoming courses or events that students have previously attended.

Recommendations:

- The menu of UniHub makes it confusing when switching between CareerHub and other UniHub functionality, and while students have a high awareness of CareerHub, most did not recognise UniHub as a platform name. Consider UX testing with students to address any confusion.
- In order to get events and courses into student bulletins, they should also be added to Student Portal updates, and linked to CareerHub.

How we publish content: *ACU Life*

Platform purpose:

All dynamic social, sport and community-related content and events, including booking, linked from static high level content on the portal. ACU Life is the place to opt-in for co-curricular emails.

Content type:

- Updates and communications from student groups.
- Campus ministry groups and events, including information about campus-specific groups and events.
- Updates from sporting groups, facilities and services.

Who can publish to this platform:

- Comms Champions from any teams who fall into the opportunities and co-curricular category of information
- Student leaders – posting to specific groups.

Publishing approach:

- Introductory information about groups and services must be published on the Student Portal and linked to ACU Life. This will help students find new opportunities and aid self directed discovery during their time at ACU.
- Student leaders and Comms Champions may publish updates, events and resources.
- Emails may be sent to students from specific groups they have joined or events they have registered for.

Recommendations:

- Training on ACU Life to be offered to any teams who may have a need to publish co-curricular events, and to create more understanding and visibility of the platform amongst staff, especially student-facing staff.
- Self-paced comms training could be offered to student leaders who publish on ACU Life, as part of onboarding to the platform.
- Explore the feasibility of monthly, campus-specific bulletins about co-curricular events, including student groups to be sent directly from ACU Life.

Recommendations

How we communicate:
Email guidelines

How we communicate: *Email guidelines*

Overview:

Guidelines for emailing students, including criteria which emails get prioritised at busy times of semester, based on student impact and needs.

Also includes guidelines for how to communicate with students and guidelines for using a consistent “Action required: ...” subject line for certain types of emails.

How will this improve the student experience?

- These guidelines reflect how students prioritise and use emails, by prioritising the information students consider essential
- Increase capacity for support and co-curricular updates and events in campus-specific bulletins will raise awareness of support and services and encourage discovery of opportunities.

How will this improve the staff experience?

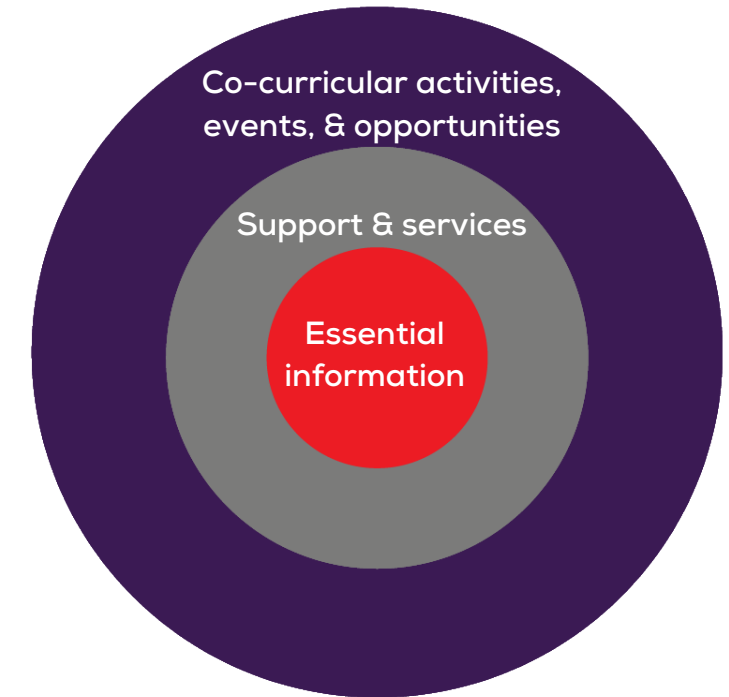
- Clear and transparent guidelines about email will create a fair communications process, guided by student needs.

Requirements and considerations

- Guidelines are to be used in the context of the shared content and communications calendar: while information categories help to guide prioritisation, the calendar will manage timing and cadence of emails.
- Personal emails to specific students do not have to be included in the content and communications calendar and are not affected by these guidelines.

First step

- Campus-specific events bulletins could be trialled to measure teams’ capacity to develop content and student engagement.



Related Key Initiatives

- Content and Communications Policy
- Student communications
- Student feedback and analytics
- Role review and resourcing

How we communicate: *Email guidelines*

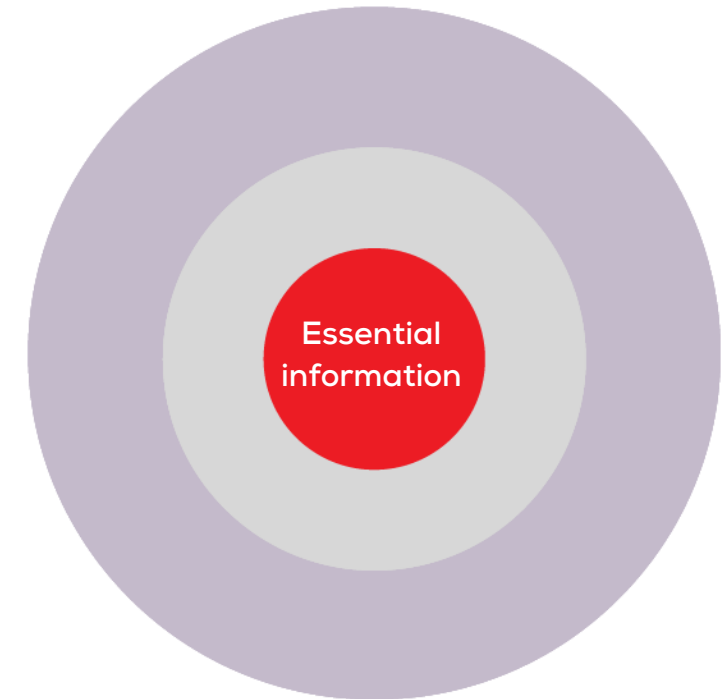
Essential information

Scheduled, cohort-wide or university-wide messages about essential information related to courses and important administrative matters are suitable for email. These are to be added to the shared content and communications calendar.

"The emails that related to units, I will fully read the email. If it is about ACU overall, I will just skim through." – ACU student

Requirements and considerations

- Students would prefer to have essential information emailed to them, as well as accessible online, to ensure they don't miss anything.
- For emails that require students to take action, critical to their enrolment or course completion, a subject line of "Action Required: [detail of the action]" is preferred by students – eg "Action required: Sem 2 timetable changes." Using this consistently for emails across the university will help students to feel more confident that they have received and acted on the most essential tasks.
- Ensure emails related to essential information have a clear point of contact – whether that is a person or a team such as AskACU.



How we communicate: *Email guidelines*

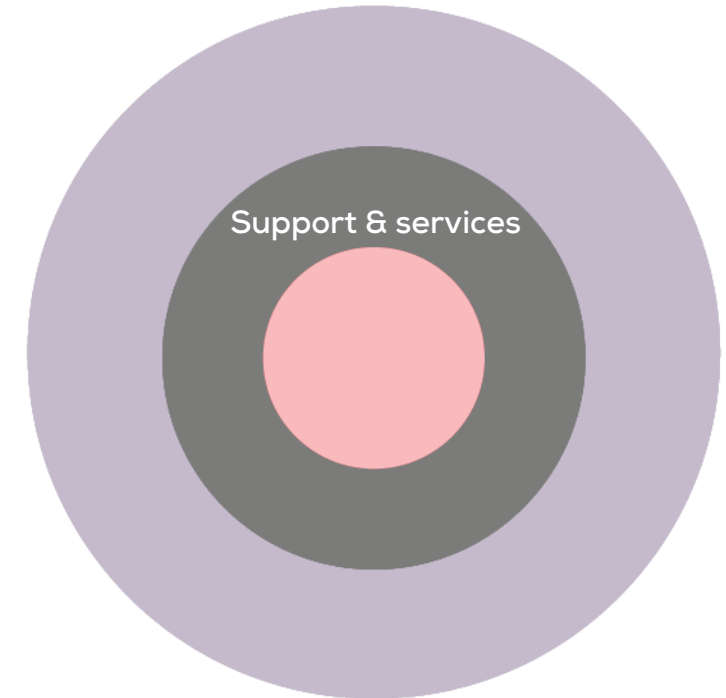
Support and services

Scheduled cohort-wide or university-wide messages related to student support and services are generally suitable for email and are to be added to the shared content and communications calendar. Ongoing updates and event promotions are to be included in the centrally managed, campus-specific student bulletin emails.

“Student news, it's just all there in that one email, I just have a quick scroll through and see, ‘oh, that looks interesting.’ And they take you to the full information, which helps.” – ACU student

Requirements and considerations

- Emails related to student support and services should be sent only to students who are able to access the services, events or resources – eg. by campus.
- EDMs are most appropriate to be sent to larger groups. If an email is for a very specific cohort, eg. students in a particular unit, it may be more appropriate to send the email via the unit lecturer, rather than the CRM system.
- Using both single-message emails and campus-specific bulletins will help to ensure students are aware of the range of support and services available to them.
- Emails will need to be scheduled and reviewed as part of the CoP meetings – adding comms to the shared calendar is the first step in scheduling an email, not a guarantee of being able to send an email on that date.



How we communicate: *Email guidelines*

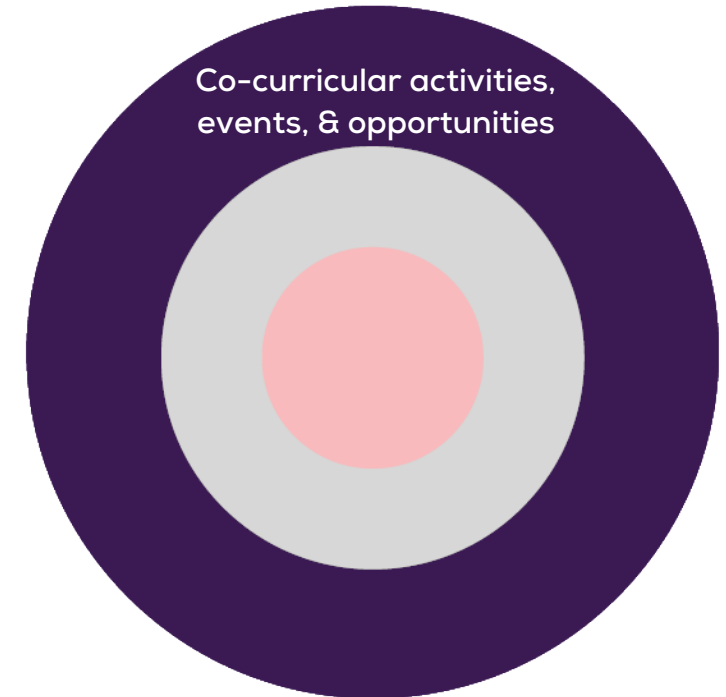
● Co-curricular events, opportunities and services

Updates, offers, promotions and events related to co-curricular activities are to be added to the centrally managed, campus-specific student bulletin emails. These bulletin emails facilitate discovery and should be used to direct students to platforms where they can sign up for events or opt in for future communications.

Students should be given the opportunity to sign up for emails about a specific group and its activities. Students should only receive emails from groups they have joined. These opt-in emails do not need to be added to the shared content and communications calendar. Students should be able to unsubscribe at any time.

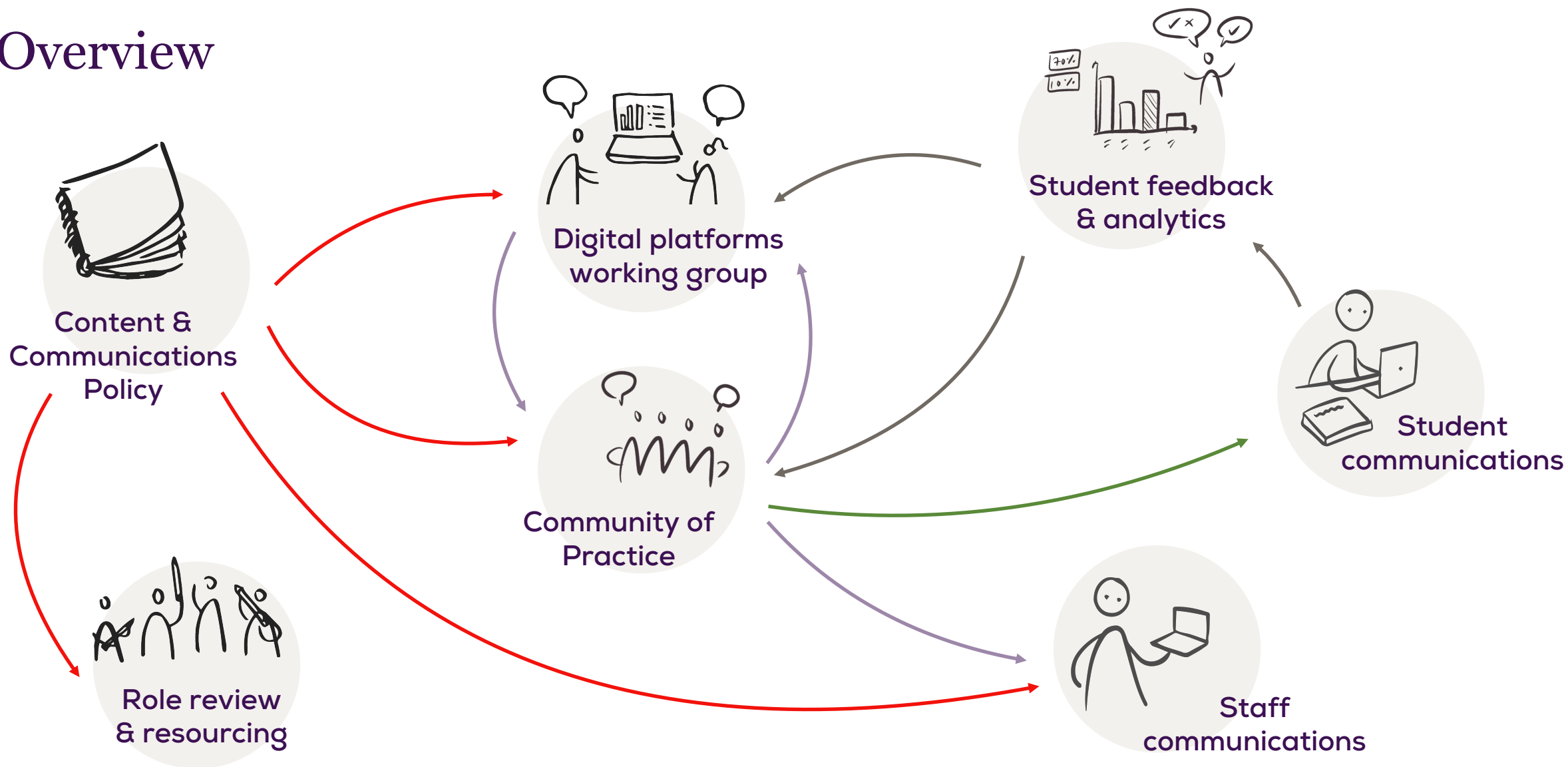
Requirements and considerations

- Including ACU Life updates and events in centrally-managed, campus-specific bulletins will help to ensure students are aware of the range of co-curricular events, opportunities and services available to them. This will be the primary way for co-curricular teams to reach students, instead of sending single-message emails.
- While opt-in emails do not need to be added to the shared communications calendar, there should still be some oversight and guidelines about appropriate content and cadence of group updates and event follow-up emails. This should be included as part of the Content and Communications Policy.



Key Initiatives & Next Steps

Overview



Content & Communications Policy

Clarity and an agreed way of working

Overview

An endorsed policy outlining online platform use and student communication requirements, setting the direction for ongoing initiatives and giving clarity to communications decisions.

What is this likely to include?

Email guidelines: Guidelines for emailing students, including criteria which emails get prioritised at busy times of semester, based on student impact and needs. Also includes guidelines for how to communicate with students – eg. EDM, bulletins, or direct emails for opt-in communications, such as events or groups.

Platform functionality review and platform guidelines: Functionality review of content currently on LEO, UniHub and other supporting platforms to determine if it could move to the student portal or ACU Life eg. videos or slideshows posted on LEO.

Review of microsites: Review role of Campus Ministry microsite, as a public-facing site, and update student experience to link from portal directly to ACU Life. Review ACU Sport microsite with a view to move content to either the student portal (for student-facing introductory content) or ACU Life for dynamic content and content for non-students (eg sporting teams). Review all other microsites to determine if there is specific functionality or content that requires its own platform (eg. ACU Library) or if content could move to the main ACU website or a student platform.

Content ownership guidelines: Portal posts and emails to have an easily identified source and clear CTA, eg “For more information, contact [Name] from [Team]: [email / phone number] so students have a point of contact. This may be AskACU, especially for student administration updates.

First steps:

- Platform functionality review and platform guidelines



Community of Practice: Overview

Establishing new ways of working

Overview

A Community of Practice (CoP) to bring collaborative ways of working to student-facing content and communications.

Supported by staff training, resources and collaborative tools, the CoP will start out as a pilot group, to test new ways of working, before expanding to become a university-wide initiative.

What is this likely to include?

Content & communications training for selected staff: See p. 43

Resources and guides: See p. 44

Shared communications calendar: See p. 45

First steps:

- Establish a pilot group to test the CoP model, leveraging existing shared calendars. This group could possibly include Student Administration, MER, AskACU, and Student Life.



Community of Practice (cont.)

Training for Content & Comms Champions

Overview

Hands-on training for Comms Champions, including writing in the ACU brand style, understanding the purpose and policies for different online platforms, using ACU communications resources, as well as technical training in posting to the portal and other online platforms.

How will this improve the student experience?

- More consistency of language, tone and names across content and communications from different teams, regardless of the channel or platform.
- More timely updates and communications, as Comms Champions are able to post updates directly to platforms.

How will this improve the staff experience?

- More confidence and expertise in writing student-facing content and communications.
- More autonomy and a streamlined process for posting updates to platforms, as Comms Champions can post for their team.
- Professional development opportunity for interested staff.
- MER team save time spent reviewing and editing content and communications.

Requirements and considerations

- There may need to be additional 'train the trainer' investment for the MER team.
- Development of teaching resources will also require time and investment.
- Teams will have to work out how to resource the Comms Champion role in line with their capacity and requirement to produce and publish student-facing content and communications.

First step

- External training providers to develop initial training for pilot group, supported by platform training by internal technical teams.

Community of Practice (cont.)

Resources and guides

Overview

A collection of guides, checklists and examples of best practice content and communications (including LEO) accessed via Service Central, and promoted through monthly updates or reminders in staff bulletins.

How will this improve the student experience?

- More consistency of language, tone and names across content and communications from different teams, regardless of the channel or platform.
- More consistent LEO setup and use by academic staff, reducing the cognitive load of learning a new LEO setup for every unit, which is an ongoing challenge for students.

How will this improve the staff experience?

- Best-practice examples to learn from and emulate in producing effective student-facing content and communications will save staff time and improve quality.
- MER team save time spent reviewing and editing content and communications.

Requirements and considerations

- Simplicity is key to engagement and uptake of resources and guides.
- Include onboarding for the ACU brand and communication strategy, to tell staff not just what to do, but why.

First step

- Knowledge base articles, content and communications examples and processes or checklists that are developed as part of the Policy process.

Community of Practice (cont.)

Shared content & communications calendar

Overview

A collaborative calendar that provides a shared view of pre-planned communications that each team is sending to groups of students (eg. all students, or a specific cohort) via platforms or email.

Updated by each team's Comms Champion and managed by MER and AskACU, it will be used to manage the flow of emails to students throughout the semester.

How will this improve the student experience?

- Planning emails and updates around key moments in the student journey will ensure they receive the information they need, at a time when they are ready to engage with it, rather than being told everything at once
- Reviewing and scheduling ongoing communications from all teams will reduce overwhelm and increase students capacity to engage with messages
- A shared view of who is communicating what, and when, will reduce duplication and inconsistencies

How will this improve the staff experience?

- Identifying opportunities to collaborate with other teams on communications
- Breaking down faculty / professional staff silos

Requirements and considerations

- Will need clear guidelines about what types of communications should be added to the calendar, and how granular information should be
- Design processes to reduce duplication of effort for staff and ensure that the calendar becomes an integrated part of their workflow

First step

- A small pilot group of teams using a shared calendar. This could be built on the shared calendar being developed by AskACU and Student Administration.

Digital platforms working group

Ongoing improvement to create an effective online environment

Overview

A working group to create more visibility and collaboration between key decision makers of student-facing platforms, including the Student Portal, ACU Life, UniHub, LEO and Student Connect, as well as technical teams who maintain and develop the platforms.

As a technical counterpoint to the Community of Practice, the Digital platform working group will prioritise and deliver ongoing uplift to platforms based on the needs of the CoP and students.

What is this likely to include?

Student portal uplift: See full list of suggested uplift on next page.

LEO UX governance: Ongoing oversight and governance of LEO as a platform, to ensure that content is appropriate for the platform and that LEO connects with ongoing portal changes.

Ongoing collaboration with CoP: Representation and feedback established between custodians of different platforms and the CoP.

First steps:

- Student Portal Information Architecture uplift is currently being implemented
- Improved Site Core search functionality project is underway
- Establishing a cross-platform working group to review other uplift recommendations



Digital platforms working group (cont.)

Student portal uplift

Student portal uplift opportunities:

Student portal publishing workflow and roles: Streamline the student portal publishing workflow and review publishing and approval roles. Ideally, fit-for-purpose roles linked to Comms Champion responsibilities would reduce the manual work-arounds currently creating barriers for both teams and the Student Communications Advisor. Improve the upload experience for Comms Champions, by reviewing publishing-side descriptions and fields.

Scheduling posts: Restoring the functionality to be able to schedule posts, which used to be available for staff publishing to the Student Portal.

Student portal search: Improved search functionality for the Student Portal. An effective search would reduce student reliance on Google (which directs to the public website, and often out-of-date resources) and adds weight to the push for all introductory content to live on the portal, before directing to supporting platforms.

Student portal filtering: More relevant categories and descriptions, to improve the staff experience of targeting newsfeed updates, and improved visibility of filtering categories for students, as well as student comms to increase understanding of filtering functionality.

Student view of platforms for staff:

Developing a way to give staff access to the student view of the Student Portal and other online platforms. Most important to implement for the Student Portal, to address the lack of confidence and visibility staff have of the portal. Understanding there are regulatory considerations with creating student logins, this will need further exploration from a technical perspective.



Student feedback and analytics

Providing a clearer understanding of the student experience

Overview

Creating feedback loops that can inform the Community of Practice and Digital platform working group. Employing a qualitative and quantitative approach by looking at both analytics and the conversations that student-facing support teams such as AskACU are having with students.

What is this likely to include?

Email footer to capture student feedback:

Include a footer on single-message EDMs to give students the option of saying if the email was helpful or not. Click through to an optional text box where they can give a brief reason. Responses can be included in monthly analytics and student enquiries updates.

Student portal analytics: Monthly analytics reports for the Student Portal shared with Comms Champions. This would bring the student portal into line with LEO and UniHub, which both offer staff more visibility of student activity.

Analytics and student enquiries update:

A monthly update covering platform and email analytics and student enquiries for the past month, delivered by MER, IT and AskACU as part of CoP meetings.

First steps:

- Monthly report of common student portal analytics produced and shared
- Engage with AskACU to see if there is a way to share the most common student enquiries each month



Staff communications

Continuing the conversation and engagement

Overview

Regular updates from the Community of Practice about upcoming student-facing communications, as well as ongoing platform uplift.

What is this likely to include?

Staff updates about student communications: An ongoing process for keeping staff updated about upcoming student comms and key dates, ensuring that the visibility that Comms Champions have extends to staff who have direct contact with students, in particular academics, faculty staff and student advisors (including ISAs and IHEUs).

Platform working group updates: Internal communications to staff about recent and planned platform upgrades, including the new Student Portal IA and ongoing work on improved Site Core search functionality.

Feedback opportunities on platform functionality: The CoP should also provide an opportunity for staff to raise issues or give feedback, to earn their confidence in the portal as a front door for students' online experience.

First steps:

- An update about the current Student Portal Information Architecture uplift project and planned portal uplift initiatives.



Student communications

Helping students to navigate and encouraging discovery

Overview

Key changes to the way we communicate with students that will help them understand and navigate the platforms more easily and encourage discovery of opportunities and services beyond essential information.

What is this likely to include?

Campus-specific email bulletins: Monthly, campus-specific emails for student events, student news and co-curricular activities or groups, to manage the number of single-message emails that students receive. Bulletins offer a way to increase visibility of co-curricular opportunities and student support and services, while ensuring students receive information relevant to their campus and study mode. TBC: monthly ACU Life bulletin - needs clear guidelines.

Commencing student onboarding:

Introducing commencing students to the ACU digital environment, by clearly explaining what each platform is for. Onboarding should include a guide to the student portal structure and functionality including filtering, an overview of monthly email bulletins, and guides on how to set up email notifications from LEO. Should include a UX review of the current commencing student workflow.

Platform guide for students: Student-facing information explaining different online platforms and their purpose eg. "UniHub is our online booking system for student services and appointments, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." Review of UX outbound from portal (to LEO, ACU Life, Career Hub, StudentConnect and other administration platforms) and inbound UX from LEO to the student portal.

First steps:

- Development of a platform guide, in simple (email / PDF) format



Role review and resourcing

Creating efficiencies to support new initiatives

Overview

Informed by the Content and Communications Policy and key initiatives, a review of roles and responsibilities will look at ways to free up capacity to be able to drive new initiatives, and ensure that responsibilities align with people's skillsets.

What is this likely to include?

Student portal publishing workflow and roles: Streamline the student portal publishing workflow and review publishing and approval roles. Ideally, fit-for-purpose roles linked to Comms Champion responsibilities would reduce the manual work-arounds currently creating barriers for both teams and the Student Communications Advisor. Improve the upload experience for Comms Champions, by reviewing publishing-side descriptions and fields.

Planning for how to manage and facilitate the CoP: Internal MER planning.

Planning for Comms Champions roles within CoP pilot group: Internal planning within pilot group teams.

First steps:

- Review of portal publishing workflow and roles.



*Thank you to everyone who participated
in interviews, codesign and showcases.*

Project Contacts

ACU:

Luke Williams

Associate Director, Digital Experience

Luke.Williams@acu.edu.au

MAKE Studios:

Harriet McDougall

Associate Director

harriet@makestudios.com.au

