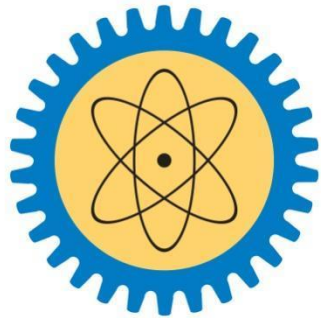


Draft



**BUSITEMA
UNIVERSITY**
Pursuing Excellence

COMMUNICATION POLICY

2021

Citation:

This policy may be cited as “Busitema University Communication Policy, 2021”

University Vision

A centre of academic and professional excellence in science, technology and innovation

University Mission

To provide high standard training, engage in quality research and outreach for socio-economic transformation and sustainable development.

Core Values

- Excellence
- Relevance
- Innovativeness
- Professionalism
- Ethics and Integrity
- Equity
- Internationalization
- Respect for diversity

List of acronyms and abbreviations

BU - Busitema University

A centre of academic and professional excellence in science, technology and innovations

CCMT	-	Crisis Communication Management Team
CP	-	Communication Policy
DIA	-	Directorate of Institutional Advancement
DVC	-	Deputy Vice Chancellor
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
PRO	-	Public Relations Officer
SWOC	-	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges
VC	-	Vice Chancellor

Foreword

Busitema University is a multi-Campus and an equal opportunity public institution in teaching, learning, research and service. This policy document stipulates how

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Busitema University will handle communication between her internal and external stakeholders to achieve her mission.

The policy is founded on the strength of Busitema University Strategic Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25. The policy stipulates that communication between the University and her stakeholders shall be a two-way process:- open communication from governance organs to her stakeholders and systemically encourage stakeholder feedback.

While addressing the concerns of our stakeholders, the University shall provide the necessary communication infrastructure to ensure that information reaches its stakeholders using the most effective means with a view to project the right institutional identity to stakeholders.

This policy puts in place a firm and solid communication strategy that provides for every facet of University life adequate visibility. In pursuit of the above, the strategy will ensure that academic, research, service activities and community relations interface on different communication platforms to reach the targeted stakeholders.

Communication for research from scholars will be prioritized as a key output of the communication unit. To ensure that the University takes advantage of web-based technology as a new frontier of communicating, the current communication structure shall be strengthened to provide for skilled personnel in each Campus to engage a web based communication strategy that is timely and focused on creating mutual understanding with stakeholders such that the University products and services are available through different interactive fora.

The policy is an assurance by Busitema University to embrace best communication practices in pursuit of excellence. It defines how communication will be structured and practiced. The University has chosen this path to realize her vision of being a centre of academic and professional excellence in science, technology and innovation

As a University we shall appreciate feedback in any format for the purpose of quality assurance and strengthening of Busitema University potential. This policy is therefore a University management commitment to implement this policy. Last but not least, the communication strategy shall be subjected to periodic reviews to ensure its relevance to the University and the changing circumstances and needs of her stakeholders.

Prof. Paul Waako

Busitema University

Glossary

Date

Confidential Information: Material information not widely disseminated within or external to the university which, if disclosed, would be unduly detrimental to the university's interests.

Crisis: A business or institutional problem that is exposed to public attention, and that threatens an institution's reputation and its ability to conduct business.

Crisis Communication: Communication designed in response to a crisis situation, aimed at diffusing such emergency situations, in order to protect the reputation of the institution and maintain its public image.

External Communication: Exchange of information and messages between the university and organisations, groups, or individuals outside its formal structure.

General and Routine Information: Information that would not otherwise be classified as material information, and which is not otherwise required to be kept confidential because of privacy laws.

Internal communication: Exchange of information and messages between employees or departments across all levels or units of the university.

Material Information: Any information relating to the business and affairs of the university that when publicly released would significantly affect, or would reasonably be expected to have a significant effect, on the image of the university.

Media: Communication channels for disseminating information, e.g. every broadcasting and narrowcasting media such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, and internet. There is also social media, e.g. WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, among others.

Spokesperson: Someone engaged, elected or appointed to speak on behalf of the university.

Staff: These include academic and administrative staff of the university, employed on permanent, contractual or part-time terms.

Stakeholder: A person, group or organisation with a stake in the university.

Students: All students enrolled in the university.

University Community: The University Council, Senate, academic and administrative staff, and students.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

This policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of communication tools including verbal printed and digital by Busitema University community. It is an important document that helps protect University's reputation by ensuring consistency and accuracy in the information placed in the public realm.

1.2 Objectives of the policy

- i. To provide efficient and effective communication mechanisms among the university community, and promote the coherence and consistency of information.
- ii. To disseminate research findings by popularising and/or interpreting information that emanates from research and presents it in a way that would be accessible to stakeholders
- iii. To streamline the flow of information between the University and other (external) stakeholders in Government, the knowledge industry, the wider society, the labour market, and donor circles.
- iv. To promote effective channels of communication to minimise communication breakdown and delays.
- v. To provide guidance for effective and responsible electronic, print and verbal communication
- vi. To provide a framework for integrated and consistent marketing and branding programmes aimed at enhancing the university's brand identity.
- vii. To establish a mechanism for communication in times of crisis.

1.3 Current handling of communication

The University has no clear structure on how the communication function should be handled and this is attributed to the fact that in the past, the public relations office in the Department of the Vice Chancellor handled communication activities such as media, publicity and photography. On the other hand, faculties and departments in the University enjoyed some degree of autonomy in carrying out key communication activities.

Best practice recommends that for purposes of sending uniform messages and portraying a common identity of the university, communication functions should be centralized and coordinated from a focal point.

Currently communication is being handled by the Directorate of Institutional Advancement. The Directorate coordinates information dissemination within the university, and for stakeholders and audiences outside the University. It also outsources photography, media and advertising services.

2.0 SWOC Analysis related to communication

Strengths	Weaknesses
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Highly knowledgeable and professional personnel to handle communication. ii. Most internal stakeholders of BU are increasingly appreciating the need for communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Absence of a Communication Policy to-date ii. Absence of a clear structure of communication iii. Delays and fragmentation iv. Absence of regular assessment of communication needs v. Limited resources allocation
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Challenges</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Availability of resources and infrastructure to support communication. ii. Increased adoption of ICT tools iii. A network of institutions, development and business partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Change of perception culture ii. Non-existence of identified channels of communication iii. Resource scarcity- need to refocus priorities iv. Lack of uniformity in branding and maintenance of the BU corporate image v. Inadequate information about BU and its multi-campus model vi. Lack of uniformity in the BU website vii. Poor signposting for spatial and geographical orientation

3.0 Rationale for communication policy/Need for a communication policy

Busitema University communicates with “her” stakeholders through a variety of appropriate channels and mechanisms which include: Emails, Notices, Facebook, Twitter, Text, Videos among others.

This communication policy seeks to provide guidelines for the timely, effective and appropriate flow of information within Busitema University, and between the University and other (external) stakeholders. Therefore, this policy acts as an instrument for supporting the systematic planning, development and use of the communication system, and its resources and possibilities, and for ensuring that they function efficiently in enhancing University development.

3.1 Vision of communication

To provide a proactive approach to information management and dissemination, strengthen the University’s image and build good will among the stakeholders.

A centre of academic and professional excellence in science, technology and innovations

4.0 Principles of communication pertaining to this Policy

- i. All communication shall be delivered in a timely, precise and unbiased manner and internal communication shall precede the external communication.
- ii. Any University's communication should be clear and simple to understand and without any slang, obscene, offensive or discriminatory remarks that could lead to misinterpretation.
- iii. Top management particularly the VC and DVCs must be alerted of all the communication matters that are ongoing at the university.
- iv. Any staff member planning to disseminate information is encouraged to cross check the precision and relevance of the information before communicating internally and outside the University.
- v. When planning, negotiating or implementing a partnering or collaborative activities with another university, company, organization, group or individual, it is crucial to take into consideration communication procedures. Hence, any staff member planning such an arrangement should do so in consultation with the Directorate for Institutional Advancement.
- vi. Communication among staff, students, and management should be open and collaborative to accomplish the institutional mission, and to ensure quality information services.
- vii. The policy shall pursue to meet the information needs of the diverse stakeholders and aspirations of staff and students.
- viii. The University shall conduct its activities in an open and socially answerable manner in relation to the principles of privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property rights.
- ix. Communication of the university mission, policy and agenda should be handled by management or designated persons.

5.0 Major Policy Issues and Strategies

5.1 Internal Communication

The University's goal is to promote effective internal communication to its students, staff and all internal stakeholders in order to maintain a good working environment for the recognition of its vision, mission and values. It is evident that BU has been communicating between and among its various units (i.e. directorates, faculties, departments, study centres etc.) and its different stakeholders. Nevertheless, while such communication has been controlled fairly effectively, it has been guided by good practice. Consequently, BU lacked guiding principles for internal communication. As a Multi-campus University, occasionally central administration is not fully aware of what is going on in respective faculties and vice versa. This therefore results into major policy issues including:

- i) lack of transparent rules of engagement and actions for communication within the university community and its major stakeholders;
- ii) misinformation especially via social media; and,

- iii) sometimes reliance on traditional paperwork/print communication media.

To remediate the existing policy issues, the following policy statements shall be adopted:

- i. Busitema University shall maintain a culture of mutual communication with all its internal stakeholders. This CP should facilitate effective flow of information from University management to faculties/institutes, departments, staff and students and vice versa; as highlighted in the principles of internal communication in the section 3.1.1 of this CP.
- ii. Busitema University shall endeavor to utilize all communication channels, suitable to the prevailing situation as highlighted in section 3.1.2 of this CP.
- iii. The University shall encourage and support information communication technology (ICT) and/or digital based communication shall be encouraged and strengthened.

5.1.1 Principles of internal communication

- i. The Chairperson of Council or the Secretary to Council shall communicate the official decisions of the Council.
- ii. The Chairperson of the University Senate or the Secretary to the Senate shall communicate the official decisions of the Senate.
- iii. The Chairperson of the Appointments Board or the Secretary to the Board shall communicate the decision of the Board.
- iv. Members of the University Management shall be responsible for communicating issues within their jurisdiction.
- v. The Dean of Students shall be responsible for communicating all information, decisions and policies concerning students' welfare.
- vi. The Dean of Students in conjunction with the Busitema University Students' Guild and student leaders at the Faculties/Institutes shall be responsible for setting up communication strategies for regular discussion between students and management.
- vii. The Academic Registrar shall be responsible for coordinating and/or communication of academic matters.
- viii. Members of staff are free to communicate on matters within their area of expertise and are encouraged to cross check the accuracy of the information before communicating it within and outside the University.
- ix. The Public Relations Officer (PRO) shall in consultation with the Director be responsible for coordinating the communication function at the University.
- x. The Director in consultation with the faculty/Institute/study centres Management and the PRO shall be responsible for coordinating the communication function within their units.
- xi. Faculties/Institutes/study centres and non-academic units shall be responsible for developing specific internal communication guidelines in conformity with this policy.

- xii. Official communication between faculties/study centres and non-academic units within the university must be handled by the head of the unit.

5.1.2 Internal communication Channels

Members of BU may where applicable shall employ the following channels to communicate with the internal public:

- i. Meetings, which can either be face to face or virtual via zoom; skype etc.
- ii. Formal letters;
- iii. E-mails;
- iv. Formal telephone calls
- v. Busitema website and Intranet;
- vi. Minutes of Meetings;
- vii. Circulars and Memos;
- viii. Notice boards;
- ix. Mailing lists;
- x. Newsletters;
- xi. Social media platforms Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter among others
- xii. Flyers, Posters, Events, Exhibitions and Presentations;
- xiii. Academic publications;
- xiv. Open-days; and,
- xv. Any other channel that may be recognized by the individual units in conformity with this policy.

5.2 External communication

External communication here entails any form of communication between BU and its stakeholders. BU has been actively interacting with its external stakeholders through official communication such as letters, meetings, memorandum of understandings, website, and print media among others.

These communications are done without a proper policy, guidelines and coordination, sometimes leading to breach of communication protocols, contradictions and release of premature information to the public.

Consequently, major policy issues are manifested: lack of guidelines for communication with external stakeholders; and inappropriate choice of effective channels for external communication, presented here below.

5.2.1 External communication channels

This policy outlines major external communication channels for appropriate communication with BU's stakeholder and these include:

- i. *BU website content* - The University's website is one of the most efficient communication channels through which the external stakeholders are provided with a wide range of information about research, education, scientific innovations and other activities. The content of the website should be clearly

structured, regularly updated and should offer easily accessible and user friendly e-services.

- ii. *Live events* – Such as public lectures, workshops, seminars, conferences, exhibitions and open days are potential tools for communication and engagement with external audiences. It is envisaged that BU shall continue to attract prominent personalities and international academics wishing to interact and discourse with the university community. These engagements are critical to the enhancement of the image of the university to the external community.
- iii. *Meetings* – BU holds different types of meetings with collaborating institutions and stakeholders. Outputs from such meetings including important decisions should be shared widely through minutes arising from such meetings.
- iv. *Media* - Communication through different media like newsletters, press releases, television and radios etc. will be strengthened. BU is active on a number of Social media platforms such Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter among others, hence, will further offer an opportunity to reach a large number of external stakeholders. To successfully employ the media and achieve impact, it necessitates working proactively and ensuring quality news and information that needs to be communicated. With regards to social media, nobody shall be permitted to start their own media and associate it with the university.

5.3 Media Relations

The media is a key audience and stakeholder of the university because, if they publish clear and accurate information regarding the university, the university will be better understood. Therefore, the Directorate of Institutional Advancement should seek to;

1. To build and maintain positive relations with the media
2. To provide the media with accurate and objective information, and monitor the media regularly.

In regard to media relations;

1. The Vice Chancellor shall be the Chief Public Relations officer of the University.
2. The Dean shall be the Chief Public Relations Officer at the Faculty level.
3. University community is encouraged to check the accuracy of the information before communicating to the media, after consulting the DIA.
4. Members of staff are urged to project a positive image of the university while communicating to the media.
5. All the above should be working closely with the DIA.

5.4 Corporate Branding and Marketing

Branding is a useful tool in the building and maintenance of an organization's identity. Busitema University shall strive to build a strong brand so as to remain visible and competitive, while communicating a consistent message to influence the various stakeholders positively.

The identity marks of BU shall include its name, the logo, colours, taglines, seal, logo and structures that have acquired symbolic significance. The brand shall also be reflected and communicated through the quality of its students and expertise of its staff.

The Alumni and existing members of the university are encouraged to foster a positive image and brand in all their actions and forms of communication.

5.5 Advertising

- i. Advertising shall involve the use of print, electronic and support media to promote a positive image, increase the visibility of the university among all the relevant stakeholders, and ensure observance of the best advertising principles and practices in the university.
- ii. The use of the BU name and logo in advertising by any collaborating organisations must be with authority from the DIA.
- iii. The University logo shall be included in all official communications regarding BU news, events and/or communications.
- iv. All units advertising university products must ensure that the information therein is accurate and up to date.
- v. All promotional items or materials must at all times bear the correct institutional name and logo. Where there are uncertainties, the concerned parties shall consult with the Directorate of Institutional Advancement.

5.6 Photography and Filming:

- i. Given the multi-campus nature of Busitema University, through consultation, authorization and/or approval of the faculty dean, each campus may identify professionals to take photographs and/or to film events/occasions at campus/faculty level.
- ii. In case of the University wide occasion/event like graduation, top management shall take charge of the choice of professionals to handle photography and filming.
- iii. All photography and filming shall be in accordance with procedures and guidelines set out by the University Council.

5.7 Crisis Communication:

This is communication designed in response to a crisis situation, in order to protect the reputation of the University and maintain its public image.

The University shall proactively prevent events that are likely to lead to loss of stakeholder confidence and to take care of events resulting from rumors and speculation that may give the university negative publicity. In case of crisis, the University shall portray an image of strong leadership by making sure that appropriate communication channels are utilized.

The following strategies shall be employed to enable the university to respond rapidly and effectively to potentially negative situations:

- i. Only the Vice Chancellor or a person authorized by him/her shall provide information on crisis situations to the media.
- ii. The office of the Vice Chancellor shall maintain regular contact with stakeholders and give advice where issues or developments appear to cause problems.
- iii. Top Management shall become the Crisis Communication Management Team (CCMT). The CCMT can co-opt other members as the situation may demand.
- iv. The Vice Chancellor will release relevant, appropriate and verifiable information to the media regarding any crisis. The media will include but shall not be limited to journalists, TV, and radio.
- v. The Directorate of Institutional Advancement shall continually monitor local and international news including media coverage and report to the VC's office for response.
- vi. Care should be taken in answering telephone calls from journalists and any other parties; one has to take time to consult with responsible offices in order to gather correct and accurate information that reflects a common stand.

5.8 Electronic Communication

- i. Electronic communication shall include the University website and emails.
- ii. For purposes of facilitating effective official communication, all staff and students shall be assigned a Busitema University Email address by the Directorate of ICT for purposes of promoting communication and information sharing.
- iii. All staff and students are encouraged to regularly check the University websites and their email addresses to receive official communication from the University and any other approved media channel.
- iv. Responses to electronic communication shall be made using the official Busitema University email addresses.
- v. All staff and students shall not disguise their identity, user name and origin of email whenever they use the University email system.
- vi. Staff and students shall refrain from using insulting language in the email subject or accompanying text.

- vii. DICTS shall regularly update mailing lists for ease of disseminating information.

6.0 Communication Pertaining to Research

The Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs & Research) shall in consultation with the Director, Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Innovation and other relevant Units be responsible for the development of institutional mechanisms to disseminate research and innovations, communicating the research agenda and research policy framework to internal and external stakeholders. The university shall encourage the use of communication channels that facilitate authentic dialogue and feedback.

6.1 Public lectures

Public lectures are tools of delivery and engagement with external audiences. It is envisaged that the University shall continue to attract prominent personalities and international academics wishing to interact with the university community. These engagements are critical to the enhancement of the image of the university.

6.2 Visitor and Guest Relations

All staff and students of the University are encouraged at all times to be courteous to visitors and guests of the University.

6.4 Communication Outlets, Vehicles and Channels

6.4.1 Situation Analysis

Busitema University is multicampus, and there are so many outlets or channels through which communication can be passed around, at the University. It will be necessary to always determine the best outlet/channel, given the kind of information that needs to be shared. Again, the individual or 'official' who is best placed, within the administrative context, should be identified to be the responsible outlet. This will be necessary for both internal and external communication, in order to ensure that communication does not unnecessarily cause misunderstanding, and therefore become a liability to the organisation. Busitema University has to adapt to the fast-changing information and communication technology and new disseminating environment.

6.4.2 Policy issues

- i) Choosing best communication outlet
- ii) Copy rights and confidentiality issues

6.4.3 Policy Statements

- i. Busitema University shall strive to share information through channels that take care of the integrity of the institution, its people, confidentiality of the information, copyrights and efficiency issues.

- ii. All Busitema University members shall abstain from communicating, to unauthorised persons, issues related to examinations and any other confidential matters that have got a bearing on general university and national security.
- iii. Busitema University has to adapt to the fast-changing information and communication technology and new disseminating environment. It shall encourage and invest in electronic communication outlets with the purpose to increase efficiency, save resources and the environment.
- iv. Important communication outlets and channels should be well described and made known to key stakeholders.

6.4.4 Strategies

- i. Busitema University's *Spokesperson* - The VC is designated as Busitema University Chief Spokesperson. He/she will be responsible for internal and external communication with various stakeholders. The VC may delegate the responsibility to any other member of the Team. From time to time, Senior Officers and/or other subject-matter experts may be called upon to speak to the media regarding specific areas of responsibility or subject matter
- ii. Any member of staff who wants to make any statement, selective disclosure, or reference to the university that may be deemed to have a repercussion must first seek authorisation/ clarification from the Office of the VC.
- iii. *Routine Administrative Communications* - Normal communication will flow from the VC to DVCs, to Principals, Deans and Directors and to Heads of Department and vice versa.
- iv. *Director, Directorate of Institutional Advancement* - The Director, communicates Management decisions to relevant units, organs, actors or even individuals. He/she is also in charge of compiling quarterly reports from different units.
- v. *University Public Relations Office under the Directorate of Institutional Advancement (PRO/DIA)* - The Public Relations Office, which also oversees the functions of the help desk, will be headed by a Public Relations Officer. The office will be responsible for all matters pertaining to information and communication, especially communication to the public, e.g. announcements, advertisements, information that should be sent to the media, among others. He/she is also in charge of disseminating summaries of quarterly reports of the University to relevant stakeholders through the various communication tools including the ICT platforms and/or news bulletin. The PRO/DIA is also responsible for ensuring that information that is uploaded on the Busitema University Website is correct and appropriate in terms of language.
- vi. *Front Desk* - The desk shall be managed by personnel who are conversant with customer service, and social relations.
- vii. *Print and Electronic Media*
 - a) Busitema University needs to continue using the available avenues to communicate to both internal and external audiences; newsletters, e-

letters, brochures, bulletins, magazines, flyers, posters, banners, press releases.

- b) Busitema University should gear up the search for, and use of, the new avenues in information and communication especially the electronic media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google, WhatsApp, among others.
 - c) BU landline telephone system and extensions should be overhauled.
- viii. *Displays* - Notice boards should be better managed, in terms of what information should be put up to avoid 'clutter' from different units. Use of electronic boards should be customised within the University Communication Strategy. The Public Relations Office shall be responsible for the type and manner of disseminating information on notice boards. The Public Relations Office is also responsible for frequent local news updates.
 - ix. Any person wishing to put up advertisements that originate from outside the university should go through the Public Relations Office.
 - x. *Suggestion Boxes and Pigeon Holes* -Although this might seem an old method of collecting feedback from the community, it is still very practical and useful, if systematically managed. On-line suggestion boxes should also be used, and these should be managed by the DIA and Busitema University ICT Manager.
 - xi. *Meetings* - The University uses meetings, such as; courtesy calls, meetings with collaborating institutions, staff meetings, and governance and management meetings to communicate with stakeholders. Given the importance of meetings; sharing of and passing on information, the University will regulate meetings to ensure that the agenda, lists of participants, timing, and minutes or records are available, as it is appropriate to good communication practice. Where possible and appropriate, meetings should be covered through the existing communication channels.
 - xii. *Responsibilities* - All staff members of Busitema University share a responsibility to communicate in accordance with the intentions of the Communication Policy. All staff members are duty bound to make known the good name of the university, and all employees have a responsibility to demonstrate the institutional standards in communication. DIA and the Directorate of Human Resource shall be responsible for sensitization, training and monitoring compliance to the laid principles of effective communication and branding at Busitema University.
 - xiii. *Unit Communication and Information Coordinators* – Faculties, Institutes, and Directorates shall be required to appoint a communication coordinator who will be responsible for updating their Website in collaboration with the Busitema University Coordinator, and handling any other matters related to corporate communication.

7.0 Policy Implementation

The Vice Chancellor shall, in consultation with faculties, directorates and other relevant academic and administrative units, develop an implementation strategy to give effect to this Policy by:

- i. Developing appropriate strategies for monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Policy,
- ii. Carrying out annual evaluation on the implementation of the policy
- iii. Defining the short-term, mid-term and long-term interventions based on the outcomes of the evaluation reports.

8.0 Supervision and Management

The Vice Chancellor in consultation with Directorate of Institutional Advancement shall ensure that all the supervisory and managerial staff;

- i. Are sensitized on the Communication Policy,
- ii. Communication systems and processes actively support the vision and mission of the University,
- iii. They act as role models by leading by example and demonstrating good practice in all aspects of communication,
- iv. Effective, timely and appropriate feedback is provided to staff and students,
- v. They reflect on communication standards and practices within their respective teams and identify opportunities for improvement,
- vi. They take action to ensure they are resolved amicably where staff and students raise issues of poor communication,
- vii. There is effective communication between the staff, students and other stakeholders,
- viii. All staff members in their areas of responsibility have an understanding of the strategic direction of the institution, faculty and service departments
- ix. There is consistency, equity and parity in communication processes across the university.

9.0 Compliance with the policy

Non compliance to this policy may result in disciplinary action as prescribed in the Busitema Human Resources Manual.

10.0 Policy review

The University senate shall in consultation with relevant stakeholders review this Policy every three years in order to ensure adherence to uniformity with national, Regional and international higher education goals and the changing trends in communication.