**Sheffield Hallam University**

## Professional Services Capability Framework: Communicating and Engaging

This document sets out in one place all of the information relating to the **Communicating and Engaging** capability, including:

- Capability indicators
- Ineffective behaviours
- Development suggestions, tips, tools and activities
- Formal learning options

This is to support you in developing in this particular capability. This document should always be read with the Professional Services Capability Framework

## Communicating and Engaging

Communicates in a professional, clear, concise and appropriate way, actively listening to others and responds with respect

**People**

| Foundation | Adept | Advanced | Strategic |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades 2, 3, 4 & 5** | **Grade 6** | **Grades 7, 8 & 9** | **SSG** |
| Actively listens; pays close attention, asks clarifying questions, and rephrases response to ensure understanding | Conveys complex messages clearly so others understand | Translates the university strategy to staff at all levels to enable them to understand and engage with the strategy | Articulates complex concepts and puts forward compelling arguments and rationales to all levels and types of audience |
| Provides clear verbal communication e.g. sharing ideas with others, contributing to meetings and delivering presentations | Identifies the correct communication channel to achieve the most engagement | Influences and negotiates with internal and external stakeholders | Obtains, understands and responds to the views of all internal and external stakeholders; influences and challenges views appropriately |
| Produces accurate and professional written communications | Presents ideas professionally to colleagues, either verbally or in writing (e.g. reports) in order to inform, influence and negotiate | Conveys complex information internally and externally | Develops and implements effective communication channels and activities and responds to changing needs |
| Demonstrates effective interpersonal skills, including non-verbal communications (body language, eye contact, gestures, tone of voice) | Is open to questions and challenge and responds effectively | Builds and participates in networks and works collaboratively | Ensures effective horizontal and vertical communication |
| Uses a variety of media | Inspires and motivates others through communication | Develops and presents reports to committees and boards to gain feedback and decisions | Is a vocal advocate and promotes the reputation of SHU with authority and credibility to the external environment |
| Encourages two-way communication and allows others time to speak | Creates opportunities for others to be heard | Influences and engages. Establishes feedback mechanisms and takes action | Engages with diverse audiences; influencing others to participate and contribute |
| Presents a clear and well-argued case when communicating with others | Actively listens to others and seeks feedback | Proactively shares information and encourages others to do so | Writes fluently in a range of styles and formats |
| | Tailors communication to the needs of the audience considering different perspectives | Actively listens and encourages others to contribute | Communicates a compelling vision |
| | Monitors the effectiveness of individual and team communication and actively manages this | | |

| | **Communicating and Engaging: Ineffective behaviours**<br>Examples of behaviours which are ineffective and may indicate a need for further discussion or development |
|---|---|
| **People** | |
| **For all** | • Communicates inaccurately, confusingly or unprofessionally to team members, colleagues, stakeholders or customers<br><br>• Does not actively listen to others or take time to seek their views on issues affecting them<br><br>• Speaks over others. Does not encourage or invite others to speak or contribute<br><br>• Maintains a single approach to communications regardless of the effectiveness and appropriateness for different people or situations<br><br>• Sits back in meetings and is disengaged or does not proactively contribute to discussions<br><br>• Criticises the University, parts of it, particular staff groups or University initiatives to others<br><br>• Builds only narrow networks of colleagues to support current tasks, rather than broad networks |
| **For leaders and managers** | • Chooses a communication style or approach which has a negative impact on staff and how they receive a message, whether in meetings or 1:1s.<br><br>• Provides little or no time for, or does not encourage, questions, clarification or constructive challenge from their team or colleagues or stakeholders<br><br>• Does not seek to engage and motivate their team by seeking their views and ideas on work issues which affect them<br><br>• Allows meetings to be dominated by some, rather than enabling everyone to contribute<br><br>• Communicates only tasks or actions instead of linking communications to the business area plan or University strategy<br><br>• Reaches unnecessary dead ends with stakeholders, rather than influencing or negotiating with them to reach an appropriate outcome for all<br><br>• Uses the same communication approach, channels and style for all audiences and topics<br><br>• Challenges inappropriately or aggressively or allows frustration to show inappropriately in difficult discussions |

## Communicating and Engaging - development suggestions
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**People**

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|---|---|---|---|
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| **Individual activities and reflection** | **Individual activities and reflection** | **Individual activities and reflection** | **Individual activities and reflection** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Before you start writing or speaking, think about the sequence of information you need to convey to ensure it will make sense. Think about what the audience need to know and why and check you will cover it | Observe others speaking and note what they do well. Practice these ways yourself to see if they work for you | Set out to create a vision for your team to clarify your team's purpose and priorities and how you will deliver them: make it a compelling vision which will bring your team and stakeholders with you | When communicating complex information, ensure you first understand every aspect of it yourself. Work through the information you wish to communicate in advance and find an ambiguous terms or test assumptions you may be making. |
| Try to express only one message at a time when communicating in meetings, rather than making lots of different points in one go | Consider who will be reading your communication: what do they need to understand and why are you telling them this information? Check your communications cover what is needed | Create a stakeholder communications plan for your team's work to ensure the right people are engaged and your current communications channels are they the most effective they could be | Choose some of the case studies on engagement from the McLeod Report: Engaging for success: what ideas could you use in your business area to improve engagement, motivating, and commitment in your team? |
| When speaking look for non-verbal clues and body language from your audience that suggest you are not being understood and take the opportunity to check that people have understood | Consider the knowledge level of the people you are speaking to and whether you need to adapt your language or pace. Are they experts or new to the subject? Pitch the level to be appropriate for them | Seek feedback from your team on whether they find your current approach communications the most helpful and what could generate more two way discussions | **Actions with others** |
| Ensure any acronyms are explained in your work | Video yourself presenting and think about your pace of speech, tone and body language. Could any aspects could be improved? | When delivering significant and important face to face communications, start by providing the broadest context, then move to communicate more granular detail gradually. Use analogies to things your audience already understand to ensure they feel clear. More tips here | With your team, review your current communication channels for your stakeholders, your peers and across your business area using stakeholder analysis and stakeholder communication plans? Are the most effective channels being used? Are there stakeholders who don't receive communications? Do your ways of engaging stakeholders encourage questions and discussion and feedback? Seek ideas from your stakeholders and team members |
| Assess your effective listening skills here | Read others' reports, letters etc. to pick up ideas on what makes them effective or ineffective for the reader. Copy useful styles or language | Create an inclusive approach to team meetings: invite everyone to contribute and encourage | |
| **Actions with others** | **Actions with others** | | |
| Ask for feedback from colleagues on your verbal communication during meetings and ask what they think you could do to make it clearer | When speaking to an audience, ask people to stop you if they do not understand or have a question. Seek | | |

Ask a colleague you trust to be a 'practice audience' for you before a presentation and to provide honest feedback

Ask someone with good grammar to proof read your written communications before you send them anywhere

Ask your manager for opportunities to make presentations, even informally, at team meetings

Join a committee or working group which will require you to do more presentations, speaking in meetings or written communications to help build and develop your skills

clarity as to which aspects were not clear and explain using different words, a metaphor or drawing a diagram

After any presentations, ask questions of your audience to seek their views and invite discussion and questions at the end. Anticipate the questions you might be asked and prepare your answers in advance

suggestions, differing views and actively listen to each team member who speaks. Think about how you can continue to keep inclusive style of meeting - including building rapport with team members outside the meeting so they feel more comfortable contributing in meetings

Complex subjects don't always need complex language. If you do need to use technical terms then ensure that these are explained: think about the simplest term you could use while still being accurate

**Actions with others**

Read the University Strategy and create an opportunity for discussing, engaging and communicating with your team about how it affects your work now and in the future

Encourage others in your unit to practice presentations with you or others first and encourage them to introduce topics or speak about their work at team meetings to build confidence

directly on what would work best for them

Hold regular informal communication meetings with staff from a range of roles and grades. Encourage them to ask you any questions about your role, policy, strategy. Ask for their ideas and listen to their views on current issues to establish a flow of communication

Listen to speakers or read writers who you rate highly and observe how they use pace, humour, models, analogies and themes to enhance their verbal or written communication and to create authenticity. If you know them, ask them for feedback on your own communication skills

Seek out opportunities outside of the University to become an ambassador for the University (this might be by building professional networks, becoming a School Governor, Trustee, or joining an external committee)

## Communicating and Engaging - formal learning options
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**People**

| Face to face learning | Online courses | Downloadable toolkits and guides |
|---|---|---|
| **Powerful Presentations** <br> This course aims to provide the fundamental tools and techniques to successfully prepare a professional presentation *(online module)* and provides the opportunity to practice within a safe environment in order to build confidence and receive feedback (*practice workshop*) | **Communicating with Confidence** <br> This video course provides simple communication tools, strategies and tips that are easy to use | **Communicating Effectively** <br> This guide shows you how to communicate effectively with one another, both face-to-face and in writing |
| **Assertiveness & Influencing** <br> This course aims to enhance your personal effectiveness and confidence in both assertiveness and influencing when working with a variety of stakeholders | **Communication Skills** <br> A variety of video courses on influencing, listening effectively, building rapport, emotional intelligence and managing conflict | **Public Speaking**: A guide to help people build confidence in public speaking and overcome anxiety |
| **Communicating Effectively with Students** <br> The aim of this course is to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with students. The course will cover verbal communication, either face to face or via telephone | **Having Difficult Conversations** <br> This video course provides tips and strategies for having difficult conversations using a four-phase model | **Building rapport** <br> Hints and tips on building rapport with your team |
| **Handling Difficult Conversations** <br> The course supports staff to manage difficult conversations with a variety of different colleagues and stakeholders | **Presentation Fundamentals** <br> This course sets out what makes a compelling presentation, including ensuring it is built on strong research, tailored to your audience's interests, and designed to anticipate and answer questions about your message | **Assertiveness** <br> This guide will help you to learn to be more assertive in a range of situations. |
| | **Active listening** <br> A range of videos on active listening skills for all | **Resolving Conflict**: This guide provides tips and advice on how you can deal with and resolve conflict <br><br> Review the **SHU Framework for communicating people change** <br><br> Further guides **here** |