



Communication Unit

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Crisis Communications Plan for the University of Gothenburg

This university-wide Crisis Communications Plan is a supplement to the University's Emergency and Disaster Plan. The Plan provides guidelines, roles and responsibilities for the communication process of the University in the event of a crisis or disaster.

1. Introduction

What is a crisis?

The characteristics of a crisis situation is that it is different from the norm, often unexpected and affecting a lot of people.

A crisis and disaster situation is deemed to exist when a major accident or incident is seriously threatening or affecting the activities and operations at the University. This also includes serious incidents and events outside of the University affecting our students, staff and operations.

(From the Emergency and Disaster Plan of the University of Gothenburg).

Why do we need crisis communications?

Planned and structured communications are essential for an effective crisis management. Crisis communications are about being prepared for a possible crisis and being able to communicate professionally in a situation of acute crisis. A lack of communication during a crisis can lead to misunderstandings, spreading of rumours and the reputation of the University being damaged.

All crises are different and crisis communications are controlled by the incident in question. Serious crises and disasters require activities that extend beyond the usual communication process.

2. About this document

This Crisis Communications Plan applies to the entire University of Gothenburg. The Plan provides guidelines, roles and responsibilities for the communication process of the University in the event of a crisis or disaster. The Plan aims to provide support to managers and communicators at all levels within the University of Gothenburg. The Crisis Communications Plan is a supplement to the University's Emergency and Disaster Plan.

3. Documentation during a crisis

All communication activities must be documented in line with the Emergency and Disaster Plan. A good documentation facilitates the coordination of the crisis communication process and constitutes the basis of the follow-up and evaluation process. The Incident Report form, available from the University's website, should be used for this purpose. All communication activities carried out should be documented, specifying dates and times. In addition, it must be clearly evident from the Incident Report who was responsible for ordering and implementing the activities in question, how communications were carried out, by whom and through what channels.

4. Roles and responsibilities

In the event of a crisis affecting the entire university, the responsibility for crisis communications will be delegated in accordance with the University's Rules of Procedure and Delegation Authority.

The University Crisis and Disaster Management Team

The Crisis and Disaster Management Team is responsible for the initial work in a crisis and disaster situation. It is important for the University to coordinate its crisis communications with Incident Commanders and the Police, should these be involved. The main responsibility of providing the media and public with information lies initially with Incident Commanders and the Police.

Head of Security

The Head of Security is ultimately responsible for all crisis communications and for initiating the crisis communication process.

Head of Communications

The Head of Communications is part of the University Crisis and Disaster Management Team and responsible for crisis communications throughout the University.

If required, the Head of Communications shall throughout the crisis communication process provide support to the Deans and Heads of Department. Regardless of the origin of the crisis, the Communication Unit at the University must always be informed.

The Dean

The Deans are responsible for crisis communications within their faculties.

Head of Department

The Heads of Department are responsible for crisis communications within their departments.

The University's Central Communication Unit

In the event of a crisis, the University Central Communication Unit is responsible for coordinating all communication activities throughout the University. The Communication Unit provides faculty/department/area communicators with the support they need. In the event of a major crisis affecting the entire university, all

media relations are coordinated by the Press Secretary at the Central Communication Unit and/or by the person appointed by the Head of the University.

Communicators

Joint Management and Faculty/Department Communicators provide support to their managers and supervisors (e.g. Area Manager, Dean and Head of Department) throughout the crisis communication process.

International Centre

The International Centre has a communicative responsibility in situations affecting students and staff who study and work abroad.

5. Communications in a crisis

All communications in a crisis situation should be:

- Planned and structured - the work involved in an acute crisis situation is facilitated by a good contemporary social and environmental surveillance including a risk analysis of potential crises in addition to complying with and drawing up response policies and a crisis communications plan
- Quick and transparent - the development of a crisis often requires quick and open communications in order to avoid the spreading of rumours and speculations
- Correct and relevant - we only communicate that which we know is true and correct
- Continuous - we communicate regularly even when there is nothing new to communicate It is better to say - 'we do not have anything further to report right now but will get back to you as soon as we do' - rather than not saying anything at all
- Coordinated - in order to avoid uncertainty and unnecessary anxiety, it is important to give a coherent and comprehensive account of the course of events
- Available - straightforward, simple and clear communications reduce the risk of misinterpretation, misunderstanding and confusion
- Translated - all information must be available in the languages relevant to the situation

6. Target groups/stakeholders and channels

Every crisis situation is unique. Accordingly, it is important to define the target groups that are of relevance for the communication. Different target groups/stakeholders have different communication needs and hence, may have to be informed in a certain order. In most cases, internal target groups are given priority over external target groups.

Channels

A crisis situation requires effective and coordinated communication channels. The communication channels must meet the necessary requirements for speed, depth and reliability. Subject to working properly, the same communication channels used in the everyday operations shall be used in a situation of crisis.

Digital channels are usually the fastest way in which to reach out with information in an acute crisis situation.

Personal meetings are, however, always preferable when it comes to explaining and putting a crisis into context and also, provide an opportunity to ask questions and reflect.

There must be an alternative to using digital channels in case the system is knocked out or jammed in connection with a crisis or disaster.

Internal channels:

The staff portal and internal websites

The main communication channel is the Staff Portal, the University's channel for internal communications. This is where all crisis communications should start. In the event of a university-wide crisis, continuous updates and information shall be given on the Staff Portal homepage. Many university departments have their own internal websites. The homepages of these internal websites should also be used for giving updates and information in a crisis situation.

Student portal

Communications with students should primarily take place at studentportalen.gu.se. The Student Portal homepage should give continuous updates and information on the current situation. The learning platform GUL is also an important communication channel for the students. Other ways in which to provide students with updates and information are the student unions, newsletters and Facebook.

SMS Text messaging

In the event of a major crisis, text messages via mobile telephones may become relevant for certain selected groups. Regular text messages are sent out with updates on the latest crisis development.

E-mail

If required, information can also be sent out by e-mail. The University's Central Communication Unit have lists of staff e-mail addresses. The lists also include the e-mail addresses of managers and other staff groups. The IT & Support Unit have lists of all student e-mail addresses.

- E-mail to all Staff
- Function e-mail from the The Central University Administration to various university operations.
- E-mail to all Managers
- E-mail to all faculty communicators
- E-mail to all communicators

Meetings

Meetings should be held with closely involved staff and students. In addition, the Managers should brief their staff on the crisis situation.

External channels:

www.gu.se

In the event of a university-wide crisis being of interest to external target groups, updates and information should be clearly provided on the external website of the University.

Switchboard

Information about the crisis situation shall be available from the University's switchboard and updated continuously. The same information shall also be referred to the relevant group(s) via the switchboard.

The Communication Unit shall, when necessary, set up a telephone response group for the referral of queries from the public and others received by the switchboard. This in order to avoid the switchboard from getting jammed while allowing for calls to be put through to the relevant emergency staff.

Media/Crisis Hotline

If required, a special hotline shall be set up giving journalists and the public quick and easy access to the latest information.

Social media

Social media used for everyday communications shall also, if relevant, be used in a situation of crisis. This usually means using Twitter or Facebook. However, social media shall never replace official communication channels. Because of the speediness and interactive nature of social media, a continuous monitoring and feedback is required.

Media

In a crisis situation, media is often used to provide the public with the information necessary. The greatest possible transparency should be applied in all contacts with the media. In order to provide accurate information and respond correctly to questions asked by the media, a response policy should, if possible, be drawn up. In case of a university-wide crisis, it is the responsibility of the Press Officers at the University's Central Communication Unit to draw up a response policy. However, if the nature of the crisis is more local, the same responsibility lies with the local Press Officers. All media related activities shall be carried out in consultation with the Press Officers at the Central Communication Unit.

When necessary, the Swedish Radio can also be used in order to reach out to students, staff and the general public.

Press conferences

The conference facilities found in the main building of the University, i.e. Gula Salongen and Torgny Segerstedtsalen is available to press conferences.

Wireless internet access is available throughout the main building via the university's wireless network. In a crisis, this should also be made available to the media in order to facilitate their coverage of the situation.

Press releases

Press releases with up to date information about the development of the crisis shall be sent out via e-mail and also, posted on the website of the University. Press releases from the University of Gothenburg or any of its organisational entities shall be checked by the University Crisis Management group before being sent out.

7. Evaluation and analysis

Communication activities taken in conjunction with a crisis shall, once the crisis is over, be subject to evaluation. The aim of the evaluation is to give an indication of what went well and what could have been done differently - giving us the opportunity to learn from experience should a similar situation develop in the future.

8. For more information

Emergency and Disaster Plan at the Staff Portal (Medarbetarportalen):

<http://medarbetarportalen.gu.se/sakerhet/kris-och-katastrofplan/>

Crisis communications at the Staff Portal:

<http://medarbetarportalen.gu.se/Kommunikation/kriskommunikation/>

Contacts with the media:

<http://www.gu.se/media/presskontakter>