

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide a strategic framework for the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of British Columbia (UBC Pharm Sci) to communicate with its key audiences during crisis situations.

It is important to note that this document is **not an emergency operations plan** and is **separate** from the Faculty's Building Emergency Response Plan, which is overseen by the Faculty's Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) and Operations & Facilities Management team within the Dean's Office. Rather, this document addresses communications for all possible crises and not just those related to building safety.

Crisis communications are an essential component of any emergency responsiveness activity and can take many different forms depending on the nature of the situation. For instance, faculty members, staff and students may need to be informed about the Faculty's response to an earthquake. A number of crises may also take the form of an issues management or public relations incident, and thus the Faculty must actively defend and maintain its reputation to key stakeholders and the public at large.

How well the Faculty communicates once a crisis occurs has a significant impact on its reputation and audiences. The authors of an article titled "Crisis communication by the book" explain:

Failure to communicate is one of the biggest mistakes you can make in a crisis situation. Crisis managers must take control of the flow of information. Otherwise speculations and rumors will emerge. Then, instead of getting accurate information from you, the media will be forced to fill the void with speculation. So, even if details are sketchy, take charge of the information flow and release what information you can.

Source: Duke, S., & Masland, L. (2002). Crisis communication by the book. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 47(3), 30-35

Questions regarding this document can be directed to:

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NOTE

Publicly accessible crisis communication planning documents from the California Primary Care Association and Colorado Nonprofit Association were used as references in the preparation of this document.

TYPES OF CRISES

At any given time, any number of crises can occur at the Faculty. In general, there are several types:

Natural Crises

Environmental occurrences such as earthquakes, fires, tornadoes and floods.

Technological Crises

Crises that result from a failure in technology. Examples include a breakdown of machinery, corrupted software, and industrial accidents.

Confrontation Crises

Crises that occur when discontented individuals and/or groups fight businesses, government, and various interest groups to win acceptance of their demands and expectations. Examples include boycotts, ultimatums to those in authority, blockades or occupations of buildings, and disobeying law enforcement.

Malevolence Crises

Crises that happen when individuals use criminal means or other extreme tactics for the purpose of expressing hostility or anger toward, or seeking gain from, a company, country, or economic system. Examples include fraud (financial and identity theft), product tampering, kidnapping, and terrorism.

Workplace Violence Crises

Crises that happen when a current or former organizational member (example, an employee) commits violence against other members on organizational grounds.

Rumour Crises

Crises that result from the dissemination of false information about an organization that causes reputational and brand identity damage.

SOURCES

- Lerbinger, O. (1997). *The crisis manager: Facing risk and responsibility*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_management
- <http://www.managementstudyguide.com/types-of-crisis.htm>

KEY COMMUNICATION ROLES AND GOALS OF THE FACULTY

No matter the crisis type, the Faculty has the following key communication roles and goals:

Communication Roles

- Communicate the Faculty's preparation for and response to the crisis.
- Communicate the impacts of the crisis on the Faculty's ability to operate and provide services.
- Communicate the Faculty's role in the crisis investigation.
- Coordinate communications with internal and external organizational entities such as UBC Campus Security, UBC Media Relations, and law enforcement.

Communication Goals

- Stakeholders feel safe, secure and informed.
- Stakeholders understand the impact of the crisis on the Faculty.
- Stakeholders understand when the Faculty will resume normal operations.
- The Faculty responded to the crisis competently.
- The Faculty is a responsible employer and academic institution.
- The Faculty is supporting investigations and is committed to doing all it can to ensure that the crisis does not occur again in future.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PROCESS

During a crisis, the following communication process must be followed:

1. All crises must be reported immediately to the Dean. Once notified, the Dean will assess the situation and depending on the crisis will convene a Crisis Communications Team (CCT) consisting of some or all of the following Faculty and UBC representatives:
 - Senior Management Team
 - Director, Communications & Marketing
 - Director, Operations & Facilities Management Director
 - Director, Human Resources Director
 - Director, Student Services
 - Executive Coordinator to the Dean
 - Other senior level Faculty management
 - Representatives from central UBC units
2. The CCT will have one designated lead person—the Director, Communications & Marketing—directing and coordinating all aspects of the Faculty’s response. The Dean will serve as the Faculty’s spokesperson and appoint additional spokespeople as required to interact with stakeholder audiences, the media, and other groups.
3. The Director, Communications & Marketing prepares a crisis communications plan for approval by the Dean. The approved plan is then implemented and only the Dean and additional spokespeople are authorized to release information to stakeholder groups, the media and other groups. All other members of the Faculty should be professional and helpful if approached for information by connecting inquiring individuals with the Dean and additional spokespeople.
4. All plan messaging developed will be professional, transparent, timely, consistent, proactive, responsive, and action-oriented. The goal of all crisis communications messaging is to ensure the health and safety of key audiences, mitigate the crisis, and reinforce the reputation of the Faculty and UBC.
5. Faculty audiences (faculty members, staff, students, postdoctoral fellows, other appointments, and retirees) are the first to receive crisis communications and subsequent updates before anything is shared on any other channel and with any other audience. Depending on the nature of the crisis, not all Faculty audiences may need to be included in the response.
6. Email is the main channel by which crisis communications will be shared with Faculty audiences. Email messages will be sent under the From the Dean email template. For:
 - Faculty members, staff, MSc and PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, other appointments, and retirees: sent by the Director, Communications & Marketing and/or Executive Coordinator to the Dean in the Dean’s Office.
 - Entry-to-Practice PharmD, Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Graduate Diploma in Pharmacy Leadership students: sent by the Director, Student Services.

7. In the event of a breakdown in UBC communication systems, the CCT will use the private contact information of all Faculty members to convey information. Such contact information consists of private email addresses and phone numbers, and is collected and maintained by the Faculty.

NOTE

All Faculty audiences are asked to keep their private contact information up to date. Email the Faculty's Human Resources team at pharmsci.hr@ubc.ca to learn more.

8. Faculty audiences will be regularly updated during the crisis and once the crisis has concluded. Crisis communication messaging will also be shared using external Faculty and UBC channels where appropriate.
9. The CCT will conduct an evaluation of the crisis response once the incident has concluded.
10. The **UBC Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences Crisis Communications Plan** will be reviewed on a biannual basis by the Director, Communications & Marketing to ensure that it is current, relevant, and effective.

SAMPLE CRISIS COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

The following sample resources have been included for reference and may be used in a crisis communication situation.

Crisis Communication Checklist

Safety

- ✓ Ensure safety of all Faculty members and the Faculty site.
- ✓ Call 911 and UBC Security if needed.

Notification

- ✓ Notify the Dean immediately.
- ✓ Notify the Director, Communications & Marketing and Director, Operations & Facilities Management.

Crisis Communications Team (CCT)

- ✓ The Dean, Senior Management Team, Directors (Communications & Marketing, Operations & Facilities Management, Human Resources, Student Services), and Executive Coordinator to the Dean will convene to strategically review the situation and manage the communications surrounding the issue.
- ✓ The Dean may request other senior managers be a part of the CCT, depending on the nature of the incident.
- ✓ The CCT will involve other UBC units as required, depending on the nature of the incident.

Situational Assessment

- ✓ The CCT will assess the situation to confirm response details and other information. An example of a situational assessment template has been provided on page 8 for reference.

Crisis Communications Plan

- ✓ The Director, Communications & Marketing prepares and implements a crisis communications plan. An example of a crisis communications plan template has been provided on page 9 for reference.

Evaluation

- ✓ The CCT evaluates communication efforts once the crisis has concluded. An example of a post crisis communication review and evaluation template has been provided on page 11 for reference.

Situational Assessment Template

Date

What is the situation?

- *What happened? When did it take place? Where did it take place?*
- *Why did it happen? How did it happen?*
- *What will happen next?*

Who are the additional spokespeople?

What Central UBC counsel and support are needed?

Who will be affected?

- *Internal (faculty members, staff, etc.)*
- *External (UBC, alumni, partners, media, etc.)*

What do they need to know about the crisis?

- *Is the situation under control? What are you advising people to do?*
- *What is being done in response to the crisis?*
- *Were there any injuries, damage or other losses associated with the crisis?*
- *When will the Pharmaceutical Sciences Building reopen? When will the Faculty be able to resume services?*
- *What caused the crisis? Was it preventable?*

What are they feeling about the crisis? Are there any sensitivities to consider?

What can and can't be communicated?

What is the overall communication strategy?

Are there any other considerations?

Crisis Communication Plan Template

Incident:

Date:

Part 1: Communication Goal

What is/are the Faculty's communication goal(s)?
Who are the Faculty's target audiences?

Part 2: Target Audience Analysis

Audience	Current Attitudes & Concerns	Impacts on the Audience	Challenges the Audience Faces	Communication Variables

Part 3: Crisis Communications

Audience	Top Three Key Messages	Delivery Channels (including spokespersons)

Part 4: Post Crisis Communications

Audience	Top Three Key Messages	Delivery Channels (including spokespersons)

Post Crisis Communication Review and Evaluation Template

Incident:

Date:

What worked well in the crisis communications response?

What didn't work well?

What can we do differently next time?

Summary notes of target audience engagement and feedback.

Summary notes of media coverage.

Final observations and comments.

KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

Key contact information in the event of a crisis is provided below. The Dean must be contacted first, followed by the Director, Communications & Marketing, and Director, Operations & Facilities Management:

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