

NET Communications policy

This policy outlines the framework for NET's internal and external communications, including the governance of NET's licensed assessment centers in respect of information procedures pertaining to NET and its products.

The objective of the Communications policy is to help us communicate effectively and transparently by:

- achieving a better understanding of NET's role in the industry and under the national qualifications structure as well as its brand values
- providing clear and well-judged information appropriate for the needs of the user
- arranging NET's work as efficiently as possible

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1. Introduction

NET recognises that consistent, effective and appropriate communication – external and internal - is important in achieving its aims, objectives and policies and to its remit both as a charitable organisation and as the guardian of the industry's independent assessment unit of national UK and Scottish industry qualifications. This document outlines the principles for managing communications, including a summary of key strands of communications, and the responsibilities of staff in relation to communications.

2. Scope

The Board of NET, members of its Management Team and the management at NET's assessment centre network should be familiar with this policy and all other NET and AM2 and FICA centre staff should be aware of its existence. The aim of the policy is to reduce the risk to NET or its clients of damaging or ineffective communication, and to ensure that the staff of NET and NET-appointed centres are aware of how communication is best conveyed externally and internally, and who has responsibility for which aspects.

3. Definitions

External communications include all the messages and information that NET presents to different audiences, whether directly (through its website, telephone calls, letters, e-mails, newsletters, marketing materials and press releases) or indirectly through the press and word of mouth. They also include the messages and information given to candidates attending NET licensed centres and to users of the website, as well as to Board members, sponsors and supporters, suppliers and customers.

Internal Communications include all the messages and information (whether verbal or written) passed within NET, principally between members of staff, but also between the Board and staff, and to and from management and staff. They include the information and documentation provided to NET's licensed centres

4. Legal Basis

NET's Communications responsibilities stem from its duty to achieve its core purposes under the Charities Act 2006, and are additionally governed by the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2005).

5. General Principles

- All communication is important and needs to be considered carefully
- Some information is highly confidential and must be protected or restricted, as it pertains to the assessment of candidates in a formal national qualification, or to licensing contracts
- External and internal communications will form part of strategic and business planning as well as project and team appraisal (including working with other organisations).
- Good communications play a very positive role in the day-to-day operations of NET, through the consideration of the content and the audience for any particular message or information to be disseminated
- Managers and staff have a responsibility to foster good communications internally and externally
- NET encourages openness in internal communication and the sharing of non-sensitive information
- NET is committed to consultation with staff and assessment centres over relevant operational affairs wherever possible
- NET seeks to constantly to improve support for candidates, in particular in the provision of effective information and the gathering of feedback. Candidate and employer needs

and views are monitored through industry consultations, surveys, committees and data analysis

- As far as possible staff and/or candidates and others with an interest are directly informed of important assessment-related issues no later than the media or other external bodies

6. Personal and confidential information and restricted practices

- Personal candidate data are protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act
- Some categories and items of information must be kept confidential. NET staff and NET assessment centre management are bound to take care with the handling and transmission of confidential information, and with regard to how and to whom information is transmitted. NET centre management must operate in accordance with the terms of their licence and this policy in respect of the communication of NET or NET product information to their clients
- Access to the candidate and administration database is restricted to NET staff, our IT provider and authorised centre personnel via individual personal logins; access permissions are set according to the user's role
- Photographic images, diagrams and any other kind of reproduction of the of the assessment bays in NET AM2/FICA centres are prohibited for the purposes of sharing, publication, training or circulation to candidates, education establishments, employers, training brokers, press and all others. Requests to photograph or otherwise reproduce the layout of assessment bays for any purpose must be made by centre management in a formal application to NET's Business Development Manager
- The NET Centre Licence Specification and Confidentiality Agreement sets out the conventions and particulars of the safeguarding of the integrity of NET's assessment by the restricting of information access and the handling of data and visitors
- NET operates a Confidentiality Agreement and controlled document signing scheme which governs centre assessment operations and the handling of sensitive documents, providing a safe means for the release of critical assessment information to centres, not for the view of candidates or the public

Appendix 1

Key Communications strands

- Quarterly NET Board meetings
- Monthly NET management and operational meetings
- Annual relicensing visits to NET centres
- NET website and public literature
- Telephone, fax and email communications to and from NET
- Corporate social media
- NET press, PR and marketing activities
- Biannual NET centre conference
- Assessment centre license specification, confidentiality agreement, contract and centre operational documentation (Centre manual)
- Assessment Centre Examiner Guidance Manuals and Candidate Manuals
- NET policies
- NET administration and candidate database
- NET meetings with other industry bodies or the public
- NET contribution to seminars, conferences and other external events
- Sponsorship

Appendix 2

Procedure for handling requests for information, interviews or visits to NET centres

- Requests for interviews with journalists, company representatives and other parties interested in learning or writing about NET or its products must be notified to NET. Without exception, NET's approval must be gained in advance of granting access permission to external individuals to enter and view the assessment site or to discuss operational information.

- NET encourages the positive promotion of its products and actively engages in PR and industry engagement in order to make information publically available. Assessment centres are encouraged to contact NET with ideas, requests, plans or contacts that might help with raising the profile of NET and its products and centre network