COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Policy Status: Core Governance and Operational Policy
Applies to: Staff, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), examiners, committee members, contractors, Teacher Members and any individual communicating on behalf of I-PATH
Policy Owner: Head Office
Governance Oversight: Examinations & Standards Committee (ESC) and Grand Council
Review Cycle: Annual, or sooner if required by organisational or regulatory change

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out the standards, methods and expectations for all communications relating to I-PATH business.

Effective communication is essential to:

- transparency and accountability
- safeguarding and integrity
- professional boundaries
- regulatory compliance
- public confidence in I-PATH as an examining organisation

All communication must reflect I-PATH's vision, mission and aims, and support the long-term stability, credibility and growth of the organisation.

2. Core Principles of Communication

All I-PATH communications must be:

- **Respectful** - recognising the diversity of roles, perspectives and experiences across the sector
- **Professional** - appropriate to an examining organisation and regulatory environment
- **Transparent** - capable of scrutiny, audit and review
- **Honest and proportionate** - clear, accurate and not misleading
- **Boundaried** - maintaining appropriate professional distance
- **Recorded and traceable** - where related to artistic, assessment, governance or business matters

Personal style, tone or convenience must never override these principles.

3. Approved Communication Channels

3.1 Email as the Primary Communication Method

All official I-PATH business must be conducted via email wherever practicable.

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This includes (but is not limited to):

- artistic and syllabus matters
- examinations and assessment
- safeguarding or welfare concerns
- complaints, appeals and enquiries
- quality assurance, standards and governance
- contractual or financial matters
- decisions, instructions or approvals

Email provides:

- a clear audit trail
- accountability
- consistency
- protection for individuals and the organisation

Email records may be required for:

- internal review
- Examinations & Standards Committee reporting
- Grand Council oversight
- Awarding organisation audits
- regulatory or legal scrutiny

3.2 Video Meetings

Video meetings are permitted where appropriate, including for:

- operational discussions
- training
- complex matters requiring discussion

However:

- meetings must be minuted
- key decisions, actions and outcomes must be recorded
- recordings may be retained where required for audit or governance purposes

Video meetings do not replace the requirement for formal written confirmation of decisions.

3.3 Telephone Calls and Text Messages

Telephone calls and text messages should be avoided for official I-PATH business, except where:

- the matter is urgent
- email or video communication is not practicable

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Where a phone call or text is used:

- a written summary must be sent by email as soon as possible
- key points, decisions and actions must be recorded

Failure to record important information creates risk and undermines transparency.

4. Prohibition on Private Messaging Platforms

No I-PATH business should be conducted via:

- private messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram DMs)
- personal social media accounts
- informal group chats

These platforms:

- lack proper audit trails
- create safeguarding and data protection risks
- blur professional boundaries
- may compromise investigations or reviews

Where exceptional circumstances require urgent contact via personal devices:

- this must be strictly limited
- followed immediately by a formal email record
- and, where ongoing use is proposed, explicit permission must be sought from the Grand Council

5. Respectful and Professional Tone

All communications must remain:

- calm
- respectful
- measured
- professional

This applies even where:

- there is disagreement
- emotions are high
- mistakes have occurred

I-PATH is a growing organisation. Errors may occur, systems may evolve, and processes may be refined. These realities must be met with:

- professionalism

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- constructive dialogue
- integrity

Disrespectful, dismissive, aggressive or sarcastic communication is unacceptable.

6. Professional Boundaries and Power Dynamics

I-PATH recognises that power imbalances exist within examining and governance structures.

To protect all parties:

- communication must not imply personal closeness or favouritism
- informal language that suggests intimacy or friendship should be avoided
- expressions such as kisses, hearts, pet names or similar sign-offs must not be used

While positive and friendly relationships are encouraged, communication must remain clearly professional.

Over-familiarity can:

- blur boundaries
- create perceived obligations
- undermine examiner independence
- create difficulty if sanctions, complaints or difficult conversations are later required

For individuals in positions of authority (including examiners, SLT and committee members), informal or overly familiar communication may be perceived as:

- misuse of power
- coercive
- or uncomfortable for the recipient

Maintaining professional distance protects both individuals and the organisation.

7. Communication on the I-PATH Hub and Forums

Communication on the I-PATH Hub must:

- be respectful and professional
- support members constructively
- remain within appropriate boundaries

The purpose of the Hub is to:

- provide support
- share information

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- build a professional community

It is not intended to:

- create personal relationships
- host informal or private conversations
- bypass formal processes

Staff and examiners must be mindful that public or semi-public responses represent I-PATH and may be reviewed later.

8. Transparency, Record Keeping and Audit

All significant communications must be capable of:

- being retrieved
- being reviewed
- being audited

Records may be required to:

- evidence decision-making
- respond to complaints or appeals
- support safeguarding investigations
- demonstrate compliance to awarding organisations or regulators

Failure to communicate transparently or to maintain records may itself constitute a compliance risk.

9. Safeguarding and Sensitive Communications

Where communication relates to:

- safeguarding
- welfare
- allegations
- disciplinary or sanctions processes

Additional care must be taken to ensure:

- confidentiality
- accuracy
- appropriate escalation

Sensitive matters must never be discussed casually or via informal channels.

10. Breach of the Communications Policy

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Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- corrective action
- additional training
- restriction of role or responsibilities
- investigation under relevant policies (e.g. safeguarding, malpractice, sanctions)

Repeated or serious breaches may lead to formal disciplinary or governance action.

11. Responsibility and Review

All individuals acting on behalf of I-PATH are responsible for:

- understanding this policy
- applying it consistently
- seeking clarification where unsure

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and aligned with organisational growth and regulatory expectations.

Final Statement

Communication shapes culture.

At I-PATH, we communicate with respect, transparency and integrity, recognising that how we speak to one another directly impacts:

- safeguarding
- standards
- trust
- and the future of the organisation.

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