2530
Text Messaging Notification Policy

1. General

The increasing and almost universal use of mobile phones has opened up a new avenue of opportunity for communication between NNMC and its staff and students.
This policy sets out the way in which NNMC will use Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging appropriately to pass on important information to staff and students. The use of SMS messaging is intended to sit alongside other existing forms of communication such as letters, email, social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter) and the College's website. The immediate delivery of SMS messages gives it an advantage over other forms of communication: most students have their mobile phones with them all the time and the message is likely to be received much sooner.

Text messaging has wide accessibility. People who are blind or visually impaired can use mobile phones, and some mobile phones have text-to-speech capability, meaning that individuals can listen to text messages.

Data Protection and privacy issues have been taken into account in preparing this policy. In some cases, people will be asked if they wish to 'opt-in' to receive particular types of messages. In others, for example where messages are sent for administrative purposes, people will be asked if they wish to 'opt-out'. However, there may be emergency circumstances in which NNMC will need to contact as many staff and students as possible, ignoring personal preferences (which is permissible if it is in the 'vital interests of the data subject' – Data Protection Act Schedule 2(4)).

Phone numbers may be stored by third parties for the purpose of sending messages, but names will not be stored. There may, very rarely, be the need to send a message for test purposes.

There are a number of scenarios in which an SMS message could be very useful, e.g.

- Emergencies:
  - An outbreak amongst the student population
  - A fire, flood, or similar incident in a College building
  - Any serious crime or terrorism incidents

- Work-related incidents:
  - Messages to support staff about equipment/environment failures
- Other usage:
  - Lecture room changes.

However, the usefulness of text messaging depends on having reliable data. The mobile numbers will be taken from data collected from staff and student databases so it is important that these phone numbers are kept up to date. This will be achieved by means of email reminders or Portal announcements to staff and students to keep their details up to date and directions for how to do so.

2. Emergencies

2.1 Scope
Messages whose content is deemed to be essential or urgent.

2.2 When is it appropriate?
Incident and crisis management is handled by a team of senior managers. The team may decide a text message is appropriate whenever it is considered important to contact a group of people urgently for reasons of health or safety.

It should be noted that there is no guarantee that text messages will be delivered promptly or at all by the mobile phone companies. In some types of emergency, e.g. a terrorist incident, the emergency services may commandeer the mobile phone network, so no messages will get through.

Simultaneous, multiple approaches are essential. Text messages must be supplemented by other means of communication, such as emails, messages issued via Facebook or Twitter or information posted on the College website, to ensure that as many of the target audience as possible receive the message.

2.3 Approvers
A request to send a message to one of the College-wide lists must be approved by the President of the College, or her designated authority to approve requests. Authorization will be given for a message only if:
- o   it is considered that it is important to get the message to a significant number of the recipients as soon as possible;
- o   the content is both appropriate and factually correct;
- o   the message format meets the guidelines.

2.4 Target Groups
It is possible to send messages to the following groups:
- All staff, faculty and students
- All staff and faculty
- All students

Further groupings may be added in the future.

2.5 Format of message
Messages should be no longer than 160 characters and should address the student or staff member directly, i.e. as 'you'. They should include essential points, and should avoid 'text speak', e.g. write 'you', not 'u'; and 'for', not '4'. Non-Latin alphabet characters should be avoided, as they may decrease the maximum message size to 140 or even 70 characters.

2.5.1   Sender
All messages must start with the words 'Eagle Alert:' so that the recipients of the text can see that it is an official message from the College requiring their attention.

2.5.2 Subject
The message must clearly indicate what it concerns.

2.5.3 Where to get more information
The message should indicate where more information can be sought, e.g. 'see www.nnmc.edu' if the College's website is operational, or 'check email for details'.

3. Work-related Incidents
3.1 Scope
Messages that are sent to one or more staff members relating to incidents at work. These could include, for example, alerts or work instructions relating to maintenance or equipment failures.

3.2 When is it appropriate?
A text message may be appropriate to communicate with a member of staff about matters relating to his or her job, where that person is likely to be moving around the campus, or 'on call'. It is impossible to give a definitive list of possible applications; the deciding factor has to be whether it is an effective means of communication.

3.3 Approvers
See 2.3 above
Authorization should be given for a particular message only if:
- the distribution list is appropriate, and
- the content is both appropriate and factually correct.

3.4 Recipients

Information Technology Department should ensure that the list of numbers is kept up to date and reviewed at least every semester. People issued with mobile phones by the College for work purposes may **not opt-out** of receiving text messages.

3.5 Format of message
- Messages should be no longer than 160 characters.
- The message must clearly indicate what it concerns.
- It should be clear who has sent the message.

4. Further Advice
Message senders need to be aware of:
- The principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the College's guidance relating to security measures for safeguarding personal data.
  See security.nnmc.edu