Communications during an IT Major Incident – DRAFT V0.3

What is an IT Major Incident?

If an IT issue fulfils one or more of the criteria below (or has serious potential to do so) an IT Major Incident is declared:

1. The issue has an extreme impact to student experience, teaching and learning or research;

2. The issue will prevent a critical time-bound business activity being completed;

3. The issue could cause wide-reaching reputational damage;

4. The issue will result in a breached Service Level Agreement (SLA), has an unknown resolution path or will have a prolonged duration.

When an IT Major Incident (MI) is declared, a Major Incident Manager within IT Services is nominated to co-ordinate its resolution. This communications strategy is then instigated and used throughout the duration of the incident, to manage the communications around that.

Purpose of this strategy

The MI communications strategy works to:

- Guide the Major Incident Manager in the coordination of communication - both during an MI and post-incident.

- Equip IT colleagues with the relevant information during an MI, so enabling the transition of this to our customers.

- Involve key business stakeholders in the management of an MI and keep them informed of progress, through to resolution and post-incident review.

- Keep our staff and student customers informed of developments during an MI; with clear, non-technical communications throughout.

This document focuses on the MI communications processes and responsibilities only. The full IT Major Incident Process document contains more detailed information on the wider MI process itself, and the various roles and responsibilities within.

Core process

1. **Conduct a stakeholder analysis**

   The nature of the incident and services affected will determine the relevant stakeholders and audiences for the communications.

2. **Update IT staff**

   Inform IT Services and other technical colleagues (eg Library IT, eLearning, timetabling) as soon as a basic level of information is known (nature of the incident, services affected, audiences for communication).

3. **Broadcast to customers**

   High level notification broadcast to customers via IT website 'traffic lights', IT Services social media, StaffNet, My Manchester student news (if audience appropriate). Consider if this impacts external audiences attempting to contact the University, or if there's the potential for external reputational damage.

4. **Inform and update stakeholders**

   If the incident takes longer than *(time period TBC),* FAQ style update issued to key stakeholders and audiences, which covers the nature of the incident, current business continuity plans, any current workarounds or alternative solutions, key information to pass on to customers (if relevant) and when a further update is expected. Will also clearly identify what colleagues should do with the information (eg: whether the update is for their information only; or whether they should cascade further).

5. **Issue post-incident update**

   Following resolution and incident de-brief, update key stakeholders with information such as lessons learnt, further mitigations now in place, and any other relevant closure information.

Responsibilities throughout

- **Developing messages**

  The MI Communications Lead will work with the MI Manager and team to develop all core audience messages.

- **Issuing messages**

  The MI Communications Lead will issue messages directly where appropriate, or; where the responsibility for dissemination lies with others, will ensure that other parties are equipped with the right message to issue. See the responsibility matrix on subsequent pages.

Out-of-hours communication

- Outside of standard UK office hours the Major Incident Manager may fulfill the role of the MI Communications Lead, until such a time that a dedicated MI Communications Lead can take over.

- There are no formal procedures within PSS and faculties however for dealing with out-of-hours communications, so all will be done on a "best efforts" basis.

- Primary communication methods out of hours will be the IT Services Twitter account and the Service Availability widget on the IT Help and Support webpage.

Communications responsibility matrix

R = Responsible A = Accountable C = Consulted I = Informed	MI Manager	MI Comms Lead	MI Technical Lead	IT Business Partner	IT Director	Senior IT Relationship Manager	IT Support Centre Manager	IT Supplier Manager	Library Head of Digital Services	Senior Business Stakeholder	Local Comms Lead	Local Estates Lead	
Senior audiences													
President, Registrar, Associate Vice Presidents	A	R	C	I	R	I				C	I		
Academic Deans	A	R	C	R	I	I				C	I		
Directors of Faculty Operations	A	R	C	R	I	I				C	I		
PSS Directors	A	R	C	R	I	I				C	I		
Heads of School	A	R	C	R	I	I				C	I		
Heads of School Administrators	A	R	C	R	I	I				C	I		
Operational audiences													
Faculty/School Teaching and Learning Directors	A	R	C	C		I	C			C	R		
Faculty/School Research Directors	A	R	C	C		I	C			C	R		
Faculty operational colleagues	A	R	C	C		I	C			C	R		
PSS operational colleagues	A	R	C	C	I	I	C			R	R		
Colleagues by building	A	R	C	C		I	C			C	I	R	
University Library	A	R	C			I	C		C	C	R		
University Communications colleagues	A	R	C			I	C			C			
Students	A	R	C	I	I	I	C			C	R		
IT Services audiences													
IT Leadership Team	A	R	C							C			
IT Services colleagues	A	R	C			C				C			
Library IT colleagues	A	R	C						R				
Out of hours service desk	A	I	C				R	R					
External service providers	A	I	R					R					

Updating IT colleagues and other service owners

- If a Major IT incident is suspected, a message may be posted on the IT Services Twitter account announcing that we're investigating a potential issue.

- When an MI is first declared, the MI Manager will issue a notice to IT Services and related technical colleagues via an appropriate channel (see table below) As the incident progresses, updates will be sent to the same groups. See Appendix for list of appropriate channels.

- Relevant IT colleagues will also be informed when communications with business stakeholders occur, as indicated by the 'Consulted' or 'Informed' markers on the communications responsibility matrix.

- A message will be sent via text message to the subscribers of the text message alert service.

Audiences for services affected by the MI:

Service Affected	IT Support Staff	Student Facing Staff	Business Systems Key users	Key Faculty / PSS Admin staff	Library Staff	ITLT	eLearning
Teaching & Learning	X	X		X	X		X
Research	X				X		
Library	X	X			X		X
Business Systems	X		X	X	X	X	
Supporting services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Other	X						

If email delivery is affected by the Major Incident, communication will take place using telephone contacts, the IT Services website, Twitter, SMS and the LANDESK announcements portlet.

Broadcast communications

- When an IT Major Incident is first declared, and when further status updates are known, the Service availability 'traffic lights' on the IT Services web homepage are updated by colleagues in the IT Support Centre.

- Escalation leads or the Support Centre manager will arrange for a recorded message to be placed on the Support Centre IVR, stating the nature of the problem and any known workaround if relevant.

- If the incident is going on for more than *(time TBC)* , an announcement is placed on StaffNet announcement by the MI Communications Lead.

- If a message is placed on StaffNet, the MI Communications Lead will liaise with the central comms team and request for a notification banner above the standard icons on the StaffNet homepage. If available (ie, no other messages are on there), this will link to the latest announcement on the incident and will remain in place for the duration.

- Notification of the incident will be posted across the IT Services social media accounts by the MI

Communications Lead.

- If broadcast communication to students is required, the MI Communications Lead will liaise directly with a DSE Communications lead to discuss appropriate channels.

Cascading messages to local audiences

- In all cases, the MI Communications Lead will prepare the message and liaise with the relevant colleagues to cascade as appropriate.

- IT Business Partners will cascade information to senior audiences, with relevant local communications leads (Faculty and/or PSS) informed of this.

- Where a deeper cascade of information is required to more operational level colleagues in Faculties, Schools and across the PSS; relevant local communication leads will be responsible for distributing the message as appropriate within their area, using their best judgment of channel and approach.

- Where messages need to be relayed to specific building occupants (which could cross a number of Faculty/PSS areas); relevant local Estates leads will be responsible for distributing the message via their established channels.

How we use social media

- During all IT Major Incidents the IT Services Twitter account (@UoM_ITS) will be used to update our broad, generic audience. This will give snippets of updates and advice on any workarounds, progress and so on. It will provide links to further information online.

- A tweet referencing the incident will also be pinned to the top of the feed, for added visibility.

- The tone and style of tweets will be factual and will use positive, supporting imagery to convey the human side of events to our customers.

- Our tweets during IT Major Incidents are often re-tweeted by wider University accounts, and this is strongly encouraged.

- The IT Services Facebook page is used for general notice of the incident being declared, along with notification of its ultimate resolution. It does not provide regular updates in between.

- Bear in mind that the general public may pick up on these messages if the incident is particularly severe.

Where there is no email or network connectivity

As most staff and students have mobile phones and tablets that can access networks outside of the University, social media updates would continue when the University network and/or email connectivity was down. It is possible to view the Twitter feed for IT Services without actually using Twitter or having an account, by visiting:

- https://twitter.com/uom_its

In addition to this, other methods of communication will be assessed and used as per the University's over-arching emergency communication procedure. The MI Communications lead will liaise directly with the University's Internal Communications Manager and/or Student Communications Manager, to agree and implement the most appropriate course of action.

Writing the message

See the 'Writing service alert messages' guidelines document for information. (link)

Appendix

This list is not exhaustive, but does include some key University and IT Services' contacts, channels and information sources.

Mailing lists – note that these can only be relied upon during core business hours, when colleagues are available to moderate and approve messages. If sending messages outside of these times when the approver is unavailable (especially in the case of lists managed outside of IT Services) it is recommended that individuals are identified (via the Online Directory) and contacted directly.

Social media – IT Services have access to post to their own social media channels directly but can also request re-promotion of items via other relevant University social media channels if the announcements are relevant to their services (eg: where a central IT issue is also affecting access to podcasts, it may be helpful for the podcast account to re-tweet our information).

Service alert mailing lists
Note: Subscriber list available on request

Business area	Service	Email
Teaching & Learning		
Research		
Library		
Business Systems		
Supporting services		
Other		

[Various Uom specific channels redacted]

Faculty and PSS (admin teams) contacts:

[Various Uom communications managers contact details redacted]

Social media within IT Services:

Username	Description	Managed by
@UoM_ITS	IT Services News and Announcements – high proportion of student followers	
www.facebook.com/UoM.ITS	IT Services Facebook account	
@UoM_eResearch	Research IT – high proportion of researcher followers	
@uomHornet	Hornet	
@uomPodcast	Media Technologies / Podcast team	

Twitter accounts with a large following outside IT Services:

Username	Description	Managed by
@Uomstudentnews	University student news	
@UoMLibrary	University Library	
@UoMStaffNet	University StaffNet	
@ManchesterSU	Manchester Students Union	

Measurement and review

The effectiveness and success of major incident communications will be measured as part of the post-incident review, which the MI Manager will conduct in partnership with relevant colleagues.

This strategy will also be reviewed annually between the IT Marketing and Communications Manager and the IT Capacity and Availability Manager, to ensure that it remains up to date and fit for purpose.

The next formal review date for this document is *(TBC)*.