




# BUILDING A COMMUNICATIONS TEAM AT A SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION IN INDIA


## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## Public Communication and Engagement by Scientific Institutions

Universities and research institutions in India are making rapid strides in science and technology to improve our understanding of the world and develop scientific solutions to societal problems. It is imperative for them to disseminate information about these advancements in a timely and effective manner to diverse audiences to foster an understanding of and trust in scientific research, as well as to enhance the institution's reputation. The latter is also critical for attracting top-tier staff and students, as well as funding and collaborations ([see reference](#)). Lately, the government has formulated various policies and guidelines to support these institutions to engage the public with scientific research, and some of these key policies are currently being implemented.

*“On the lines of Corporate Social Responsibility, the concept of **Scientific Social Responsibility** needs to be inculcated to connect our leading institutions to all stakeholders, including schools and colleges. We must create an environment for sharing ideas and resources.”* PM Narendra Modi

Following this speech delivered by the Prime Minister at the [Indian Science Congress](#) in 2017, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) communicated the Draft [Scientific Social Responsibility](#) for public consultation on September 9, 2019. The 2022 [SSR Guidelines](#) mention that bridging science-society, science-science, and society-science gaps will be key “to harness the voluntary potential that is latent in the country’s scientific community to strengthen science and society linkages so as to make S&T ecosystem vibrant.”

Furthermore, the recent [Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2020](#) (STIP 2020) draft by the Government of India states “every public-funded institution and the department will have a dedicated wing set-up for science communication and public engagement in STI-related activities” and that “Institutes and organizations will be encouraged to earmark a percentage of allocated budget (SSR fund) for science communication and public engagement activities”. These new policies and guidelines signal a renewed focus on science communication and public engagement by scientific institutions as a way to improve impact of scientific research, among other things.

The Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, has created and continues to support science and technology communication efforts through **DST-National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC)**, **DST-Vigyan Prasar**, and **CSIR-NIScPR**. DST also supports state S&T councils that are involved in science communication and popularization activities at the regional level. More recently, DST's **Science and Engineering Board (SERB)** has implemented the DST **SSR policy**, and initiatives have been devised to benefit other S&T stakeholders using SERB grantees' expertise and infrastructure. Even non-government research funding agencies such as [DBT/Wellcome Trust Alliance \(India Alliance\)](#) provides funding to its grantees' for public engagement initiatives as part of their research programmes.

A January 2022 working paper by the [Foundation for Advancing Science and Technology](#) (FAST India) on [Public Communication by Scientific Institutions in India: A Case for Change \(January 2022\)](#) carried out a preliminary evaluation and reported the status of public communication by scientific institutions in India. Though a small number of scientists and communication officers were interviewed, the report provides key insights on the challenges faced by these institutions, and the staff that execute communication activities. The report also briefly delves into the best practices in science communication and public engagement outside of India.

Furthermore, a 2022 [survey](#) “[Mapping & Understanding the Practice of Science Communication & Outreach Activities \(SC&OA\) Undertaken by R&D Institutions in India](#)” of directors/heads of 177 R&D

institutions that fall under the science ministries and/or departments of the Government of India showed that **95% of the surveyed institutions strongly indicated that there is no separate budget allocated for science communication and outreach activities, and a majority of the institutions highlighted the lack of funding, training, time, and professional staff as key challenges.**

These findings highlight the need for universities and research institutions in the country to have adequate infrastructure and resources if they are to undertake effective and timely public communication and engagement activities.

In response to this rising need for scientific institutions in India to have formal communication structures in place, FAST India has developed a list of **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** on building institutional offices/teams for public communication and engagement.

This list of questions in this document is by no means exhaustive, but we hope it can serve as a starting point for scientific institutions to think through communication functions and goals in a more organised manner while also recognising that this function requires dedicated and specialised expertise and resources.

The FAQ document has been compiled with inputs from Dr. Siuli Mitra and Dennis C Joy (formerly at the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India) as well as various communication staff and faculty based at Indian institutions (see Annexure 3).

Feedback and suggestions for the FAQs can be sent to [sarah@fast-india.org](mailto:sarah@fast-india.org). The FAQ document will be updated based on the evolving needs of Indian scientific institutions and feedback received from users of the document.

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## Definitions of terms used to describe public communication of and engagement with science

Adapted from Doran, H. (2019, May 21). *Communication and Engagement Jargon*. University of Dundee.  
<https://doi.org/10.20933/100001124>

**Strategic Communications:** Strategic communication refers to the planned and deliberate process of developing, implementing, and managing communication efforts to achieve a specific goal or objective. It involves identifying target audiences, understanding their needs and perspectives, and developing messages and communication strategies that effectively communicate with them.

**Science Communication\*:** Science communication refers to the process of communicating scientific information and knowledge to various audiences, including the general public, policymakers, educators, and other scientists. The goal of science communication is to make scientific information accessible, understandable, and relevant to non-experts while also promoting public engagement and understanding of science. \*Definition used by the author of the FAQs.

**Public Engagement:** Public engagement describes “the myriad ways in which the activities and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process involving interaction and listening with the goal of generating mutual benefit.”

Reference: National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (2018, Oct 16). *What is Public Engagement?* Retrieved from <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/what-publicengagement>

**Outreach:** Outreach is defined as “a one-way discourse, in which scientists communicate their research to the general public, with particular focus on school children and young people.

Reference: Illingworth S., Redfern J, Millington S and Gray S. *What's in a Name? Exploring the Nomenclature of Science Communication in the UK*

**Knowledge Exchange:** any activity that involves engagement with businesses, public and third sector services, the community, and the wider public, which involves the sharing of best practices, and which can be monitored for funding purposes.

Reference: Illingworth S, Redfern J, Millington S and Gray S. *What's in a Name? Exploring the Nomenclature of Science Communication in the UK*

**Citizen Science:** Citizen science typically refers to “research collaborations between scientists and volunteers, particularly (but not exclusively) to expand opportunities for scientific data collection and to provide access to scientific information for community members. As a working definition, we offer the following: projects in which volunteers’ partner with scientists to answer real-world questions.”

Reference: Cornell Lab of Ornithology (2018, Oct 16). *Citizen Science*. Retrieved from <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/about/definition>

**Science Education:** Science education refers to the teaching and learning of scientific knowledge, skills, and attitudes through various instructional methods, such as classroom lectures, hands-on, laboratory experiments, and field trips.

**Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI):** RRI is defined as “an approach where societal actors (researchers, citizens, policy makers, business, third sector organisations, etc.) work together during the whole research and innovation process in order to better align both the process and its outcomes with the values, needs and expectations of society.”

Reference: NUCLEUS Project (2018, Oct 16). *Responsible research & innovation*. Retrieved from <http://www.nucleus-project.eu/rri/>

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Building Institutional Communication Functions

Universities and research institutions are becoming more aware of their role in making scientific knowledge and information available to non-expert audiences. While individual researchers' and students' communication efforts are critical and should be supported, scientific institutions must also establish formal structures and mechanisms to foster this type of support. In addition, to improve their visibility and influence locally and globally, they should engage proactively with diverse audiences. Institutions can ensure this by developing and deploying a "communications team" to ensure the timely dissemination of scientific information and public engagement with Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI).

**Note:** The term "communications team" is used in the document for simplicity. The name of such an institutional structure should be considered carefully by the institution to ensure it reflects all the activities undertaken by such a team. For example, if the team also handles public engagement activities, it can be called the "Communications and Public Engagement" office/team. If it manages science education efforts such as school and college outreach, it can be called a "Science education and outreach" team, and so on.

### Q1. What role does a communications team play in a scientific institution?

A communications team serves as a crucial bridge between the institution and the outside world. Broadly, a communications team can contribute towards improving

1. institution's visibility, credibility, and reputation for attracting new staff, students, collaborations, funding, etc., (**Strategic Communication**) and;
2. public understanding of and engagement with science by informing and engaging with the local community and the public at large, including policymakers, media, etc., about research taking place at the institution and about science in general (**Science Communication or SciComm**).

In summary, a communications team/function can help institutions increase their visibility and credibility, maximize the impact of their research, improve public understanding of science, build trust, promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in research participation, attract funding, and engage with diverse audiences.

### Q2. What are some key goals and functions of a communications team?

Depending on the institution's mandate, some or all of the following goals can be considered institutional goals for public communication.



**Figure 1:** This figure shows the full extent of institutional communication and engagement goals, many of which are overlapping and synergistic in nature and also intersect with other research and academic support functionalities of the institution.

To achieve these goals, the Communications team performs a variety of functions listed below:

### Strategic Communication functions

- Devise and implement creative and robust strategies and tools to publicise the institution, its various projects, and programmes. This will help build a unique institutional identity and enhance its visibility, credibility, and reputation.
- Manage the day-to-day internal and external communications of the institution, including but not limited to the preparation of reports, website, social media, event publicity, fund-raising, and risk communication.
- Develop and maintain press relations and media contacts; respond to media inquiries; prepare press releases; and draft and post advertisements.
- Support the institution's vision and liaise with and support other departments/teams at the institution for the advancement of education and research activities at the institution.

### Science Communication functions

- Conceptualise, design, and develop written, audio, and visual content for various communication channels and audiences about the research advances at the institution.
- Design and implement innovative science communication programmes for a diverse public to inform and engage them directly in the institution's research activities and science in general.
- Lead and execute, or provide support to faculty, students, and allied staff in research communications and science engagement activities through skill-building workshops, bootcamps, resource-sharing, mentoring, etc.

**Important note:** While a distinction has been suggested between ‘Strategic Communication’ and ‘Science Communication’, there is a fair amount of overlap between these functions. Institutions should assess these similarities and differences carefully before developing a job description for hiring appropriate staff. They should develop a project brief if they are outsourcing these functions to external agencies. Furthermore, these functions should be carried out in accordance with government guidelines for public-funded institutions.

### Q 3. What are some key communication channels that institutions should develop, maintain, and use?

In today’s digital age, websites and social media serve as key public profiles of an institution. Several times, they function as the first point of contact between an organization and other stakeholders (within the government, industry, funding organizations, and the public), making them vital sources of information and platforms for engagement. The National Informatics Centre (NIC), MeitY, has implemented [Guidelines for Indian Government Websites](#) and emphasizes the ease of accessibility of the different features of the website and the maintenance of high-quality content.

Institutions use the following communication channels: a website (with a Content Management System, CMS), other web communication technologies such as newsletters and email services, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.), public/community events, and press communication. (See Annexure 2 for some examples and best practices)

### Q 4. Where should a communications function/team be placed within the institution?

The communications function or team should be positioned within an institutional framework that provides it with sufficient resources and a reasonable amount of autonomy to carry out its responsibilities in line with the institution’s communication goals. To advance the institution’s overall objectives, this team should collaborate closely with other departments, such as administrative offices, fundraising, research support offices, etc.

Additionally, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations, the communications team can report directly to the institution’s head, director, or dean of research/academics. For larger institutions, the reporting structure should guarantee that the team receives adequate guidance from the leadership on institutional goals and can successfully carry out communication objectives.

### Q 5. What should be the composition and structure of an institutional communications team?

The composition (number and type of staff) and structure of an institutional communications team depend on the institution’s size, available resources, and communication mandate and goals.

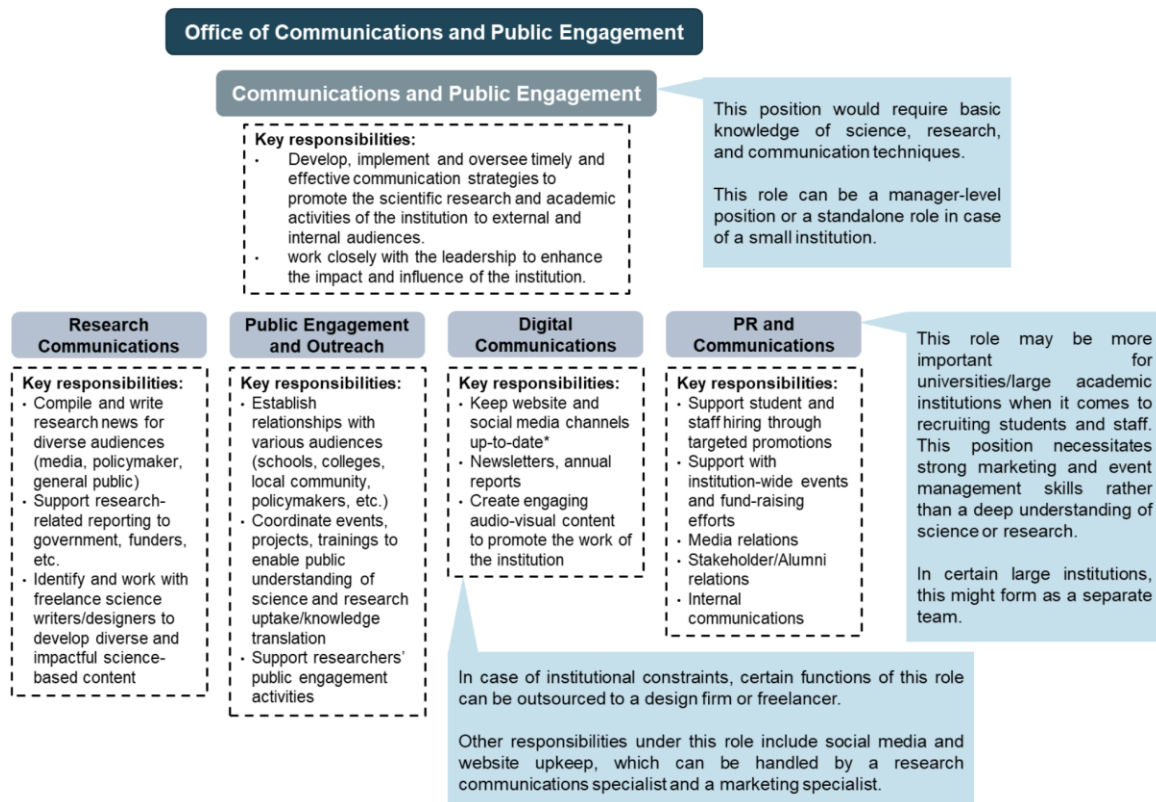
**Figure 2** lists possible roles in an institutional communications team. The total number of staff required in a communications team or for each of these role(s) would depend entirely on the institution’s communication needs as well as resource availability.

It is also important to note that each role listed in this table requires a specific skill set. For example, one would need strong writing skills as well as a basic understanding of scientific concepts to carry out research communication functions on this team. Similarly, the social media coordinator should possess a portfolio that shows a strong understanding of visualization along with social media communication capabilities.



Additionally, in large institutions, individual departments/centers/schools can also hire/set up their own communications team that works in tandem with the central communications team. Decentralising communication responsibilities not only relieves the central office of some workload but also results in more targeted and effective communication.

The institutional hiring team should be mindful of the different skill requirements for 'Strategic Communication' and 'Science Communication' activities. While the former requires a more in-depth understanding of PR and communication strategies and tools, the latter usually requires the ability to simplify complex scientific information without compromising scientific facts and rigour.



**Figure 2:** A possible architecture for a communications team. It is important to note the team's functional diversity and how different functions necessitate specific skill sets. For examples, for science communication activities, a PR or marketing specialist would need to work with a research communication specialist or other technical experts.

## Q 6. How do you determine the ideal team composition and structure?

The composition and structure of an institutional communications team can be determined by identifying the communication goals and objectives of the institution.

For example,

### If you are a research institute:

You may consider recruiting a communications officer or manager who can guide and oversee the various communication functions of the institution. This person also serves as a communication liaison for various stakeholders, including government departments, funding agencies, the media, etc. Additionally, you may hire a research communication specialist and graphic designer to promote

institution's research through social media, newsletters, and other multimedia channels or formats.

**If you are a central/state university:**

As an institution coordinating both higher education and research activities, universities typically have a broader communications mandate that includes both marketing and promotional activities to attract diverse, high-quality staff and students, as well as responsive and meaningful engagement with local communities and university stakeholders to enable them to appreciate and participate in the work of the university. Identify the roles needed to fulfil this institutional mandate from Figure 1.

**If you are an institution overseeing multiple research institutes:**

Establish a lean communications team to serve as the single point of contact for communication teams at other research institutes. This team should be able to identify and amplify all institution's research stories and updates of public importance. The team is also expected to provide leadership and assistance to their communications staff across all research institutes.

## Q 7. How to set up a communications team?

Institutions can either hire communication staff from the list in **Figure 2** or outsource certain communication functions to an external agency, individuals freelancing as communication specialists, science communicators, or public engagement specialists. In any case, **the institution should develop a communication roadmap outlining its key communication goals, strategies, and outcomes**. This is a critical exercise that determines the effectiveness of communication activities and the efficient utilisation of funds.

**If directly hiring full-time staff:**

- Design a suitable job description for the role(s) you plan to hire for (see Annexure 1)
- In addition to announcing job vacancies on the institution's website and social media channels, advertise them on popular and relevant job boards.
- Set 6-9 months as the probation period for hired staff; prepare a performance matrix to review their work (annually or half yearly) and provide necessary guidance.

**Outsourcing:**

- Carefully review the external agency and/or consultant portfolio to ensure it adheres to the institution's policies and standards of work.
- Develop a clear brief with a list of deliverables, a timeline, and the expected quality of work. Make sure this is agreed upon with the external contractor/consultant at the outset. These details must be included in the contract.
- Share examples of work that you would like them to refer to (optional).
- The institution can sign a non-disclosure and confidentiality agreement with the external agency or individuals to prevent unauthorised use and disclosure of information that the institution considers proprietary or confidential or both.

**Important note:** When establishing a new communications team, no more than two full-time communication staff should be hired in the first two years. While the reporting structure for the communication team should be in line with organizational policies and processes, the communication staff should have a strong connection with the institutional leadership and be able to effectively execute institutional communication priorities as well as provide feedback on the workings of the institution based on audience/stakeholder expectations and feedback. The communications team should be expanded based on an objective assessment of evolving communication objectives, activities, and staff workload. To monitor the staff's performance, an appropriate (6-9 months)

probation period should be implemented.

Additionally, institutions setting up a communications function/team for the first time can form an **advisory board** composed of internal and external members representing diverse disciplines yet possessing relevant expertise. This advisory board can review performance and guide the institution's communication activities once a year or every six months.

## Q 8. What should be the funding mechanism for the institution's communications team?

The institution should allocate and spend adequate funds from its core budget to manage institutional communications and public engagement activities. A **certain percentage** of the institution's annual budget can be allocated to these activities. Specifying a budget will also help the institution to enhance its ability to strategically plan and effectively monitor the mid- and long-term returns on its communication-related initiatives. This evidence-based approach will enable the institution to take informed steps towards achieving its goals.

The recruitment and salaries of the communications team members can be covered under the budget head "Human Resources". The remuneration should be competitive (equal or more than the industry average for similar positions in the same location).

The institution can also consider exploring extramural funds to support the communications team's activities. For example, CSR funds can be used to support certain science outreach and education activities.

## Q 9. How do you measure the impact of the communication activities?

Monitoring and evaluation are essential components of high-quality communication and audience engagement. Not only does it help to assess the impact of communication activities, but it also helps adapt to the complex and dynamic nature of external communication and engagement.

Creating a suitable evaluation framework to focus on both quantitative and qualitative measures [Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART); Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), outputs, and outcomes] as a measurement of communication activities is essential.

Some key indicators that can help monitor the effectiveness of institutional communication activities are as follows:

Quantitative indicators:

- **Website and newsletters:** traffic to the website, particularly around key announcements and events; click-through rate on the website, newsletters, and ads
- **Social media:** the number of impressions, reach, engagement (likes, comments, and shares), and engagement rate by post or reach on social media platforms. Engagement rates on social media, particularly around key announcements and events, can provide a good indication of the effectiveness of the communication content and strategy. (See the example below for more details.)
- **Press and media:** The number of press queries, mentions, and responses can indicate the penetration and presence of institution's key messages in public spaces.
- **Participation and quantitative feedback** from outreach and public engagement programs

- **Research uptake:** how widely research findings have been taken up by the media, policymakers, and the public as a result of targeted or organic communication efforts. Measurables like reach, impressions, citations, and mentions can help assess the outcome quantitatively.

Qualitative indicators:

- feedback, comments, and testimonials from internal and external stakeholders (e.g., positive/negative feedback on surveys; spontaneous mentions at high-level stakeholder or public meetings and events; new collaborations, etc.).
- Sentiment analysis can be done by analyzing comments and testimonials for specific emotions. This analysis can provide insight into the public's perception of the institution.

**Important note:** It will be necessary to build a communications strategy (objective, inputs, outputs, outcomes framework) for the communications team and baseline data for each of the parameters to be assessed before setting out to evaluate communication efforts.

The example below is for illustrative purposes only.

**Objective:** *Improve institution's visibility through social media.*

**Inputs:** These interventions/activities may be put in place to achieve the objective.

- Identify and segment the audience- peers, journalists, institutes, policymakers, etc.
- Regular and appealing posts. Identify an appropriate time of posting and suitable types of content
- Prepare a social media posting and posts strategy.
- Use short videos, photos, and graphics as and when needed. Ensure all accessibility, privacy, and permission criteria are met
- Regular and targeted campaigns, polls and contests relevant for audience
- Use appropriate hashtags and account tags. Identify and interact with micro-influencers if needed.
- Monitor social media-led visitors to digital channels and events. This can be done through Google Analytics.
- Measure the sentiments of the audience through quotes, retweets, or comment texts.

**Outputs:** These are tangible actions or products produced or delivered, the number of individuals benefited, and the activities or services offered. Outputs are measurable and readily identified.

- Percentage increase in social media followers over a given time period (quarterly measured)
- Percentage increase in audience engagement on social media by posts and reach
- Percentage increased reach of social media posts
- Visitors traffic to institutional websites, programmes or events through social media
- Increase in audience positive sentiment

**Outcomes:** An outcome is the effect that your programme/intervention has on the people or issues that you serve or address. Outcomes are predicted improvements in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviour, condition, or status for the group served.

- Improved visibility of the institution on social media
- Institution or its researchers seen as credible source of scientific information

**Measures:**

- Website and Social Media analytics (metrics like engagement (likes, comment, share, preview), impression, reach, engagement rate by post/reach, follows, and comments)
- Increased rate of relevant followers
- Media coverage based on social media posts; journalists picking up news stories from social media, reaching out to the institute/researcher based on a news story, etc.
- Increase in submissions and joining applications for administrative roles, research, and academic programmes
- Increase in participation at institutional events

**Q 10. What are some key features of a good communications team?**

- Identifies SMART goals and objectives of communication at the outset
- Use of simple and accessible language in their communication
- Communicates proactively rather than reactively
- Engages audience members using culturally appropriate and inclusive communication techniques and tools.
- Monitors and assesses the effectiveness of its communication activities on a continuous basis, making course corrections as appropriate.
- Based on its work, provides continuous insights to the leadership to inform the larger goals of the institution.
- Works cooperatively with staff and students to achieve its communication goals and that of the institution.

**Q 11. How to ensure that communication activities are an integral part of the institutional ethos and culture**

Communication and public engagement activities will only be effective if they are embedded in the institution's vision and mandate. This change can be achieved in the following ways:

- Articulate and integrate the goals and purpose of communication and public engagement into the institution's mission, vision, and strategy.
- Identify core communication and engagement activities for the institution.
- To ensure the sustainability of these core communication activities, allocate a specific portion of the institution's budget and pertinent resources to them.
- Share quarterly outcomes, case studies of communications, and raise awareness. of the importance of public communication of science with the institution. Share the impact stories with data and comments through engaging internal communication activities.
- Reward and recognise those who undertake public communication and engagement activities at the institution out of their personal interest and beyond their defined roles.
- Provide regular and periodic training in science communication to staff and students to encourage and foster their interest, knowledge, and skills to ultimately empower and prepare new and existing enthusiasts to contribute to the institution's communication efforts.
- Set up an advisory board of internal and external members to advise and monitor the effectiveness of the institution's communication activities, as needed.
- Use tools such as EDGE to monitor institutions' support and readiness level for public communication and engagement.

## ANNEXURE 1 | Examples of a Job Description for Communications Team

### Example of a job description for a Communications Officer (OR Manager)

**Position Summary:** The Communications Officer will be responsible for developing and implementing effective communication strategies to promote the scientific research and academic activities of the institution to external and internal audiences. This includes managing public relations, community engagement, media outreach, social media, website and other communication channels to ensure the institution's work is effectively communicated.

#### Key responsibilities:

- Develop and implement communication and public engagement strategies that align with the institution's goals and objectives.
- Create and manage content for the institution's website, social media channels, and other communication channels to engage the public in the institution's research and activities.
- Work closely with researchers and other stakeholders to identify and communicate research developments in a way that is accessible and engaging to the public.
- Develop and implement public engagement initiatives, such as events, workshops, and educational programs, that promote the institution's work and impact.
- Manage relationships with media outlets, journalists, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure positive coverage of the institution's work.
- Coordinate the institution's public outreach efforts, including responding to inquiries and requests for information from the public.
- Ensure that all communication materials are accurate, well-written, and conform to institutional branding guidelines.
- Conduct regular analysis and reporting on the effectiveness of communication and public engagement strategies and adjust them as needed.
- Work with other institutional stakeholders, such as development and fundraising teams, to ensure that communication and engagement efforts align with broader institutional goals.

#### Qualifications:

- Minimum of 3 years of experience in communications or public engagement, preferably in a scientific or academic setting
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to communicate complex scientific concepts to a broad range of audiences
- Strong project management skills, with the ability to prioritize and manage multiple projects simultaneously
- Experience managing social media accounts and website content management systems
- Knowledge of public engagement principles and strategies, and experience developing and implementing public engagement initiatives
- Knowledge of media relations and experience working with journalists and media outlets
- Familiarity with branding and marketing principles and strategies is desirable
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Strong attention to detail and a commitment to producing high-quality work.

**Note for institutions:** The reporting line for this role should be determined by the institution as per their policies. But ideally this role should be reporting to the leadership (Head/Director/Dean) of the institution so that communication activities are timely and strategic.

## Example of a job description for a Digital Communications Coordinator

### Job Title: Digital Communications Coordinator

**Position Summary:** The **Digital Communications Coordinator** will be responsible for managing the website, social media engagement and digital outreach efforts of the research institution. They will work closely with researchers, staff, and external partners to develop and execute digital outreach strategies that promote the institution's research, build relationships with stakeholders, and engage the public with latest research and science, more broadly.

### Key Responsibilities:

1. Develop and implement a digital communication strategy that aligns with the institution's goals and objectives.
2. Manage the institution's website and social media platforms, ensuring that they are up-to-date and engaging.
3. Create digital content (including graphics, videos, and written content) that promotes the institution's activities, research findings, and events.
4. Write and edit content for the institution's website, social media platforms, newsletters, and other digital communication channels.
5. Work closely with research teams and to identify and promote their research findings through digital channels.
6. Monitor and analyze the institution's digital communication metrics, and use the data to improve communication strategies.
7. Develop and maintain relationships with key stakeholders, including media outlets, partner organizations, and the wider research community.
8. Provide training and support to staff members on digital communication best practices.
9. Keep up-to-date with trends and developments in digital communication, and identify opportunities to improve the institution's communication strategies.

### Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in Science, Communications, Public Relations, Marketing, or related field.
- 1-2 years of experience in social media management, outreach, or related fields.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to translate complex scientific concepts into accessible language.
- Knowledge of social media platforms and best practices, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.
- Experience developing and implementing outreach strategies and programs.
- Ability to work collaboratively with researchers, staff, and external partners.
- Strong organizational and project management skills.
- Ability to work independently and manage multiple tasks and projects simultaneously.
- Experience with email marketing and newsletter campaigns.
- Familiarity with scientific research and related terminology preferred.

The Digital Communications Coordinator will report to the Communications Manager and work closely with other departments and the researchers/staff across the institution.

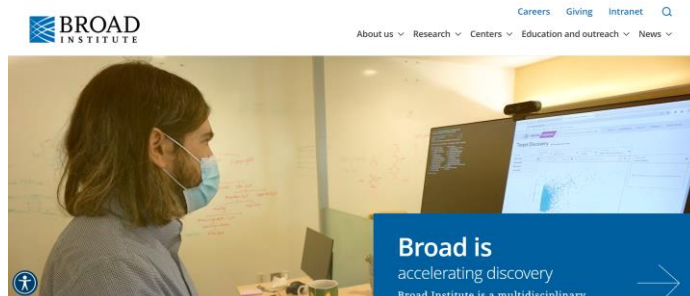
## ANNEXURE 2 | Example of institutional websites and social media channels

Find below some key considerations to keep in mind while developing or maintaining an institutional website:

1. **User-friendly interface:** A good website should be easy to navigate, with clear menus and a logical layout that makes it simple for users to find the information they are looking for.
2. **Fast loading times:** A website that takes too long to load can be frustrating for users, so it's important to optimize the site's images, videos, and other content to ensure fast loading times.
3. **Responsive design:** A good website should be responsive, meaning it adapts to the user's device, whether it's a desktop computer, tablet, or smartphone, and looks great on any screen size.
4. **High-quality content:** A good website should have well-written, informative content that is relevant to the user's needs and interests.
5. **Engaging visuals:** Visual elements such as images, videos, and graphics can make a website more engaging and interesting for users, but it's important to use high-quality visuals that are relevant to the content. Photos of people help humanise science by showcasing the people behind research and teaching.
6. **Strong security:** A good website should have strong security measures in place to protect user data and prevent hacking or other security breaches.
7. **Easy-to-use forms:** If the website includes forms, such as contact forms or order forms, they should be easy to use and not require too much information from the user.
8. **Regular updates:** A good website should be regularly updated with fresh content, news, or other information to keep users coming back.
9. **Social media integration:** Integrating social media into the website can help to increase engagement and expand the site's reach to a wider audience.
10. **Good search engine optimization (SEO):** A good website should be optimized for search engines so that it can rank well in search results and attract more traffic.

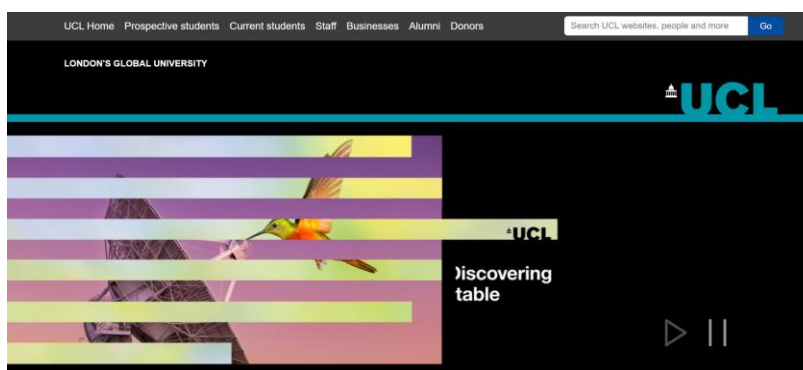
Find below some examples of institutional websites and social media channels that follow the general good practices listed above and can serve as a useful reference for building effective digital communication channels for your institution.

1. **Broad Institute**, USA

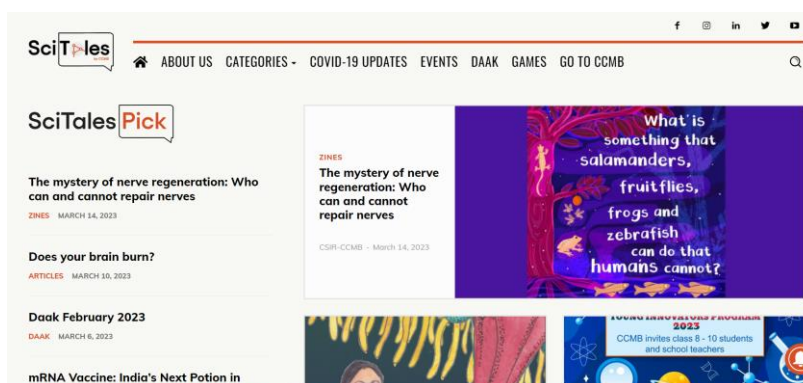




## 2. University College London, UK



## 3. SciTales, CSIR-CCMB's science communication website, India



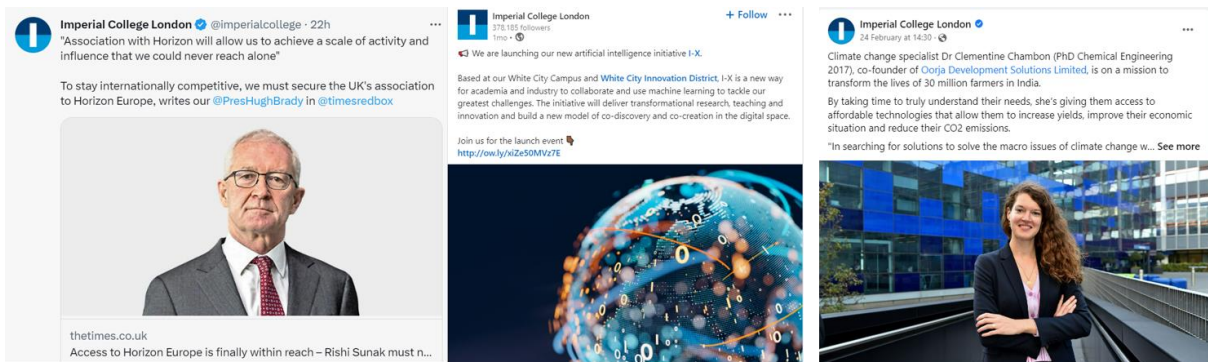
The key characteristics of an institution's social media channel include:

1. **Branding:** The institution's social media channel and other communication materials should have a consistent look and feel reflecting the organization's brand. This includes building and applying one color scheme (if it does not exist already), logo, and font across all social media platforms and communications (slide deck, newsletter, email design, etc).
2. **Content:** The content posted on the institution's social media channels should be relevant, engaging, and informative. It should be tailored to the specific audience that the institution is targeting. The content (especially photos, videos, graphics, and quotes) should not violate any privacy or permissions.
3. **Tone:** The tone of the institution's social media channels should be professional yet approachable. It should be consistent with the organization's overall voice and messaging. Depending on the social media channel, the tone may vary from professional to friendly. However, it should be open, inclusive, and compassionate at all times. The institution can establish if the use of emojis expresses the tone and voice accurately.
4. **Frequency:** The institution's social media channels should be updated regularly with new content to keep followers engaged and informed. The frequency of posts should be consistent and tailored to the specific social media platform.

5. **Engagement:** The institution should actively engage with its followers and respond to comments and messages on time. This helps to build trust, humanizes the channel, and fosters a sense of community around the institution's social media channels.
6. **Analytics:** The institution should use analytics tools to track the social media channels' performance. Metrics such as engagement rate, reach, and follower growth can help the institution refine its social media strategy over the course of time.

### Example of an institutional social media channel

4. **Imperial College London's** social media account includes a good balance of posts around events, research, new programmes and academic training opportunities, student life, etc.. The account uses a variety of high-quality media (particularly photos of people), appropriate tone and voice, hashtags and emojis to draw audiences' attention.



### **ANNEXURE 3 | List of people who provided inputs for the FAQs**

1. Anusheela Chatterjee, Programme Head-Science Media Centre, TIFR Hyderabad
2. Dr. Anirban Chakraborty, Director of Research and Development, Ashoka University
3. Ranjini Raghunath, Communications Officer, IISc Bangalore
4. Dr. Ratnesh Thakur, Technical Officer (Science Communications), DBT-NIPGR, New Delhi
5. Dr. Shanti Kalipatnapu, Principal Technical Officer (Research Communications), IISER Pune
6. Dr. Sharmistha Majumdar, Associate Professor, Biological Engineering, IIT Gandhinagar
7. Dr. Somdatta Karak, Science Communication and Public Outreach Officer, CSIR-CCMB, Hyderabad
8. Sonal Katyal, Communications Officer, NCBS Bangalore
9. Dr. Siuli Mitra, Communications Consultant, CMC Vellore