

University Library Customer Engagement and Communication Strategy

The University of Hull Library prides itself on delivering an exceptional experience for all our customers. This is evidenced in the achievement of the Customer Service Excellence standard for our front-line services and through the maintenance of our strong NSS performance. This strategy sets out our aspirations to work alongside and with our customers to better understand, develop and improve our services. We believe that working in partnership with our customers is core to the delivery of transformational services.

We use the term 'customer' to represent the diversity of those we serve. While most of our customers are University of Hull staff and students, we also support many other groups. This includes our volunteers, members of the public, prospective students, our further education partners and our associate members. For this reason, this strategy takes a genuinely inclusive approach to define customer. We want to know how our customers experience our services to ensure that we deliver services that meet everyone's needs.

Our customer services go beyond the University of Hull campus. We are a core partner in the delivery of services at the Hull History Centre. Our digital and remote services provide for University of Hull staff and students – and other customers all over the world. As a provider of library and archive services, we serve as stewards of special collections which we curate and make accessible for the benefit of all. For these reasons, our engagement strategy looks beyond the Brynmor Jones Library.

This strategy has been written in collaboration with staff representing all Library services. Collectively, the whole Library remains committed to delivering this strategy. We are incredibly proud of everything we have achieved so far. All the values and objectives established in this strategy will help us develop how we work alongside customers. This strategy will be underpinned by an annual Customer Engagement Plan and separate Communication Plan to ensure the strategy is delivered.

How we define customer engagement – our values

Customer engagement is the development of a comprehensive understanding of our customers. The goal of customer engagement is to better understand their needs and how our services meet them. Customer engagement is a continuous and evolving process. It should be an essential aspect of all Library operations. This section sets out the core principles we believe embody customer engagement.

Customer engagement is a two-way process. We should know who our customers are, but we also want them to know us. For this reason, we consider marketing and communication a core aspect of customer engagement. While communications are traditionally broadcasts, they are the most basic form of engagement with our customers, especially in the digital age. Digital communications and especially social media give us the affordance to move from broadcast to dialogue. For this reason, communications are a fundamental part of this strategy and will help us to ensure consistency across both what we say and how we listen and respond.

Communications also allow us to close the feedback loop. The most essential companion to listening is a timely response or action. As engagement is a two-way process, we remain committed to delivering customer feedback to the right department or manager for consideration. Where appropriate or requested, customers will receive a timely response. However, we need to go further and show all customers how we respond to feedback. There will be times in which we cannot improve, change, or meet expectations. On such occasions, we should explain our reasoning to customers.

Our customers should be aware of our services and know how to seek help. For this reason, we should produce consistent and high-quality communications. From tweets and emails to posters and digital signage, our communications should be clear. We should support all of our services with clear communication lines for our customers to feedback or seek support.

We passionately believe that partnership is the most profound form of customer engagement, and we want to work with our customers to improve our services. However, we also value more routine forms of engagement – such as surveys and feedback. Not all customers have the volition or time to work in partnership, but all deserve the opportunity to feedback to us. We will always listen.

We have the benefit of many partners and stakeholders to help us deliver customer engagement. This includes collaborating with University Faculties, the Students' Union, Hull History Centre, and any other partners to get a fuller picture of our services. Wherever there is joint responsibility on the delivery of services, there is additional pressure on us to get our partnerships right. We will also work with our suppliers to help customers get resolutions to any problems they face.

We are one University Library. Our staff may be based in different teams, locations and working environments, but we work towards a common goal. Any one group cannot own customer engagement. It is a collective endeavour, and University Library-wide collaboration is essential to make this work.

Engagement that is not inclusive is not engagement. It is exclusion. The University Library remains committed to delivering inclusive and accessible communications and engagement opportunities. Inclusion is everyone's responsibility. We want inclusion to be a core part of our engagement. No customer should feel like they cannot get involved. We should work to understand the diversity of our customers and how we can support them to feel included, developing services that represent them and meet their needs. We will achieve this with closing working University Library's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

Aims and objectives

1. Develop university-leading partnerships with students and staff to collaborate on the development and enhancement of services

We recognise the importance of partnerships and collaborations to deliver meaningful engagement.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Leveraging our existing student-staff partnerships and facilitating new ones to develop our services.
- ii. Investigating opportunities to deliver service improvement through partnership with our volunteers.
- iii. Engaging with academics to understand their needs and develop our services.

2. Leverage data to transform services and the understanding of our customers

We need to maximise the use of our resources. For this reason, better utilising the data already possessed is an integral part of this strategy. We should first see if we may already have an answer before we seek engagement and feedback on specific issues.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Leveraging the quantitative data we have to understand how our customers use our services.
- ii. Understanding the data we have, its worth and cost.
- iii. Develop our use of qualitative data and feedback to develop greater depth in our customer insight.

3. Develop our understanding of our customer groups and their needs.

Fundamental to customer engagement is a thorough understanding of who our customers are.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Continuing to build our understanding of who uses which services.
- ii. Identifying our hard to reach customers and develop ways to successfully engage with them.
- iii. Ensuring we treat and engage with our customers fairly

4. Develop new means of online feedback (i.e. polls, surveys, social media)

Most customers now use our online and digital services. Where people are working at a distance, existing mechanisms like our feedback postbox no longer work. We need to revolutionise how our customers can engage with the Library in online spaces.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Developing a feedback toolkit to offer a range of feedback mechanisms.
- ii. Considering the role of in-time feedback

5. Integrate marketing and communication into broader engagement work

We need to ensure that our messaging and communications are fully integrated with our customer engagement processes. Communications are the basis of engagement, and our engagement should inform future communications.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Establishing a new Marketing and Social Media Team to lead on communication.
- ii. Develop an annual communications plan, focusing on how and what we communicate.
- iii. Ensuring active cross-working between colleagues involved in engagement and communications.
- iv. Using our marketing and communications channels to explain how we have made changes to our services and policies in response to information gathered through customer engagement.

6. Develop impactful user experience research that considers both our physical and digital environments and services.

The University Library strongly acknowledges the potential benefits of user experience (UX) research. However, such research must be meaningful, realistic, and impactful.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Developing realistic projects that target specific issues we wish to address. Projects should focus on issues within our power to fix.
- ii. A/B testing of digital environments and behavioural analysis.

7. Use best practice from across the sector to develop and enhance our customer engagement plan and strategy

a. We will do this by:

- i. Benchmarking services, service standards and policies with comparator institutions and other CSE holders.
- ii. Maintaining an awareness of customer engagement initiatives being developed by other institutions in the sector.

8. Support our users in the development of realistic feedback and requests, setting expectations on what is possible.

a. We will do this by:

- i. Ensuring we are specific in what we ask our customers for feedback on.
- ii. Being clear about what can and can't be changed as a result of feedback.

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