

Team Talk - Guidelines

1. Introduction

Many organisations use team briefings and formal cascades as a way of keeping staff members up to date with organisational decisions and progress.

A new system of team briefing for all staff is being formally introduced at The University of Bolton called Team Talk. The following document contains everything you need to fully engage in the team briefing process. This Team Talk briefing should supplement and not replace other forms of effective formal and informal communication methods.

These guidelines cover the key points to the process and give you all the information you need to carry out a successful team brief here at the University of Bolton.

- Why are we doing this?

Team Talk briefings are an opportunity to give thanks and recognition for the work that we do within the University.

The initiative is supported by feedback we received from Investors in People (IiP) reaccreditation in March 2017 and complements the ethos of continuous improvement. In addition, in October 2017 the University asked staff to give feedback on internal communications facilitated by PWC and we recognise that improvements need to be made.

2. What is a Team Briefing?

Team briefing provides:

- A channel for delivering clear messages and encouraging open communication.
- Timely face-to-face communication which prevents rumour and the grapevine from gaining credibility.
- A great form of two-way communication - it's not just about informing people, but listening and responding to questions and concerns
- Staff with an opportunity to ask questions and for suggestions to be fed back from staff to the top.

Everyone acknowledges that face-to-face contact can sometimes be challenging. However it is important to also acknowledge that team briefings will only work if **everyone** involved in the process is committed to making it work.

If you are a manager with a responsibility to deliver a Team Talk then it is your job to make sure that everyone within your team **fully** understands what team briefing is about and the importance of why they should take part proactively in the process.

2.1 The benefits

The benefits of team briefings include:

- A greater awareness of organisational issues and involvement at all levels.

- A shared sense of mission, vision, collective aims and reasons about why we're working here.
- The ability to reduce misunderstanding within your team and within other parts of the University.
- Brief staff with up to date information on performance, results, progress and policy changes.

2.2 The Team Talk Briefing process

There will be a formal university briefing each month after each Executive Board monthly meeting. This will be communicated as follows:

The Team Talk Briefing Process

Step 1

Executive Board meeting is held . Information is taken out of that meeting to cascade down . This will be called the University briefing

Step 2

The University Briefing is shared within the Senior Managers Forum and in Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic) Core Operations Meeting at least monthly

Academic Process

Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic) delivers the University brief to Deans/Heads of School and Directors

Professional Support Process

Members of the Executive Board deliver the University brief to Heads of Service/Director in Senior Managers Forum

Step 3

Dean of the Faculty/Heads of School/Directors deliver the University Briefing as part of a Team Talk to all staff

Step 3

Heads of Service/Directors deliver University Briefing as part of a Team Talk to all staff

Once step 2 of the University Briefing process has been completed, the Head of School/Service will meet with their staff and deliver the University brief as part of a Team Talk briefing. This will include details of the University brief but any local information that they feel needs to be shared. This can be supplemented by a team brief document that can also be given out as part of the brief. Please note that it is expected that Heads of School/Service will take notes at the relevant meeting/forum to feedback to their teams.

If Heads of School/Service have large teams they may wish to brief their direct report managers who in turn can deliver a team brief to their staff members. These managers should then brief their own teams, again including the information from the University Brief/ the HOS/HOS brief which

they have received, and again adding any further local information which they feel may be of relevance to their own individual teams.

The cascade of briefings should continue down all relevant levels of management until all teams have received a face-to-face team briefing.

It is important to note that managers responsible for delivering University briefings must nominate a deputy, with agreement from the Chair of the relevant meeting/forum, who can attend the Step 2 briefings if they themselves are unable to attend.

- Additional Informal Team Briefings

Managers can continue to complete informal (optional) team briefs with their teams throughout the month, this will be separate to the University briefings that will take place once per month.

The informal team briefing process should begin on the same day of each week or as closely as realistically achievable if this is not possible. Briefings can be weekly or fortnightly depending on the nature of the work in your area, or if there are no updates required.

3. Team Talk Briefing calendar

Managers are expected to publish dates, times and locations for Team Talk briefings. The Team Talk briefing needs to be delivered within 7 working days of the Core Operations meeting/Senior Managers Forum. Dates selected should support efficient cascading of information to all levels of staff in a prompt manner. Once the cascade has been agreed, managers should set a series of dates for their Team Talk briefings so that staff are aware of the dates in advance and can put them into their diaries. When choosing dates managers should try where possible to aim for a day when most of their team is around - take into consideration those who may work part-time or shifts/rotas.

3.1 Guidelines for managers who are responsible for delivering a Team Talk

The single most important factor in the success of the team brief process is the person who is giving the briefing. Preparation is key!

- I. Firstly establish if you are responsible for delivering a briefing and in what context from the calendar above.
- II. Make sure you arrange a suitable venue

3.2 Preparing the Team Talk brief

The University Brief

Your manager will tell you about the University Brief which will have been generated from Step 2 of the Team Talk briefing process. This Brief will contain items which may be of operational or strategic importance to the administration as a whole.

You should deliver this information to your team as part of a team briefing; however the information from the University Brief should only make up around 30% of your Team Talk as a whole. Where possible you should try to make the information contained within The University Brief as relevant to your team as possible by highlighting the implications and impact of the information on the team you are briefing.

Context

Briefers, usually Head of School, Dean or Head of Service must always remember, and if necessary remind those that they are briefing, that the object of the exercise is to provide information.

Content

The majority of your team briefing should be made up of local information which is relevant to your team. Here are some pointers to get you thinking about the kind of things to include in your local brief.

A good way to think about your brief is to split it up into ‘the four Ps’, people, points for action, progress and policy issues.

The four P's:

People	Points for Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotions • Appointments • Retirements/leavers • Visitors • Success stories • Changed locations/functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New and on-going projects/activities • Special events • Health and Safety issues • Building works • Work standards • Upcoming deadlines
Progress	Policy Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figures, returns, numbers • Marketing • Success stories • Feedback/Customer Service excellence SE/Continuous Improvement • Completed projects/activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources policies • New/Update Policies • Student recruitment and retention policies • Health and Safety policy

- **Good news stories!**

We all want to hear positive messages throughout the University so the Team Talk briefing is a time to share good news and achievements for example, share any new starters that have or will be joining the team, any positive feedback that has been received.

3.3 Delivering the Team Talk brief

Here are some hints and tips to help you deliver the brief:

- **Be clear** – avoid unfamiliar technicalities, acronyms, names and jargon
- **Be brief** – don't ramble or go off the point
- **Be interesting** – use real examples that the group will recognise to help bring the brief to life.
- **Be in control** – arrange the group so that you are its focus. Watch the reaction you are getting as you go along
- **Be positive** – if you appear nervous or unsure it can give your staff the impression that you don't really believe what you're saying. Don't give your own personal views about decisions which have been taken at a University level
- **Be you** – use your own words and your own style

4. Communicating Upwards

As discussed earlier in this document, it is important that staff feel they have a voice and that there is a channel where they can feedback and share their knowledge and experiences with the rest of the team. This can then be fed back upwards to the Senior Managers Forum and /or the Core Operation meetings. This supports our IIP and CSE agenda.

As part of your briefings you should allow time for others in your team to feedback on any communications you have cascaded and share anything they feel adds value to the meeting. We will discuss feedback and follow up in the next section but let's now look at what staff members can share in the team briefings that can also be communicated upwards to Senior Manager Forum and Core Operational meeting:

- Any courses or meetings they have been on that can be shared
- Any good news stories such as student compliments
- Any new business partnerships or contacts that have been made that will help increase revenue within the University

If the feedback is specifically department related this can be communicated upwards to the Executive Board Line Manager.

5. Feedback and Follow up

One of the main reasons for doing team brief is to seek the views of your staff and gain their feedback. While you're not expected to know the answers to every question your teams put to you, there are some things you can do to encourage and handle feedback:

- Take a note of any feedback – if you receive any feedback round the Team Talk briefing, note it down to take forward to Senior Managers Forum, Core Operational Meeting or Executive Board line manager as appropriate.
- Make sure anyone who isn't present get a copy of the briefing note or brief them separately.
- Commit to finding out the answer – If one of your team ask you a question that you do not know the answer to make sure you find out the answer and feedback as soon as possible.
- Anticipate any questions that may be asked.

6. Training and Support

If you feel you would benefit from some support or training on how to deliver team briefings please contact your HR Business Partner