

TEXT MESSAGING

POLICY NUMBER: ADM-TEXTMESSAGING

POLICY TYPE: ADMINISTRATIVE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL TITLE: VICE PRESIDENT OF ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER/OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

EFFECTIVE DATE: JANUARY 29, 2018

NEXT REVIEW DATE: LAST REVIEW PLUS FOUR (4) YEARS – 8/13/25

BOARD OF REGENTS REPORTING (CHECK ONE):

PRESIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATION (CONSENT AGENDA/VOTING ITEM)

PRESIDENTIAL REPORT (INFORMATION ONLY)

I. POLICY STATEMENT

Background

The increasing and almost universal use of mobile phones has opened up a new avenue of opportunity for communication between Northern Kentucky University (NKU) and its staff and students.

NKU values communication methods that engage students without overwhelming them. Text messaging is one of the methods of communication used by NKU to communicate directly with prospective students and currently enrolled students and shall be conducted only in accordance with this policy.

This policy provides the acceptable guidelines for how the university will use Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) text messaging appropriately to communicate important information to faculty, staff, and students. The use of SMS messaging is intended to sit alongside other existing forms of communication such as letters, email, and the university's website. The immediate delivery of text messaging gives it an advantage over other forms of communication: most students have their 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.

Mass Texting

Mass texting of prospective students and currently enrolled students concerning university business must support health, safety, and/or student success initiatives. Mass texting is the process of sending the same text message to multiple recipients. For purposes of clarity, this policy defines a mass text as sending to 100 or more recipients within a 24-hour period.

Instructional Texting

Instructional texting includes faculty communication to students currently enrolled in courses they instruct. These messages may be individualized to a particular student (e.g., *Hello Bob, this is Dr. Smith. I received your assignment, but it is missing page 2; I do have pages 1 and 3. Please resubmit with all pages.*) or a text message to the class about something that affects the entire class (e.g., *ENG 101 students, this is Dr. Smith. I am ill and must cancel class today. Please see Canvas for notes.*)

Following the requirements stated in NKU policies is necessary, but no prior approval is needed when sending an instructional text message.

General Texting

General texting includes messages for university business purposes between a university office (such as UCAP) and a student or employee, or a small group of students or employees. These messages are intended to provide important data regarding a business need (e.g., *Bob, An advising hold has been placed on your account. Please contact your advisor, John Doe, for hold removal.*) Following the requirements stated in NKU policies is necessary, but no prior approval is needed when sending a general text message.

RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines for various texting: mass texting, instructional texting, and general texting.

Mass texting is to enable approved offices to use consistent operating procedures to communicate university business in an expedient and timely manner through text messages to 100 or more students.

General texting is to enable individualized, consistent operating procedures to communicate university business in an expedient and timely manner through text messages. General texting is intended to be used when communicating one-to-one or one-to-few.

Instructional texting is to enable faculty to communicate with their current students in an expedient and timely manner.

In the case of mass, instructional, and general texting, text messaging must not be used as the sole means of communicating an essential message or announcement. The text message must be supplemented by some other means of communication, such as an email or paper notice, to ensure that all students, including those who have opted-out, receive the message.

All text messages should:

- Provide means to opt-out or to opt-in
- Provide time sensitive data professionally and concisely
- Be no longer than 160 characters
- Be directly related to a mission-critical need, health, safety, or academic success
- Clearly convey who has sent the message
- NOT be sent too frequently, which may result in more people opting-out

Text messaging must *not* be used for the following:

- Sole method of communication for essential messages
- Communicating personal or confidential information or any data protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Sending general information to large populations (e.g., *Fall classes start Monday!*)
- Personal matters (e.g., items for sale)
- Appeals on behalf of student groups (e.g., to attend social, cultural, or sporting events, unless the students specifically opted-in for such text messages)
- Repeat reminders of text messages already circulated

Messages should be as concise as possible, while still maintaining a conversational tone and should address the student directly (e.g., *Your financial aid form is due Friday*, rather than, *Financial aid forms are due Friday*.) They should include essential points and, if needed, further instruction (e.g., *Check your email for full details*.)

Abbreviations and common messaging lingo may be used as deemed appropriate for the audience or situation.

II. AUTHORIZED INDIVIDUALS

The following entities are authorized to send mass text messages for business purposes related to the following:

Athletics

Coaches (to student athletes), Student-Athlete Advisory Group Coordinators

Health and Safety

University Police, Office of the President, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vice President for Student Affairs

Student Success

Office of Admissions, Office of Student Financial Assistance, Office of Norse Advising, Office of the Provost, Office of the University Registrar, Student Account Services, and other university entities as deemed necessary for student success.

III. REQUESTING ACCESS TO SEND MASS TEXT MESSAGES

If a university entity not yet provided approval to send mass texts desires to send mass text messages, the entity must request approval from its area Vice President.

Requests must include the following:

- Department/Role requesting approval
- Group desired to reach with the mass text
- Content of mass text requesting to send
- Reason for wanting to send mass text
- Frequency requested (one time or ongoing)

In accordance with NKU's [Information Technology \(IT\) Procurement](#) policy, usage of tools for mass texting should be approved by IT prior to acquisition. This includes all tools, including software, cloud tools, or apps.

IV. OPT-IN AND OPT-OUT

Accessible, clear opt-in and opt-out processes must be in place for each texting tool/entity so that prospective students and currently enrolled students have the opportunity to opt-in or opt-out on an ongoing basis. Students who opt-in to receive text messages have responsibility to update the sending entity with any changes to their contact information.

Any opt-in/opt-out process created must include the following information:

- What recipients can expect
- Who may send text messages
- When and why texting may occur
- A contact for abuse or annoyance
- Clear directions for opting in/out
- Clear directions on how to update changes to contact information

Instructional texting by faculty to students enrolled in courses they instruct should allow for an opt-out feature (e.g., students reply “stop” and the faculty member removes them from the text messaging list).

For emergency mass text messaging policy, see NKU’s [Mass Notification Protocol](#).

V. PRIVACY

All mobile information shared with NKU will remain confidential and will only be used by NKU representatives to assist people regarding university business. NKU does not share phone numbers with external sources.

VI. ACCESSIBILITY

Mass texting and general texting must comply with all applicable accessibility requirements (e.g., recipients with disabilities, non-English speakers).

Instructional texting to students enrolled in a faculty member’s course must comply with accessibility requirements as needed by students registered with the Office for Student Accessibility.

VII. RECORDS RETENTION

University business-related text messages are considered public records whether an NKU system/tool or personal telephone/system/tool is used for texting. The sender is responsible for retention of text messages. Follow the state of Kentucky’s [Records Retention Schedule](#) and NKU’s [Records Management policy](#) for retention requirements because there are different retention requirements depending on the topic of the message.

VIII. ENTITIES AFFECTED

Faculty, staff, and students

IX. DEFINITIONS

Text Messaging or Texting is the process of sending written messages using a mobile device, most often a cellular phone.

Mass Texting is the process of sending the same text message to multiple recipients. For purposes of clarity, this policy defines a mass text as sending to 100 or more recipients.

Instructional Texting includes faculty communication to students currently enrolled in courses they instruct. These messages may be individualized for a particular purpose or a text message to the class about something that affects the entire class.

General Texting includes texting messages regarding university business purposes between a university office and a student or employee, or a small group of students or employees. These messages are intended to provide important data regarding a business need (e.g., *Bob, your financial aid has not been received. Please contact the registrar or see your email for more details.*).

X. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office of Information Technology will communicate the policy and must approve any tools used in the delivery of text messages.

Vice Presidential Offices will be responsible for monitoring and enforcing the policy for their divisions.

XI. REFERENCES AND RELATED MATERIALS

REFERENCES & FORMS

Financial Considerations: All costs associated with receiving a text message are the responsibility of the individual receiving the message. Receiving mobile text messages from NKU is completely free of charge. **However, standard text messaging rates from the recipients' wireless carriers still apply.** Recipients must check with their wireless carrier for details on charges for text messages (SMS).

RELATED POLICIES

[State of Kentucky's Record Retention Schedule](#)

[NKU's Mass Notification Protocol](#)

[NKU's IT Procurement policy](#)

[NKU's Records Management policy](#)

REVISION HISTORY

REVISION TYPE	MONTH/YEAR APPROVED
Minor Revision	August 13, 2021
New Policy	January 29, 2018

TEXT MESSAGING

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

PRESIDENT

Signature 

Date 8/13/2021

Ashish Vaidya

BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVAL

BOARD OF REGENTS (IF FORWARDED BY PRESIDENT)

- This policy was forwarded to the Board of Regents on the **Presidential Report (information only)**.
Date of Board of Regents meeting at which this policy was reported: 11 / 16 / 2021.
- This policy was forwarded to the Board of Regents as a **Presidential Recommendation (consent agenda/voting item)**.
- The Board of Regents approved this policy on ____ / ____ / ____.
(Attach a copy of Board of Regents meeting minutes showing approval of policy.)
- The Board of Regents rejected this policy on ____ / ____ / ____.
(Attach a copy of Board of Regents meeting minutes showing rejection of policy.)

SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS

Signature 

Date 2/22/2022

Tammy Knochelmann