



PAN AFRICA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION
MAY-AUGUST 2026 EXAM
COM404 – PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
FINAL PROJECT – STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN (60%)

A. PROJECT DETAILS

This project assesses your ability to apply the theories, models, and frameworks studied throughout the semester to a real-world communication challenge. You will work as a strategic consulting team to produce a comprehensive, evidence-based communication plan for a specific client addressing one of the three prescribed thematic areas.

Group Project: Teams of 3–4 students

Prescribed Thematic Areas (Choose ONE)

Theme	Description	Client	Focus
A. Student Unrest in Kenyan Schools	A communication strategy to prevent student unrest, protests, and school fires in national secondary schools.	Ministry of Education	Develop a comprehensive strategy addressing early warning systems, student engagement, teacher training, parent involvement, and crisis communication.
B. Child Abductions in Informal Settlements	A community awareness campaign to reduce child abduction cases.	A Local NGO (e.g., Missing Child Kenya, Childline Kenya, or a community-based organisation)	Design a grassroots awareness campaign targeting parents, children, community leaders, and local authorities in Nairobi's informal settlements.
C. Youth Mental Health Crisis	A communication campaign to address the rising mental health challenges among Kenyan youth.	Ministry of Health OR A Mental Health NGO (e.g., Befrienders Kenya, BasicNeeds Kenya)	Develop a strategy to reduce stigma, increase awareness of mental health services, and promote help-seeking behaviour among young people (15–30 years).

B. CLIENT & FOCUS AREA

Theme A: Student Unrest in Kenyan Schools

Element	Detail
Client	Ministry of Education
Core Challenge	Rising incidents of student unrest, school fires, protests, and violence in national secondary schools
Key Issues	Poor student-teacher relationships, inadequate grievance mechanisms, mental health challenges, peer pressure, media influence, weak early warning systems
Recent Context	Utumishi Girls Academy fire (May 2026), Hillside Endarasha Academy fire (2024), other school protests
Primary Audiences	Students (13–18 years), teachers, parents, school administrators, education officials
Communication Goal	Prevent student unrest through dialogue, early intervention, and positive engagement

Theme B: Child Abductions in Informal Settlements

Element	Detail
Client	A Local NGO (specify: e.g., Missing Child Kenya, Childline Kenya, or a community-based organisation)
Core Challenge	Rising cases of child abductions in Nairobi's informal settlements (e.g., Kibera, Mathare, Kawangware, Mukuru)
Key Issues	Poverty, lack of supervision, weak community policing, low awareness of reporting mechanisms, inadequate legal protection
Recent Context	Increasing media reports of child abductions, public outrage, government crackdowns on kidnappers
Primary Audiences	Parents (especially low-income), children (5–15 years), community leaders, local police, teachers
Communication Goal	Increase community awareness, prevention behaviours, and reporting of abduction cases

Theme C: Youth Mental Health Crisis

Element	Detail
Client	Ministry of Health or A Mental Health NGO (e.g., Befrienders Kenya, BasicNeeds Kenya, Africa Mental Health Foundation)
Core Challenge	Rising mental health challenges among Kenyan youth (anxiety, depression, suicide, substance abuse)
Key Issues	Stigma, lack of awareness, limited access to services, inadequate school-based support, social media pressure
Recent Context	Increased media coverage of youth suicide, school mental health crises, government mental health taskforce recommendations
Primary Audiences	Youth (15–30 years), parents, teachers, healthcare workers, employers
Communication Goal	Reduce stigma, promote help-seeking behaviour, and increase awareness of available mental health services

C. STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN

Your final written plan must follow this structure. Use clear headings and subheadings.

Section	Content Required
1. Executive Summary	A 250-word summary of the entire plan – challenge, goals, key tactics, and expected outcomes.
2. Situation Analysis	Background on the client and the communication challenge. Include a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) relevant to communication. Must reference recent events and data (e.g., media reports, government statistics, NGO research).
3. Stakeholder & Audience Analysis	Identify all key stakeholders. Segment primary and secondary audiences with demographic, psychographic, and behavioural profiles. Justify why these audiences matter.
4. Communication Goals & SMART Objectives	State 3–5 SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). Distinguish between outputs (activities) and outcomes (behavioural/attitudinal change).
5. Key Messages	Develop 3–5 core messages – tailored to different audiences but aligned with the client’s mission. Include proof points and a message hierarchy. Ensure cultural and contextual sensitivity.
6. Strategic Approach & Tactical Plan	Explain the overarching strategy (e.g., RACE, IMC, MBO). Detail specific tactics – events, media relations, social media campaigns, influencer engagement, paid advertising, community forums, etc.
7. Channel Strategy	Justify channel selection (owned, earned, paid, shared media). Include a content calendar or an editorial timeline for the first 3 months. Consider channels relevant to target audiences (e.g., TikTok for youth, radio for informal settlements).

Section	Content Required
8. Timeline & Milestones	Present a Gantt chart or phased timeline (pre-campaign, launch, sustain, evaluation).
9. Budget Outline	Provide a high-level budget (categorized – personnel, production, media buying, events, monitoring). Indicate whether it is a cost-recovery or revenue-generating campaign.
10. Evaluation & KPIs	Define measurable KPIs (reach, engagement, sentiment, behaviour change). Explain how you will collect data (surveys, analytics, media monitoring, community feedback) and when you will report back.
11. Risk & Contingency Plan	Identify potential risks (e.g., negative backlash, misinformation, political interference, stakeholder resistance) and propose mitigation strategies.
12. Ethics & Sourcing Memo	A 1-page memo (also submitted separately) detailing: (a) ethical decisions made (consent, privacy, avoiding harm, cultural sensitivity), (b) sources of all data and research, and (c) how you ensured cultural and contextual sensitivity for Kenyan audiences.

D. PRESENTATION & DEFENCE

Format

- 15-minute presentation to a panel (instructor + invited industry guest, if available)
- 10–12 slides that cover the essence of the plan – do not simply read the written document
- Q&A session of 5–10 minutes

Presentation Tips

- Focus on the strategic story – why this plan will work.
- Use visuals (charts, mock-ups, audience personas) to make it engaging.
- Be prepared to justify every choice – budget, channel, message, timeline.
- Demonstrate your understanding of the thematic context – show awareness of recent events and why your plan matters now.
- Speak confidently about your client – show you understand their mission, challenges, and stakeholder relationships.

E. SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Before submission, ensure your group has:

- A signed (or approved) client consent form (if working with a real NGO or government body – encouraged but not mandatory for Themes B and C)
- A single PDF file containing the full written plan (15–20 pages)
- A separate PDF/PPT file for the presentation slides
- The 1-page ethics & sourcing memo (included as Appendix A in the plan)
- A references/bibliography section (APA 7th edition) for all sources used

F. GRADING RUBRIC (TOTAL: 100 POINTS – converted to 60%)

Criteria	Excellent (10 pts)	Very Good (8 pts)	Good (6 pts)	Fair (4 pts)	Needs Improvement (2 pts)
1. Contextual Understanding & Thematic Relevance	Demonstrates exceptional understanding of the chosen theme. Plan is deeply rooted in recent national events, statistics, and trends. Provides compelling justification for why the issue is urgent and strategically significant. References Kenya-specific data and sources.	Shows strong understanding of the theme. References recent events and data appropriately. Good justification for relevance.	Demonstrates basic understanding of the theme. Some references to recent events but could be deeper. Adequate justification.	Shows limited understanding of the theme. Few or outdated references. Weak justification for relevance.	No understanding of the thematic context. Events are generic or unrelated. No Kenya-specific data.
2. Situation Analysis & Research	Deep, insightful analysis with robust evidence. SWOT is thorough and directly tied to communication. Uses credible local data (e.g., Ministry reports, CA data, MCK guidelines, police statistics, NGO research, media reports).	Strong analysis with good evidence. SWOT is relevant and mostly tied to communication. Some local data used.	Adequate analysis with basic research. SWOT is present but generic or weakly connected.	Superficial or missing analysis. SWOT is incomplete or not communication-focused.	No situation analysis or research evident.
3. Audience & Stakeholder Analysis	Exceptional segmentation with detailed personas. Clear prioritization of stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups (students, children, youth).	Good segmentation with relevant personas. Stakeholders are identified and prioritized. Link to messaging is clear.	Basic segmentation with generic profiles. Stakeholders listed but not prioritized.	Vague or missing audience analysis. Stakeholders are confused or ignored.	No audience/ stakeholder work present.

Criteria	Excellent (10 pts)	Very Good (8 pts)	Good (6 pts)	Fair (4 pts)	Needs Improvement (2 pts)
	Audience needs are directly linked to messaging and channels. Demonstrates understanding of audience behaviours and barriers.		Weak link to tactics.		
4. SMART Objectives	Objectives are perfectly SMART, ambitious yet realistic. Outputs and outcomes are clearly distinguished. Directly address the communication challenge within the thematic context.	Objectives are SMART and clear. Output/outcome distinction is present. Relevant to the challenge.	Objectives are mostly SMART but may have one weak element (e.g., not measurable). Good but generic.	Objectives are vague, not time-bound, or not measurable. Not clearly linked to the challenge.	No objectives or completely unworkable objectives.
5. Key Messages & Brand Voice	Messages are compelling, memorable, and tailored to each audience. Proof points are strong. Demonstrates cultural and contextual sensitivity (e.g., age-appropriate, trauma-informed language).	Good messages with clear proof points. Tailored to audiences with minor inconsistency. Sensitive to context.	Acceptable messages but generic or lacking proof. Some tailoring but not fully audience-specific.	Messages are weak, confusing, or not supported. Little to no tailoring. May be insensitive.	Messages are missing or irrelevant.
6. Strategic Approach & Tactics	Strategy is clearly articulated (e.g., RACE, IMC). Tactics are creative, feasible, and directly support the objectives.	Strategy is present and logical. Tactics are appropriate and support objectives with minor gaps.	Strategy is mentioned but not clearly applied. Tactics are generic or not fully aligned.	Strategy is unclear or missing. Tactics are random or unworkable.	No strategic approach or tactics.

Criteria	Excellent (10 pts)	Very Good (8 pts)	Good (6 pts)	Fair (4 pts)	Needs Improvement (2 pts)
	Excellent integration across tactics. Considers crisis communication principles where relevant.				
7. Channel Strategy & Media Mix	Channel selection is highly strategic and justified. Mix of owned, earned, paid, shared is balanced and audience-appropriate. Clear editorial/content calendar. Considers platforms relevant to the target audience (e.g., TikTok for youth, radio for informal settlements).	Good channel mix with clear justification. Owned/earned/paid/shared considered. Content calendar is adequate.	Basic channel selection with generic justification. Mix may be unbalanced. Calendar is weak.	Channels are poorly chosen or unexplained. No mix consideration. No calendar.	No channel strategy.
8. Timeline & Budget	Timeline (Gantt) is detailed, realistic, and phased logically. Budget is realistic, categorized, and justified. Cost-efficient choices are highlighted.	Good timeline and budget. Most categories covered. Realistic but may have minor omissions.	Acceptable timeline and budget but lacking detail or realism in places.	Timeline is vague or unrealistic. Budget is incomplete or not justified.	No timeline or budget.
9. Evaluation & KPIs	KPIs are specific, measurable, and tied to each objective. Evaluation methods are practical and include both quantitative and qualitative measures.	Good KPIs with clear measurement methods. Most objectives have a matching KPI.	Basic KPIs but some are vague or not directly tied to objectives. Evaluation methods are generic.	KPIs are missing or unmeasurable. No evaluation plan.	No evaluation framework.

Criteria	Excellent (10 pts)	Very Good (8 pts)	Good (6 pts)	Fair (4 pts)	Needs Improvement (2 pts)
	Sensitive to measuring behavioural change (e.g., reduced incidents, increased reporting, improved attitudes).				
10. Presentation & Professionalism	Presentation is polished, compelling, and within time. Team demonstrates mastery of content. Q&A responses are confident and well-reasoned. Written plan is error-free and professionally formatted.	Presentation is clear and professional. Team shows good understanding. Q&A is mostly strong. Written plan has minor formatting or grammatical errors.	Presentation is adequate but lacks polish. Some team members are less prepared. Q&A is shaky. Written plan has noticeable errors.	Presentation is disorganized or overly rushed. Poor Q&A. Written plan has frequent errors.	Presentation is missing or unprofessional. Written plan is incomplete or illegible.

H. IMPORTANT REMINDERS

1. Start early: Research and client engagement must begin by Week 8.
2. Use real data: Cite Kenyan sources (CA reports, MCK codes, DCI statistics, Ministry of Health data, NGO research, academic studies, media reports) to ground your plan locally.
3. Be sensitive: All three themes involve trauma, vulnerability, and human suffering. Your plan must prioritise dignity, empathy, and ethical communication.
4. Know your client: – Research your client thoroughly. Understand their mission, existing programmes, and stakeholder relationships.
5. Back up your work: Save drafts on cloud storage so that nothing gets lost in the process of working on the same.
6. Team communication: Use a shared document (Google Docs) and meet regularly.
7. Ethics are non-negotiable: Any fabricated data or plagiarism will result in a zero for the entire group.
8. Seek feedback: Use the Week 10 workshop to present your draft for instructor and peer input.
9. Stay within the theme: Do not deviate from the three prescribed options.