



Guidelines on the Use of Email

All use of email within Cardiff University and from Cardiff University email addresses is subject to Information Services' Regulations.

These Guidelines supplement the Regulations by describing good practice in the use of email. They aim to facilitate an appropriate use of email that is beneficial to all members of Cardiff University whilst protecting it from any possibility of litigation.

Any changes to these Guidelines will be published on Information Services Regulations web page on the INSRV web site at: www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/aboutus/regulations

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1. Communication via Email

Email is easy and speedy to use but should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication between staff or between staff and students.

Also consider that some recipients may not read their email regularly. Important messages should also be available via other communication methods.

1.1 Writing Effective Emails

Email is a quick and easy form of communication. But many of us receive more emails in a day than we can deal with and it's also easy to send a message without thorough consideration of what we're writing and how clearly we're communicating.

To increase the likelihood of your email being opened, read and understood:

- a. Use a clear, reasonably specific but concise subject line to help the recipient judge what the email is about, whether it is of relevance and how they should prioritise dealing with it;
- b. Consider the purpose of your email, for example, are you:
 - i. Sharing information
 - ii. Asking someone to do something
 - iii. Giving a written confirmation;
- c. Structure the email with this in mind. Make it clear in the opening sentence what the email is about before moving on to specifics. Ensure the reader can clearly understand:
 - i. If / how the message is of relevance to them
 - ii. What action they are expected to take as a result of the message;
- d. Keep your message as concise as possible: it is slower to read on screen than on paper;
- e. Avoid using capital letters in your message as it will appear as if you're shouting. Also avoid writing only in lower case. Both of these will make your message more difficult to read;
- f. Be accurate with your spelling and grammar. An email full of mistakes gives the impression that the sender does not care enough about the information or the recipient to bother getting the words right;
- g. Be careful with the use of abbreviations and emoticons. They may be misunderstood or appear too informal.

1.2 Unsuitable Uses of Email

Email is not suitable for every purpose. You will need to use your personal judgement as to whether your communication is suitable for email, but generally the following are not suitable for communication via email:

- a. Staffing issues which include personal details (e.g. performance, discipline, salaries etc.);
- b. Information relating to the content of examination papers;
- c. Student examination or assessment marks prior to publication;
- d. Content where there might be a contractual or other legal need to prove the identity of the sender, or to demonstrate the receipt of the message;
- e. Student assignments which do not relate directly to email skills, and any material forming part of a student's formal assessment.

1.3 Consideration for the Email Recipient

You should not cause offence to others by your use of Cardiff University's email system. Some forms of offence are serious enough to be subject to legal sanctions or covered by Cardiff University's Regulations.

The following guidelines offer advice on avoiding some of the most common ways of inadvertently causing offence or annoyance.

- a. Never give bad personal news by email;
- b. Take care that the tone of your messages is clear - irony and humour, for example, may not be clear to your recipient unless it is someone who knows you well;
- c. Ensure the tone of your message is respectful to recipients regardless of their role and status;
- d. Remember: unlike other forms of communication there are no other clues to the contents delivered to the reader before they open it – the first sentence can cause serious impact;
- e. Re-read your email before sending it and put yourself in the place of the recipient and ask yourself: "is that really what I would have said if I'd been meeting with the recipient face-to-face?"
 - NOTE: Email sent internally via GroupWise can be retrieved as long as it has not been opened and has stayed within GroupWise. Other mailing clients cannot retrieve sent mail;
- f. Take particular care with remarks that are or might appear to be critical of the recipient or another person - these can often come across as much stronger than you intended, and might, in some instances, be considered defamatory;
- g. Put your name at the foot of the message to avoid any misunderstanding about who has sent your message as not all email systems transmit the sender's real name.
- h. Before forwarding a message, it is often sensible to check that the originator of a message is happy for it to be circulated before you pass it on to a third party – it could cause serious offence or embarrassment if you pass a message on against the wishes of the originator and may also be an infringement of their copyright. It is advisable to state it explicitly if you yourself do not wish a particular message of yours to be forwarded to others.
- i. Only use a mailing list for the purpose for which it was created. Create your own personal groups in your GroupWise Address Book for your need, rather than using a public list for your purposes;

- j. Avoid the blasting of information to people via email lists; considered choice of who should receive messages and the proper and correct use of TO: and CC: fields will be much appreciated by recipients.

1.4 Consideration for the Email System

Every email message uses system resources: please do not waste these resources. While the drain on the system of an individual unnecessary mail message may be slight, the cumulative effect of such messages sent by several thousand users can seriously degrade the system performance and inconvenience all users.

- a. Do not send unnecessary copies of messages;
- b. When replying to a message that has been sent to a number of recipients, reply only to the sender rather than to all recipients;
- c. If you've been CC'd into a message, reply to the sender if you have a comment to make on the subject but avoid replying to all recipients of the original message;
- d. When replying to a message, do not quote the whole of the original message unless there is some need to. This is particularly important when the original message itself includes previous correspondence;
- e. Use a signature to identify yourself and give your contact details but do not include a large signature in every message you send - four to six lines should be enough;
- f. Delete any messages you have saved but which are no longer needed as they take up storage space and will also be backed up;
- g. Remove unwanted *sent* messages on a regular basis or copy / archive them to the hard disk of your own computer. See www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/helpandtraining for FAQs on managing your email. Please note: you cannot archive to removable media – the archived messages will become unreadable;
- h. If you subscribe to mailing lists, ensure that you know how to suspend the receipt of messages from them, and remember to do this if you are not going to be reading your email for more than about two weeks;
- i. Do not forward virus warnings to others - any virus warning you receive from outside Cardiff University is almost certain to be a hoax.

2. Security

2.1 Preventing Unauthorised Access to your Email

Normal email messages are not entirely secure. It is not obvious when a message has been read by someone other than the intended recipient so it is generally unwise to send any sensitive or confidential material by email.

There are two ways in which someone who is not intended to could see a message:

- a. It could be wrongly addressed;
- b. Someone could gain unauthorised access to the mailboxes of sender and/or recipient. Except for very rare instances of hacking, the main way that the latter happens is by:
 - i. Leaving yourself logged in at a computer, such as the open access facilities, after you have finished using it;
 - ii. Allowing someone else to use your username and password.

Please ensure that all emails have the correct address for the intended recipient. If you are using GroupWise you can find the email address of any user registered in GroupWise using the Address Book feature. Please be careful when using the auto-completion feature for filling in names. It is very easy to send mail to the wrong person, especially where there is more than one person with the same name working / studying in the University. Where there are multiple entries for a name, GroupWise will prompt you to choose a name from a list which also shows their School / Division: do not assume that the first name which is auto-completed is the correct one.

Or use the People Search facility at www.cardiff.ac.uk/contactus/people/ to find the email address of staff and researchers at Cardiff University.

Leaving yourself logged in to open access computers and allowing someone else to use your username and password are contrary to Cardiff University's Regulations, and disciplinary action may be taken against any user who compromises the security of the system by doing so.

2.2 Privacy

Cardiff University does not monitor or read the email of users as a matter of course. However, Cardiff University reserves the right to examine mail messages without authorisation from sender or recipient where there is reason to suspect a breach of Regulations, or on user request where there are reasonable grounds to do so.

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act and / or the Freedom of Information Act, emails may be released as part of a subject access request.

2.3 Encryption

The best way to guarantee that unauthorised persons do not read an email message is encryption. GroupWise email is encrypted within the GroupWise system. Other email clients are not. If the material is of a sensitive nature consider using another communication method.

2.4 Received Messages

It is impossible to prove that a normal email message has in fact come from the person or organisation it appears to come from. It is also not possible to prove that a message has in fact been received and read by the intended recipient.

Email should, therefore, not be used in relation to contractual or disciplinary matters where such proof may be important.

Be wary of phishing scams. **Phishing** is the name given to the practice of sending emails at random purporting to come from a genuine company operating on the internet. The emails attempt to trick the recipient into entering confidential information, such as credit card or bank details. For further advice see: www.cardiff.ac.uk/schoolsanddivisions/divisions/insrv/computingservices/antivirus/phishing.html

If you receive mail that you have reason to believe comes from someone other than the apparent sender, you should report this immediately to postmaster@cardiff.ac.uk

3. Internal Email

3.1 Official Email Addresses

Each school and unit in Cardiff University has an official email address. This is used for email that is addressed to that school or unit rather than to an individual member of staff. This ensures that if an individual member of staff is absent, the school / unit can deal with email.

While this is clearly not appropriate for all external email - for example, where there is only one person who can deal with the query - departments are strongly advised to use this email address for general departmental contact with the outside world.

Staff who deal with mail of this sort are encouraged to use the "Reply To" feature of their email software to ensure that replies go to the departmental address rather than the individual member of staff.

3.2 Staff Absence

Staff are expected to make arrangements for their email to be read while they are away from Cardiff University, in the same way as they would make arrangements for their mail on paper.

In cases where unexpected absence makes it impossible for the individual staff member to make suitable arrangements insrvConnect should be contacted to set up forwarding or other arrangements, as appropriate, by the Head of School.

Under no circumstances should schools / units ask staff to reveal their passwords to facilitate the reading of email sent to a personal email address.

For further advice or in case of difficulty, contact insrvConnect, the Information Services Helpdesk: insrvConnect@cardiff.ac.uk.

For more information and advice on using email see: www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/computingservices

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