

*Draft*

## **Guidelines Governing E-Mail and Other Electronic Material**

### **General Information**

The electronic mail (e-mail) should be used, subject to the provisions of the University's Electronic Mail and Messaging Services Policy, for all general internal communication and appropriate external communication. The guidelines herein are developed in addition to the policy to assist users of the system to develop good practices and to improve communication through this media. E-mail users are expected to:

- Check e-mail on a regular basis. E-mails should be answered within 24 hours, but users should endeavour to answer within the work day.
- Take their own backup of important messages and files
- Immediately report to their department heads security breaches detected
- Maintain their email accounts by deleting old files, excessively large files, files no longer needed and set e-mail client to automatically empty 'deleted item' on closing.

### **Interference with Other Users**

Campus email services shall not be used for purposes that could reasonably be expected to cause, excessive strain on any computing facilities, or undue interference with others' use of the email service. Such uses include, but are not limited to, the use of email services to:

- Send or forward email chain letters;
- Exploit mail list servers or similar broadcast to amplify the widespread distribution of unsolicited email, i.e. "spam";
- Resend the same email repeatedly to one or more recipients to interfere with the recipient's use of email, i.e. "letter-bomb";
- Deliberately spread viruses or other electronic infection

### **Unlawful Practices**

This is not an exhaustive list. The actions identified are those which people are more generally in breach of. It is strictly prohibited to:

- Send or forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks. If you receive an e-mail of this nature, you must promptly notify your supervisor.
- Forge or attempt to forge email messages.

- Send email messages using another person's email account.
- Copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator.
- Disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending mail.
- Violate copyright laws by transmitting without credit or permission, someone else's work or thought.

## **Security**

**Employing Basic Protection:** The following basic practices will contribute significantly to safe guarding our communication against the typical intruder though they may only deter professional hackers. This latter group, however, constitutes a small number of highly skilled persons who are mostly not interested in intruding on the average message.

- Change passwords regularly – about every thirty (30) days;
- Use passwords that are not easily guessable – at least 6-characters made of a combination of letters and numbers.
- Associate a password to important attachments – when creating your attachments you may set a requirement of a password to open the document or to change the document. *Remember to inform the recipient of the password by a different medium such as telephone.*
- Do not leave your mail on your desktop unattended – close down the mail or lock your computer.
- As far as possible avoid sending confidential information by e-mail. If you do, you must secure the information by creating it with a document creation tool such as a word processor (e.g. Word) and protecting it with a password.
- Attach a signature to your mail to identify you as the sender. This is a low-level security against impersonation.

## **Official Records**

Email messages are subject to the University's developing electronic records management policies, which will specify, among other things, retention periods and responsibilities for maintenance of electronic records. Specific guidance will be issued in a later update to the Electronic Mail Policy, but in the interim you should ensure that your archive of e-mail sent and received is adequately organised, enabling easy access and retrieval. Most email systems, including Microsoft Outlook/Exchange, provide structured folder facilities for this purpose.

E-mail may be treated as written evidence within a court of law. An email message may also be construed as part of a contract, so particular care is necessary to avoid this. It is permissible to use email in the course of negotiation and/or clarification of contractual

matters, but any formal agreement should be by paper communication (e.g. an Official University order) which states that it alone specifies the contractual terms.

A number of senior members of staff within the University (e.g. the Principal, Campus Registrar, Deans etc.) have “official” and “personal” email addresses whilst others have only “personal” addresses. When sending important email to such people, use the “official” email address, since email sent to it will be handled in the recipient’s absences. Email sent to “personal” addresses may be deleted unopened by the recipient. Therefore, if it is necessary to send email in confidence to these individuals, it should be sent to the “personal” address, with the word “CONFIDENTIAL” in capitals in the subject field; this is likely to avoid its being deleted unread.

### **Best practices for creating messages**

The Mona Campus considers email to be an important means of communication and recognizes the importance of structure and format in balancing the requirement for quick delivery and response against the need for understandable communication. Therefore the Campus wishes users to adhere to the following practices:

- Write well-structured messages and use short, descriptive subjects. Emails with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the meaning of the text.
- Only send emails of which the content could be displayed on a public notice board. If they cannot be displayed publicly in their current state, consider rephrasing the email, using other means of communication, or protecting information by using a password (see confidential).
- Email style is generally informal so the sentences can be short and to the point. Nevertheless, it is good practice to salute your recipient with the standard formalities. You can start your e-mail with ‘Hi’, or ‘Dear’, or ‘Ms’ and the name of the person. However in addressing a friend you may use just the name such as ‘Joe’.
- Messages may be closed with ‘Best Regards’. The use of Internet abbreviations and characters such as “smileys” is not encouraged as many people do not know them and the message may appear unprofessional.
- Signatures must include your name, job title and company name. A disclaimer may be added underneath your signature (see Disclaimer below).

## **Helpful Tips in Composing emails:**

Re-read and spell check before you send out an email.

Answer all questions and pre-empt the obvious ones.

Do not send unnecessary attachments. Compress attachments larger than 200K before sending them.

Do not write emails in capitals. This is analogous to shouting at someone.

If you forward mails, state clearly what action you expect the recipient to take.

Only mark emails as *urgent* if they really are urgent.

Use templates for frequently used responses. Some questions you get over and over again, such as your address or how to subscribe to your newsletter. Save these texts as response templates and paste these into your message when you need them. You can save your templates in a Word document, or use pre-formatted emails

When formatting, you should be aware that when you use formatting in your emails, the sender might not be able to view formatting, or might see different fonts than you had intended. In particular, when using colours as a background, you should select a colour on which it is easy to read. Do not be too expansive in formatting.

## **Signature**

You can use a signature to automatically add text to the messages you send. For example, you can create a signature that includes your name, job title, and phone number. You can create multiple signatures, and select a signature to insert in a message.

To illustrate:

Signature 1:

Marge Lawrence

malawrence@cvjamaica.com

*Inspiration: Look for God in all  
souls who cross your path today*

Signature 2:

Office of the Bursary

Mona Campus

The University of the West Indies

## **Disclaimer**

It is good practice to add a disclaimer such as the following to your email message:

‘This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to which they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the system manager. Please note that any views or opinions presented in this email are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the University. Finally, the recipient should check this email and any attachments for the presence of viruses. The University accepts no liability for any damage caused by any virus transmitted by this email.’