

# Email Protocols – Guidelines

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## Background

Email as a medium of communication has become an almost indispensable tool for business, educational, social and personal purposes. Email has the advantage of being quick, easy with the ability to send attachments to many recipients to be delivered directly to mailboxes to be read when convenient.

## Purpose

This email protocol provides staff with some basic guidelines for managing internal and external emails to ensure email responses follow general email etiquette. Your colleagues may use commonly accepted abbreviations in e-mail, but when communicating with external customers, everyone should follow standard writing protocol. Your e-mail message reflects you and the university, so spelling, grammar, and punctuation rules apply.

## Actions

Email users must be mindful of the purpose of electronic communication and that all email interactions are respectful. The following is a set guidelines to use when communicating via email in either a personal or official capacity.

- **Reply to emails as soon as possible** - recipients will appreciate a prompt reply and it will help you manage your email account.
- **Allow time for an email reply** – emails are not required immediately and not everyone is online 24 hours a day.
- **Write Relevant Subject Lines** – Make the subject line summaries the body of the email, so the recipient(s) will know what the email is about.
- **Keep Emails Short** - Do not intimidate recipients with too much text. Concentrate on one subject per message whenever possible.
- **Correct punctuation and grammar** – Use punctuation and grammar in a normal manner, use correct grammar as with any written message. Setting up the spell check function helps with punctuation and grammar.
- **Layout** – Use spaces and breaks between paragraphs and long sentences to make it easier on the reader.
- **Clean Up Emails Before Forwarding Them** - Forwarding emails is a great way of sharing ideas, but make sure the original idea is not hidden.
- **Use sentence case.** USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS LOOKS AS IF YOU'RE SHOUTING. Using all lowercase letters looks lazy. For emphasis, use asterisks or bold formatting to

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emphasize important words. Do not, however, use a lot of colors or graphics embedded in your message, because not everyone uses an e-mail program that can display them.

- **Make use of the CC (Carbon copy) and BC (Blind Copy)** – CC is for people to know about the message but are not directly involved, used to keep people “in the loop”. BC is used when you want other people to receive the message but you don’t want other recipients to know they have got it.
- **Remember that e-mail isn't private.** - E-mail is considered company property and can be retrieved, examined, and used in a court of law. Also remember that e-mail can be forwarded, so unintended audiences may see what you've written. You might also inadvertently send something to the wrong party, so always keep the content professional to avoid embarrassment.
- **Avoid angry outbursts** – Don't send an email when you are angry, wait until you have calmed down, then compose email, once sent it can't be recalled. Ask yourself “would I say this to a person's face”?
- **Be sparing with group e-mail.** Send group e-mail only when it's useful to every recipient and to ensure the whole team has the same information. Use the "reply all" button only when compiling results requiring collective input and only if you have something to add. Recipients get quite annoyed to open an e-mail that says only "Me too!"
- **Use a signature that includes contact information.** To ensure that people know who you are, include a signature that has your contact information, including your mailing address, Web site, and phone numbers.
- **NOTE:** Be aware that if you are logging onto a different computer, you will need to install Outlook and set up your signature, these functions are not carried over to different computers.