

Green Templeton College University of Oxford

Policy on Staff Use of E-mail and Internet

Policy Statement

Green Templeton College is committed to developing appropriate technology to ensure the efficient and cost effective provision of services. To this end employees are encouraged to develop IT skills including using the email system as a communication tool and accessing the Internet. All use of E-Mail and the Internet by staff must be in accordance with this policy and with the Computing Rules of Green Templeton College and with the University Rules for Computer Use of the University of Oxford which can be viewed at the following e-mail address <http://www.ict.ox.ac.uk/oxford/rules/> .

Allocation of Email Addresses

Staff will be given an E-Mail address and should regularly check their post. E-Mail addresses with Internet access are given to those who need to use these facilities as a normal part of their work. All E-Mail users will be issued with a unique password which will be changed at regular intervals and is confidential to the user. Accessing the E-Mail system using another employee's password without prior authorisation is a breach of policy and is likely to result in disciplinary action.

The Legal Position

Staff should be aware that electronic text (E-Mail) has the same status in law as the printed word. This means that E-Mail communications can be potentially actionable in law in exactly the same way as the printed word for breaches of the relevant legislation such as the Data Protection Act or the laws surrounding libel or defamation.

Staff must, therefore, be aware that they have a personal responsibility and hence are potentially personally liable for the legality, accuracy and confidentiality of statements made in E-Mail communications. This applies irrespective of whether those communications are circulated purely internally within the organisation or externally via the Internet.

Where defamatory statements or other comments which are actionable in law are made, or where there is breach of confidentiality, then disciplinary action may be taken.

Personal Use

The E-Mail service and access to the Internet have been provided to staff on the basis that they will be used primarily for College business purposes. However, reasonable and limited use of these services for social and recreational purposes, where not in breach of this policy and other relevant rules or otherwise forbidden, is permitted outside of normal working hours. This is to be viewed as a privilege and if there is evidence of abuse, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken.

Training

Employees will be trained in the use of the E-Mail system and accessing the Internet and how to best utilise it in the workplace. Training will normally take place in-house and will include the employee

being taken through this policy. Lack of training in the system will not be an acceptable defence when addressing abuse of the system issues.

Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide users with an E-Mail etiquette. In this sense they can be seen as statements of good practice in using the E-Mail system:

- E-Mail is a messaging medium somewhere between a formal letter or memo and spoken or telephone communication. It tends to be more informal than the written word, but more formal than telephone conversations. You should, therefore, be very careful to avoid phrasing which may be misinterpreted or offend the recipient. The use of humour or irony does not always come across as intended and can cause offence.
- the E-Mail system should not in general be used to disseminate personal and confidential information but may be used for this purpose when there is a specific business related issue.
- anyone receiving an E-Mail which is clearly not meant to have been sent to them should send it back to the originator as soon as possible.
- E-Mails should not be forwarded on to another person without the permission of the originator, unless it is clear to any reasonable person that the information contained in the E-Mail is not intended to be in any way confidential.
- E-Mail is not an appropriate debating forum. Do not use it to enter into discussion where it would be more appropriate to have a face to face meeting or to make contact by phone. Never use it as a means of avoiding direct contact.
- Critical information must not be stored solely within the E-Mail system. Hard copies must be kept or stored separately on the system.
- Do not send libellous or defamatory material whether original or downloaded from another source.
- if you need further advice on using the E-Mail system then contact the IT Team.

Monitoring Email Use and Internet Access

Use of the E-Mail system and of Internet access may be recorded and monitored to ensure the system is being used effectively and in line with this policy and all relevant legislation.

Employees will be considered to have consented to this monitoring by their acceptance of an E-Mail address at Green Templeton College and their agreement to comply with the Green Templeton College Computing Rules.

Hard copies of E-Mail messages may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings. The College reserves the right to retain E-Mail messages and records of sites accessed for a reasonable period.

Security

- User ID's and passwords help maintain individual accountability for all use of college computing facilities. Any employee who obtains a password or ID for any work-related purpose must keep that password confidential. Passwords should not be written down and password sharing is strictly forbidden.
- Staff are advised to log out of computers when leaving their office.

- All data, including incoming e-mails of employees, may be checked if they are absent for work or on leave, without having made arrangements for access to their e-mails or data, as the College will need to ensure that business matters can effectively be dealt with in their absence.
- The College's e-mail or internet facilities may not be used to deliberately propagate a virus. Be alert to the potential dangers of accepting programs from public sources or unsolicited software. Approval must be sought from a member of the IT Team before downloading and installing software from the Internet. In addition, software or data owned or licensed to the College may not be uploaded without express authorisation from the IT Manager.
- Staff should guard against the risk of viruses being imported into the College's computer systems, and report any actual or suspected virus infections immediately.
- Staff should not use the College's internet facilities knowingly to disable or overload any system intended to protect the privacy or security of another user.

Inappropriate Use of Email and the Internet

Although active use of the E-Mail system and of the Internet is encouraged, abuse of these systems can result in very serious consequences for the College and disciplinary action may be taken for inappropriate use, which could lead to summary dismissal. Inappropriate use of the systems would include:

- Harassment
- Personal use of the system during work time without good reason
- On-line gambling
- Accessing, using or printing any material that may cause offence e.g. pornography
- Downloading or distributing copyright protected information and/or any copyrighted software
- Posting unapproved confidential information about other employees, volunteers, the College, students, suppliers, etc.
- Using another person's identity so as to appear to be someone else or attempting to gain access to anyone else's e-mail to which you do not have authorised access.
- Use of the E-Mail system or of the Internet for purposes that any reasonable person would know the College would not approve of

Resolving Complaints

Employees who feel that they have cause for complaint as a result of E-Mail communication should raise the matter initially with their immediate line manager and/or the IT Manager. If necessary, the complaint can then be raised through the grievance procedure.