





an urgent response is needed, a follow up by telephone may be more appropriate than a “chaser” email.

- 5.1.5 Senders should also be mindful of the impact on others when sending lots of emails out of hours, even if the sender does not expect a swift response. Arriving to work to a full “inbox” unexpectedly can be a stressor to recipients who may be deluged by emails both inside and outside of working hours.
- 5.1.6 It is also important to remember that some departments within the School will have pre-agreed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) regarding response times to emails. It is expected that all SLAs should be reasonable, reviewed regularly by management within its own area, communicated clearly to all of its users and be respectfully accepted and adhered to by others.

## 6 Tackling problems

- 6.1.1 Where staff feel that colleagues are not making efforts to abide by the contents of this guidance it is reasonable to:
- Speak with the person who sent the email - ideally in person or by phone - reminding them about the principles within this guidance and encouraging them to follow its advice. All staff should aim to support and remind each other of the importance of respecting boundaries and working in a professional and efficient manner. However, entering into email discussion about appropriateness of emails is rarely to be encouraged.
  - Speak to your line manager or HR Partner in the first instances for a second opinion on email content and further advice if necessary, if you feel it to be inappropriate.
  - Try applying a degree of professional empathy to the message sent and consider whether you could be ‘reading too much into it’. Feedback to the sender may still be necessary, but taking a step back and considering whether the issue is typical in your experience of an individual may separate a ‘one-off’ from a more serious issue.

## 7 ‘Rule of Thumb’ email guidance

In terms of what is currently considered good practice:

- Consider whether an email is the most effective method of communicating your message. It may be more productive to have a quick meeting or phone call followed up with one summary email to confirm discussions (if necessary).
- Remain respectful, treating others with dignity at all times.
- Write all email messages in a professional manner. Whilst the written style may sometimes differ, the general *content* of a work email should be consistent to other forms of written communication.

- Keep emails short and to the point wherever possible. This will be beneficial for all dealing with large numbers of emails and assist with recipients working remotely on tablets or mobiles.
- Re-read emails before sending from the perspective of the recipient(s). Ensure your communication is clear, in particular in relation to the positioning of instructions within the body of the message, highlighting clearly required actions. Where 'no action' is necessary and where the email is for only for information, this should be stated.
- Do not leave the subject line blank.
- Ensure appropriate use of cc. and whether all participants of an email need to continue to be cc.ed or included in an email trail when the topic deviates to another issue.
- Be extremely cautious in the use of bcc. ensuring that decisions to do so would meet the standards of the Ethics Code, particularly with regard to integrity and transparency.
- Try to minimise the use of graphics, different fonts, and formats stored within a document when sending it as an attachment to an email.
- Be extremely careful when sending emails containing personal or confidential information.
- Check the recipient's name, especially if there is more than one person with the same name or where a person uses more than one email address e.g. LSE work email and a personal email.
- Before commencing writing an email on a sensitive topic, consider talking confidentially in person or by phone instead. If there is a possibility that the email will be misconstrued, misunderstood or intercepted, it is probably best avoided.
- Do not expect others to wade through extensively long email trails to pick up important information you wish them to be aware of.
- Where the content of an extended email trail has changed direction or purpose be mindful of continuing to forward excessively long email trails to others or continuing to include others as either 'to' or 'cc' recipients unnecessarily.
- Avoid using uppercase text unless completely appropriate and necessary for particular emphasis (e.g. acronyms or initials of names), as this is often interpreted as electronic "shouting".
- Be careful when using humour or sarcasm within an email as this can be easily misinterpreted.
- It is accepted that emails are may be prepared and sent outside of normal School working hours, however, it should be fully expected that replies should not be expected before the next working day commences.
- Automated 'out of office' notifications can be used to manage expectations for both the recipient and sender of emails (e.g. by explaining the time of return to work following a period of time off work, period of back-to-back meetings, exam times etc.). Where possible it is helpful to ensure an appropriate signposted alternative is suggested.
- Use Outlook to set up meeting, which in turn involves making staff diaries accessible to others

- Set clear instructions at the start emails to enhance productivity and efficient use of time for the recipients, e.g. ‘this is just an FYI for person X’, ‘@action or sign-off required’, ‘please reply so that we can all build on each other’s comments, and I will collate responses’, etc.
- Once documents are finalised and unchanging (e.g. committee papers), do not use multiple attachments where possible. If such are necessary, it may be helpful to house all documents in a prescribed order, using a pdf format

**8 Personal email usage**

- 8.1.1 Email functionality is provided to staff for work purposes; however, it is recognised that in a more flexible work-life environment, limited usage of work email for personal usage is unlikely to cause a significant adverse impact on work productivity. Nonetheless, staff should ensure that personal emails do not impinge upon work performance and do not take precedence over work that requires urgent attention. Where possible, personal emails should be limited to lunch breaks, tea breaks etc.
- 8.1.2 Staff should also be aware that emails containing inappropriate material are not acceptable at any time. Staff should also be made aware that, ‘deleting or ‘permanently deleting’ emails does not mean they are unrecoverable at a later date. Further detail relating to privacy of personal emails can be found in the *electronic messaging guidance* issued by IMT.

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